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PRIOR LEARNING ASSESSMENT AND RECOGNITION (PLAR) AS QUALITATIVE SELF-ASSESSMENT

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Objectives

- ① Participants will unite the awarding of PLAR credits with self-development with implications for career and personal choice;
- ① Participants will view learners as holistic and complex beings recognizing that educational strategies can meet multiple objectives extending beyond the educational domain and potentially creating an overlap with learners' mental health

This presentation is based on...

- Robertson, L. H. (2011a). An application of PLAR to the development of the aboriginal self: One college's experience. *International Review of Research in Open and Distance Learning*, 12(1), 96–108.
- Robertson, L. H. (2011b). Prior learning assessment and recognition in aboriginal self (re) construction. *Pimatisiwin* 9(2), 459–472.
- Robertson, L. H., & Conrad, D. (2016). Considerations of Self in Recognising Prior Learning and Credentialing. In S. Reushle, A. Antonio & M. Keppell (Eds.), *Open Learning and Formal Credentialing in Higher Education: Curriculum Models and Institutional Policies* (pp. 187-204). Hershey, PA, USA: IGI Global.

Working definitions

- Challenge-for-credit PLAR is the awarding of credit for prior knowledge as measured against some existent criteria
- “Whole Person” Portfolio PLAR is a holistic view of one’s life experience from which we derive meaning

Portfolio Development is Knowledge Construction

The linkage between learning and concepts of identity has implications for institutions of higher education as regards the development of relationships between learners' engagement in learning and the process of obtaining formal qualifications. We submit that the innovative recognition pedagogies that inform open education practices and credentialing must also consider concepts of self-development in order to recognise the transformative potential of the process.

Robertson & Conrad (2016) p. 188

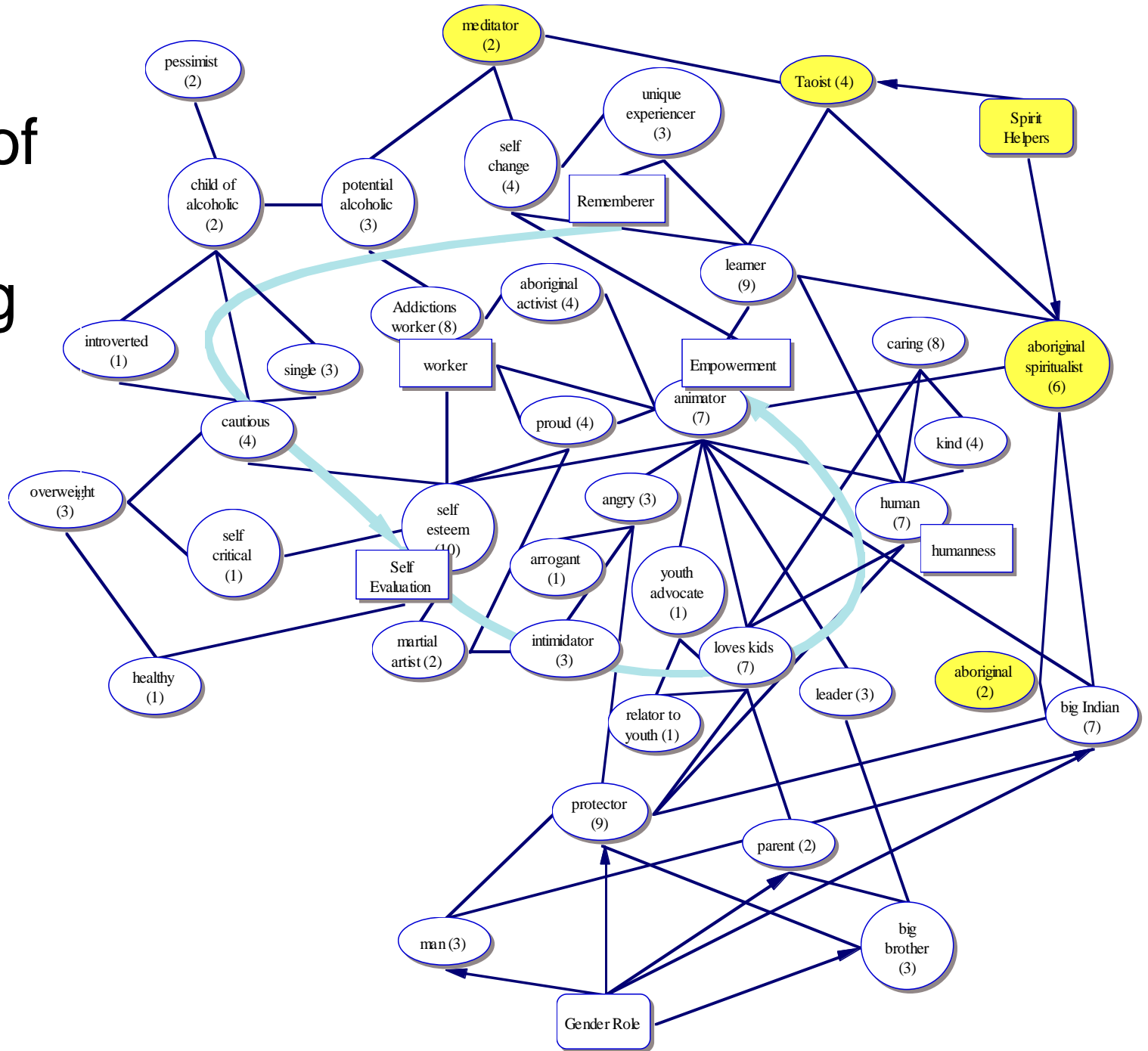
PLAR: A Means of Knowledge Creation and Self-growth

