



Same blood, but so different

By Pierrette Desrosiers, psychologist and coach

“When they were little, they played together so well that I was convinced they would make a good team later on.”

“He’s my brother, but we think differently and have different values and different personalities. In fact, I have the impression that I would get along better with a stranger.”

Often, parents dream of their children forming partnerships, and of seeing them work together harmoniously in the family business. Sometimes, however, in between a dream and reality lies a nightmare. It seems that the marriage of business and family is not always as happy as we would like — on both the economic and the relationship levels. Betting on the success of an association solely because we are members of the same family is far from being a sure thing.

How do we explain how family members can be so different? We are the products of our genetic baggage and of our environment.

Let’s use nature as an example:

- Our temperament is like a seed.

We are born with it. Our basic temperament is unique. That is why, for example, a baby can be very nervous while his sister or brother is very calm. Our genetic baggage partially influences our predisposition to like certain things. It influences our IQs and the totality of what later constitutes our personalities, but at birth we already have a temperament, and we will always carry this unique kernel of corn, wheat or barley inside of us.

- Our environment is like the soil.

The immediate environment (home and school) influences the individual’s development just as the soil acts on plant development. We can easily imagine that environments can differ even between brothers. Just look at how school can be experienced differently by one brother who possesses a facility to learn, is excellent at sports and has a lot of friends, compared to his sibling who is shy and who has been the victim of bullying.

- Soil quality or characteristics may vary in the same field.

Contrary to popular belief, the immediate environment is not identical for children in the same family. In one field, you can find certain areas where the soil drains better or where the ground has more clay or is sandier, not to mention the pH and nutritional variations. Parents do not act in an identical way with all their children. In fact, each child is different and evokes different emotions and reactions from his or her parents. The various soil characteristics may not

provide the same conditions for all plants on your land, and likewise, the immediate environment does not provide the same conditions for each child.

- Each plant has different growing needs.

The children in a family soon undergo and choose very different experiences throughout their lives, first of all because they have different values and interests but also because they have different opportunities. As all varieties of plants have different growing needs, children also have different needs. That is why, like some plants in a field, some children will manage to meet their needs while, for others, the soil will not be rich enough.

- Each plant assimilates soil elements differently.

Lastly, to complicate things, one event may be interpreted very differently. Let’s take the example of two corn plants side-by-side. One will better be able to grow and take advantage of the soil in order to develop to full maturity, while the other plant, although under the same conditions, will struggle. I’m always eager to listen to the stories of siblings and how they experienced their childhood so differently, especially how situations such as the loss of a parent, parent divorces or poverty may have affected the members of the same family so differently.

As agricultural producers, when we look at our progeny, we have to remind ourselves of nature’s teachings. Therefore, when you wonder about the differences in your family, consider Mother Nature and your harvests. Remember that, even though you try to plan the harvest, the results are sometimes different than you planned for. There are limits to our ability to model our children according to our expectations and dreams. We cannot genetically modify our progeny, nor control their experiences and the perceptions of these experiences.

As a result of all of those realities:

1. Do not expect that you children will share a lot in common simply because they are siblings.
2. Do not expect that they will all have the potential or the interest to become farmers simply because they have been raised on a farm.
3. Even if they have the potential and the interest, do not assume that they will fit together and form a good partnership.

Mother Nature always has the last word. **CG**

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