

# parents, family culture & responses to alcohol and other drug use

## Research on sibling bereavement when death is drug-related

- 21 siblings interviewed
- hermeneutic phenomenological informed method
- each interview analysed from 3 discrete lenses: bereavement, AOD, and family

if we have a family we exist in a multiplicity of roles, positions & relationships governed by family culture

every family is unique - a whole world of its own - shaped by functions, rules, responsibilities, boundaries, subsystems, closeness & distance

Donna's father "would be ... goading me or jollying me along a bit to go and see my brother, which often I would be quite reluctant to do".

Carl says, "dad was the supportive one ... dad was the one holding the family together". Carl's brother was included in all family events.

Stan describes his parents as not talking about his brother's drug use with 'their heads buried in the sand'. In hindsight he says "if I went back, I don't care what mum and dad are doing ... I'm going to find out ... I'm going to drag him there ... get him sorted out".

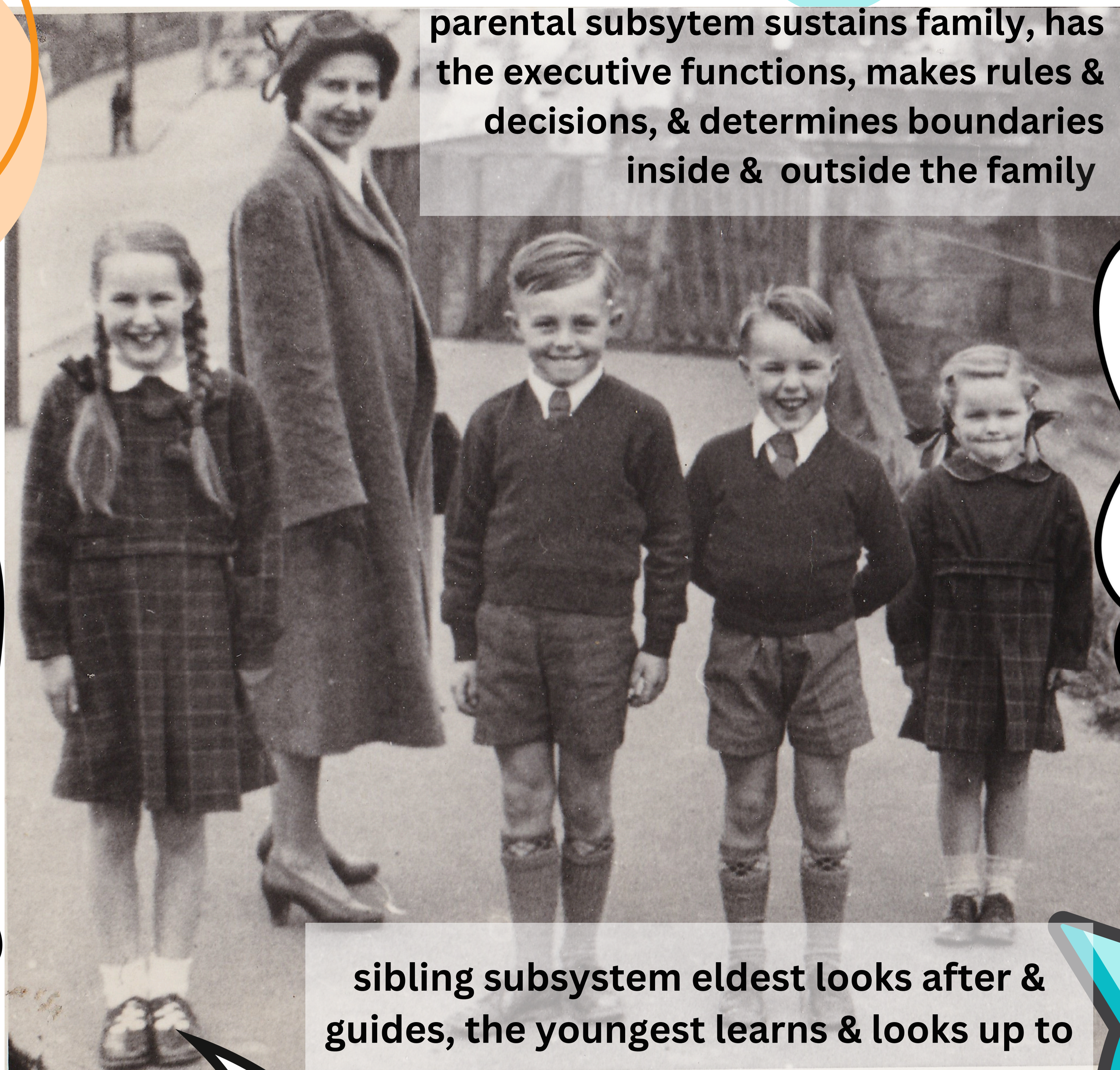
As the eldest Jacquie says "I'd left to go to uni ... I blame myself for a lot of this because I wasn't there to look after my little sister ... [when] she went off the rails".

Krystal says the family were "just being a strong family ... we're here to support you, we're here to help you ... we sort of cut everyone else out".

Helen says her older brother, "lived for a while with mum and dad ... and tried to ... get himself back on track ... the family were very supportive".

Judy as the eldest says she would have liked to have, "got the family together and tried to do something to help him ... and I mean my parents; hey were totally out of their depth".

parental subsystem sustains family, has the executive functions, makes rules & decisions, & determines boundaries inside & outside the family



sibling subsystem eldest looks after & guides, the youngest learns & looks up to

Sally talks about finding her older brother with her mother, "we'd track him down, wherever he was, and sometimes he would be passed out in some hallway or something". She describes this as her normal.

Karen as the younger sister says "he and I were very close ... despite all the chaos". She also describes her brother as her hero.



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