Portfolio development “gives rise to new knowledge—of self, of self situated within the trajectory of growth, and of self situated within the profession” (Conrad, 2008, p. 142).

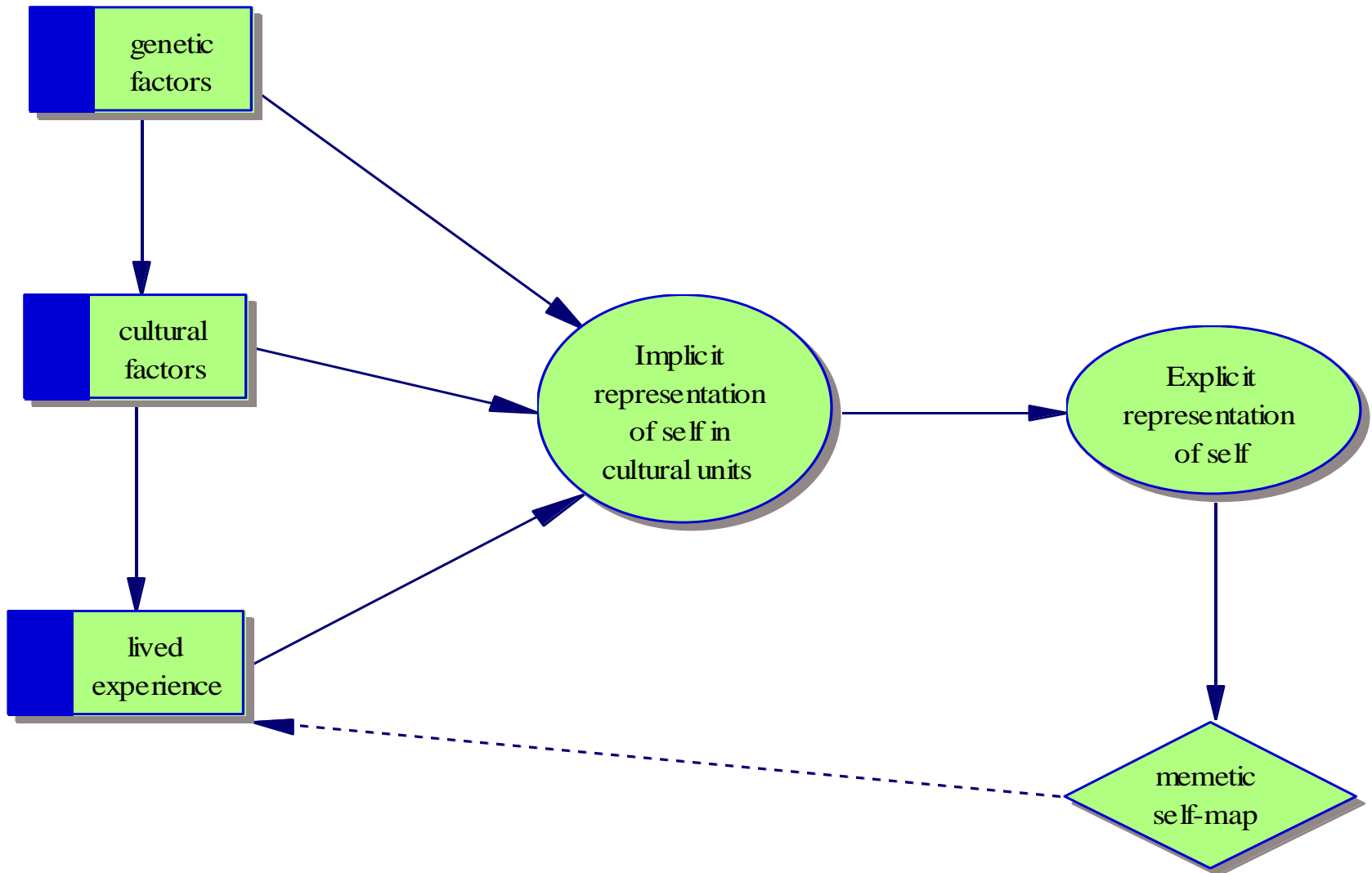
Portfolios may include...

