

*Christine Dehlinger*

**End of Life Doula**

eold@christinedehlinger.com 608-220-5139

## **Potential questions for a doula to ask during a life review or legacy project**

Researched and compiled from various sources including INELDA (International End-of-Life Doula Association), Agrace Hospice Care (Madison, WI), and several web sites which offer this kind of content. Nothing here is verbatim from any source, as I have rewritten, edited and organized so that I now consider it my own.

© Copyright Christine Dehlinger, 2021

# Life Review

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Current Age \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Contents

### Biographical

Section A: Birth and Vitals; Parents, Siblings and Grandparents 3

#### Growing Up

Section B: Childhood and Grade School 4

Section C: Teenage Years 5

Section D: College, Military, Young Adult 5

#### Adult Life

Section E: Marriage and Relationships 6

Section F: Adulthood (21 to Retirement) 6

Section G: Raising Children 6

Section H: Career, Work Outside the Home 7

Section J: Empty Nest, Grandchildren, Retirement 7

**About Life: Values, Experiences, and Lessons Learned 7**

**Questions for Friends and Family about You and Your Life 9**

## Biographical

### Section A: Birth and Vitals; Parents, Siblings and Grandparents

1. What is your full name?
2. Where were you born? (City, state, location such as hospital)
3. When were you born? (Date and year)
4. What were/are the names of your parents?
5. If you know your mother's maiden name, what was it?
6. If you were named after someone, who was it?
7. Do you or did you have any siblings? What are/were their names?  
What memories do you have of each of them from when you were growing up?
8. What did your parents tell you about the day you were born, if anything?
9. Why were you given the first (and middle) name(s) that you have?
10. How are you like your father? How are you unlike your father?
11. How are you like your mother? How are you unlike your mother?
12. What do you perceive was most important to your parents?
13. What are/were the names of your grandparents?
14. Talk about your grandparents? Where were they born? When were they born? What do you remember about them? When did they die?
15. In what ways that you know of, are you like any of your grandparents?
16. What do you wish that your parents has done differently in raising you?
17. What are the things that you feel that your parents did right?
18. Recall any special foods that your parents or grandparents cooked for you.
19. Recall a time when your mother seemed very happy.  
And your dad.

# Growing Up

## Section B: Childhood and Grade School

1. What was the name of the community in which you lived?  
Rural? City? Small town?
2. Talk about the apartment or house in which you grew up? How many bedrooms did it have?
3. What was your bedroom like? Who did you share it with?
4. Take us on a walk around your yard or your neighborhood
5. What's your first, *most vivid* memory of childhood?
6. What are your favorite memories of being a child?
7. How did you get along with your siblings? Are there any particular fights you had with them that you remember?
8. What were some of your childhood chores? Describe. What did you like and dislike about them?
9. Talk about pets that you had.
10. If you grew up in a faith community, religious or spiritual tradition, what was it? Describe your thoughts/feelings about it then, and now.
11. Share memories about family vacations. Describe one of your family's vacations.
12. Talk about your parents. Where were they born? What memories do you have of them during your childhood?
13. Who was more strict – your mother or your father? Why do you say that?
14. Talk about a vivid memory of something that you did that you were disciplined for?
15. What were you like as a child?  
What did you like to eat?  
What did you do for fun?  
What did you like to wear?  
What were your favorite toys and games?  
Did you have a secret place or a favorite hiding spot? If so, describe it.
16. Who were your heroes and role models when you were a child?
17. What responsibilities did you have at home when you were young?
18. Who else, besides your parents, gave you meaningful guidance when you were young?
19. Where did you attend grade school?
20. Describe your grade school.
21. How did you get to school? Walk? Bus? Other?
22. Were you a good student? What did that mean to you then, and what does it mean now?  
What was your favorite subject? Least favorite?
23. Who was your favorite teacher in grade school, and why?
24. Talk about a teacher, your favorite or otherwise, who made a difference in your life.
25. Who were your friends?
26. Describe an adventure that you had with your friends.
27. In what programs or contests did you participate? (Spelling bees, concerts, plays, sports, etc.)
28. What pranks did you play in grade school?
29. Did you have a crush on a boy or girl? What made you notice that person, and what did you like about him/her?
30. What did you want to be when you grew up?
31. Which holidays did your family celebrate, and how?
32. What were holidays like when you were a young child?
33. Describe your favorite holiday.  
Did lots of relatives get together?  
What traditions did you have year after year?  
What food was served?
34. What is the best gift you remember receiving as a child?
35. Talk about the big world events that you remember from the time you were growing up.

