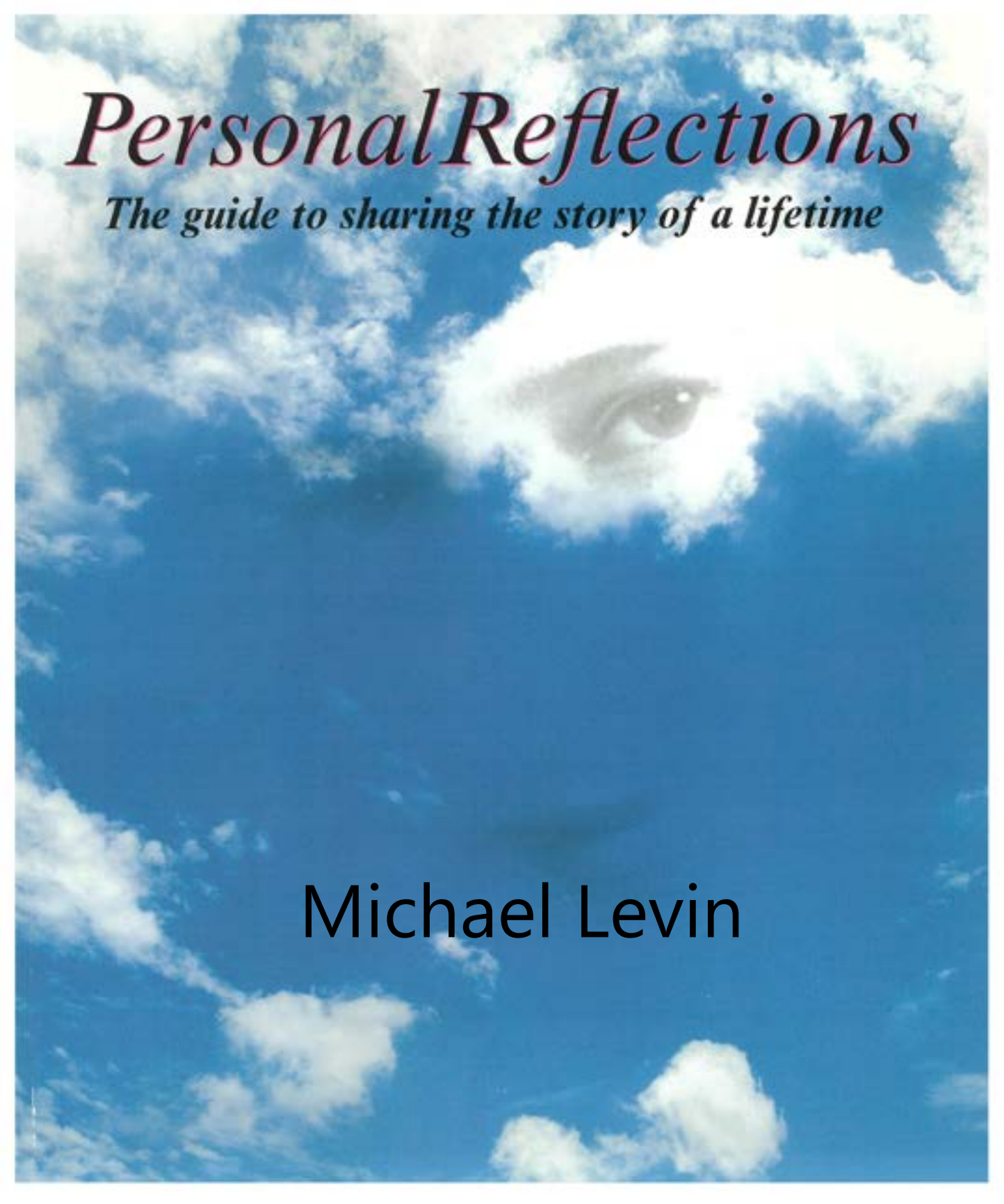




Personal Reflections

The guide to sharing the story of a lifetime

Michael Levin



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Dedication

PersonalReflections is dedicated to Lillian Ziff Levin, in honor of all those who have passed before us and those who will come after, in the hope that we will learn more about our past and illuminate the way into the future.

Acknowledgments

With deepest respect and admiration for Susan Hilary Grant, whose consistent devotion, trust and creativity has provided the impetus for the creation of PersonalReflections.

LATE-LIFE YEARS:

Words of Wisdom

This is the time to convey to your gene-cestors your words of wisdom. The interesting thing about conveying "words of wisdom" to friends and family alike when we are living, is that no one wants to listen. The truth is that once we're gone, our words of wisdom will be respected and taken to heart. So this truly is your time to be heard. Say what you think. Say what you feel. They all will listen, because these may be your last words of wisdom they will ever hear.

Respect the fact that your parents tried their best because ...

The most important quality we should try to cultivate while we are young is ...

When deciding which career you should consider ...

Being satisfied with your best is enough because ...

Respecting other people's beliefs is important because ...

When looking for that person you want be your life's companion, you should ...

If you want to remain happily married, you should ...

Be honest with yourself and others because ...

You can develop financial stability if you ...

The most important thing you can do to raise an emotionally healthy child is ...

Continue expressing, other words of wisdom.

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Introduction

**...GIVE ME ANYTHING TO REMEMBER YOU BY,
I KNOW HOW SHORT MEMORY IS.**

— ANNA AKHMATOVA

These words, written by Russian poet Anna Akhmatova, express the truth that without tangibles — birth and death certificates, photographs, souvenirs, these tokens of life — we will forget. Memory fails. So we write things down in lists and registers; we record a child's first birthday or a 50th wedding anniversary on video tape. We do this because we want to remember, because we know we will forget.

What was your great-grandmother like? Do you know how your grandparents met? What life was like for them? Have you asked your mother about her first job after college or how she felt when you were born? These moments are important. They are passkeys to the mysteries of your life. And who begs entrance? Family. Your children and the generations beyond will want to know how it was that they came to be; how their ancestors lived and what they learned by living.

We all have this desire. We ask again for the story of how our parents met. We want to know about our grandparents as children and those before them. Why? Because in knowing the members of our family, we hope to learn something about ourselves. Every member of a family, no matter how far removed, is connected not only by genetics, but by common experiences as well.

Family. Lineage. These words are nothing without the details of the lives of those individuals who give them meaning, make them real. Words. They give us the power to name things, to speak the details and lessons of a whole life. And images. They capture brief moments in time, moments that help us rub away at the fogged window of history so that we may see our past, and better understand who we are and who we can be.

PersonalReflections offers the power of words to record the memories of your family's life for eternity. With the help of PersonalReflections the images and words that evoke your history will be preserved for those who will want to remember for generations to come.

The PersonalReflections guide is designed to trigger distinct memories, of each individual's life story. Your parents or grandparents will recall their greatest achievements and regrets, what they've learned and everything they hope for the future. You will be able to enlighten the lives of future generations by allowing your loved ones to share their experiences.

Recording PersonalReflections is as self-rewarding as it is beneficial to those who will view it in the future. The process of remembering and talking about life is not only enjoyable, but therapeutic as well. The intimate and probing nature of the script allows the reliving of life, so that you, your parent or grandparent may once again recognize their accomplishments and diminish any regrets by lending their wisdom for generations to come. Many wait too long and must then endure a state of panic in a last-minute attempt to reach out to family and say the things they never got the chance to express. Don't wait until the memories are all gone.

PersonalReflections now provides every member of your family the opportunity to leave behind their own PersonalReflections. Think of it: a collection of the lives of your whole family transcribed and forever preserved. You could begin this tradition by giving PersonalReflections as a gift to your parents or grandparents and then recording your own for your grandchildren and their grandchildren. At a time when your parents or grandparents are remembering and evaluating their lives, PersonalReflections is a gift that says "Your life is important."

PersonalReflections exists because your family's history is important. And by recording your PersonalReflections, future generations can better understand who they are and where they came from. By recording the significant moments of the lives of your parents and grandparents, you create that which will someday be a door to the past. You are the keeper of the passkeys. To leave behind your PersonalReflections is to keep that door open forever.

PERSONALREFLECTIONS

User's Guide

PersonalReflections is your guide to creating the story of your life. Its purpose is to help you remember and talk about yourself, your family, your experiences and the lessons you've learned from living.

The format is quite simple and easy to use. There are two parts that form an alternating pattern to guide you through the stages of your life. (1) *Reflection* and (2) *Monologue*. Each part is explained in the paragraphs that follow.

Reflections encourage you to remember the events and people you are asked to talk about by the sentences and fragments in the *Monologue*. *Reflections* will help you focus on each chapter of your life.

Monologue will get you thinking about certain periods in your life and will help you begin the process of communicating your memories. Each *Monologue* contains sentence fragments that read as though someone was speaking. These sentence fragments are prompts that will help you talk about specific aspects of your life. To create your PersonalReflections, you can read these fragments out loud, finishing each thought with details from your life. For example, one fragment reads: "My earliest memory is ..." "I think I remember this particular (person, moment, place) because ..." These fragments are triggers that will help you communicate your own experiences, your life's important moments.

The *Monologue* does not consist of fragments only, but also more complete sentences that help the *Monologue* flow from one idea to the next. As you can see, within some of these sentences are words in parentheses; these serve as samples of the kind of response you might give in each situation. The words in parentheses are just possibilities to help you remember your experiences. You are in no way limited to the words provided and are encouraged to describe your memories as honestly and with as much detail as you can.

You may respond to any or all (or none) of the cues found under *Reflections* and *Monologue*. Again, the guide offers possibilities, options—ways to remember not only an event, but to dig for the meaning of each one and pass on its significance. You may find that some of the questions and prompts we suggest deal with topics you may not want to talk about. Say only what you are comfortable saying, skip over those issues you may find too delicate.

If you are intending to use the guide to recount your story to the lens of a video camera or a tape recorder, it will be helpful to review the guide and make preparations prior to the recording session. If you are intending to write your PersonalReflections with the aid of the software, a review of the guide may be helpful, but perhaps not necessary, since you will have more time to reflect before writing your reflections. It will be helpful in any case for you to have prepared photographs or other memorabilia which you want to include or just to refresh your memory of important people and places. You may also want to make notes, jot down names, dates and anything else which will help you speak easily about each subject. Keep your notes to a minimum (just the facts and a few key words), so that the *Monologue* remains conversational and has an air of spontaneity.

When recording your PersonalReflections, keep your audience in mind. Try to recall your most vivid memories as clearly as you can. Determine before you begin whether your Reflections are intended for children, adults or both. Allow your gene-cestors to see and understand you in your most honest and natural sense, but retain perspective concerning the age and maturity level of those who will be reading, listening or viewing your PersonalReflections.

The nature of PersonalReflections is guidance; its purpose is to help you talk about your life from an intuitive perspective so that your Reflections will reveal your deepest thoughts and will be full of insight for those who view or read it in the years to come. However, while you are reflecting, you should keep in mind that there are no correct or incorrect answers to the sentence fragments provided. The responses provided are merely offered as cues to jog your thought process. Let your reflections flow once initiated, so that you expound further after each reflection derived from the sentence fragments. Your Reflections should be in your own words. Try to remember that the process of recording your PersonalReflections is a process to be enjoyed. If there are portions of the monologue to which you simply don't want to respond, skip over them and move on to any other section. Take your time. You are not tied to a schedule.

Memory is a funny thing. Some people can remember more about their childhood than they can about their early twenties. Some can remember places, but not dates, others can remember faces, but not names. Some people simply perceive and remember more than others. It's not really important how much you remember or how intuitive your memories are.

