



Life Reviews: A Tool to Shape Your Future - Part Two

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"You only live once, but if you do it right, once is enough."

-- Mae West

Looking back through the experience of Life Review work with individuals where we capture life wisdom has always been a rewarding and thought-provoking task for all involved. The family members inevitably enjoy the process of reflecting on their personal histories and significant life events, and there is often a moment of realization when the wisdom or lessons learned become apparent and they acknowledge their impact.

In Part One, we talked about a few experiences in the Life Review process and the impact they made. In Part Two, we discover more of these stories and see how the outcome is the same despite the difference in backgrounds: that all who experience it derive immense value from the process of reflecting back.

Legacy of Values

Recently a middle-aged granddaughter, Eve R., asked us to produce a Legacy Of Values (Ethical Will) production of

her grandmother, a 99-year old Grandma Rosie who was rapidly losing sight and was physically very frail. Just a few years before I met her, she had lost her only daughter (Eve's mother) to a lengthy battle with cancer. Grandma Rosie was stricken with mourning her loss, and Eve thought (and rightfully so) that her reflecting on her life with Memoirs Productions would be a nice distraction, and maybe to be a salve for her wounds. In addition, Eve realized that her own children, along with her brother's, would truly benefit from knowing their Great-Grandma's reflections and life story recorded.

As our discovery process with Grandma Rosie unfolded, in reviewing her long (almost) lost childhood in a foreign country from which she and her family emigrated to North America and to which she has never returned, she remembered that she loved to paint with watercolors in art classes taken after elementary school. Both Eve and I encouraged her to attend the art sessions given at her seniors' residence, and she agreed as long as Eve went with her. Very quickly, it became apparent to both Eve and the art teacher at the residence that in fact, Grandma Rosie was extremely talented and gifted in her drawing and watercolor art.

Within a few months she was producing many beautiful watercolor pieces weekly, and the Art teacher upon submitting one of them to a local contest at a museum (without her knowledge) was thrilled to announce that Grandma Rosie had won and that it would hang for an undetermined length of time in the museum's collection. The moral of this story is that Grandma Rosie became known as almost a "Grandma Moses" in their family and friends' circles, from renewing a long-forgotten love of watercolor art.

Most importantly, this new "old" hobby of painting watercolors truly did become an important outlet for her



grief and she told me months later when I visited her that painting had helped her eliminate the nightly dreams of her beloved lost daughter. It almost was as though she was painting out her sense of loss on the page every day.

Thoughts, Values, Lessons Learned

In another case, at the other end of the age spectrum, Bradley, a highly successful 43-year old entrepreneur, engaged us to record his Legacy of Values~Ethical Will. He along with his father and brothers had shared in a liquidity event of one of their businesses that prompted them to open their own multi-family office. Bradley has a wife and three children under the age of ten. A year or so before he met us, his best friend from childhood, who also had a young family, was killed in a tragic accident. That event gave Bradley serious pause, and he told me as soon as I met him that he would never forgive himself for not leaving his thoughts, values, lessons learned recorded, so that if anything ever happened to him, his family would have some wisdom to inherit along with his financial fortune.

We worked with Bradley on his Ethical Will Worksheet over a span of four months, and filmed him privately in his home (while his children were away for the day). Once edited, his production was 43 minutes in duration, and his reflection on his childhood and other life highlights was so vivid, since he was so young and he had a remarkable memory for details.

Once we delivered Bradley's DVDs, we realized that he was our first client ever to have both parents alive to view his production. He decided to go to his childhood home where his folks still live and sit in the family room with his Mom and Dad to watch it. Together, they sat on the couch, he had one arm around his Dad and the other holding his Mom's hand while they laughed and cried during the viewing.

In the telling of a major challenging event that happened to him in elementary school, an amazing thing happened. He had mentioned that this event became a guiding force for how he chose to live his life. His Mom, with whom he

was very close as a child, admitted that she vaguely remembered the incident, and had no idea the effect it had had on him. His father had no inkling about it at all, and was amazed to learn this important information about his adult son. Bradley recounted to me that in sharing his production with his parents, firstly, he felt so blessed that they were around to see it, and secondly, to share it with parents was truly a priceless experience as it has deepened his relationship with them to a level he never thought was possible.

Bradley's parents now wish to go through the same process and record their thoughts and memories in a real Life Review to share with their children and grandchildren, having seen firsthand not only the importance of preserving their stories but also the sometimes revealing nature of the process.

In addition, Bradley has also decided to do updates every ten years: when he's 53, 63, 73, and so on. He values this self-work tremendously, and is presently keeping a journal of his personal wisdom and insights: lessons learned, new beliefs, and other inspirations that he will draw upon when he is on camera next time.

Imagine the impact and shared knowledge that could be celebrated if more people started this work in their forties and kept it up all their lives. Reviewing one's life is a highly rewarding task. It does not have to be a video production: you could start by creating and recording traditions. You can also begin to review the life of a child by each year on their birthday, sitting down at a computer and noting all their accomplishments. When they experience a major life event, like graduating from college, marrying, or having their first child, you can hand them all the letters recording their life experiences as you saw them grow up, and the wisdom you saw them gain and develop. Perhaps, this would encourage you to do the same for yourself.

This is a gift that has no price. There are many options out there, just find the time and method that works best for you, and go ahead and do it! You'll be happy you did and so will those loved ones you share it with.



*Names of Memoirs Productions clients have been changed to protect their identities

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