



Prompts for My Life Story

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I encourage Senior clients to create a legacy for their families - recording slices of their life story.

The questions below can be used as a prompt to help write a life story that will bring family and friends more into the picture about the important, amazing, challenging, and endearing aspects of your journey - about your time, about your hopes and dreams, about your highs and lows, about your key life changes, decisions, or moments, and about the important people in your life.

You won't need to answer all questions – some are very similar. Instead, just select the questions you want to do.

I also suggest you aim to complete this story as a 6-to-12 month project, perhaps preparing it as a gift to give to each family member on a special family occasion - perhaps your Birthday. And set aside a specific time, perhaps once a week (or once a day depending on how enthusiastic you feel) to sit with your favourite drink, to quietly reflect, and to answer just one or two questions in a one-hour session – that way you will gradually build up your story.

Once recorded, your life story will be an invaluable gift, a legacy, to provide to your family, especially your family's younger generations many of whom will at some time become keenly interested in their roots and in your story. Don't put it off – get to it now whilst you have the capability. You know too well how fleeting life can be.

AND BEWARE. My fellow psychologists tell us that there are also great benefits to you too by doing this – journaling like this can be cathartic, healing, and joyful as you reflect upon your life. We hope the questions help jog some nice memories for you. Perhaps you might even ask some grandkids to get involved in helping Nan/Pa complete this recording, perhaps using smart phone technologies to capture the memories on audio or video, then using 'audio to text software' to then share the story as a printed book, perhaps with a treasured picture of you on the cover.

My Life's Journey – My Family Heritage?

1. Where are your parents' families from? Have you ever been there? What was that experience like?
2. Did you have grandparents? What do you remember about them? When did they die? When were they born?
3. What traditions have been passed down in your family?
4. Do you remember any stories your grandparents told you? What are the classic family stories? Jokes? Songs?
5. What do you know about your family's ancestors? Where were they from? What work did they do?

My Life's Journey – Birth?

6. What year were you born? On what date? What day of the week was it?
7. Did your parents tell you anything about the day you were born?
8. Where were you born?
9. Why were you given the first (and middle) name(s) that you have?
10. What was the address where your family lived when you were born?
11. What were the full names and birthdates of your siblings (older and younger)?

12. What is your very first life memory?
13. What images do you recall from your first few years of life? People? Places? Toys? Events? Incidents?

My Life's Journey – Childhood?

14. What was your childhood like?
15. Where did you grow up? What was it like?
16. What did you look like?
17. How would you describe yourself as a child? Were you happy?
18. What is one of your best memories of childhood? Worst?
19. Did you have a nickname? How'd you get it?
20. Who were your best friends? What were they like?
21. How would you describe a perfect day when you were young?
22. What did you think your life would be like when you were older?
23. Do you have any favourite stories from your childhood?
24. Describe the apartment/house that you grew up in? How many bedrooms? Bathrooms? What was your bedroom like?
25. Can you describe the neighbourhood you grew up in?
26. Tell us about your parents. What memories do you have of them? What were they like?
27. Who was stricter – Mum? Dad? Do you have a vivid memory of something you did that you were disciplined for?
28. How was your relationship with your parents?
29. Did you get into trouble? What was the worst thing you did?
30. Did your parents have a good marriage?
31. How did your family earn money? How financially comfortable did your family compare to other local families?
32. What kinds of things did your family spend money on?
33. Do you have any siblings? What were they like growing up?
34. What memories do you have of each sibling as you grew up?
35. Did you have any pets?
36. What were you like as a child? What did you like to eat? What did you do for fun? What were your favourite toys or games? Did you have a secret place or a special hiding spot, cubby?
37. What did you wear?
38. Did you get an allowance? How much? Did you spend it right away, or save it? What did you buy?
39. What responsibilities did you have at home when you were young?
40. What kind of school did you go to? Were you a good student? What was your favourite subject? Least favourite?
41. Who were your friends? Who was your favourite teacher and why?
42. When you were a child, what did you want to be when you grew up?
43. Did you enjoy school?
44. What would you do for fun?
45. How would your classmates remember you?
46. Are you still friends with anyone from that time in your life?
47. What are your best memories of grade school/high school/college/graduate school? Worst memories?
48. Was there an adult (eg teacher/s, family friend) who had a strong influence on your life? Tell us about them.
49. Do you have any favourite stories from school?
50. Did you have any heroes or role models when you were a child?
51. How did you spend your summer holidays? What were your favourite summer activities?
52. Where did your family go on vacations?
53. How did your family celebrate holidays (e.g. Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Year, Easter, Memorial Day)?
54. Did lots of relatives get together? What traditions did you have year after year? What food was served?
55. What was the best gift you remember receiving as a child?
56. What big world events do you remember from the time you were growing up?
57. What inventions do you most remember?