Whatever you remember, no matter how little, is important and worth passing on. What may seem boring to you may be cherished beyond your wildest dreams by your gene-cestors.

When you complete writing your PersonalReflections, you may do one of the following:

1. You may use your PersonalReflections as a script to recount your Reflections to the lens of a video camera.
2. You may print the text and have it bound.
3. You may send your PersonalReflections either in video or text format to Levin Grant and Associates, Inc. along with related video clips and photographs so they may be integrated and packaged into your own CD-ROM. The cost of packaging will be predicated upon the length and number of video clips and photographs.

Note: To help explain the philosophy behind PersonalReflections, we have created the word "gene-cestors". Gene-cestors are family members who will be born in years to come, who may or may not be related to you genetically, but who will be connected to you through love and extended family, and who will come to know you through your PersonalReflections.

Opening Statement

In your opening statement, you are introducing yourself to your gene-cestors. It is an overview of you and your family, highlighting when and where each of you were born and where you are in your life right now. Conclude by explaining why you are creating your PersonalReflections. Consider as possibilities that you want to be remembered, you want to leave behind some evidence of your life so that your family will have a frame of reference concerning genetic traits and common experiences, you want your children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren to learn from your life, you want to keep your gene-cestors from repeating the same mistakes you've made.

My full name is ... I was named after ... I was born on (date of birth), in (city, state, country). Today's date is (date). My father's full name is ... He was born in (city, state, country) on (date). My mother's full name is ... She was born in (city, state, country) on (date). I have (number) of brothers and (number) of sisters. My oldest sibling's name is ... He/she was born in (city, state, country) on (date). *Continue to introduce your siblings in birth order, including their full names and dates of birth.*

I now live in (city, state, country) with (name of wife or companion in residence with you.) I have (number) of children. My oldest (son/daughter) is (age) and was born on (date) in (city, state, country). *Continue to introduce your children in birth order, including their full names and birthdays.*

Currently, I work as a(n) (occupation) or I am retired but worked as a(n) (occupation).

Note: If you have a family tree, incorporate it into your opening statement. If you are using a computer, scan the family tree.

I am sharing the story of my life because ...

REFLECTIONS:

Childhood

In this section, you will address your relationship with members of your family during your childhood, starting with your mother and father. To begin remembering your childhood relationships, it will help to remember your childhood home(s). Visualize yourself walking through the bedrooms, bathrooms and the room in your home where your family spent most of its time. It will also help to think about and describe your neighborhood and some of the children with whom you played as a child. As you reflect on your childhood relationships, you may decide, in order to recreate an accurate reflection, to describe not only the positive, nurturing memories, but also the negative aspects of your family relationships. The way your mother and father treated you and the things they said to you helped form your self-image. Elaboration on this subject will help future generations (your gene-cestors) learn from the positive things your parents did when raising you, as well as their mistakes.

CHILDHOOD:

Home and Neighborhood

I was born in (city, state, country). I grew up in (city, state, suburb, street). My childhood home was a (single story, two story home, apartment, etc.). As I think about my home, I remember it as (describe your home).

My favorite room in the house was the (room). I (did, didn't) share a bedroom with my brother/sister. Our neighborhood was a(n) (middle class, upper class, lower class) neighborhood. When I picture my childhood neighborhood, I think about the (beautiful trees, openness, etc.). Compared to the homes in which my friends lived, my home was (larger, smaller, prettier, etc.). *Describe other things which you remember about your neighborhood.*

The things I liked to do while playing in my neighborhood were (playing hopscotch, playing baseball, jumping rope, playing marbles, etc.).

The distance of my home from the school I attended was (how far). The school I attended was (name). I (walked, rode my bike, took the bus, etc.) to school. The school I attended was a (private, public) school.

My family and I (did, did not) have a pet. We had a (dog, cat, bird, etc.) named (what). I (loved, didn't like) this (pet) because ... *Continue to describe your pets.*

My favorite season of the year was (summer, fall, winter, spring). It was my favorite season because ... We (did, didn't) have severe (snow storms, tornadoes, floods, etc.). When I think back to my childhood home and neighborhood, I (wish, don't wish) that I could live in a neighborhood and home just like the one in which I grew up.

CHILDHOOD:

Relationship with Parents

My father:

My relationship with my father was (open, caring, distant, strained, etc.). He was (kind, gentle, abusive, difficult to talk to, controlling, etc.). As I think about the emotions I felt for my father, I know that I (loved, did not love, hated, etc.) him. My father made me feel (worthy, unworthy, useless, etc.). My father used to say that I was (smart, good, hard working, sensitive, handsome, pretty, lazy, stupid, bad, etc.). As a result of how my father treated me, I grew to be a person who ... The one thing I loved to do with my father was ... The most special experience I had with my father was ...

The most common relationship problem I had with my father was ... There (were, were not) any long-term consequences from this relationship problem. As I grew older, my relationship with my father became (closer, more distant, stayed the same, etc.). I feel that I (did, did not) get enough love from my father.

I feel that I would be a different person today if my father had/had not (done what). I think that the most important thing a father can do for his child is ... I think that it is important for a father to understand (what). I wish my father had (name the thing you wish he had done). I'm glad my father raised me to be

When I think about things my father did for me, I remember that my father (did what). My favorite bedtime story was ... My father (did, did not) teach me to ride a bike. My father taught me to (do what).

My father worked as a ... I was (proud of, ashamed of, etc.) him.

The happiest I can remember being when with my father was (when).

My mother:

My relationship with my mother was (open, caring, distant, strained, etc.). She was (kind, gentle, abusive, difficult to talk to, controlling, etc.). As I think about the emotions I felt for my mother, I know that I (loved, did not love, hated, etc.) her. My mother (emotionally abused me, made me feel worthy, etc.). My mother used to say that I was (smart, good, hard working, sensitive, handsome, pretty, lazy, stupid, bad, etc.). As a result of the way my mother treated me, I grew to be a person who ... The one thing I loved to do with my mother was (what). The most special experience I had with my mother was ... The most common relationship problem I had with my mother was ... There (were, were not) long-term consequences from this relationship problem. As I grew older, my relationship with my mother became (closer, more distant, stayed the same, etc.). *Describe those special things that your mother did for you.*

I would be a different person today if my mother (had, had not) ... The most important thing that a mother can do for her child is to It is important for a mother to understand (what). I wish my mother had (done what). I'm glad my mother raised me to be

My mother worked as a ... I was (proud of, ashamed of) her.

The happiest I can remember being with my mother was (when).

CHILDHOOD:

Relationship with Siblings

The names and dates of birth of my siblings are ... (list each one and state if they were older or younger than you). *Continue to answer each of the following questions as they relate to your brother or sister. Then start at the beginning of this section for your next sibling.*

My relationship with (name) was (warm and loving, competitive, hateful, fun, etc.). The thing I enjoyed doing with (name) was (what). The one thing that comes to mind when I think about growing up with (name) is ...

(Name) was the (smart one, athletic one, musically inclined one, etc.). The quality I most admired in (name) was ... One thing I disliked about (name) was ... If I could reinvent my relationship with (name) I would ... As we became older my relationship with (name) (changed, remained the same, etc.). (Name) now lives in (city, state). I see (name) (how often).

CHILDHOOD:

Relationship with Grandparents

The name, dates of birth and places of birth of my grandparents are ... (list each one and state with as much accuracy as possible the information requested.) *Continue to answer each of the foregoing questions separately, as they relate to each grandparent.*

My maternal grandfather and I (were close, had little contact, had no contact because he died while I was young, etc.).

Before my grandfather stopped working, he worked as a (what). He and my grandmother had (number) children. During my childhood, my grandfather lived in (city, state). I saw my grandfather (often, infrequently, etc.). As I reflect on his appearance now, I think that I (did, did not) resemble him. My grandfather played an important role in my life in that ... The thing that I liked to do best with him was (what). The one thing that I learned from my grandfather was ...

My favorite story about my grandfather is ... The thing I liked best about visiting my grandfather's house was ... The thing I liked best about my grandfather visiting my house was ... As I think about my grandfather now, I believe that my grandfather and I had characteristics that were (similar, dissimilar).

My grandfather's health began to deteriorate when he was (age). He died when he was (age). He died from (state the cause of his death).

Note: Continue reflecting about each of your other grandparents, as you have with your maternal grandfather.

CHILDHOOD:

Relationship with Aunts, Uncles and Cousins

The names of my father's brother(s) and sister(s) are ... (list each one) and state whether they were older or younger than your father, whether they were married, the name of their spouse, the names and ages of your cousins, and the city and state in which they lived. Continue to do the same for your mother's brother(s) and sister(s).

My favorite uncle was (name). He was related to me because he was my ... The things that were special about him were ... My favorite time with him was ... My relationship with him was important to me because ...

My favorite aunt was (name). She was related to me because she was my ... The things that were special about her were ... My favorite time with her was ... My relationship with her was important to me because ...

If your cousins played an important role in your life, answer the questions in the section above, as they relate to your cousins.

CHILDHOOD:

Parents' Relationship with Each Other

Describe your parents' relationship with each other. Think back to day-to-day life in your household. Hear them speaking to one another, picture them sharing glances, listen to their words, watch them hold each other.

As a child, I remember my parents' relationship as being (happy, loving, quarrelsome, etc.). I (how often) found them kissing and being affectionate with one another. My father treated my mother as though he (respected her, liked her, thought she was intelligent, didn't care about her opinions, thought she was inferior to him, etc.). My father was (sensitive, insensitive) to my mother's needs. My father (how often) helped my mother with the work around our house. I believe my father felt my mother was (his best friend, someone who was there to work for him, etc.).

My mother treated my father as though she (respected him, liked him, thought he was intelligent, thought he should be earning more money, etc.). My mother was (caring, attentive, uncaring, inattentive) to my father's needs. I felt as though my mother was (appreciative, unappreciative) of his efforts to support our family. I believe my mother felt my father was (her best friend, someone whom she was compelled to live with even though she was unhappy, etc.).

The most important thing that I learned from my parents' relationship is ...

CHILDHOOD:

Friendships

In this section, describe whether you made friends easily, whether you felt comfortable or awkward when you were with them, whether you were popular or whether you sometimes had to struggle to be accepted. Also describe the things you liked to do best when you were with your friends.

As a child, making friends for me (came easily, was difficult, etc.).
I was (popular, not very popular, accepted pretty much like most of the other kids, etc.). When I was with my friends I felt (comfortable, uncomfortable).
I (did, did not) have to struggle to be accepted.

My first friend was (name). I met him/her while I was (doing what).
The thing that I liked to do best with him/her was (what). Other childhood friends were (names). The things that I liked to do with my friends were ...
Most of the time, I would play with my friends at (my house, their house, the playground, etc.).

I (did, did not) join the (cub scouts, boy scouts, girl scouts, etc.).
I joined the boy scouts/girl scouts when I was (age). I left scouting when I was (how old). I attained the rank of (what). My father/mother (did, did not) participate in scouting with me. As a scout, the most important thing I learned was (what).

Describe an incident or story about you and one or more of your friends that you still laugh about or just think about once in a while.

REFLECTIONS:

Childhood Memories

Let your mind drift back as far as it will go. Picture your very first memory. Describe the significance of that memory, if any. Then reflect on your first traumatic experience. Describe the event in as much detail as you wish, including where you were and the people with whom you were involved. Describe also what impact that trauma had on your life.

