



“TELL ME A STORY” ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Sample Questions

(adapted from StoryCorps Great Questions List)

Great questions for anyone

- What was the happiest moment of your life? The saddest?
- Who was the most important person in your life? Can you tell me about him or her?
- Who has been the biggest influence on your life? What lessons did that person teach you?
- It's been said that after they pass away, the most important people in our lives “live within us.” Is there anyone from your past that lives within you?
- What are the most important lessons you've learned in life?
- What is your earliest memory?
- Are there any words of wisdom you'd like to pass along to me?
- What are you proudest of in your life?
- How has your life been different than what you'd imagined?
- How would you like to be remembered?
- Do you have any regrets?
- What does your future hold?

Grandparents

- Where did you grow up?
- What was your childhood like?
- Who were your favorite relatives?
- Do you remember any of the stories they used to tell you?
- How did you and grandma/grandpa meet?
- What was my mom/dad like growing up?
- Do you remember any songs that you used to sing to her/him? Can you sing them now?
- Was she/he well-behaved?
- What is the worst thing she/he ever did?
- What were your parents like?
- What were your grandparents like?
- How would you like to be remembered?
- Are you proud of me?

Parents

- Do you remember what was going through your head when you first saw me?
- How did you choose my name?
- What was I like as a baby? As a young child?
- Do you remember any of the songs you used to sing to me? Can you sing them now?
- What were my siblings like?
- What were the hardest moments you had when I was growing up?
- If you could do everything again, would you raise me differently?
- What advice would you give me about raising my own kids?
- What are your dreams for me?
- How did you meet mom/dad?
- Are you proud of me?

Sample Questions – Page 2

Raising children

- When did you first find out that you'd be a parent? How did you feel?
- Can you describe the moment when you saw your child for the first time?
- How has being a parent changed you?
- What are your dreams for your children?
- Do you remember when your last child left home for good?
- Do you have any favorite stories about your kids?

Growing up

- When and where were you born?
- Where did you grow up?
- What was it like?
- Who were your parents?
- What were your parents like?
- How was your relationship with your parents?
- Did you get into trouble? What was the worst thing you did?
- Do you have any siblings? What were they like growing up?
- What did you look like?
- How would you describe yourself as a child? Were you happy?
- What is your best memory of childhood? Worst?
- Did you have a nickname? How'd you get it?
- Who were your best friends? What were they like?
- How would you describe a perfect day when you were young?
- What did you think your life would be like when you were older?
- Do you have any favorite stories from your childhood?

Marriage & Partnerships

- How did you meet your husband/wife?
- How did you know he/she was "the one"?
- How did you propose?
- What were the best times? The most difficult times?
- Did you ever think of getting divorced?
- Did you ever get divorced? Can you tell me about it?
- What advice do you have for young couples?
- Do you have any favorite stories from your marriage or about your husband/wife?

Working

- What do you do for a living?
- Tell me about how you got into your line of work.
- Do you like your job?
- What did you think you were going to be when you grew up?
- What did you want to be when you grew up?
- What lessons has your work life taught you?
- If you could do anything now, what would you do? Why?
- Do you plan on retiring? If so, when? How do you feel about it?
- Do you have any favorite stories from your work life?

Religion

- Can you tell me about your religious beliefs/spiritual beliefs? What is your religion?
- Have you experienced any miracles?
- What was the most profound spiritual moment of your life?
- Do you believe in God?
- Do you believe in the after-life? What do you think it will be like?
- When you meet God, what do you want to say to Him?

Sample Questions – Page 3

Serious Illness

- Can you tell me about your illness?
- Do you think about dying? Are you scared?
- How do you imagine your death?
- Do you believe in an after-life?
- Do you regret anything?
- Do you look at your life differently now than before you were diagnosed?
- Do you have any last wishes?
- If you were to give advice to me or my children, or even children to come in our family, what would it be?
- What have you learned from life? The most important things?
- Has this illness changed you? What have you learned?
- How do you want to be remembered?

Family heritage

- What is your ethnic background?
- Where is your mom's family from? Where is your dad's family from?
- Have you ever been there? What was that experience like?
- What traditions have been passed down in your family?
- Who were your favorite relatives?
- Do you remember any of the stories they used to tell you?
- What are the classic family stories? Jokes? Songs?

War

- Were you in the military?
- Did you go to war? What was it like?
- How did war change you?
- During your service, can you recall times when you were afraid?
- What are your strongest memories from your time in the military?
- What lessons did you learn from this time in your life?

Remembering a loved one

- What was your relationship to _____?
- Tell me about _____.
- What is your first memory of _____?
- What is your best memory of _____?
- What is your most vivid memory of _____?
- What did _____ mean to you?
- Are you comfortable/ can you talk about _____'s death? How did _____ die?
- What has been the hardest thing about losing _____?
- What would you ask _____ if _____ were here today?
- What do you miss most about _____?
- How do you think _____ would want to be remembered?
- Can you talk about the biggest obstacles _____ overcame in life?
- Was there anything you and _____ disagreed about, fought over, or experienced some conflict around?
- What about _____ makes you smile?
- What was your relationship like?
- What did _____ look like?
- Did you have any favorite jokes _____ used to tell?
- Do you have any stories you want to share about _____?
- What were _____'s hopes and dreams for the future?
- Is there something about _____ that you think no one else knows?
- How are you different now than you were before you lost _____?
- What is the image of _____ that persists?
- Do you have any traditions to honor _____?
- What has helped you the most in your grief?