

# Summer Wellness Challenge



## Life Review: Activity for Middle & High School Students

“We live life forward but understand it backward.” – Soren Kierkegaard

Many of the most vulnerable populations struggle with social isolation which can increase symptoms of anxiety or depression, including older adults (age 65+). The number of older adults in our communities is continuing to increase, especially as the Baby Boomer generation reaches retirement age. By the year 2030, the number of adults aged 65 and older in California is expected to grow by four million people.<sup>1</sup> Connect with an older adult in your community this week by conducting a life review to help increase their social connection and practice compassion. Compassion is a feeling and an act; it is defined as the desire to assist someone who is struggling. When someone shows kindness, caring and a willingness to help others, they are showing compassion.

### WHAT IS A LIFE REVIEW?<sup>2</sup>

A life review is a process that uses the past to come to peace with the present and can allow older adults to feel better about their lives in lasting ways. Research shows that individuals who participate in a life review have increased life satisfaction. A life review can help an older adult reflect on previous successes, disappointments and identify meaningful moments and turning points in their past experiences. It can cover many areas of one's life including friendships, influential people in one's life, phases of one's life, descriptions of a typical day and exploring things that bring joy.

### WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF A LIFE REVIEW?<sup>3</sup>

Older adults engaging in a life review can feel empowered to find hope, value, improved self-esteem, meaning in their lives and recognize the significance of their accomplishments. This new perspective can help older adults release the past and live more fully in the present moment. For family members, they can learn more about their loved one and can save these memories through video, audio or writing as a piece of family history.

### CONDUCTING A LIFE REVIEW

#### STEP 1: Determine who will be your interviewee.

Identify an older adult in your life that you want to interview for a life review. Think about your neighbors and family members that would benefit from social connection and reflecting on their life accomplishments. If you aren't sure who to call, draft a list of possible people with your family and then narrow it down to your top two options – just in case the first person you reach out to is not ready to participate in a life review.

<sup>1</sup> Planning for California's Growing Senior Population. (2020, May 08). Retrieved from <https://www.ppic.org/publication/planning-for-californias-growing-senior-population/>

<sup>2</sup> How a "Life Review" Consoles the Elderly and Counteracts Late Life Depression. (2020, March 11). Retrieved from <https://www.seniormatter.com/how-a-life-review- consoles-the-elderly-and-counteracts-late-life-depression/2492290>

<sup>3</sup> Life Review Therapy. (2018, May 29). Retrieved from <https://www.healthline.com/health/life-review-therapy#life-review-therapy-benefits>

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## SUCCESSSES, DISAPPOINTMENTS, TURNING POINTS

### STEP 2: Determine how you want to capture the information shared during the life review.

You will most likely be provided with a lot of information from your interviewee so be prepared to capture all their valuable memories in a way that is easy for you to review later. A few options include recording a phone call, recording a zoom call, taking notes on the phone, or asking a family member to help you take notes while you are asking questions.

### STEP 3: Prepare questions that you think will be valuable for your interviewee.

[Click here to view sample questions.](#) Categories to consider addressing include childhood, adulthood, influential relationships, retirement, current daily life, successes, disappointments, turning points, social history (example: living through the Great Depression) or feelings about aging.

Once you have your questions, determine how many sessions you will need to complete the life review.

### STEP 4: Determine how you will share your takeaways with your interviewee.

A life review is also very informative and rewarding for the interviewer and offers a unique look into another person's world. Your interviewee would love to hear your takeaways from the life review. Determine if you would like to spend time after the life review to share how their memories impacted you and what you took away from the open and honest reflective conversation. Another option is to create a life timeline for your interviewee by dividing a timeline into decades and include key events, people and highlights they shared with you on the timeline.

## ADDITIONAL SUPPORT NEEDED?

Please keep in mind the Life Review is a reflective conversation, and not a counseling session. If you feel your friend, family member or neighbor would benefit from a Beach Cities Health District Social Worker or could use additional support, please have them call BCHD's assistance, information & referral line at 310-374-3426, ext. 256, available Monday - Friday from 8:30 a.m. - 5 p.m.

<sup>4</sup> Clark University. Life Review Interview Manual. Available online at [www.clarku.edu/faculty/dmerrill/soc180/manual.doc](http://www.clarku.edu/faculty/dmerrill/soc180/manual.doc).