- ⦿ Certificates of achievement
- ⦿ Awards
- ⦿ Newsletter articles
- ⦿ Stories/poems/songs /videos
- ⦿ List of training and volunteer/work experience
- ⦿ Testimonials from others
- ⦿ Resumes
- ⦿ Personal reflections
- ⦿ Results of standardized testing for abilities or interests
- ⦿ Self-maps, personal medicine wheels, symbolic still lifes or other representations of self

Self-map of a young Cree man



Genetic , cultural and interpretive factors in the creation of the self



Holistic PLAR affirms and creates self-knowledge

- ⦿ PLAR begins with self-awareness
- ⦿ Self-awareness leads to self-assessment and this generates possibilities in personal and career development
- ⦿ In developing one's portfolio maladaptive assumptions may be identified and re-framed
- ⦿ Taking a look at the whole self aides in identifying learning that may have been discounted as unimportant or ordinary

An application of PLAR to aboriginal identity construction (Robertson, 2011b)

- Development of a portfolio recounting one's personal history
- Education on the history of colonialism as may apply to dysfunctional self attributions
- An invitation to consider reframing past experiences in more positive ways
- The development of a map, medicine wheel or narrative that represents the individual's current self
- Listing of strengths that can be carried forward to meet career goals

Who am I?

- ◉ Metis
- ◉ Psychologist
- ◉ Writer
- ◉ Father
- ◉ Knower
- ◉ Man
- ◉ Chess player
- ◉ Traveler
- ◉ Brother
- ◉ Uncle

10 things I am

- ◉ Seek understanding
- ◉ Be authentic
- ◉ Knowledge is freedom
- ◉ World needs more love
- ◉ Challenge existing ideas
- ◉ Help others
- ◉ Believe in something bigger
- ◉ There is an objective reality
- ◉ Capitalism is based on greed
- ◉ To be human is to be rational

10 things I believe to be true

Who am I (2)?

10 things I like about myself

- Patient
- Active (doer)
- Intelligent
- Good-hearted
- A thinker
- Soft-hearted
- A rebel
- Out-spoken
- Caring
- Well-read

10 things I would change about myself if I could

- More outgoing (introverted)
- More authentic (inauthentic)
- Less down on self (self-critical)
- Better hearing (deaf)
- Better eyesight (blind)
- Less neurotic (neurotic)
- Less gullible (gullible)
- More objective in relationships (gullible)
- Believe in self more (self-doubter)
- Exercise more (out-of-shape)