36. Talk about inventions that were new when you were a child.
37. Talk about the most significant event of your childhood.

### **Section C: Teenage Years**

1. Was your junior high school and/or high school a different place from grade school?
2. Did you consider yourself a good student? What did that mean to you then?
3. Who were your friends in junior high and high school?
4. What kind of mischief did you get into with your friends during your teen years?
5. In what school activities were you involved? (Clubs, performances, sports, etc.)
6. Talk about the adults who most influenced you in your teenage years.
7. Did you have a job when you were a teenager? Describe the job, and your impressions/feelings about the experience.
8. Did you date in high school?
9. What did you do on your dates?
10. Did your school have a prom or other school dances? Describe your attendance at these, what you experienced and how you felt. With whom did you attend?
11. Who was your first love? What made you notice/fall in love with that person?
12. Did you graduate from high school? Where and when?
13. What is an interesting memory from your high school graduation?
14. What's different about today from when you were a teenager?
15. When you were a teenager, what did you do for fun?  
What was your favorite spot to hang out?
16. What time did you have to be home at night?
17. What trouble did you get into? (Expand on that as much as you wish.)
18. What words or phrases were popular when you were a teen?
19. What did you like to wear?  
How did your parents feel about what you wore?
20. When did you learn how to drive? Who taught you? At what age did you get your driver's license?
21. Describe the car that you drove when you were a teen. Was it yours, or your parents'?
22. What dreams and goals did you have for your life when you graduated from high school?

### **Section D: College, Military, Young Adult**

1. Did you attend college? Which college and where?
2. How did you decide what you wanted to study?
3. In what years did you attend college?
4. If you graduated, in what year did you graduate from college?
5. What was your degree, if any?
6. Where did you live while attending college? (Dorm? Apartment? Parents' home? Describe all.)
7. Did you have a job during college? Talk about where and when.
8. Did you serve in the military? Volunteer or drafted?  
What did you do in the military? Share your experiences.  
Share a specific military memory. (Boot camp, tour of duty, wars fought, buddies, et.)
9. How did you decide what you wanted to do with your life? How do you feel about that choice now if that choice has remained the same? If your choice changed, how so, and why?

## Adult Life

### Section E: Marriage and Committed Relationships

*“SO” refers to spouse (husband or wife), significant other, life partner, within the confines and description of a legal marriage or not.*

1. How many times have you been married or in a long-term relationship with a significant other or live partner? To whom?
2. How did you meet your current or most recent SO?
3. What makes your current or most recent SO special or unique?
4. What is your memory of your first date with your current or most recent SO?  
When did you know that s/he was the one you were going to commit to?  
Was there a formal proposal of marriage or commitment? Who proposed, and how?  
How and when did you make the decision to commit to each other (get engaged)? When did you get married or make your commitment? How old were you?  
When and where did you get married or have a commitment ceremony? Talk about your most recent commitment ceremony/wedding and share some memories.
5. What was your occupation when you were newly (most recently) joined in commitment/married with your SO? What were your job responsibilities?
6. Talk about your first house or apartment as a couple.

### Section F: Adulthood: Age 21 to “Retirement”

1. What was your hobby or something that you did in your free time in your adult life?
2. What accomplishments were you most proud of during that time in your life?
3. What lessons, vast or small, did you learn during that time in your life?
4. In which clubs or organizations in your community were you involved? In what capacity?
5. In what faith community, church or spiritual tradition were you involved?  
What meaning did you find in it?
6. What family member has had the most influence on your life?
7. Who have you trusted with a key to your home? Why?

### Section G: Raising Children

1. Talk about the child(ren) that you have had (in all relationships).  
Include how many, names and the years they were born.
2. How did you decide what to name each?
3. What’s your favorite story about your child(ren)?
4. What is something funny or embarrassing that your child said at an early age that you’ll never forget?
5. What’s the most memorable family vacation you took together?
6. Talk about what you remember about your family holiday celebrations and traditions. What is the one holiday memory that stands out for you?
7. In what occasion did your child(ren) do something rare and wonderful? Expand on it.
8. Talk about your feelings and impressions about raising your child(ren). What was the best part? The worst part?
9. What makes you proud of your child(ren), in the past, and now?
10. What memories do you have of your child(ren) when they were small (0-4 years)?
11. Talk about a moment when you were proud to be a parent.
12. What were some of your challenges as a parent?
13. What do you wish that you had done differently in raising your child(ren)?
14. What might have been any special moments that you feel you missed with your child(ren)?
15. What did you learn from your child(ren) as you were raising them?