58. What's different about growing up today from when you were growing up?
59. When you were a teenager, what did you do for fun? Did you have a favourite spot to "hang out"? What time did you have to be home at night? Did you ever get into any trouble?
60. Were there any phrases that were popular when you were a teenager? What did you like to wear? How did your parents feel about the way you talked and what you wore?
61. When did you learn how to drive? Who taught you? What was your first car like?
62. What was your graduation from high school like?
63. What dreams and goals did you have for your life when you graduated?

My Life's Journey – Adulthood?

64. Did you go to university or college? How did you decide what you wanted to study?
65. How did you decide what you wanted to do with your life? How do you feel about that choice?
66. What was your first job? What did you like or not like about it?
67. What job did you do most of your life? What did you like most about it? Least?
68. Describe the work that you do/did.
69. Tell us about how you got into your line of work.
70. Do/Did you like your job?
71. What did you think you were going to be when you grew up?
72. What did you want to be when you grew up?
73. What lessons has your work life taught you?
74. When and why did you decide to become a _____?
75. Tell us about your first day as a _____.
76. How was _____ different from how you imagined it to be?
77. Tell us about a time when _____ made you feel hopeful.
78. What are the most challenging and/or funniest moments you've experienced in your work?
79. How would you like your work colleagues to remember you?
80. Were there a specific person/people who had a strong influence on your work life? What did you learn from them?
81. Do you have any favourite stories from your work life?
82. Looking back, what advice would you give to yourself in your first year of work?
83. If you could do anything now, what would you do? Why?
84. Do you have a love of your life?
85. When did you first fall in love?
86. Can you tell us about your first kiss?
87. What was your first serious relationship?
88. Do you believe in love at first sight?
89. Do you ever think about previous lovers?
90. What lessons have you learned from your relationships?
91. Who were the "ones that got away" in your life?
92. What was the hardest break up you've ever experienced?
93. Do you remember the best date you ever went on? Tell us about your first date?
94. How did you meet your spouse? What did you like about him/her?
95. How did you know they were "the one"?
96. How did the proposal happen? How and when did you get engaged?
97. What were the best times? The most difficult times?
98. Do you have any favourite stories from your marriage or about your spouse/partner?
99. When did you get married? How old were you? Where did you get married? What was your wedding like?
100. What was the first big purchase you made with your spouse?
101. What makes/made your spouse special or unique?
102. Did you ever think of getting divorced?

103. Did you ever get divorced? Can you tell us about it?
104. What advice do you have for young couples?
105. How many children do you have? When were they born? How did you decide what to name each?
106. What's your favourite story about each of your children?
107. When did you first find out that you'd be a parent? How did you feel?
108. Did you always know you wanted to be a parent?
109. Can you describe the moment when you saw your child for the first time?
110. How has being a parent changed you?
111. What have you learned about yourself from being a parent?
112. What are your dreams for your children?
113. In what ways do you think you are similar, different to each of your children?
114. Do you remember when your last child left home for good?
115. Do you have any favourite stories about your kids?
116. How did you choose your children's names?
117. What was each child like as a baby? As a young child?
118. Do you remember any of the songs you used to sing to your children? Can you sing them now?
119. Describe the personalities of each child?
120. What were the hardest moments you had as your family grew up?
121. If you could do everything again, would you raise your kids any differently?
122. What advice would you give parents about raising their kids?
123. What is something funny or embarrassing one of your children said at an early age that you'll never forget?
124. What's the most memorable family vacation you took?
125. What do you remember about holiday celebrations? Is there one holiday memory that stands out for you?
126. How did you feel about raising your children? What was the best part? The hardest part?
127. What makes you proud of your children?
128. What's the best thing about being a parent? A grandparent?
129. Did you serve in the military? What did you do and what kind of experience was it?
130. When were you drafted or when did you enlist?
131. What do you remember about the day you enlisted?
132. How did you imagine military life before you joined? How did your perceptions change after serving?
133. What was basic training like?
134. Can you describe a funny moment from your time in the military?
135. What are some of the things you remember about adapting to military life?
136. Where did you serve during the war?
137. If you deployed overseas, how did you tell your loved ones you were being deployed?
138. How did you stay in touch with family and friends back home?
139. What are some things you remember most about your deployment?
140. If you saw multiple deployments, how did they differ from each other? How did you change?
141. Can you describe how you felt coming home from combat?
142. Was there anything you especially missed about civilian life?
143. Is there someone you served with that you remember fondly? Can you tell us about them?
144. What are some fun things you and your friends did together while you were deployed?
145. Did any of your military friends play pranks on each other? Can you describe a funny one?
146. Did you get caught breaking any rules? Did you ever get away with something you weren't supposed to do?
147. Did you ever learn something about a fellow service member that surprised you?
148. When did you leave the military? What was that process like?
149. What were your first few months out of the service like?
150. Was there anything or anyone that helped you during the transition from military to civilian life?
151. Do you have advice for others transitioning out of the military?
152. How do you think your time in the military affected you?