CHILDHOOD:

My Earliest Memory

My earliest memory is (what). I think I remember this particular (person, moment, place, etc.) because ... I (have, have not) thought about this memory before. *Describe the significance of that memory, if any.*

CHILDHOOD:

My First Traumatic Experience

The (death of a friend or family member, divorce of my parents, loss of a friendship, etc.) was the first painful experience which greatly affected me. It happened when I was (age). When I think about my feelings when this happened, I now realize that I felt (angry, sad, abandoned, confused, etc.). I felt this way because ... The person who helped me deal with this crises was ... He/she helped me by (doing what). This experience was significant because ...

CHILDHOOD:

Grade School and Middle School

Describe your earliest feelings about school. Reflect on whether they were positive or negative and what impact those feelings may have had upon your performance in school. Reflect on your teachers, subjects or anything else which may have contributed to the way you felt. Describe the subjects in which you excelled and those in which you may have not done as well. Describe your favorite school-related activities.

I attended grade school in (city, state). The grade school I attended was (name of school). I attended middle school in (city, state). The middle school I attended was (name of school). My grade school and middle school experiences were (positive, negative). I (liked, did not like) school because ... I (did well, did not do well) in school. My parents were (supportive and helped me feel good about my performance, were not supportive and made me feel badly about myself, etc.). The subjects I liked best were ... For me, school was (easy, a struggle, etc.). I felt as though I (was as smart as, smarter than most of, not as smart as) my classmates. My first years of school (did not have an impact, did have a significant impact, etc.) on the balance of my years in school.

The extra curricular activities in which I participated were ... I (was, was not) in a school play. (If you were in a school play, what play was it, and what part did you play.)

I (was, was not) punished often for misbehaving in school. As I look back on those years now, I wish that I had (done what) or I'm glad that I (did what).

The most vivid memory I have of my grade and middle school years is ...

CHILDHOOD:

Family Vacations and Experiences

Reflect back to those memorable family vacations. Describe places you visited and the things you did. Describe other family outings such as family picnics, days at the beach and special experiences you and your family shared.

When I was about (age) my family and I went on vacation to (where). *Describe any vacation you'd like to describe and include your form of transportation, your accommodations, what you saw, people you met and things you did.* I think that the reason I remember this vacation so vividly is because ... Another time we went on vacation to ...

When I was (age) I attended summer camp for the first time. It was camp (name). Camp (was, was not) a sleep-away camp. When I was at camp I (did, did not) get homesick. I liked camp because ... I attended this camp for (how many years). Other camps I attended were ... My favorite activity at camp was (what). *Share camp experiences with as much or as little detail as you wish.*

I also remember that one time my family and I (did what). *Relate an experience which may not necessarily be a family vacation.*

The one thing I loved to do with my family was ...

REFLECTIONS:

Holidays and Celebrations

The holiday which I enjoyed the most when I was a child was ...
My family and I used to celebrate (holiday) by (doing what). One specific (holiday) I remember was (holiday) in (year). I remember this (holiday) because ...

When our family would have holiday celebrations, the members of our family who would be there would be (name the members of your family who would attend the celebration)

Our family (was, was not) a religious family. We (did, did not) attend services together. We (did, did not) say grace at mealtime. I (did, did not) say a prayer at bedtime. Religion (did, did not) play an important role during (Christmas, Chanukah, Easter, etc.).

Note: If religion has played a significant role in your life, spend as much time as you wish sharing your feelings and beliefs.

Continue this section by sharing memories of holiday celebrations during your childhood.

CHILDHOOD:

Feelings

My proudest moment as a child was ...

My most embarrassing moment as a child was when

As a child, my favorite activities were

The most exciting moment I had as a child was when ...

The one thing I did best was ...

As a child, I thought when I grew up I would become a ...

My sports hero was ... My favorite actor (actress) was ...

The one thing I just couldn't do was ...

I thought I was (pretty, cute, handsome, just average-looking, etc.)

My saddest moment as a child was when ...

The most fun I had with a friend was when ...

My most difficult moments as a child were ...

One funny little story that I'm sort of embarrassed to tell was when ...

Looking back, I would say that I had a (magical, average,
troubled, etc.) childhood.

If I could relive my childhood I would ...

CHILDHOOD:

Life-Altering Events

As I think about my childhood, I think that the one event which changed my life or had a significant impact on my life was ...

REFLECTIONS:

Adolescence

You're older now, entering adolescence. You are beginning to experience the years of rapid mental and physical growth. Remember discovering that the opposite sex was rather interesting. Remember awkward moments, added responsibilities, and trying to be all that your parents and teachers expected you to be. Describe how it felt trying to be that which you imagined you should be.

ADOLESCENCE:

Home and Neighborhood

Omit this section if you continued to live in your childhood home.

We lived at (street address) in (city, state, country). I lived in a(n) (single story home, two story home, apartment, etc.). My home was (how large). The room in which I spent most of my time was ... We lived in a(n) (lower class, middle class, upper class) neighborhood. When I picture my neighborhood, I think about the (beautiful trees, flowers, etc.). I used to wish my home was or I was happy that my home was ...

The distance of my home from the school I attended was (how far). The school I attended was (name). I (walked, was driven, rode my bike, etc.) to school. The school I attended was a (private, public) school.

ADOLESCENCE:

Relationship with Parents

During my adolescent years, my relationship with my mother and father was (better, worse, about the same) as compared to my younger years. The things which my parents expected me to do were ... I (did, did not) meet their expectations. My parents helped me to feel (worthy and lovable, unworthy and unlovable, etc.).

My mother (understood, did not understand) the changes I was experiencing as an adolescent. My father (did, did not) understand the changes I was experiencing. The primary topic about which my parents and I disagreed was ... When it came to the way I dressed and the way I wore my hair, my parents (didn't mind the way I looked, tried to enforce their will upon me, etc.). In general, as I look back at my adolescent years I think ...

ADOLESCENCE:

Parents' Relationship with Each Other

Omit this section if you perceive your parents' relationship as remaining consistent with their relationship during your childhood years.

During my adolescent years, I remember my parents' relationship as being (warm, loving, quarrelsome, etc.). My father treated my mother as though he (respected her, liked her, thought she was intelligent, didn't care about her opinions, thought she was inferior to him, etc.). My father was (sensitive, insensitive) to my mother's needs. My father (how often) helped my mother with the work around our house. I believe my father felt my mother was (his best friend, someone who was there to work for him, etc.).

My mother treated my father as though she (respected him, liked him, thought he was intelligent, thought he should be earning more money, etc.). My mother was (caring, attentive, uncaring, inattentive, etc.) to my father's needs. I felt as though my mother was (appreciative, unappreciative) of his efforts to support our family. I believe my mother felt my father was (her best friend, someone whom she was compelled to live with even though she was unhappy, etc.).

The most important thing that I learned from my parents' relationship is ...

REFLECTIONS:

School and Friendships

The transition from middle school to high school can be very tumultuous. Recall how you adapted to this transition, and how going through adolescence affected your performance in school. Describe the extra-curricular activities in which you participated and how you felt about those activities. Reflect about the teacher(s) who influenced you the most. Reflect on your friends and recall how your friendships may have changed while you were going through adolescence.

ADOLESCENCE:

Junior High School

As I moved from middle school to junior high school, I found myself (adjusting easily, having difficulty adjusting, etc.) to the more advanced school work. I remember that my classes were (easy, more difficult), and that I needed to study (the same amount, more than I had before, etc.). During adolescence, my grades in school averaged (A, B, C or D). I found myself being (satisfied, dissatisfied) with my performance. My parents expected me to (get high grades, just do my best, etc.). My teachers thought that I was working (up to my potential, not putting forth enough effort, etc.).

As to my home work, each day I went to school (prepared, generally prepared, frequently unprepared, etc.). I (was, was not) a class officer. When I think about how I felt about my school days, I remember that I was (happy and content, filled with anxiety, etc.). The teacher who influenced me the most during these years was ... *Explain how he/she influenced you and the impact that influence had on your life.*

ADOLESCENCE:

Extracurricular Activities

I (was, was not) involved in extra-curricular activities. I participated in (band, sports, the debate team, etc.). The activities in which I was most involved were ... My parents were (supportive, not supportive) of my participation in those activities. My closest friends (did, did not) participate in these extra-curricular activities with me. My involvement in these activities (did, did not) detract from my school work. Outside of school activities, I was involved with other activities such as (fraternity, sorority, ballet, music lessons, etc.). As I look back at my participation in both my school extra-curricular activities and other outside activities, I think these activities (were, were not) important to my growth. I believe this is true because ...

ADOLESCENCE:

Friendships

For the most part, during my adolescence, I (maintained, did not maintain) friendships from my younger years. My best friend during these years was (name). The things I liked to do with him/her were ... My parents (liked, did not like) him/her. When I think back to the best times I spent with (name), I remember that one time we ... *Continue to describe other memorable experiences you think may be of interest to or fun for your gene-cestors to hear.*

ADOLESCENCE:

Adolescent Changes

Mostly, I felt (confident, comfortable, uncomfortable, self-conscious, etc.) about myself. I (did, did not) worry about (acne, my relationship with the opposite sex, my changing body, etc.). My first boy/girlfriend was (name). I (was, was not) boy/girl crazy. I (thought about, did not think too much about, etc.) sex. I (did, did not) talk to my friends about my thoughts and feelings. As I look back on my behavior during this time I (do not regret, regret) some of my behavior. *If you do have regrets, explain why you feel this way.* In general, the years of my adolescence were (easy, difficult, etc.) for me.

The most important lesson I learned from the changes I experienced during adolescence was ...

ADOLESCENCE:

Feelings

The one thing about my appearance which bothered me the most was ...

During my adolescent years my self-esteem was ...

While I was in junior high school the music I liked best was ...

For me, dancing was ... The dances I liked the most were ...

During this time of my life I thought my parents were ...

When I was 13 years old I wanted to be (what age) because ...

ADOLESCENCE:

Life-Altering Events

As I look back at my life during my adolescent years, I believe that one event which changed or had a significant impact on my life was ...

ADOLESCENCE:

Hindsight

As I reflect on my life during my adolescent years, I believe that the changes I was going through were (normal, abnormal) changes. If I could reinvent the circumstances of those years and myself during that time of my life, I would ...

REFLECTIONS:

Teenage Years

Now you're a young adult, starting to form your own opinions, perhaps thinking about your life and the world around you for the first time. Remember what it was like to be at the beginning of your life and so full of energy. Remember what it was like to be a teenager when you were in high school. Reflect on how you dressed, the music you listened to and the dances you danced. Were these "glory" years for you or years filled with self-doubt? Share your feelings and thoughts with your gene-cestors who need to know about you, so they will know more about themselves.

TEENAGE YEARS:

Home and Neighborhood

We continued to live at (street address, city, state, country). *Omit the following section if your childhood home and neighborhood were unchanged.*

We lived in (city, state, suburb, street). I lived in a(n) (single story home, two story home, apartment, etc.). We lived in a(n) (middle class, upper class, lower class) neighborhood. I lived (how far) from school. The school I attended was (name). I (rode my bike, walked, took the bus, was

driven by my parents, etc.) to school. The school I attended was a (private, public) school. Most of my friends (did, did not) live in my neighborhood. I (was, was not) proud of my home. I (liked, did not like) to have friends come to my home.

TEENAGE YEARS:

Relationship with Parents

During these years, my relationship with my parents was (unchanged, tumultuous, improved from previous years, etc.). In general, they were (patient, lenient, trusting, controlling, abusive, etc.). My curfew was (what hour). The curfew was (self-imposed, imposed by my parents, etc.). My parents (expected, did not expect) me to be more responsible than I had been during my younger years. Chores they expected me to complete on a regular basis were ...