16. In what kinds of activities were your child(ren) engaged as they grew older?
17. What's the best thing about being a parent?
18. How is/are your child(ren) like you? Unlike you?
19. Why and/or why not would you have wanted some like yourself as a parent?
20. In what specific ways did you have fun with your child(ren)?

### **Section H: Career, Work Outside the Home**

1. What was your first job as an adult? What did you like and not like about it?
2. What career moves – promotions, job changes, etc. – did you make as an adult?
3. Who was a boss or mentor who encouraged you or helped you develop your talents? Talk about how they helped you.
4. Was there any particular job category or profession that you worked in for much of your life? Describe it. Tell what you most liked about it, and what you didn't care for.
5. Talk about any special professional recognition that you received during your career?
6. In which career were you working when you retired?  
How many years had you been in that line of work?
7. Talk about your retirement party, if you had one.

### **Section J: Empty Nest, Grandchildren, Retirement**

1. What was it like and how did you feel when your oldest child left home? And your youngest? Or your only?
2. What have you been doing with your time after your children are no longer living with you? (Hobbies, volunteering, new job, etc.)
3. Talk about your children meeting their spouses.
4. If you have grandchildren, talk about the experiences and feelings when they were born.
5. What special memories do you have about your grandchildren?
6. What's the best thing about being a grandparent?
7. If there are great-grandchildren, share a memory of one or all.
8. What community awards or recognition have you received, if any, in retirement?
9. Talk about the kinds of things you looked forward to in retirement? Have you been able to check them off your list?
10. If you have traveled after retirement, talk about a memory about those travels.
11. What are your hobbies or special interests in retirement?
12. What sports do you enjoy? As a participant? As a spectator?
13. What do you do for fun and play?

## **Section H: About Life -- Values, Experiences, and Lessons Learned**

1. What has been most important to you in your life? (If there are several things, talk about as many of them that you wish to share. If you not answer any other questions, please consider this one.)
2. Name 10 things for which you are grateful.
3. Of those that you wish to speak, what beliefs have you adhered to?  
How does your behavior reflect your beliefs and values?
4. What do you remember about (any or all or some), your age in your...  
20s? 30s? 40s? 50s? 60s?
5. What events in your life so far most stand out in your mind?
6. What do you wish you'd done differently?

7. Who have you trusted and depended on, and why?
8. What have you loved doing in your spare time?
9. What volunteer activity has been most important, valuable, or satisfying to you? Why?
10. What is the scariest thing that ever happened to you?
11. What work or aspect of work in your life do you consider the most important?
12. How have you related to friends?
13. How have you related to close and extended family?
14. Describe the lesson(s) you've learned in life that you would most like to talk about.
15. Thinking about your accomplishments, of which are you most proud?
16. Recall and describe a time that you were eager to be taught, a time when growth and learning was more important than anything else.
17. What qualities of your character stand out most in your mind? Those for better? Those for worse?
18. What adversities have you overcome, and how did you accomplish that?
19. Where have you loved to spend time in nature?
20. How have you dealt with the life challenges that you have faced?
21. How would you like to be remembered?
22. What objects do/did you collect, and why?
23. What life choices have had an impact on where you lived, and how you lived?
24. What life difficulty has added some seasoning to your life and actually worked in your behalf over the long term?
25. What hobbies and preoccupations have mattered to you most?
26. What has made you strong and resilient?
27. What do you consider your legacies for those left behind after your death?
28. What are you grateful for?
29. What's your most cherished family tradition? Why is it important?
30. What have you liked best about your life so far?
31. What have been your happiest or proudest moments so far?
32. What is the most difficult emotional pain that you have had to deal with?
33. What has been your most difficult physical pain?
34. What do you feel have been the important successes in your life?  
The frustrations?
35. What's the most difficult thing that you have experienced? How did you deal with it?
36. If you could start your life over again, what would you do differently?
37. What do you think the turning points have been in your life?
38. Which times of your life do you remember more vividly than others? Expand on these memories.
39. What have been the most influential experiences in your life?
40. In what kinds of social settings have you felt uneasy?
41. What do you want written on your tombstone?
42. Talk about what you feel or have felt guilty about.
43. Has there been a time in your life in which you were a rebel? If so, in what ways did you rebel? What consequences, if any, did you have to pay?
44. Describe a person or situation from your childhood that had a profound effect on the way you look at life.
45. What, if anything, would you have done differently in your life?
46. Name a song for which you know every word. Share some of your favorite words in that song, and tell why.
47. What things can easily bring you to tears? (Both joyful and sad.)
48. What do you know now that you wish you'd known when you were young?
49. When you think of beauty, what is the first thought that comes to mind?
50. What physical objects have you thrown away that you wish you hadn't?  
What objects have you held on to that are important, and why are they important?  
What "junk" have you held on to and why?
51. What is something that you regret?
52. Over time, how have you changed the way you look at life and people?
53. What has aroused your curiosity? Share a curiosity that has never been satisfied.

