Your Journey From Birth to Adulthood

Everyone has a very rich and unique life story and the following questions are designed to help you think about the events and influences that helped shape you. This is an opportunity to reflect and talk about these important topics to get more insight into yourself, which is always a good thing. You don’t need to explore any question if you don’t want to. You may find it helpful to write your answers but it’s ok if you don’t.  Note: at the end of each answer it can be helpful to ask yourself "what insight does this provide to help me understand my current situation/struggle?"  Sometimes how you answered a question won't seem relevant but other times you may notice patterns or themes that are worth exploring.

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1. What do you know about your birth and your family when you were born?

2. How were your relationships during childhood with each of your parents, siblings, and any other significant family members? How did these relationships change as you aged?

3. What was your childhood understanding of what it meant to be an adult? A man? A woman? Who or what helped shape or represent this vision?

4. How were affection and nurturance (or their lack) shown in your family?  How did your family members express difficult emotions like anger, conflict, anxiety and sadness?

5. How were you disciplined and rewarded, and for what?

6. Who or what did you fear or worry about as a child?

7. How did you feel about yourself as a child and teen? What was your overall level of self-esteem?

8. What did you like to do in childhood and adolescence, including any hobbies or special interests?  What were you good at?

9. What losses, sadness or painful memories did you experience in childhood, and how did these affect you?

10. Describe any abuse or misuse of power or authority over you. What are examples of times you felt shame or embarrassment? How did you cope with these difficulties?

11. How was school for you? How did you get along with teachers and other students? Do you have any history of being bullied or teased?

12. How did you relate to your own body as you grew up? Did you have significant childhood illnesses, injuries or physical challenges?

13. What were your relationships with other people like as a child and adolescent? Were you outgoing or shy?  How did you typically interact with others?

14. What and how did you learn about money? What was your family’s financial situation? How did you get, save and spend money?

15. What were some “rites of passage” along your road to adulthood?

16. How did you learn about sex? How did your romantic and sexual feelings develop? What in this category was traumatic, embarrassing, confusing or noteworthy?  How did you talk about any sexual concerns or questions you had?

17. What role did alcohol and drugs have in your life prior to adulthood?

18. Did you have any legal trouble growing up? What about anyone else in your family?

19. Describe your religious and spiritual development growing up.

20. How did you learn about your cultural and racial identity? Describe the messages you received and lessons you learned about race, culture and political views.

21. What do you know about past generations of your family who lived through wars, atrocities, poverty, slavery and other historical traumas? What about any specific tragic events that took place among past members of your family tree?

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Again, now that you have reflected on these questions, consider the ways in which any of these categories may influence how you are living your life as an adult. How have these questions helped you to understand and appreciate your unique story better? Consider talking about your answers and insights with another person you trust.  You have created a powerful source of information about yourself that can be helpful to review with a counselor, therapist or other source of guidance (who will probably be thrilled that you have already done this much work on yourself!)

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December 2019