As to my school work, my parents (allowed me use my own judgment, regularly checked to see if was done, didn't care, etc.). My parents were (satisfied, dissatisfied, not concerned, etc.) with my grades in school. They (often, never, seldom, etc.) needed to go to school to discuss a school-related problem. As to my school performance, my parents helped me to feel (positive, negative) about myself. My parents (did, did not) attend school functions with me. They (did, did not) attend my school open houses. They (were, were not) supportive of my participation in extracurricular activities.

I (did, didn't) learn to drive a car during my teenage years. My (dad, mom, etc.) taught me how to drive a car. The car in which I learned to drive was a ... I (did, didn't) pass my driver's test on my first attempt. My first car was a ... (I, my parents, my parents and I, etc.) paid for my first car. It cost (how much). My parents (did, did not) trust me, when it came to driving a car.

The biggest relationship problem between me and my parents was ...

In retrospect, I believe we had this problem because I ... As I look back on my relationship with my parents while I was in high school, I now believe that my relationship with them was ...

My parents (did, did not) like my friends. The thing my parents liked best about my friends was ... The thing my parents liked least about my friends was ... I thought their attitude toward my friends was (old-fashioned, controlling, fair, etc.). I (did, didn't) respect their opinion when it came to my friends.

As I look back on my relationship with my parents during my teenage years, I wish now that I had (done what). As I look back on how my parents raised me during my teenage years, I wish that they had (done what).

TEENAGE YEARS:

High School

My years in high school were my (happiest, most difficult, etc.). I went to (name of high school) in (city, state). There were approximately (number) of students in my class. Academically, I was a(n) (excellent, average, motivated, etc.) student. School was (easy, boring, a struggle, etc.) for me. My high school average was (A, B, C or D). As I think about my study habits during my high school years, I (am happy that I was disciplined, regret that I wasn't more conscientious, etc.). I wish now that I had (done what) or I'm really glad that I (did what).

While in high school I participated in (name the sports, clubs, student council, etc.). *If you were an officer in any club, or the captain of a team, mention it now.* My favorite school-related activity was ... My parents (were, were not) supportive of my participation in activities. They (did, did not) watch me participate in (what). I (did, did not) attain the goals I set for myself. My outside school activities included ...

When I was in high school my best characteristic was ... My worst habit was ... I (was, was not) meticulous about my appearance. My bedroom (was, was not) generally clean.

When I was in high school I (was, was not) superstitious. I (did, did not) regularly read the newspaper. My favorite section was the (sports section, comics, etc.). I (did, didn't) doodle. I (did, didn't) bathe or shower everyday. I (did, didn't) smoke cigarettes. I (did, didn't) listen to music

a lot of the time. I (did, didn't) exercise regularly. I (did, didn't) read the bible. I (did, didn't) do crossword puzzles. *Mention other things which you did or didn't do while you were in high school.*

The one thing in which I excelled was (what). The one thing I tried to do but couldn't was (what). My self-esteem during my high school years was (high, low, etc.). My parents (helped me, did not help me) to feel good about myself.

Complete this section if you attended or considered attending college.

When I began to think about college, the factors I took into consideration were ... The college I most wanted to attend was ... I (did, did not) believe that my grades were good enough to attend that school. As I remember, my SAT scores were (number) in English and (number) in math. I (was, wasn't) satisfied with those scores. I applied to (number) colleges. They were ... I was accepted to (which colleges) As I'll explain later, I decided to attend (name of college) because ... At that time, I thought that I would major in ... I thought that I wanted to be a ... My parents were (excited for me, disappointed, etc.). I thought that I (would, would not) have sufficient money to attend college. I anticipated that I (would, would not) have to work. I anticipated that I (would, would not) need financial assistance.

If I only knew then, what I know now I would have (done what).

TEENAGE YEARS:

Relationship with Siblings

My relationship with my brother(s) and sister(s) during this time (was still good, was not good, remained pretty much the same, etc.). I (was, was not) jealous of my brother(s) or sister(s). My (brother, sister) (was, wasn't) jealous of me. The things I liked to do with my (brother(s), sister(s)) were (what). I (loved, didn't really feel affection, etc.) for my (brother, sister). I wish now that I had (done what) with my brother(s) and sister(s).

TEENAGE YEARS:

Friendships

My grade school friends (still remained my friends, were not close friends any longer, etc.) as I entered high school. I was interested in friends who (excelled in school, liked to dance, were boy crazy or girl crazy, played sports, etc.). I made friends while I was a member of (what clubs, organizations, etc.).

When it came to dancing, I (loved to, liked to, couldn't, etc.) dance. The person who taught me to dance was (who). My favorite kind of music was (what). I (loved to, liked to, didn't) listen to music. When I went to parties I (felt, didn't feel) comfortable. I (tried, didn't try) to be the center of attention.

During my high school years, I (did, didn't) drink beer at parties. My friends (did, didn't) drink beer. I (was, wasn't) influenced by peer pressure. In general, I would say that my friendships during my teenage years were ...

I thought I (was pretty, wasn't very pretty, was handsome, wasn't very handsome, etc.). I (liked, didn't like) my looks. The one thing I wish I could have changed about my looks was ... My most obvious physical change during high school was ... My friends generally were (pretty, good looking, average-looking, etc.). It (was, wasn't) important how my friends looked or dressed.

My favorite thing to do with my friends was ... On weekends we would ... I (liked, didn't like) to have my friends come to my house. I was (proud, ashamed, etc.) of my home. My parents (liked, didn't like) my choice of friends. My best friend was ... The thing I liked best about (her/him) was ... My first high school date was ... My most serious high school relationship was with ... As I look back on that relationship, I realize that it was ... As far as teenage relationships are concerned, I think it's important to remember (what).

TEENAGE YEARS:

Jobs

While in high school, I found that I (did, didn't) need to work. My parents (were, were not) able to give me spending money. My first job was ... Other jobs I had while in high school were ... I worked about (how many) hours per week, while school was in session. During the summer, I worked about (how many) hours per week. I (earned, did not earn) enough money to provide all of my spending money. I (was, was not) able to do all the things I wanted to do, without asking my parents for money. My favorite job during my teenage years was ...

TEENAGE YEARS:

Summer Vacations

My family and I (did, did not, etc.) go on vacations during the summer. My most memorable vacation, with my family was the one we took to ... I (loved, didn't like) this vacation because ... Other family vacations we took were to ...

I (was, was not) able to go on a vacation by myself with my friends during my teenage years. My most memorable vacation with my friends was the one I took to ... I remember that vacation because I/we ... I was on this vacation for (length of time). Another time I went with (name) to ... I remember that vacation because ...

TEENAGE YEARS:

Feelings

My proudest moment as a teenager was when ...

As a teenager, the one thing I did best was ...

My saddest moment as a teenager was when ...

My lucky break came when I ...

My biggest problem was ...

During my teenage years, one constant concern of mine was ...

Goals which I set for myself as a teenager were ...

During my teenage years, my worst habits were ...

During my teenage years, my best traits were ...

Those people who I loved the most were ...

My thoughts about religion were ...

One story which I'm a little embarrassed to relate is ...

Overall, I'd consider my teenage years to be (magical, average,
troubled, etc.)

If I could relive my teenage years, I would ...

TEENAGE YEARS:

Summer after High School

The summer after high school (was the greatest, nothing special, etc.). I felt (free, worried, grown up, etc.) As I began looking forward to the next stage of my life, I was feeling ...

TEENAGE YEARS:

Life-Altering Events

As I think about my teenage years, I think that the one event which changed my life or had a significant impact on my life was ...

Note: You're doing great. The story of your life is unfolding. Hopefully, communicating your reflections is becoming easier now that you are getting used to the concept of sharing your Personal Reflections with your gene-cestors. The next section is designed for those who entered the work force after high school and did not attend college. If you attended college, please skip to the section entitled, Life in College.

REFLECTIONS:

Young Adulthood

You have now finished high school or perhaps left school without finishing and must begin your life as a young adult. In this section, you will think about how your life changed and what you were feeling during this profound transition. If you moved from your parents' home, reflect on how it felt to be on your own for the first time. Remember your thoughts as they related to your decision of whether to go to college or begin your career. Remember the conversations you had with your parents when you were deciding to move out their home. Remember how it felt to be supporting yourself for the first time.

YOUNG ADULTHOOD:

Life after High School

After high school I decided to (begin work, move from my parents' home, join the military, travel, etc.). The decision I had to make about the next stage of my life was (an easy one to make, difficult to make, etc.). I made this decision (with the help of my parents, with the help of a friend, by myself, etc.). I decided not to go to college because ...

My parents wanted me to (finish high school, go to college, go into the military, go to work, etc.). My relationship with my parents after I made my decision (remained positive, was still poor, changed for the better, changed for the worse, etc.). I moved out of my parents' home approximately (how long) after I finished high school.

The day I left my parents' house to begin the next stage of my life, I felt (excited, nervous, etc.). As it turned out, living on my own was (liberating, frightening, a lot of fun, etc.). After moving out, my lifestyle (changed dramatically, changed a little, was about the same, etc.). My parents treated me as though I was (more of an adult, still a child, etc.). I felt like I was (an adult, still a child, becoming an adult, etc.). I felt this way because ...

YOUNG ADULthood:

Employment

My first job after high school was ... I accepted this job because ... I got this job by (doing what). I believed that this job was (going to be my career profession, just a stepping stone, only to pay my expenses for a while, etc.). As I remember, I was earning (how much money). The amount I was earning was (sufficient to live comfortably, just barely enough to get by, etc.). My job was (hard work, exciting, boring, etc.). I was (proud, ashamed, etc.) of what I did to earn a living. I thought that I should (continue working at this job, go back to school, change jobs, etc.). My parents were

(supportive, negative, etc.). They made me feel as though I ... I worked at this job for (how long). I left that job because I (found a better job, went back to school, got fired, etc.). Other jobs which I had before I started my career as a (profession) were ...

Looking back, I think (I made the right decisions, should have listened to my parents, made the wrong decisions, etc.). In retrospect, I wish that I had (done what).

YOUNG ADULthood:

Life in College

In the fall of (year), I became a freshman at (name of college) which is located in (place). My first day of college I felt (excited, overwhelmed, scared, etc.). I thought that I would find college courses (easy, hard, much like high school courses, etc.). My freshman year courses were ... I (was, was not) afraid of flunking out of college. I (had, did not have) confidence in my ability to succeed. As I remember, my first year in college my grade point average was (average). I (was, was not) proud of my work. I felt that I (could have, could not have) done better. I (was, was not) looking forward to my sophomore year.

My first year in college I lived (in a dormitory, in an apartment, with my parents, etc.). I was (happy, not happy) with my living arrangements. I found that living on my own was (liberating, frightening, etc.). I found college life (stimulating, boring, the same as high school, exciting, etc.).

I had (many, a few, a couple of) good friends. My best friends were ... I (did, did not) join a fraternity or sorority. Since I left college, I (have, have not) maintained my college friendships.

Tell a story or two which your gene-cestors may find interesting or enjoyable about college life.

My first year in college I (did not work, worked as a ...). My spending money came from ... My parents (were, were not) able to pay for my college room and board, tuition and expenses. I found myself (not in need of, always needing) more money. I found it (easy, difficult) to budget my own money. As I look back now, I consider myself to have been (responsible, irresponsible). My outside activities included (being a member of clubs, participating in fraternity or intramural sports, etc.). I (was, was not) an officer or leader of (club, fraternity, sorority, etc.). During this time of my life, I excelled at (what). I struggled with (what). My self-esteem was high, low, etc.).