54. What “shoulds” have you outgrown?
55. What music most intensely speaks to you? What piece, or artist, or group, or composer?
56. Talk about a belief that you once had but that you no longer hold.
57. What is one thing that you can do extremely well? And one thing that you totally screw up every time?
58. What advice did your grandparents or parents give you that you remember best? Talk about its helpfulness to you, or how it didn’t help.
59. Talk about something you can think of that puts a smile on your face.
60. What is your philosophy of life?
61. Recall your most valuable education – formal or informal.
62. What would you tell a young person that is your best piece of advice for living?
63. When have you felt the most whole? And recall a time when you felt empty.
64. To what causes have you been devoted, and why?
65. Recall a time you were invited, and a time you weren’t. Describe your feelings and thoughts about those.
66. Recall a time when you were separated and then reunited with someone whom you love.
67. What would you say is the most important thing for living a good life?
68. If you had the power to solve one and only one problem in the world today, what would it be and why?
69. What do you see as your place or purpose in life? How did you come to that conclusion?
70. What would you like your children and grandchildren (if any) to remember about you?
71. If you could write a message to each of your children and grandchildren (if any), and put the messages in a time capsule for reading 20 years from now, what would you write to each?
72. What is something that happened in your life that caused you to change as a person?
73. What is the meaning of your surname? What are the stories about the origins of your surname?  
If you are legally married and have taken the surname of your spouse, please comment about any of surnames which might have meaning for you.
74. How much thought have you given to the way you live your life?  
How would you live differently if, when the clock struck midnight each night, you had no guarantee to live the following day?
75. How have you distinguished between an acquaintance and a friend?
76. Recall an understanding or acceptance that came with age.
77. What age would you be if you didn’t know what age you are now?
78. What have been your nicknames as a child or as an adult? Who gave you the nickname(s) and why?
79. Talk about a person whom you could always “cut loose with,” with whom you always have/had fun.
80. Talk about any special sayings, quotes, or expressions that resonate with you and why.
81. What’s one of your favorite books and why?  
What’s one of your favorite movies and why?
82. Who are three people in history you admire most and why?
83. What have been the three biggest news events during your lifetime? Why were they “big” for you?
84. If you could have three wishes now, what would they be?
85. What is the one thing that you have always hated to be nagged about?
86. If you won \$1 million tomorrow, what would you do with the money?
87. Who knows you better than anyone else? (Alive or deceased.)
88. Have you, and do you usually trust your instincts? Recall a time that your intuition was right on target.
89. Who can you name who will always tell you the truth from their perspective, no matter how painful? Expand on that.
90. Talk about the most memorable phone call you’ve ever received.
91. Talk about the best compliment you ever received.
92. What kinds of things bring you the most pleasure now?  
When you were a younger adult?  
When you were a child?
93. What things frighten you now?  
When you were a younger adult?  
When you were a child?
94. What’s the one thing you’ve always wanted but still don’t have or haven’t received?



95. What things would be left undone if you were to die today?
96. How do you feel differently about yourself now from how you felt when you were a young adult?
97. What has stayed the same about you throughout life?  
What has changed?
98. Of what are you most proud?
99. What do you want people to remember you for?
100. What is your favorite memory?
101. What would you like to say to your family that you haven't already said? (Any particular person?)
102. What are some important lessons than you've learned in your life?
103. What was the world like when you grew up?
104. What have been your family's greatest strengths?
105. Who has been the most significant person in your life?  
(Someone that you personally know? Someone that you have read about and learned about?)
106. What has been the happiest time in your life?
107. What has been your greatest accomplishment?
108. What makes a home "a home?"
109. If you could change anything at any time in your life, what would it be?
110. What are you most thankful for?
111. What is your "unfinished business?"
112. Recall someone who you met whom you felt that you had known forever.

## Questions for Friends and Family about You and Your Life

1. What did you learn about living from him/her?
2. Talk about a favorite time or experience that you shared with her/him.
3. What were favorite expressions that he or she often used? What did those expressions mean to you?
4. How has s/he made the world around her/him a better place?
5. How will you remember him/her the most?
6. Talk about how you met her/him, or an early recollection of her/him.
7. Why are you grateful to have had him/her in your life?