

# Epigenetic Transmission



## ***JOE FERGUSON, PhD***

PhD Clinical Psychology, Fielding University  
MBA, Wharton School of Business

People often think they have inherited their anxiety or depression from their parents because everybody in the family seems to have had it for generations. While there are some rare genetic conditions that cause or promote anxiety or depression at the physiological level, most of the time the older generations have actually *trained* their descendants to be anxious or depressed. The generational transmission of most psychological conditions may go along with the genome, but is not actually in it. This is called epigenetic transmission.

Human babies are born with only about a quarter of their adult brain and their intellectual capacity is limited to basic survival functions. They come equipped with a full range of emotional responses but they have no means of determining which emotions they should feel at any particular moment, unless they are hungry or uncomfortable. Newborns can, however, make eye contact with their caregivers, read the expressions on their faces, and mirror those emotions themselves. To a large extent babies feel what their parents feel. This is why postpartum depression and anxiety are so problematic. An anxious or depressed parent is training their child to be anxious or depressed. The range of situations children can feel some way about expands as they get older. Parents with generalized anxiety or chronic depression are constantly training their children to perceive the world as a dangerous or hopeless place. This is usually obvious when a client tells me their life story.

The good news is that epigenetic transmission of anxiety or depression is just behavioral conditioning and is therefore reversible by means of generalized counter-conditioning and psychotherapy, once it is properly understood. It is not necessary or helpful to work through every single trigger or issue that seems to be the problem. Trust me. Call me.

## ***Concise Personal Counseling***

\$225 per 70-minute session ~ Walking Distance From St. John's College  
(505) 913-7159 ~ [DrJoe@Fergi.com](mailto:DrJoe@Fergi.com) ~ [www.Fergi.com](http://www.Fergi.com)