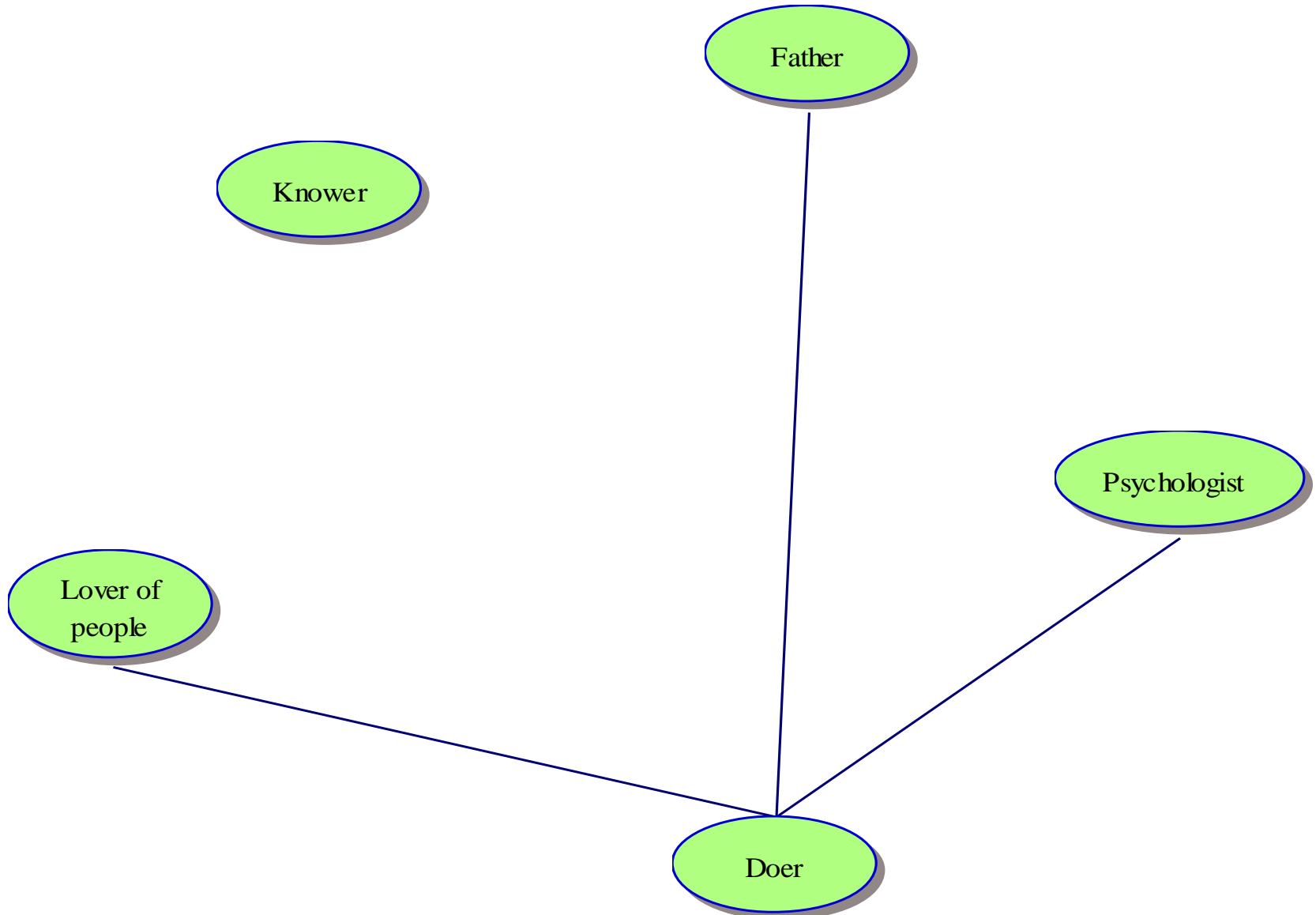
One thing I am: A father

- Referent meaning: I have three biological children
- Connotation: I have a responsibility for my children to nurture and to guide
- Emotion: Love, caring, tenderness
- Behavior: I provide for, I listen to, and I share my time and experience with my children

