

Planning Your Biography: Where to start...

Before you start, it may help to have a think about what you would like to talk about.

Ideas to think about to help you with your biography process:

At your beginnings: your birth; your family – immediate and extended, and the history of your family; your birthplace and the culture you were born into; special stories and events surrounding your birth.

Carry on in a chronological fashion in blocks of a few years at a time: birth– 5; 5-10; 12-20 and so on, exploring topics such as:

- Birth and birthplace
- Family
- Friends and relationships
- Education
- Work – family and your own work
- Health
- Values and beliefs
- Recreation – your hobbies and interests
- Marriage and children
- Who and what is important to you
- Homes and houses
- Major events, either nationally or internationally, in your lifetime

Story Starters:

Family

- How did your parents meet?
- When did they marry or become partners?
- Where did they live at that time?
- How many brothers and sisters do you have? Who are they?
- What qualities and skills have you inherited from your parents?

Childhood/Growing Up

- What is your earliest memory?
- What toys do you remember? What was your favourite?
- What games did you play?
- Did you play any sports?
- What do you remember about the house(s) you lived in as a child?
- What were things like for you and your family when you were a young?
- What did your family do for holidays?
- What special days were celebrated by your family?
- How were they celebrated by your family?
- What schools did you go to?

- How far was it to school? How did you get there?
- What is the most fun you remember from your school days?
- What are the worst times you remember from your school days?
- What chores did you have to do at home?
- What was happening in NZ/the world when you were growing up?
- Did any of your family ever go to war?

Adulthood

- When and how did you get your first job? What was it like to work?
- How did you get to work and home again? How long was your working day?
- What other jobs have you had?
- What gave you the most satisfaction/difficulty in your work?
- When did you leave your family home? How did you feel when you left home?
- What things were most important to you in those days?
- What were fashion and clothes like? Manners?
- Did you fall in love, get married or live with a partner?
- When and where did you meet your future partner?
- How did your families feel about your relationship?
- If you got married what was your wedding like?
- Where did you go for your honeymoon?
- Did you have children? Tell me about each of your children?
- How did you raise your children?
- How did you manage to feed and clothe your children?
- Were there any illnesses or economic hardships?
- What holidays did you take your family on?
- Where have you lived over the years?
- What was retirement like for you?

Looking Back

- What are some of the stories or jokes you told in your family?
- What are your best accomplishments?
- What one thing (object, person, idea, event) do you most prize now?
- What has been the most difficult time or event in your life?
- What are some of your happiest memories?
- Who have been your best friends over the years? How did you become friends?
- Are there any special sayings or proverbs that have helped you over the years?
- What are some of the milestones that stand out in your life as you look back?

You might like to impart words of wisdom to your family, tell them what you have learned throughout your life, or your wishes for their future.

Dignity Therapy

- Tell me about your life history: particularly those parts that you either remember most of or think are the most important
- When did you feel most alive?
- Are there specific things that you would want your family to know about you, and are there particular things that you would want them to remember?
- What are the most important roles you have played in life?
- Why were they so important to you, and what do you think you accomplished in these roles?
- What are your most important accomplishments, and what do you feel most proud of?
- Are there particular things that you feel still need to be said to your loved ones, or things that you would want to take the time to say once again?
- What are your hopes and dreams for loved ones?
What have you learned about life that you would want to pass on to your family members?
- Are there words or even instructions you would like to offer your family, to help them prepare for the future?
- In creating this permanent record, are there other things that you would like included?

Letters to my family/loved ones:

You may like to write letters to specific people rather than a book. Some of the things you might like to talk about are:

I have always appreciated...

What I particularly love about you is...

I hope you will forgive me for...

Sorry about...

Please don't worry about...

When you think about me I hope you will remember...

For your future what I wish for you is...

This is what I'm most proud of about you...

These are the best memories of when you were little... (kids)

These are the best memories about when we first met... (partner)

This is what makes me really happy about you...

This is what makes me laugh about you...

These are my hopes for your future...