In my (freshman, sophomore, junior, senior) year, I decided to major in (pre-medicine, pre-law, teaching, social science, etc.). I decided that this should be my major because of my desire to be (what). (Social pressure, my parents' wishes, my wish to make a lot of money, etc.) was the primary factor I took into consideration when making my decision. I (did, did not) think that I would really become a (profession).

I (did, did not) graduate from college. My grade point average was (grade point average). I consider my years in college to be (good ones, productive, unproductive, etc.). I wish now that I had (done what). I believe that college (did, didn't) prepare me for the next stage of my life. I believe that college (did, did not) prepare me to earn a living. I do believe, however,

that college is (important, not important) because it ... I consider my college years to be (a high point, a low point, just another part, etc.) of my life.

As I look back at my high school years, as they relate to my (achievements, lack of achievement) in college, I think that I (utilized my time well, wasted my high school years, did as well as I could have expected, etc.). I did receive my degree in ... or I did not receive my degree, and still have (number of hours) to graduate college. I attended college for (number) of years. I (did, did not) continue my education by (doing what).

During my college years, I (did, did not) fall in love. My most meaningful relationship was with ... As I think back to this relationship now, I think that I (was really in love, wasn't really in love, etc.). My favorite memory of the time I spent with (name) was when we ...

Note: If you attended graduate school, continue by reflecting on those years.

YOUNG ADULTHOOD:

Friendships

After I left college, I (continued to maintain, did not maintain) my college friendships. My college friends who I kept in touch with were (who). Most of my new friends were people I met (how). When I was with my friends, we (did what). My closest friend was (name). I met him/her while I was ... The reason I believe we became such close friends was ... I think my best friends were the ones I made (during high school and grade school, after high school).

YOUNG ADULthood:

Physical Fitness and Health

As a young adult, I (did, didn't) concentrate on maintaining good physical fitness. I exercised (daily, a few times a week, infrequently, etc.). I exercised by (walking, running, working out, playing sports, dancing, etc.). I was in (excellent, good, fair, poor) physical condition. I was in the best condition of my life when I was (how old).

As a young adult, my overall health was (excellent, good, fair, poor). I (did, did not) contract colds frequently. I (did, didn't) go to the doctor for physical examinations. One time I was really ill was (when). I (was, was not) hospitalized for this illness. *If you had a chronic physical ailment, discuss that ailment now; also, this might be a good place to mention any operations performed on you.*

In general, as a young adult, I (was, was not) concerned about controlling my weight. I weighed about (how much). I (frequently, infrequently, never) had to diet. As I look back at the foods I ate, I believe that my food intake was (healthy, unhealthy).

I (was, was not) allergic to any particular food. I (was, was not) allergic to any medications. *If you have had an allergic reaction to some form of medication or food, mention that reaction now.*

As a young adult, I (did, did not) smoke cigarettes. I (did, did not) drink alcohol. I (did, did not) abuse drugs. *If you care to discuss in greater detail any abuse of cigarettes, alcohol or drugs, please do so. Your experience and viewpoint may be helpful to your gene-cestors.*

YOUNG ADULthood:

Employment after College

My first job after college was working as a (what). It took me about (how long) to obtain that job. I (did, didn't) believe that this job would become a career. My starting income was (how much). I was (happy with, dissatisfied with, ambivalent about) this job. I remained employed in this position for (how long). I had reached the level of (what job status) by the time I left this employment. My income had reached (how much). I left this job (voluntarily, because I was terminated, because I was laid off). The one thing I liked best about this job was ... The things I didn't like were ... At the time, I looked at this job as a (stepping stone, just a job to pay my expenses, the start of my career, etc.). In retrospect, this job was (what).

Note: Continue reflecting on each of your jobs, after this one, as you have herein. Do not go beyond those jobs you had after you reached thirty years of age.

YOUNG ADULthood:

Financial Matters

The amount of money I earned as a young adult was (always, never, sometimes) sufficient to meet my monthly needs. I (always, never, etc.) was able to stay within my budget. In retrospect, I would say that as to the financial part of my life, during my young adulthood I was (always, never, sometimes) disciplined.

I (did, did not) buy a car. My first car as a young adult was a (make of car). It was a (new, used) car. Other cars I owned as a young adult were (cars). I (always, sometimes, never) purchased a car by financing it.

The first place I lived when I started my first job, was a(n) (home, apartment, my parents' home, etc.).

As a young adult, I (did, did not) buy a home. The first home I purchased was located at (address, city, state, country). It was a (single-story, two-story) home. It had (how many bedrooms and bathrooms). It cost (how much money). My down payment came from (money saved, a gift, an inheritance, a loan, etc.). My monthly payments were (how much). I lived in this home with (who). *Continue to describe the neighborhood, front and back yards, and anything else you'd like to describe about the home.* I lived in this home for (how long). I moved from this home because ... During the time I lived in this home, my life was (happy, not happy, etc.).

Note: Continue describing homes you purchased or lived in as a young adult.

As a young adult, I (was, wasn't) able to take vacations. I (was, wasn't) able to buy nice clothes. I (was, wasn't) able to buy nice furniture and other things for my home. My most prized material acquisition was ...

As a young adulthood, I (did become, never became) deeply in debt. I (did lose, never lost) money through an investment. I (did generate, never generated) profits from investments. I (did consider, never considered) filing for bankruptcy. I filed for bankruptcy protection in (year). My debt was incurred because I ...

An important lesson I learned about financial responsibility is (what).

YOUNG ADULthood:

Family

My (mother, father, parents) lived in (city, state, country), while I lived in (city, state, county).

My siblings (names) lived in (city, state, country). I spent (a lot, a little, etc.) time with members of my family. *Briefly describe your relationship with each member of your family. If any member of your family became estranged from you or one another or perhaps passed away, this can be the place to reflect on those circumstances.*

Note: The section in which you will reflect on your spouse and children follows in Adulthood.

YOUNG ADULthood:

Travels

I (did, did not) travel to other states or other countries. *If you did travel continue with this section.* I traveled (frequently, once in a while, infrequently) as a young adult. I traveled to (cities, states, countries). During my travels I (thought, never thought) that I would like to move to those places. I traveled with (wife/husband, friends, children, etc.). My favorite travel experience was when I traveled to ... From my travels I learned ...

YOUNG ADULthood:

Feelings

My proudest moment was when I ...

My saddest moment was ...

The most fun I had as a young adult was when ...

My lucky break came when I ...

The biggest problem I had to overcome was ...

My biggest mistake was ...

The most important lesson I learned as a young adult was ...

If I could reinvent my young adulthood years, I would ...

YOUNG ADULthood:

Life-Altering Events

As I look back on my life as a young adult, I think an event, situation or relationship that changed or may have changed the entire course of my life was ...

REFLECTIONS:

Adulthood

In this section, you'll reflect on meeting and marrying your spouse. Describe your feelings when you met him or her. Mention others with whom you may have maintained a close relationship, and what impact that relationship may have had on your life.

In this section also, reflect on your thought process as you searched for a career if you hadn't already established a career. Were you primarily concerned with earning as much money as possible or were you more interested in working in a particular profession? Did you ever attempt to start your own business? What kind of business was it? Was it successful? Reflect on that career in which you worked most of your life.

Finally, remember those you loved who passed away during this period of your life.

ADULTHOOD:

Employment and Career

I worked as a(n) (occupation). I (did, did not) take college courses or other classes to prepare myself for this work. My starting income was ... I was able to get this job by (doing what). I (was, was not) thinking about this job as my career. I (was, wasn't) able to pay my living expenses from the money I was earning. I was (proud, ashamed, etc.) of what I did for a living. I had that job for (how long). I left because I (was terminated, was laid off, found a better job, etc.). The thing I liked best about this job was ... The thing I liked least about this job was ... From this job, I learned (what). Looking back, I (think I did the right thing by accepting this job, should not have taken this job, etc.). I think that this job (was, could have been, wasn't, etc.) a great opportunity for me. I believe that this job prepared me to (do what). When I left this job, I was earning (how much money).

Note: Continue completing this paragraph for each of your next jobs. If along the way you either attempted to start a business of your own or did in fact start a business on your own or in partnership with another person or other people complete the following paragraph(s).

In (year) I decided that I wanted to (buy, start) a business. I made this decision because I felt ... I (was, was not) married at this time. I felt that I could (increase my income, finally become my own boss, etc.). I had (how much money) to invest in this business and I felt that this (would, would not) be enough money. I decided to (enter into a partnership with

others, not to enter into a partnership with others) because ... I (did, did not) know a lot about this business. I (bought, started) this (business) in (month, year).

My experience as owner of this business was (rewarding, a financial disaster, exhausting, etc.). I found that I was working (shorter hours, longer hours, about the same) than when I was employed by someone else. I found that I was earning (more, less, about the same, etc.) than in previous years. I found that I (did, didn't) complete sufficient research about the business before I (purchased, started) it. I found that I (did, did not) have sufficient capital to fund this business. I (did, did not) make a satisfactory return on my investment. I think the advice I would give to my gene-cestors who are thinking about starting their own business would be to (do what).

The (job, career) which I consider to be my best (job, career) was ... I feel this way because ... If I could make career choices once again, I would (do what). I think that everyone, when planning their career should ...

ADULTHOOD:

Military

I served in the (branch, division, etc.) of the military from (time period). I was drafted or I enlisted when I was (age) years of age. I (wanted, did not want) to serve in the military. The reason I felt this way was because ...

I remember military life as being (terrifying, exciting, depressing, traumatic, etc.). I felt this way because ... I (was, was not) in combat. *If you were in combat, reflect on where you served, some battles in which you were engaged and how the fear of your life being in danger affected you.* I remember that I (wanted, did not want) to be in combat because ... The best thing about being in the service for me was ... While the worst thing was ...

While in the (branch of the service) I achieved the rank of (what rank). Achieving the rank of (rank) was an (accomplishment, disappointment) for me. When I first went into the service I thought that I could achieve the rank of (rank).

Serving in the (branch of service) made me (stronger, more independent, cynical, etc.). When I left the service my physical condition was (better, the same, worse, etc.) than when I entered the service.

The friendships I made while I was in the service have (lasted, not lasted). The last time I saw someone who I served with was ...

I (was, was not) wounded while I was in the service. *If you were wounded, explain when and where you were wounded and what effect that wound has had on your life.* I think that war is ... If I had it to do all over again, I (would join the military again, would do everything possible to stay out of the military) because ...

The most important benefit I received from the military was ... The most detrimental effect the military had on me was ...

ADULTHOOD:

Military Spouse

My (husband, wife) served in (branch, division, etc.) of the military from (time period). He/she was (drafted) or he/she (enlisted) in the military. I (did, did not) want him/her to serve in the military.

While (name of spouse) was in the military, I was (terrified, not concerned, etc.) with his/her well being. (Name of spouse) was/was not in combat. *If your spouse was in combat, reflect on where he/she served and how the fear of your spouse losing their life affected you.*

The best thing for me while (name) was in the military was ...
The worst thing for me while (name) was in the military was ... (Name) achieved the rank of (rank) while he/she was in the service. While (name) was serving in the military, I became (stronger, more independent, cynical, etc.). While he/she was in the service, I kept myself busy by (doing what). (Name) (was, was not ever) in combat. *If he/she was in combat and wounded, explain when and where that wound occurred and the affect that wound had on you and your spouse's life.*

The most significant aspect for me of (name) being in the military was ...