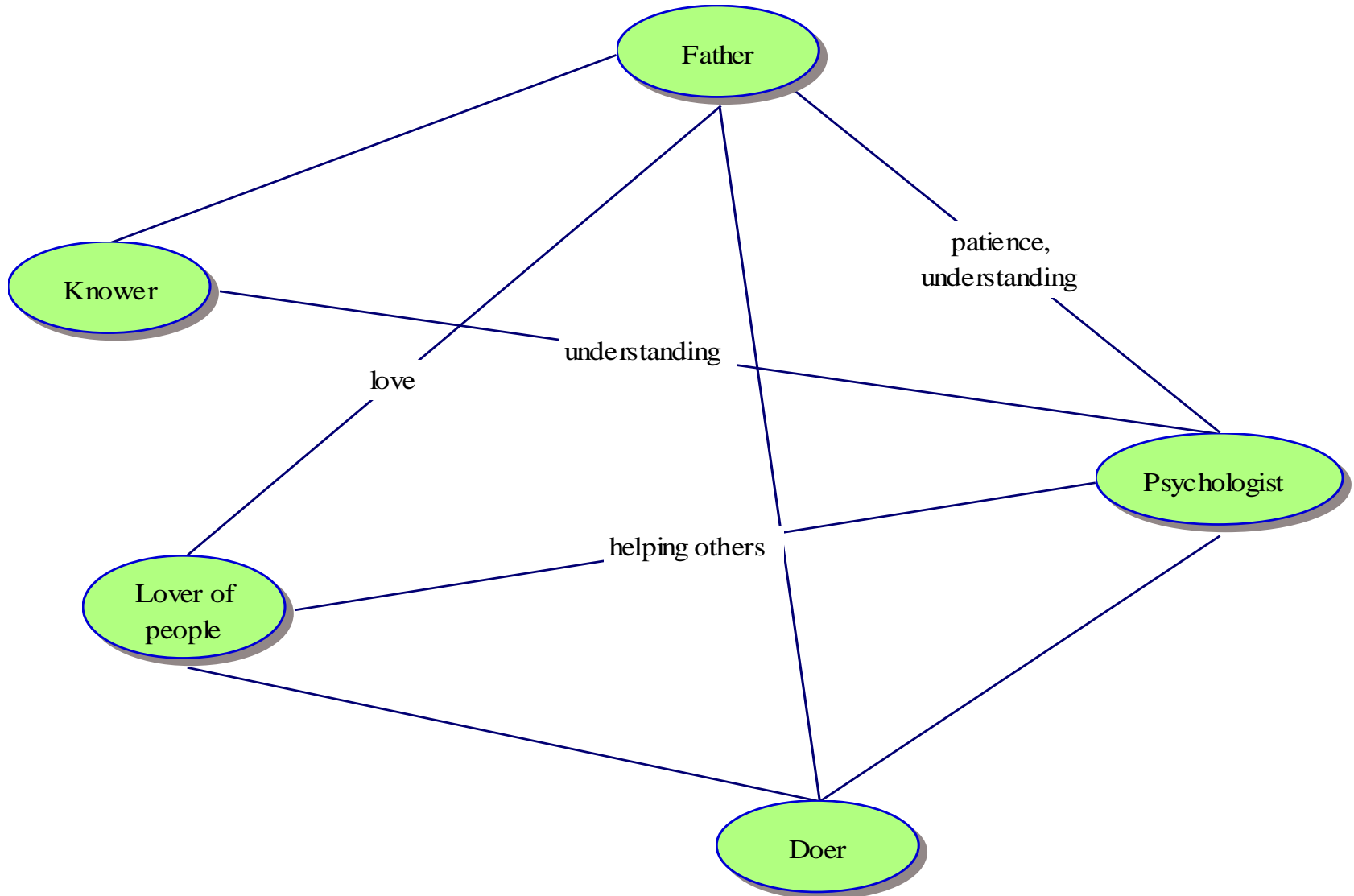
Another thing I am is a “doer”