153. What did you learn about yourself?
154. What are some of your hopes for the future?
155. What phrase or word will never be the same now that you served?
156. When you were first discharged, what are some things about civilians that were difficult for you to deal with?
157. Is there anything you wish civilians understood about military service?
158. What are some habits you developed in the service that you like? What are some that you dislike?
159. What are some things you miss about being in the service? What are some you are glad to have left behind?
160. What has been difficult to communicate to family and friends about your military service?
161. Do you have advice for other military couples?
162. If you have children, what do you want them to know about your military service?

My Life's Journey: Today's Senior Years?

163. What age were you when you accepted you were now in your Senior years?
164. Please tell us about some special people in your life that have passed:
 - What was your relationship to _____?
 - Tell us about _____.
 - What is your first memory of _____?
 - What is your best memory of _____?
 - What is your most vivid memory of _____?
 - What did _____ mean to you?
 - Are you comfortable/ can you talk about _____'s death? How did _____ die?
 - What has been the hardest thing about losing _____?
 - What would you ask _____ if _____ were here today?
 - What do you miss most about _____?
 - How do you think _____ would want to be remembered?
 - Can you talk about the biggest obstacles _____ overcame in life?
 - Was there anything you and _____ disagreed about, fought over, or experienced some conflict around?
 - What about _____ makes you smile?
 - What was your relationship like?
 - What did _____ look like?
 - Did you have any favourite jokes _____ used to tell?
 - Do you have any stories you want to share about _____?
 - What were _____'s hopes and dreams for the future?
 - Is there something about _____ that you think no one else knows?
 - How are you different now than you were before you lost _____?
 - What is the image of _____ that persists?
 - Do you have any traditions to honour _____?
 - What has helped you the most in your grief?
 - What are the hardest times?
164. Do you have any hobbies or special interests? Do you enjoy any particular sports?
165. What's your typical day like now? How is it different from your daily routines in the past?
166. Is the present better or worse than when you were younger?
167. What do you do for fun?
168. Who do you trust and depend on?
169. What things are most important to you now? Why?
170. How have your dreams and goals changed through your life?
171. What do you see? (Hold a mirror up to the person)
172. What challenges are you having in your life today?
173. What does your future hold?

174. How is your health today?
175. Do you think about dying? Are you scared?
176. How do you imagine your death?
177. Do you believe in an after-life?
178. Do you regret anything?
179. Do you look at your life differently today than younger years? If so, in what way/s?
180. Has illness changed you? What have you learned?
181. Do you have any last wishes?

My Identity?

182. Who were your favourite relatives?
183. Do you remember any of the stories your grandparents used to tell you?
184. Do you know the meaning of your family name? Are there stories about the origins of your family name?
185. Have you ever had any nicknames as a child or as an adult? Where did they come from?
186. How are you like your mother? Unlike her? How are you like your father? Unlike him?
187. What was most important to your parents?
188. Do you feel you're like any of your grandparents? In what ways?
189. How are your children like you? Unlike you?
190. What do you think are your three best qualities? Your three worst?
191. Which do you think you have most of: talent, intelligence, education, persistence? How has it helped you in life?
192. Do you have any special sayings or expressions?
193. What's your favourite book and why? What's your favourite movie and why?
194. Who are three people in history you admire most and why?
195. What have been the three biggest news events during your lifetime and why?
196. If you could have three wishes, what would they be?
197. If you won \$10 million tomorrow, what would you do with the money?
198. What's the highest honour or award you've ever received?
199. What's the most memorable phone call you've ever received?
200. What's the best compliment you ever received?
201. What kinds of things bring you the most pleasure now? When you were a younger adult? A child?
202. What things frighten you now? What frightened you when you were a younger adult? A child?
203. What's the one thing you've always wanted but still don't have?
204. Do you feel differently about yourself now from how you felt when you were younger? How?
205. What do you think has stayed the same about you throughout life? What do you think has changed?
206. How would you describe yourself?

Over The Years?