ADULTHOOD:

Marriage

Remember the day you met your future spouse. Was it love at first sight, or did it take time for you to realize that this was the person with whom you wanted to share your life? Think about your first date. Reflect on what you were feeling. Were you looking for someone to marry or were you just dating to date? Who popped the question? Think back to this very special time in your life and have fun remembering and sharing these moments.

I first met (name of your spouse) in (month, year). I lived in (city, country). I met (name) when I was (how old). When I first saw him/her, I thought (what). I (was, was not) immediately attracted to (name). It was (how long) before I realized that my relationship with (name) was special. One thing which attracted me to (name) was ...

I took (name) to meet my family after we had dated for (how long). Their first reaction to him/her was ... It was (how long) before my family truly accepted (name).

(Name) and I were engaged in (month, year). I asked (name) to marry me when we were (doing what) or (name) asked me to marry him when we were (doing what). *Share any special circumstances of the moment you became engaged to be married.*

We decided to be married on (day, month, year) in (church, temple, etc.) in (city, state). As that day approached I felt as though I (had, had not) made the right decision. I talked about my feelings with (who). The deci-

sion to go forward with our marriage was (an easy one, a hard one). At the time, I was thinking that my decision was a (correct one, a wrong one, etc.). On our wedding day my (maid and matron of honor, best man) was ... We had (how many) guests at our wedding. The most special present we received was (what). One thing I remember as being special about that day is (what). In retrospect, I know now that I made the (right, wrong) decision by marrying (name).

My marriage to (name) is/was one filled with (love, respect, caring and friendship, a lack of respect, love, etc.). (Name) clearly (is/was my best friend, is/was not my best friend). We (did or do, did not or do not) share our deepest feelings and thoughts with one another. We really (were or are, were not or are not) compatible in almost every way. We (do or did, don't or did not) spend most of our free time together. As I think about (name), in general, I would describe our relationship as ...

My happiest moments with (name) were/are when we ...

The strongest part of our relationship was/is ... The weakest part of our relationship was/is ... The most fun I had with (name) was (when). My saddest moment with (name) was (when). The biggest problem we have/had in our relationship is/was ... The reason that (name) and I get/got along so well is because ...

Advice I would offer my gene-cestors who may eventually choose a mate is ...

ADULTHOOD:

Separation and Divorce

In (year) (name) and I separated. The primary reason we decided to separate is (what).

Separation from (name) was something that I (wanted, did not want) to happen. We had not been getting along for (how long). I (was, was not) involved with someone else. (Name) (was, was not) involved with someone else. We (did, did not) have children. The hardest part of our separation was the part related to ...

It was (how long) after we separated that (who) filed for divorce. The petition for dissolution of our marriage was filed in (county, state). Our marriage was dissolved on (date). Legal custody of our child(ren) was awarded as (sole to me, sole to him/her, joint). Physical custody of our child(ren) was awarded as (primary to me, primary to him/her, joint). Our child(ren) (adjusted well, did not adjust well) to the separation and the divorce. I (adjusted well, did not adjust well) to the separation and the divorce. It took me (how long) to begin to feel better about my life as a single person. I (did, did not) seek help from professionals or others. The person who helped me the most during this time was ... I (did, did not) have sufficient money with which to support myself. I (did, did not) have a lot of debt.

If one of my gene-cestors must experience a dissolution of their marriage, the advice I would give to them is ... In retrospect, I wish that I had ... In retrospect, I wish that I had not ...

Note: If you remarried, please return to the section on Marriage and complete that section once again. Similarly, if your next marriage ended in dissolution, please complete this section again.

ADULTHOOD:

Parenthood

My husband/wife (name) and I had our first child (name) on (date, year). He/she was born at (time) in the (morning, afternoon, evening). We (had, had not) planned to have a child. I (was, was not) ready and excited to have a baby. I wanted to have a (girl, boy, healthy child, it didn't matter). My (son, daughter) was born in (hospital) in (city, state, country). He/she weighed (how much) at birth. The delivery (was, was not) easy. There (were, were not) complications during childbirth. *If there were complications, explain if you would like to.* I/my wife stayed in the hospital for (number) of days. My husband/wife (name) (was, was not) excited to have this child. He/she wanted the child to be a (boy, girl, healthy child, it didn't matter). I thought our (son, daughter) looked like (me, my husband, my wife). He/she (was, was not) a healthy child. *If your child was not healthy, if you care to explain further, please do.* When I first saw (child's name) I felt (what). I (did, did not) have

experience handling a baby. It (was, was not) what I expected it to be. I (did, didn't) realize that it would be a lot of work. I (was, was not) comfortable changing diapers and feeding the baby. I (was, was not) comfortable when (child's name) first came home from the hospital.

I (loved, didn't like) being a (mother, father). I (was, was not) patient with our baby. The things I liked to do with (him, her) were (what). The things I didn't like to do with (him, her) were (what). (Spouse's name) (was, was not) a wonderful (father, mother). He/she (was, was not) patient, loving and sensitive. Our relationship during this time of our life (flourished, was about the same, was not as good as it had been, etc.).

As (child's name) became older, I (became a better parent, continued to be patient and loving, I became less tolerant, etc.). The things I liked to do with (him, her) were ... The things I didn't like to do with (him, her) were ... I (did, didn't) read books to (child's name). I (did, didn't) attend (child's name) school activities and other things in which (child's name) was involved. I (did, didn't) show (child's name) a lot of affection. I (did, didn't) patiently answer questions. I (did, didn't) yell at (child's name). I (did, didn't) hit my (son, daughter).

I (believe, do not believe) that I was a good (father, mother). I believe that (I could have been a better parent, could not have been a better parent, etc.). I wish that I had (done what). I wish that I had not (done what). My relationship with (child's name) is (wonderful, good, fair, not good). I believe that my relationship is like that because (why). I am (proud, not proud) of my parenting skills and the way I raised (child's name).

My scariest moment as a parent was ... The hardest decision I ever had to make as a parent was ... The best part of being a parent for me was ... If I could reinvent myself as the parent of (child's name) I would ...

Note: Share your thoughts about parenting, so your gene-cestors may benefit from your beliefs and experiences.

If you had more than one child, please return to the beginning of this section and complete it for each of your children.

ADULTHOOD:

Other Love Relationships

Although I didn't marry (name), I (was, thought I was) in love with him/her. As I think about (name) now, I am (glad, sorry) that I didn't marry him/her. I feel this way because ... I dated (name) for (how long). We dated from (when to when). During the time I dated him/her I was living in (city, state). I (have, have not) fantasized about what my life would have been like, had I married (name). The reason I didn't marry (name) was ...

Note: Repeat this paragraph for others with whom you had a special relationship.

ADULTHOOD:

Friendships

My best friends during this time of my life were (names). I still keep in touch with (names). The best time I had with (name) was when we ... Interestingly, I always found myself making friends with people who ... I always preferred to have (few but good friends, a lot of friends who I spent time with infrequently, etc.).

ADULTHOOD:

Physical Fitness and Health

Note: If your physical condition changed little from your young adult years, you may want to skip over this section.

As an adult my physical fitness (was, was not) important to me. I (did, didn't) concentrate on maintaining good physical fitness. I exercised (daily, a few times a week, infrequently, etc.).

I exercised by (walking, running, working out, playing sports, dancing, etc.). I considered myself to be in (excellent, good, fair, poor) physical condition. The time I believe I was in the best condition of my life as an adult, was when I was (age).

As an adult, my overall health was (excellent, good, fair, poor). I (did, did not) contract colds frequently. I (did, didn't) go to the doctor for physical examinations. The one time I remember that I was really ill was ... I (was, was not) hospitalized for this illness. *If you had a chronic physical ailment, discuss that ailment now; also, this might be a good place to mention operations performed on you.*

As an adult, I (was, was not) concerned about controlling my weight. I weighed about (how much). I (frequently, infrequently, never) had to diet. My eating habits (were, were not) normal. As I look back on the foods I ate as an adult, I believe that my food intake was (healthy, unhealthy).

As an adult, I (was, was not) allergic to any particular food. As an adult, I (was, was not) allergic to any medications. *If you have had an allergic reaction to some form of medication, or food, discuss that reaction now.*

ADULTHOOD:

Hobbies and Interests

During my leisure time, I spent most of my time doing (what). I (did, didn't) enjoy playing sports. The sport I played the most was ... I really liked to watch (what) on television. I (did, didn't) collected (stamps, coins, dolls, etc.). The (thing) I collected I would find by ... My collection is now (where). I (did, didn't) like to dance. I danced (how frequently). Other things which I liked to do were ... *Continue to describe other hobbies or interests.*

ADULTHOOD:

Travels

As an adult I (did, did not) travel to other states or other countries. *If you did travel, continue with this section.* I traveled (frequently, once in a while, infrequently) as an adult. I visited (cities, states, countries). I traveled with my (wife/husband, friends, children, etc.). My favorite travel experience was when I traveled to ... From my travels I learned (what).

ADULTHOOD:

Financial Matters

My income was (sufficient, not sufficient) to invest in (real estate, gold, stocks, bonds, etc.).

Note: If you feel comfortable speaking about your investments, please do so. You may address anything related to those investments including how much you invested, and your profit or losses.

I (was, was not) able to purchase a home. Other homes which I purchased besides the first home referred to in my young adult section were ... I/we put (how much) down on the purchase price and I/we financed (how much). *Describe each home purchased and whether or not you were married at the time.*

Note: If you care to relate the financial details of those purchases, you may do so.

Throughout my adult life, I (was, was not) in debt. I (always, sometimes, infrequently, etc.) managed to live within my means. I (always, rarely, most of the time, etc.) earned sufficient income to live comfortably. I (always, most of the time, rarely, etc.) was able to purchase things that I wanted to purchase. My monthly income averaged (how much). My monthly expenses during my adulthood averaged (how much). I (often, rarely, once in a while) used charge cards and other forms of credit when making purchases.

Note: Complete the following section if applicable.

In (year) I was forced to file for bankruptcy. I (was, wasn't) able to rebound from this financial setback. The reason I was embroiled in this financial crises was ... Afterwards, my life changed in that ... Other financial setbacks which affected my life were those related to (loss relating to fire, theft, or other disasters, etc. explain.)

ADULTHOOD:

Deaths of Family and Friends

In (year) my (mother, father, brother, sister, other relative, friend) died. (She, he) died from (illness or cause of death). (Name) was the person in my life who (what). *Describe your relationship with that person.* (Name of person) died (after a long illness, suddenly, etc.). The death of (name of person) affected me (how). Looking back on my relationship with (name of person) I realize (what).

Note: Continue to reflect on other family members and friends in your life who have died.

ADULTHOOD:

Feelings

My greatest accomplishment was ...

While I was employed by (who), I held (what title)

As an adult, my worst illness was ...

The worst accident in which I was involved was ...

The one thing that I am really good at is ...

The biggest obstacle I have ever had to overcome was/is ...

My proudest moment as an adult was when ...

As an adult, I'd get most angry when ...

My definition of a friend is ...

As an adult, I have been most afraid of ...

My greatest regret is ...

I consider myself to be a (hard working, lazy) person.

I consider myself to be a (patient, impatient) person.

I believe that I (am, am not) a confident person. I believe that I (am, am not) an insecure person. I believe that I (am, am not) a jealous person.

I generally have a (positive, negative) attitude. I generally (do, do not) get depressed. I generally (am, am not) an easy person to get along with.

I (do, do not) appreciate positive qualities of other people. I (like, do not like) to be with other people. I (do, do not) like to be alone.

If I could reinvent my adult years I would ...

My lucky break as an adult came when ...