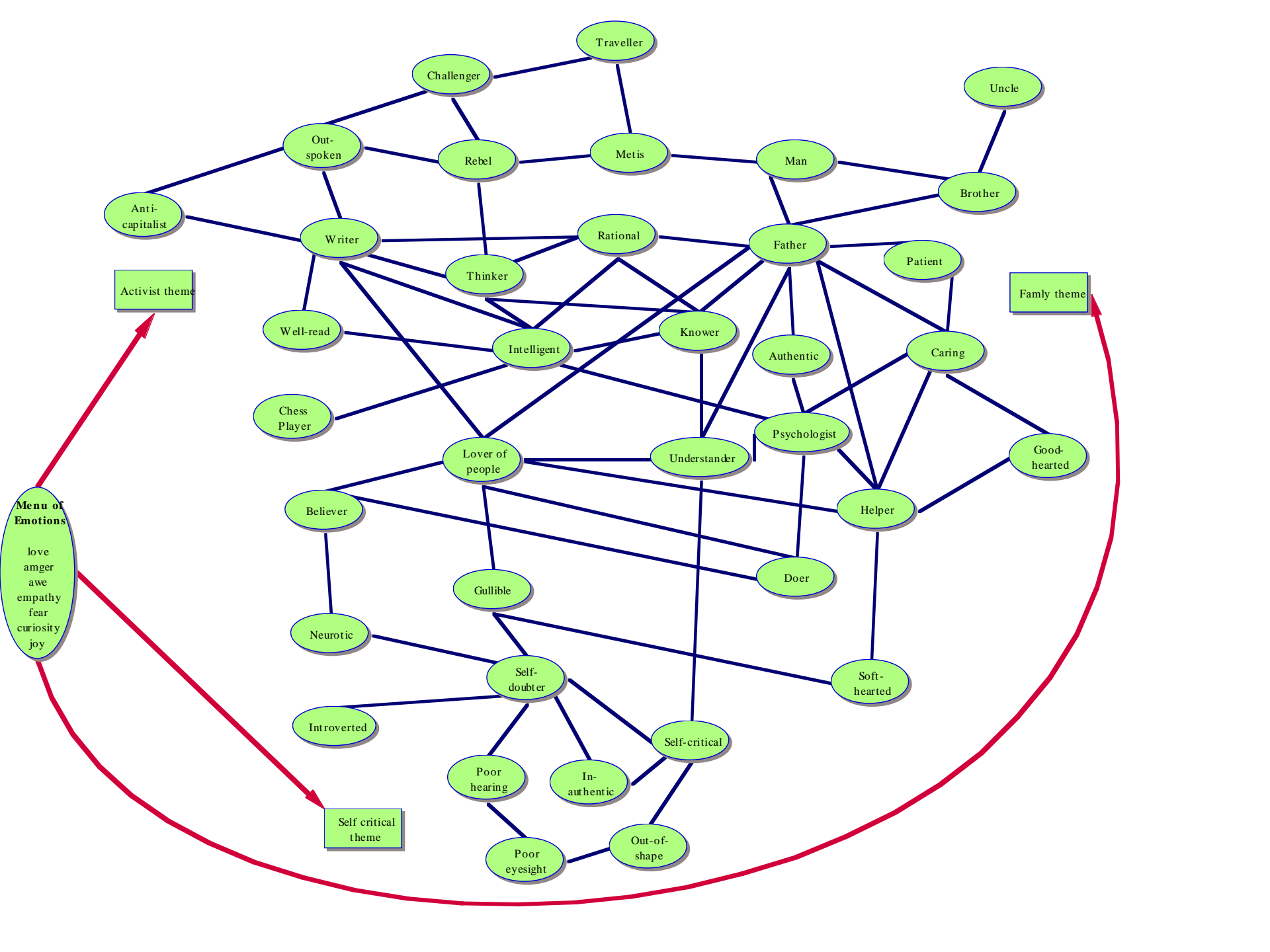
- Referent meaning: I engage in goal directed activity
- Connotative meaning: My self-worth is tied to my ability to engage in meaningful activity
- Emotion: Self-esteem, a feeling of worthiness
- Behavior: My waking hours are engaged in activity as opposed to passive pursuits

