

## Write Your Life Story

### *Family and Friends, Today*

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#### Modified from:

*Telling the Stories of Life Through Guided Autobiography* by James E Birren, Ph.D. and Kathryn N. Cochran

*Writing your Legacy: The Step-by-Step Guide to Crafting Your Life Story* by Richard Campbell M.Ed. and Cheryl Svensson, Ph.D.

Below are a series of questions to jog memory and to focus writing a theme about your family and friends, today. You don't need to answer each question. Nor do you need to answer questions literally the way you wrote answers to essay questions or reading comprehension questions in school. Just read through the questions and decide what would be interesting and meaningful for you to write about your family and friends, today.

As you write your theme, weave in your age and where you were living at the time to help readers understand the context of your experience. Also reflect on your thoughts, feelings, and interpretations of the events at the time and now that you're looking back. Are they the same, different, or a mix?

Finally, try to relate your story in two to four pages—with double spacing and a twelve-point font that's about 500 to 1,000 words. Remember writing

is about selection: Selecting memories, selecting specific words, and selecting details relevant to your theme. The limitation on the number of pages will force you to choose the most relevant aspects of your experiences. And that will create a sharp focus for your story. You can always expand the story later. Initially, it's important to convey the most essential aspects of how your family and friends today influence your life.

### **Closest Friend(s)**

Where did you meet?

What do you have in common? How are you different? How do your common interests enrich the relationship? How do your differences enrich the relationship and each of you as individuals?

How have these relationships shaped you as a person or influenced the direction of your life?

What are your favorite memories about these close friends?

### **Your Family as an Adult**

Where did you meet your spouse? How old were you when you met your spouse? What attracted you to this person?

What are your favorite memories before you married?

What are your favorite memories about the wedding?

How are you and your spouse similar and how are you different?

How do these similarities and differences impact your lifestyle and your daily interactions?

In most families, each person is conceptualized over time according to what other family members identify as a defining trait or role. So, your spouse might be the organized one while you might be the social director. One child might be considered the athlete, another the clown, another the brain or nerd. Family members might also assume roles such as the favorite son, the hero, the quiet one, the talkative one, the dreamer, the angry one, etc.

When you think about the members of your adult family, do you associate them with different traits or roles?

What are your favorite memories about your spouse? Why?

What are your favorite memories about each of your children? Why?

### **Family Rules as an Adult**

Family rules whether spoken or modeled operate across all daily activities.

What rules guide your family? Which rules from your family of origin have you modified or eliminated? What new rules have you formulated with your spouse?

Are there rules about performing household chores, doing homework, interacting with other adults, mealtimes, clothes, hair, movies, television, bedtimes, or curfews?

## **Family Traditions as an Adult**

Most people think about family traditions in terms of religious celebrations such as Christmas, Hanukkah, Kwanza, Easter, Passover, etc. But as families move through each year, they also create other traditions, such as:

Summers at the beach

How birthdays are celebrated

Visits with relatives

The beginning of each school year

Friday night dinners

How they chose to spend time on weekends.

How they prepare for each changing season

As you think about family traditions created in your family as adult, which are the most important to you and why?