Overall, I'd say my life up to this point has/had been ...

ADULTHOOD:

Life-Altering Events

As I look back on my life as an adult, I think an event or relationship that changed or may have changed the entire course of my life was ...

ADULTHOOD:

Hindsight

As I reflect on my life as an adult, I believe that the one thing which had the greatest impact on my life was ... I think that if circumstances had been different, my life might have taken a different course because ...

REFLECTIONS:

Mid-Life Years

Remember the moment when you actually thought that you were at the mid-point of your life. Reflect on the feelings and emotions that thought evoked. Were you frightened by not having accomplished goals which you had consciously set for yourself? Were your financial circumstances such that you were afraid that you had not as yet provided sufficient security for those you loved? Were you afraid that you had not yet provided financial security for your retirement years? Was your physical condition and eyesight beginning to fail? Did the realization that "time was running out" cause a mid-life crisis? What changes did these feelings and emotions precipitate in your life? Share your mid-life feelings and thoughts with your gene-cestors. They will benefit from your experience.

MID-LIFE YEARS:

Mid-Life Crisis

When I was about (what age) I remember thinking that my life was half over. That thought (did, didn't) frighten me. I felt as though I (had, had not) accomplished goals which I had set for myself. I felt that I (had, had not) provided financial security for my loved ones. I (was, was not) afraid that I still needed to provide financial security for my retirement years.

I (was, was not) feeling dissatisfied with my accomplishments. I (did, did not) have a love relationship. My outlook on life was generally (positive, negative). I (did, did not) experience a mid-life crisis. In general, I (was, was not) feeling that my life was filled with the wonderful things, I had imagined.

Note: If you did experience a mid-life crisis, continue by reflecting on that experience. If you did not experience a mid-life crisis, skip this section and continue with the section entitled Employment/Career.

My mid-life crisis began when I was about (age) and ended when I was about (age). The things which I did during this period of my life, which I now realize were "unlike me" were ... The one thing I did which had the greatest impact on my life was ... Generally, I was (happy, depressed, etc.). If I could go back in time to this period of my life, I (would do the same things again, wouldn't do the same things I did before, etc.).

MID-LIFE YEARS:

Employment and Career

During my mid-life years, I worked as a(n) (occupation). My income was (how much). I had been employed by the (company) for (how long). The money I was earning (was, was not) sufficient to meet my obligations. I was (proud, ashamed, satisfied etc.) with my job. The thing I liked best about this job was ... The thing I liked least about this job was ... The one thing I learned from this job was ... My employment with this company terminated because I (was laid off, was fired, retired, accepted another position, etc.). Looking back, I (think I did the right thing by initially accepting this job, should not have taken this job, etc.). I think that this job (was, could have been, wasn't, etc.) a great opportunity for me. I (believe, don't believe) that I took advantage of the opportunities available to me. When I left this job, I was earning (how much money).

Note: Continue completing this paragraph for your other jobs. If along the way you either attempted to start your own business, or did in fact start a business, complete the following section.

In (month, year) I (bought, started) a business. The business was (what kind of business). I (did, did not) have a partner. *Continue to reflect on the process of starting this business.*

My experience as owner of a business was (rewarding, a financial disaster, exhausting, etc.). I found that I was working (shorter hours, longer hours, about the same) as when I was employed by someone else. I found

that I was earning (more, less, about the same, etc.) as in previous years. I found that I (did, did not) complete sufficient research prior to purchasing/starting the business. I found that I (did, did not) have sufficient capital to fund this business. I (did, did not) find what I expected to find when I became involved in it. I (did, did not) make a satisfactory return on my investment. In retrospect, I'm glad that I (did what) or I wish that I had (done what). The advice I would offer my gene-cestors who are thinking about starting their own business is (what).

I (had, had not) been able to establish a pension, or adequate investments and savings for my retirement. I believed that I would need (how much) per month, while in retirement to maintain the lifestyle I wanted to maintain. I believed that I (would, would not) have that much money to sustain myself during my retirement years. I (still had, did not have) a plan, which I thought would provide sufficient income for my retirement years.

Note: If you did have a plan, even though it may not have succeeded, please continue by sharing that plan with your gene-cestors.

MID-LIFE YEARS:

Marriage

Remember the day you met your future spouse. At this point in your life, you probably were not thinking of marriage. Were you immediately attracted to him/her, or did it take time for you to realize that this was the person with whom you wanted to share the rest of your life? Think back to your first date. Reflect on what you were

feeling. Were you consciously looking for someone to love or just a companion? When did you realize that marriage was a possibility? Were you truly in love? Share your feelings and experiences with your gene-cestors.

I first met (name) in (month, year). I lived in (city, country). I met (name) when I was ... When I first saw him/her, I thought (what). I (was, was not) immediately attracted to (name). It was (how long) after I met (name) when I realized that I wanted to marry him/her. One thing which especially attracted me to (name) was ... I (was hoping to find, was not expecting to find, wasn't interested in) a love relationship. As to a relationship, I was primarily interested in (financial security, a companion to share the rest of my life, etc.).

(Name) and I were engaged in (month, year). I asked (name) to marry me when we were (where and doing what) or (name) asked me to marry him when we were (where and doing what).

We decided to be married on (day, month, year) in (church, temple, etc.) in (city, state).

As that day approached I felt as though I (had, had not) made the right decision. I talked about my feelings with (who). On our wedding day the people who stood up for me were (who). We had (how many) guests at our wedding. One specific gift I remember receiving was (what). One thing I remember as being special about that day is ... In retrospect, I know now that I made the (right, wrong) decision in marrying (name).

My marriage to (name) is/was one filled with (love, respect, a lack of respect, love, or friendship, etc.). (Name) clearly (is/was my best friend, is/was not my best friend, etc.). We (did or do, did not or do not) share our deepest feelings and thoughts with one another. We (were or are, were not

or are not) compatible in almost every way. We (do or did, don't or did not) spend most of our free time together.

My happiest moments with (name) were/are when we ... The strongest part of our relationship was/is (what). The weakest part of our relationship was/is (what). I am really (thankful, sorry) I married (name) because ... I had the best time with (name) when we (did what). My saddest moment with (name) was ... The biggest problem we have/had in our relationship is/was (what).

Advice I would offer my gene-cestors who may eventually choose a mate during their mid-life years is ...

MID-LIFE YEARS:

Separation and Divorce

In (year) (name) and I separated. The primary reason we were not getting along was (what).

Separation from (name) was something that I (wanted, did not want). We had not been getting along for (how long). I (did, did not) believe that the separation would be temporary. I (was, was not) involved with someone else. (Name) (was, was not) involved with someone else. The hardest part of our separation was (what). This was the hardest part for me because ...

It was (how long) after we separated that (who) filed for divorce. The petition for dissolution of our marriage was filed in (county, state). Our marriage was dissolved on (date). I (adjusted well, did not adjust well) to

the separation and the divorce. It took me (how long) to begin to feel better about my life as a single person. I (did, did not) seek help from professionals or others. The person who helped me the most during this time was (who). I (did, did not) have sufficient money with which to support myself. I (did, did not) have a lot of debt.

If one of my gene-cestors must experience a dissolution of their marriage during their mid-life years, the advice I would give to them is (what). In retrospect, I wish that I had ... I wish that I had not ... I think I was lucky because ... I think I was unlucky because ...

Note: If you remarried, return to the section on Marriage and complete that section once again.

MID-LIFE YEARS:

Parenthood

My child (name, age), (did still require, did not require) much of my attention. Primarily, he/she needed me to do (what). I (did, did not) have the time to devote to his/her needs. I (did, did not) have the patience to listen carefully to the things he/she said to me.

I (believe, do not believe) that I was at this particular time of my life, a good (father, mother). I believe that I could have been a better parent if I had (done what). I wish that I had not (done what). My relationship with (child's name) is (wonderful, good, fair, not good, etc.). I believe that my

relationship is like that because I (was, was not) a good parent. I believe that I (am loved, am not particularly loved) by (child's name).

If I could reinvent myself as the parent of (child's name) I would ...

Note: If you had more than one child, please return to the beginning of this section and complete it for each of your children. Also, respond to the prompts, where applicable, for your daughter/son-in-law and stepchildren.

MID-LIFE YEARS:

Grandchildren

I have (number) of grandchildren. The oldest is (name) and he/she is (how old). This child is my (son's name, daughter's name) child. (Name) was born on (date of birth). I (do, do not) live near (name). He/she lives with his/her mom and dad in (city) while I live in (city). When (name) was young, I (was, was not) able to babysit for him/her. (Name) looks most like (who) when he/she was a baby. I call (name) (your nickname for him/her). I now speak with (name) on the phone (often, seldom, etc.). I am able to see (name) (often, seldom, etc.). My favorite thing to do with (name) is ... My dream for (name) is ... *Spend a few moments bragging about this grandchild. Say anything you wish.*

Note: Continue reflecting on each of your grandchildren.

The best part of being a grandparent is ... The worst part of being a grandparent is ... I (do, do not) think it is better to be a grandparent rather than a parent. I can't resist telling my children (how to do what). One thing I wish my children would do with their children, that I didn't do with them is ...

MID-LIFE YEARS:

Other Love Relationships

Although I didn't marry (name), I (was, thought I was) in love with him/her. As I think about (name) now, I am (glad, sorry) that I didn't marry him/her. I feel this way because ... I dated (name) for (how long). We dated for (how long). During the time I dated him/her, I was living in (city, state). I (have, have not) had fantasies (name). The reason I didn't marry (name) was ...

Note: If you were in love with other men/women who you didn't marry, complete this section again.

MID-LIFE YEARS:

Friendships

My best friends during this time of my life were (names). I still keep in touch with (names). The best time I had with (name) was when we ... Interestingly, I always found myself making friends with people who ... I always preferred to have (a few, a lot of friends, etc.).

MID-LIFE YEARS:

Physical Fitness and Health

During my mid-life years, maintaining good physical fitness (was, was not) a priority. I exercised (daily, a few times a week, infrequently, etc.). I exercised by (walking, running, working out with weights, playing sports, dancing, etc.). I considered myself to be in (excellent, good, fair, poor) physical condition.

During my mid-life years, my overall health was (excellent, good, fair, poor). I (did, did not) contract colds frequently. I (did, didn't) go to the doctor for physical examinations. The one time I remember that I was really sick was (when). I (was, was not) hospitalized for this illness. *If you had a chronic physical ailment, discuss that ailment now; also, this might be a good place to mention any operations you had performed on you.*

I realized that I was really getting older because (my eyesight was getting worse, I became out of breath more quickly, I couldn't run when I wanted to, etc.). My deteriorating physical condition (did, didn't) bother me. I (was, was not) able to accept it gracefully.

In general, as in my adult years, I (was, was not) concerned about controlling my weight. I weighed about (how much). I (frequently, infrequently, never) had to diet. As I look back on the foods I ate during my mid-life years, I believe that my food intake was (healthy, unhealthy). I (did, did not) need to change the amount of food I was eating, to accommodate my slower metabolism.

During my mid-life years I (did, did not) develop an allergic reaction to certain foods. I still (was, was not) allergic to any medications. *If you have had an allergic reaction to some form of medication, or food, discuss that reaction now.*

MID-LIFE YEARS:

Hobbies and Interests

When I wasn't working, the one thing I spent most of my time doing was (what). I liked to watch (what) on television. I collected (stamps, coins, dolls, sports cards, etc.). The (thing) I collected I would find by (doing what). I (did, didn't) enjoy (playing sports, dancing, etc.). Other things which I liked to do were ...