“Doer” is related to other memes within my self

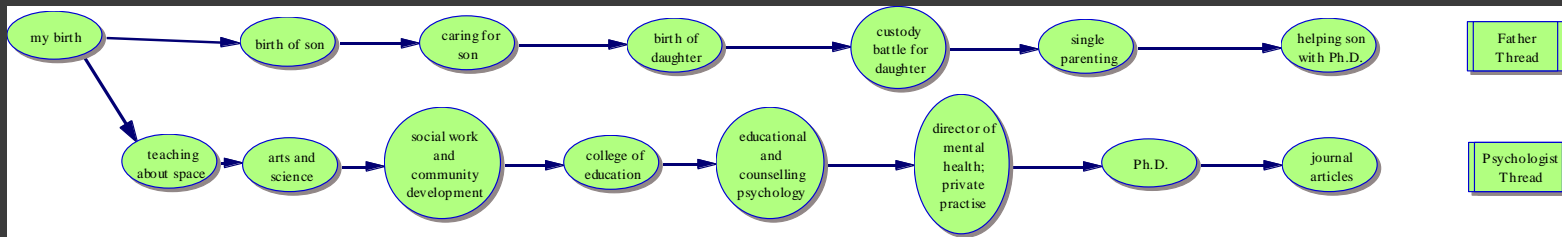


The self forms a structure

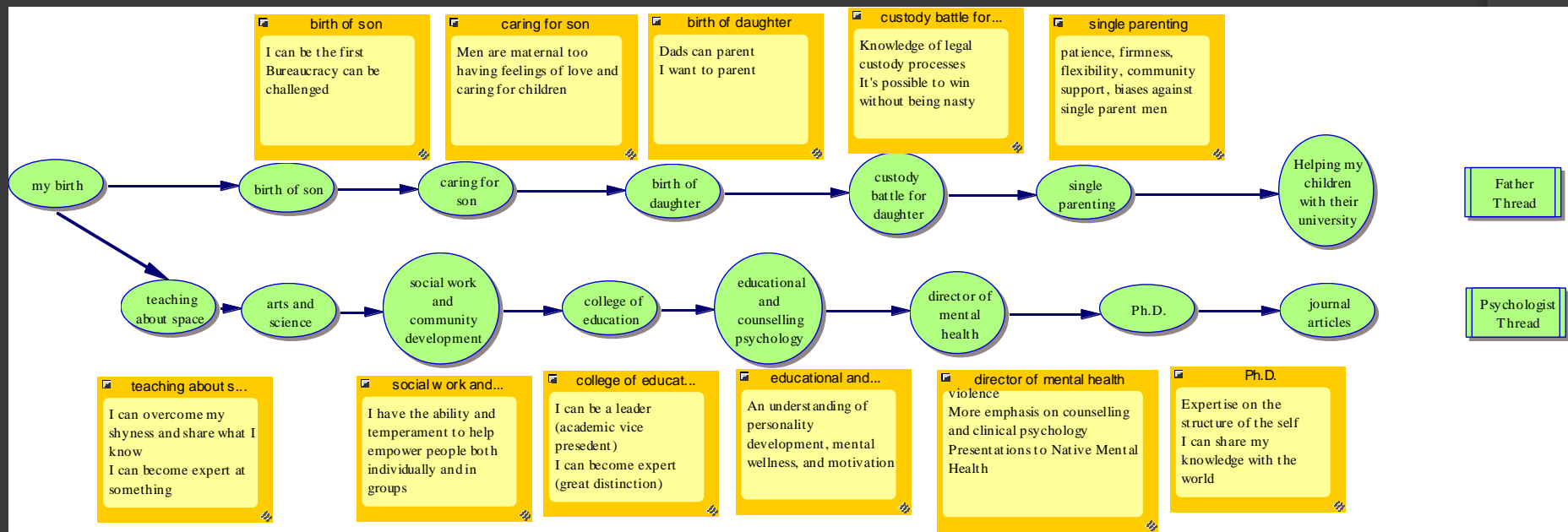




Timeline for two persons I am



What I learned from my highlighted experiences



What I learned for which I have no certificate

- Advocacy
- Legal systems pertaining to custody
- Parenting skills
- Self-confidence
- Proposal writing
- Writing articles for newspapers, magazines and journals