207. What do you remember about your 20s? 30s? 40s? 50s? 60s? How was each age different from the one before it?
208. What life events stand out in your mind?
209. There are some ages we don't look forward to. What birthday were you least enthusiastic about? Why?
210. If you could go back to any age, which age would it be and why?
211. How do you feel now about growing old? What's the hardest thing about growing older? The best thing?
212. What were your parents like when they got older?
213. Did you have any expectations at points in your life about what growing older would be like for you?
214. How should a person prepare for old age? Is there anything you wish you'd done differently?
215. Do you think about the future and make plans? What are your concerns for the future?
216. If you live another 20-30 years, what will you do? Do you want to live another 20-30 years?
217. What do you look forward to now?

218. Can you tell us about the important people in your life?
219. If you could interview anyone from your life living or dead, but not a celebrity, who would it be and why?
220. What have been some of the happiest moments in your life? The saddest?
221. Who has been the biggest influence on your life? What lessons did that person or those people teach you?
222. Can you tell us about a moment when a person's kindness made a difference in your life?
223. Are there any funny stories your family talks about you that come to mind?
224. Are there any funny stories or memories or characters from your life that you want to tell us about?
225. What are you proudest of?
226. When in life have you felt most alone?
227. If you could hold on to memories from your life forever, which would they be?
228. How has your life been different than what you'd imagined?
229. Do you have any regrets?
230. Is there anything that you've never told us but want to tell us now?
231. What was mom/dad/parent like growing up?
232. Were your grandparents well-behaved?
233. What is the worst thing your grandparents ever did?
234. What were your parents like?
235. What were your grandparents like?
236. Can you tell us about your religious beliefs/spiritual beliefs? What is your religion?
237. How did you come to your faith? From your family? From a particular experience or set of experiences?
238. How has your faith evolved over time?
239. Have you experienced any miracles?
240. What was the most profound spiritual moment of your life?
241. Do you believe in God?
242. How have you experienced God (or a Higher Power) in your life?
243. Do you believe in the afterlife? What do you think it will be like?
244. When you meet God, what do you want to say?
245. Have there been moments that tested your faith? What were those challenges? How did they impact your faith?
246. Tell us about the first time you were aware that the criminal justice system existed.
247. Has your experience with the justice system changed you or your outlook? How?
248. How has the criminal justice system affected your life?
249. What do you wish others knew about the criminal justice system?
250. Were you ever arrested? If so, can you describe the circumstances and the outcome?

Lessons Learned?

251. What are the most important lessons you've learned in life?
252. What's your most cherished family tradition? Why is it important?
253. What have you liked best about your life so far? What's your happiest or proudest moment?
254. What do you feel have been the important successes in your life? The frustrations?
255. What's the most difficult thing that ever happened to you? How did you deal with it?
256. What do you think the turning points have been in your life? What were you like then?
257. Are there times of your life that you remember more vividly than others? Why?
258. What have been the most influential experiences in your life?
259. Describe a person or situation from your childhood that had a profound effect on the way you look at life.
260. If you were writing the story of your life, how would you divide it into chapters?
261. What, if anything, would you have done differently in your life?
262. What do you know now that you wish you'd known when you were young?
263. What have you thrown away in your life that you wish you hadn't?
264. What have you held on to that's important and why is it important? What "junk" have you held on to and why?

265. Over time, how have you changed the way you look at life/people?
266. What advice did your grandparents or parents give you that you remember best?
267. Do you have a philosophy of life? What's your best piece of advice for living?
268. If a young person came to you asking what's the most important thing for living a good life, what would you say?
269. How do you define a "good life" or a "successful life"?
270. Do you think a person needs to first overcome serious setbacks or challenges to be truly successful?
271. In what way is it important to know your limitations in your life or career?
272. If you had the power to solve one and only one problem in the world, what would it be and why?
273. What do you see as your place or purpose in life? How did you come to that conclusion?
274. Is there any wisdom you'd want to pass on to your future generations? What would you want them to know?
275. If you could talk to a younger version of yourself, what would you say?
276. If you were to give advice to us, members of our family, what would it be?
277. What have you learned from life? The most important things?

My Legacy?

278. If this was to be our very last conversation, is there anything you'd want to say to us?
279. What would you like your kids & grandkids to remember about you? How would you like to be remembered?
280. If you could write a message to each of your children, your grandchildren, your great grandchildren, and put it in a time capsule for them to read 20 years from now, what would you write to each? What are your hopes and dreams for each of them?

What You Leave Behind is Not What is Engraved in Stone Monuments, But What is Woven into the Lives of Others (Pericles)

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