MID-LIFE YEARS:

Travels

During my mid-life years I (did, did not) travel to other states or other countries).

Note: If you did travel, continue with this section.

I traveled (frequently, once in a while, infrequently, etc.). I traveled to (where). During my travels I (thought, never thought) that I would like to retire to one of those places. I traveled with my (wife/husband, friends, children, etc.). My favorite travel experience was when I traveled to ...

MID-LIFE YEARS:

Financial Matters

My income was (sufficient, not sufficient) to invest in (real estate, gold, stocks, bonds, etc.).

Note: If you feel comfortable speaking about your investments, please do so. You may address anything related to those investments including how much you invested, and your profit or losses.

I (did, did not) own a home during my mid-life years. I (believe(d), did not believe) that there was sufficient equity in my home to help during my retirement years.

During my mid-life years, I (was, was not) in debt. I (always, sometimes, infrequently, etc.) managed to live within my means. I (always, rarely, most of the time, etc.) earned sufficient income to live comfortably. I (always, most of the time, rarely, etc.) was able to purchase things that I wanted to purchase. My monthly income averaged (how much). My monthly expenses averaged (how much). I (often, rarely, once in a while) used charge cards and other forms of credit, when making purchases.

In (year) I was forced to file for bankruptcy. I (was, wasn't) able to rebound from this financial setback. The reason I found myself in this financial crisis was ... Afterwards, my life changed in that ... Other financial setbacks which affected my mid-life years were those related to (loss from fire, theft, etc.).

MID-LIFE YEARS:

Death of Family and Friends

In (year) my (mother, father, brother, sister, child, other relative, friend) died. (She, he) died from (illness or cause of death). (Name) died (after a long illness, suddenly, etc.). The death of (name) affected me (how). Looking back on my relationship with (name) I realize (what).

Note: Continue to reflect on other family members and friends who died during or before your mid-life years.

MID-LIFE YEARS:

Feelings

As an adult, my worst illness was ...

The relationship I lost which meant the most to me was ...

My greatest struggle was to ...

I was most afraid of ...

My greatest regret was ...

I consider myself to be a (hard working, lazy) person.

I consider myself to be a (patient, impatient) person.

I believe that I (am, am not) a confident person. I (am, am not) an insecure person.

I (do, do not) get depressed often. I (am, am not) an easy person to get along with. I (do, do not) appreciate positive qualities of other people. I (like, do not like) to be with other people.

If I could reinvent my mid-life years I would ...

My lucky break came when I ...

Overall, I'd say my life up to this point was ...

MID-LIFE YEARS:

Life-Altering Events

As I look back on my life during my mid-life years, I think an event that changed or may have changed the course of the remainder of my life was ...

MID-LIFE YEARS:

Hindsight

As I reflect on my mid-life years, I believe that I should have (done what).

As I approached my late life years, I believed that I would live until (what age). I also believed that when I died, I would die of (old age, heart attack, cancer, etc.).

REFLECTIONS:

Late-Life Years

You have now reached your late-life years. Hopefully, it's a good time: a time of peace, a time to enjoy the things you never had time to enjoy. It's a time to forgive yourself for those mistakes of judgment that we all make. It's a time to forgive others for their indiscretions. It's a time to gain perspective of the meaning and purpose of your life. It's a time to set some final goals and to work toward accomplishing those goals. It's a time to share your words of wisdom. It's the time to say good-by, thank you and anything else you'd like to say. It's the final chapter of your PersonalReflections; Reflections which will enlighten the lives of your gene-casters by creating that which will someday be their door to the past.

LATE-LIFE YEARS:

Retirement

During my late-life years, I worked as a (occupation). This job (was, was not) a full-time job. I was earning (how much money). I had been employed with the (name) company for (how long). I (was, was not) able to pay my living expenses from the money I was earning. I was supplementing my income with income from (social security, pension, investments, my spouse's income, etc.).

The day I retired was (depressing, uplifting, frightening, etc.). The date was (date). My days are now (busy, satisfying, boring, unfulfilling, etc.). I spend my days (taking walks, reading, watching television, traveling, being with friends, working part-time, etc.). Retirement (is, is not) what I imagined it to be. If I again, was considering retirement, I (would, would not) retire.

I (have, do not have) sufficient income to sustain myself. I need (how much) per month, to maintain the lifestyle I want to maintain. I (do, do not) worry about financial matters. My income comes from (investments, savings, pension, social security, inheritance, etc.). As I look back at the planning I did for my retirement years, I believe that I (did, did not) plan properly.

LATE-LIFE YEARS:

Marriage

Complete this section only if your spouse has passed away.

(Name) passed away on (date). He/she died from (what). He/she was (how old). When he/she died, I was (how old). He/she (was, was not) sick for a long time. (Name) and I had been married for (how many) years. When (name) died, we were living (where).

The loss of (name) was (devastating, not too great a loss, etc.) for me. He/she (was, was not) my best friend. I (miss, do not miss) him/her. I (think, do not think) about him/her everyday. The hardest part of the loss of (name) for me is (what). My life without (name) is (lonely, peaceful, happier, etc.). The one thing I miss most about (name) is ...

Now that (name) is gone, I wish that I had (done what) with him/her. I also wish that I had told him/her (what).

LATE-LIFE YEARS:

Parenthood and GrandParenthood

My children are (how old). They live in (city, state). I (have, do not have) grandchildren. Their names are (names). They are (how old) respectively. I (do, do not) see them often. I (do, do not) speak with the often on the phone.

I believe that (I could have been a better parent, could not have been a better parent). I wish that I had (done what). I wish that I had not (done what). My relationship with (child's name) is (wonderful, good, fair, not good). I believe that my relationship is like that because ... I believe that I (am loved, am not particularly loved) by (child's name).

I believe that I (am, am not) a good grandparent. I think that I (am, am not) a better grandparent, than I was a parent. My relationship with my grandchild(ren) is (very good, fair, not very good, etc.). If I could teach my grandchildren just one thing, it would be (what).

The things I like to do with my grandchildren are ... If I could have just one wish for my grandchildren, it would be (what).

LATE-LIFE YEARS:

Friendships

My best friends during this time of my life are (names). I still keep in touch with (names). When I'm with my friends we spend our time doing (what).

I miss my friends who have now passed away such as (names). The friend I miss the most is (who).

My friends (are, are not) having medical problems. I (am, am not) afraid to still be living when my other friends have passed away. I (am, am not) looking for new friendships.

LATE-LIFE YEARS:

Physical Fitness and Health

During my late-life years, physical fitness (is, is not) important to me. I (have, have not) concentrated on maintaining good physical fitness. I exercise (daily, a few times each week, etc.). I exercise by (walking, dancing, doing aerobics, etc.). I consider myself to be in (excellent, good, fair, poor) physical condition, considering my age.

During my late-life years, my overall health is (excellent, good, fair, poor). I (do, do not) get sick frequently. I (do, don't) need to see the doctor frequently. The one time I was really sick was (when). I (was, was not) hospitalized for this illness. *If you have a chronic physical ailment or condition, discuss that condition or ailment now.*

My deteriorating physical condition (does not, does bother me). I (am, am not) accepting it gracefully. In general, I (am, am not) able to eat the food I want to eat. I weigh about (how much). As I look back at my eating habits during my lifetime, I believe that my food intake was (healthy, unhealthy).

During my late-life years I (have, have not) developed any allergic reactions. I (am, am not) allergic to (what).

Note: If you have had an allergic reaction to some form of medication, or food, discuss that reaction now.

LATE-LIFE YEARS:

Hobbies and Interests

I spend most of my time doing (what). I like to watch (what) on television. Other things that I like to do are (what). I (do, don't) collect (stamps, coins, dolls, etc.). One particular thing which I was able to do during my younger years, which I'm unable to do now and really miss, is (what).

LATE-LIFE YEARS:

Travels

During my late life years I (am, am not) traveling to other states or other countries.

Note: If you are traveling continue with this section.

I travel (frequently, once in a while, infrequently). Some of the places I travel to are (places). I travel with (wife/husband, friends, children, grandchildren, etc.). My favorite travel experience is (which).

LATE-LIFE YEARS:

Deaths

In (year) my (brother, sister, child, other relative, friend) died. (She, he) died from (what). (Name) died (after a long illness, after a long stay in the hospital, suddenly, etc.). The death of (name) affected me (how). Looking back on my relationship with (name) I realize (what).

Note: Continue to reflect on other family members and friends who died.

LATE-LIFE YEARS:

God, Life, Death and Life after Death

When I was younger I (did, did not) believe in God. As I got older, that belief (changed, did not change). Now, I (do, still do not) believe in God. I believe God is (the source of all life, all-powerful, just, unjust, etc.). I picture God as ...

LATE-LIFE YEARS:

Feelings

The relationship which I lost which meant the most to me was ...

My greatest struggle during these years is ...

Now, I am most afraid of ...

During this phase of my life, my greatest regret is ...

If I could reinvent my late life years, I would ...

Overall, I'd say my life has been ...

LATE-LIFE YEARS:

Hindsight

My favorite year was (year). The reason it was my favorite year was because ... The most important date in my life was (date). It was the most important date because ...

The biggest mistake I made in my life was ... This was my biggest mistake because ...

The one thing I didn't do that I wish I had done is ...

If I could live another healthy twenty years, I would (do what).

As I look back at my life, and the things I've learned about life in general, I believe that life is ... Now that I've arrived at my late-life years, the advice I would give to a young person just starting out on life's journey is ... I believe my purpose on this earth was to (do what). My goal during my late-life years is to (do what).

If I had life to live over again, I would (live my life the same way, live life differently, etc.). The changes which I would make are ... I believe that if I had lived my life differently as reflected by those changes, my life would have been different because ...

I believe that death is (the beginning of a new life, the final stage of life, something to be feared, etc.). I (do, do not) look forward to death. When I die, I want my final thought to be (what). I (am, am not) afraid of death.

I (believe, do not believe) that there is life after death. I (believe, do not believe) that there is a heaven. I (believe, do not believe) that there is a hell. I (believe, do not believe) that if there is a heaven, I will end up there. I (believe, do not believe) in reincarnation. I (believe, do not believe) that I have lived many lives before this one. *If you believe that you have lived other lives before this one and if you feel or have felt that you remember some aspect of that life, try to describe it now.* I (hope, do not hope) that there is a life after death. I (believe, do not believe) that when I die I will see all the souls of people I loved and knew during life. *If you do believe that you will see souls of people who you knew during life, and can in fact communicate with their souls, describe what you might say to those souls of special people you knew.*

Personal Reflections

What was your great-grandmother like? Do you know how your grandparents met, what life was like for them? Have you asked your mother about her first job after college or how she felt when you were born? These moments are important. They are passkeys to the mysteries of your life. And who begs entrance? Family.

Your Children and generations beyond will want to know, will want to know how it was they came to be; how their ancestors lived and what they learned by living. Why? Because in knowing the members of our family, we hope to learn something about ourselves. Every member of a family, no matter how far removed, is connected - not only by genetics but by common experience as well.

Personal Reflections, is designed to trigger distinct memories. It is the guide to sharing the story of a lifetime, whether written, spoken into a tape recorder, or recounted by the lens of a video camera.



We all come from the past, and children ought to know what it was that went into their making, to know that life is a braided cord of humanity stretching up from time long gone, and that it cannot be defined by the span of a single journey from diaper to shroud.

- Russel Baker, "Growing Up"

Give me anything to remember you by, I know how short memory is.

- Anna Akhmatova

One must wait until the evening to see how splendid the day has been.

- Sophocles