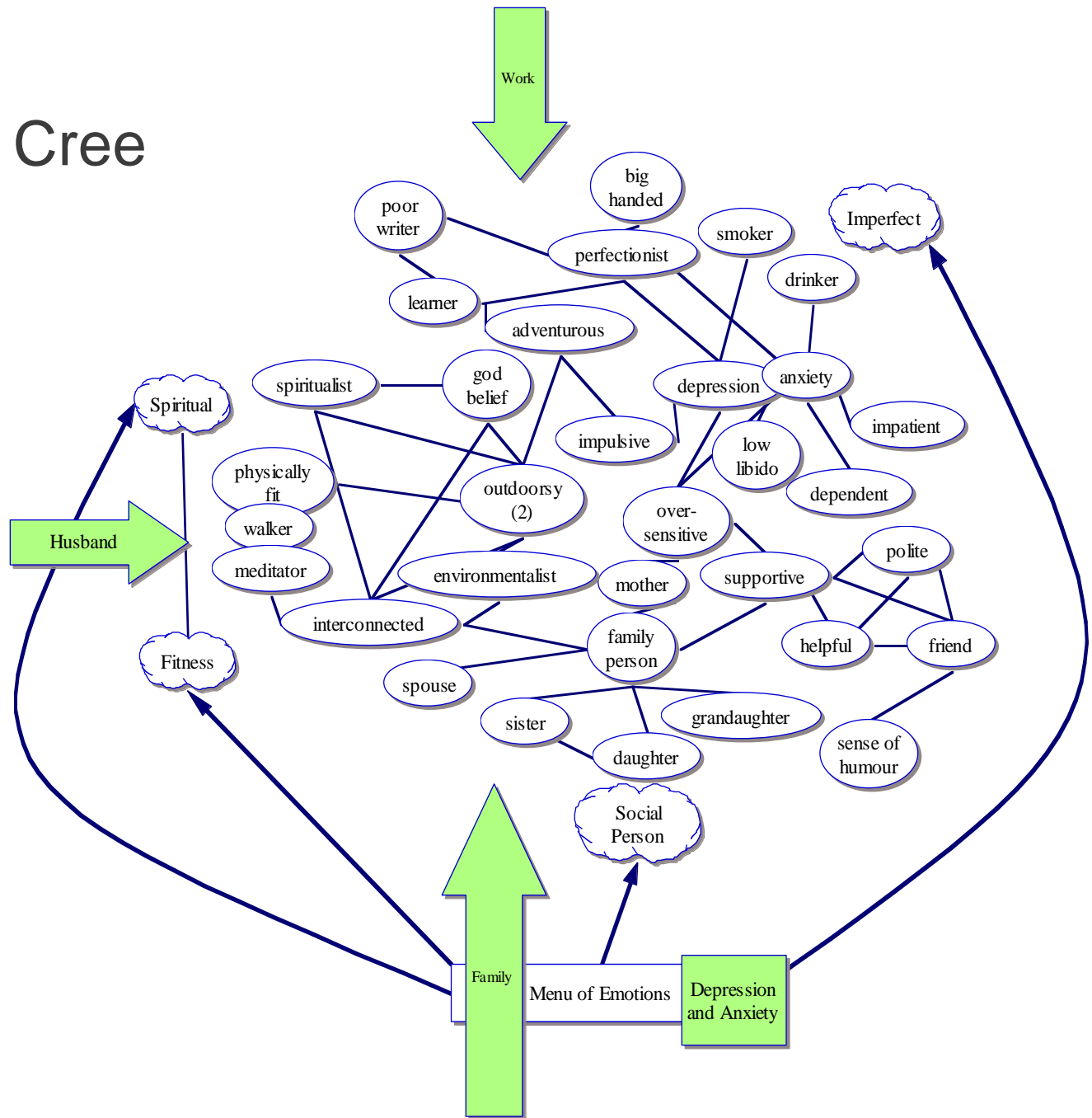
Holistic vs. summative portfolios

- ⦿ What we term a “holistic portfolio” might also be called a “foundational portfolio” that includes a personal profile highlighting significant life events or transitions, life goals, formal learning, circles of support, work and volunteer history, and personal reflections on all of the foregoing.
- ⦿ The “summative” portfolio is directed toward a specific purpose such as a job application or academic credit and may be evaluated by criterion referenced means.

Results of the Mental Health and Addictions pilot orientations

- All students (N=23) completed a holistic or foundational portfolio
- Six students successfully challenged the first accredited class in the program, three successfully challenged the second such class

A Young Cree Mother



PLR begins with student self-assessment, and the process...

- ⦿ Helps validate past experiential learning in meaningful ways;
- ⦿ Develop organizational skills;
- ⦿ Invites meaningful self-reflection on on past learning;
- ⦿ Provides students with detailed feedback on their learning;
- ⦿ Helps students to think critically about their own learning;
- ⦿ Gives students the opportunity to achieve additional course credits;
- ⦿ Offers students the opportunity to build a comprehensive self-esteem building monument to their past accomplishments.

Summation

- ◉ *The competent holistic portfolio developer is more facilitator than teacher, but the art of facilitation involves inviting new interpretive possibilities. Often the student or client will not have recognized skills and abilities that are evident in the portfolio or will have downplayed their significance. It is the duty of the facilitator to point out evidence of possible skill sets and their applicability to new contexts. The [student] may have been overly harsh in his interpretations of past events and the facilitator may point out that alternative interpretations are possible while empowering the [student] to make the final “correct” understanding. On reflection the [student] may wish to engage in areas of self-development. The facilitator may suggest resources the [student] could utilize in pursuit of such a quest. (Robertson, 2011a, p. 469)*

More references

- Conrad, D. (2008). Building knowledge through portfolio learning in prior learning assessment and recognition. *Quarterly Review of Distance Education*, 9(2), 139-151. 10
- Robertson, L. H. (2010). Mapping the self with units of culture. *Psychology*, 1(3), 185-193.
- Robertson, L. H. (2016). Self-Mapping in Counselling: Using Memetic Maps to Enhance Client Reflectivity and Therapeutic Efficacy. *Canadian Journal of Counselling and Psychotherapy*, 50(3), 332-347.