



## **Orange Senior Center**

170 S. Olive St. Orange, CA 92866

Registration Location

Room U-84 8045 E. Chapman Avenue

Orange, Calif. 92869 714-628-4900

[www.sccollege.edu](http://www.sccollege.edu)

**Myla Collier** [mylacollier@gmail.com](mailto:mylacollier@gmail.com)

## **LIFE STORY WRITING**

### **FAMILY HISTORY THEMES**

**Questions:** (These questions are designed to prime or stimulate your memories and thoughts about your family. The questions need not be answered in a literal manner. Read through them and react to the ones that open windows on your past. Each family is unique, and the priming questions do not have the same value to all persons.)

### **FAMILY HISTORY, A GEOGRAPHICAL and HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE**

Your family's history is intertwined with American and World History. The theme of our history demonstrates how our stories connect to historical events and the geographical areas in which our ancestors lived. Our family stories make us who we are, and to a great extent connect us to far off places and significant historical events.

1. What was an important move your ancestors made? Why did they move? What influenced their decision to move?

### **FAMILY ATTACHMENTS**

Our families represent the blending of many styles of relating. Our family histories include our ancestors (parents, grandparents, great-grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins) and the family and families of our adult lives (spouses, children, grandchildren, and in-laws). Perhaps an adopted child, a friend or another person has been important in our family's history. The attachment relationships of our ancestors serve as models for our own affectional bonds which we in turn pass on to the next generation. Our attachment relationships are unique in that the object of love is not interchangeable and that security and comfort seeking characterize them.

1. Which relatives in your family felt comfortable with closeness and who allowed themselves to depend on others?

### **FAMILY CULTURE, RITUALS AND TRADITIONS**

The culture, rituals and traditions we inherited from our ancestors enrich our family's history. This inheritance is the fabric that creates deep feelings of emotional connectedness in a family group. Culture and traditions are passed on in a family in many ways. These include anything from a family recipe, how and when a holiday is celebrated, dietary restrictions or customs, how family members behave around the dinner table, how birthdays are celebrated, or what rules were passed on down the generations.

1. What cultural background does each side of your family come from?

## **FAMILY ROLES ACROSS THE GENERATIONS**

Every family group has leaders, followers, peacemakers, confidants, holders of secrets and troublemakers. Role assignment can both empower and limit a family's member options. In the questions below you will explore gender and other prescriptive role definitions throughout your family's history. This will shed light on how family roles across generations have impact on your own experience.

1. What impact did family size have on role assignment? What roles were assigned to the older versus the younger children in the family?

## **INFLUENCE OF WORK ETHIC, EDUCATION AND CAREER MESSAGES ACROSS THE GENERATIONS**

The life work chosen by our ancestors determined their lifestyle and to a great extent shaped our expectation for our career choices. Life work includes all the activities that occupied most of our family's time, energy and/or concerns. The family history of careers or lifetime work may include work as a parent, spouse or homemaker. The career can be a lifetime job or it can be a lifetime of service in the church, community or politics. Access and the promoting of education by role models in our family often determine whether we do blue or white collar work. You will trace the type of work and education chosen by your ancestors.

1. What type of work did women do in your family?

## **FAMILY VALUES AND BELIEFS**

"Beliefs are truths that individuals hold and use to guide their life.

Truth is what you believe and may not be based on objective facts."

Our values and beliefs give meaning to our lives. They are the principles we use to ponder ethical challenges, show us what we ought or ought not to do and how we act to get on with other people; give us support when we are down or lost. Transmission of values is generally not an explicit parental exercise, rather values are learned on a daily basis through observation of both daily life and life in crisis as well as through the telling of stories.

1. What philosophy of life or guiding principle was passed on in your family? Were there family sayings?

## **ROLE OF MONEY IN YOUR FAMILY HISTORY**

Money is the most commonly tabooed subject in families. And yet, financial stability can contribute to feelings of security, reduced stress and well-being. Financial difficulties can bring out feelings of anxiety and insecurity, marital discordance and uproot families entirely. Money influenced the way our ancestors lived, i.e., where they lived, access to education and health care and in some cases the ability to avoid ravages of war and death. Affluence affects the balance of power in the family, and the relationship amongst family members. Historically, our family's access to money and how they viewed their financial means have shaped both our positive and negative ideas about money.

How affluent were your ancestors? Did they consider themselves wealthy or poor? How did they view wealthy and poor people? Was it the same for the different branches of the family?