**Life Events – Childhood**

**What is your full name? Do you know why you were named that?**

**When and where you born?**

**Do you know anything about the day you were born?**

**Have you ever had any nicknames as a child or as an adult?**

**What’s your first memory?**

**What is your best childhood memory?**

**What were you like as a child?**

**What was your home and neighborhood you grew up in like?**

**What big world events do you remember from the time you were growing up?**

**What inventions do you most remember?**

**What’s different about growing up today from when you were growing up?**

**When you were a teenager, what did you do for fun?**

**Did you have a favorite spot to “hang out”?**

**What time did you have to be home at night?**

**Did you ever get into any trouble?**

**Did you learn how to drive?**

**If so, who taught you?**

**What age were you when you got your first car and what was it like?**

**Adulthood**

**What do you feel most proud of?**

**What are some of the life lessons that you have learned and would like to pass on to your descendants?**

**If you could travel anywhere, where would you go and why?**

**If you could only keep five possessions, what would they be?**

**What teacher in school made the most impact on you and why?**

**What was school like? Do you have any stories?**

**What were your favorite subjects in school & why?**

**What subjects did you not like?**

**Are you still friendly with any of your school friends, if so where are they and what are they doing?**

**If you could possess one super-human power, what would it be?**

**If a newspaper wanted to do a story about you, what would the story be about?**

**Are you an animal lover? Do you have or have you ever had pets? If so, tell us about them.**

**What was one of your most defining moments in life?**

**Why did you choose that profession?**

**What’s your favorite pastime time?**

**If you won the lottery, what would you do?**

**Who do you most admire in this world?**

**What are your 5 favorite books and why?**

**What are your 5 favorite movies and why?**

**What frightens you?**

**Have you ever been in love?**

**What is your best quality?**

**What was your most embarrassing moment?**

**What are you grateful for in this life?**

**If you were president, what is the first thing you would like to do?**

**If you could do anything, what would it be?**

**If you could change anything in your life what would it be?**

**What age do you feel right now and why?**

**If you could witness any event from any time, what would it be?**

**What is a skill you’d like to learn and why?**

**What’s on your bucket list?**

**How would your friends describe you?**

**What do you see as your greatest strengths?**

**What were some of the challenges you have had to deal with in your life?**

**What medical issues have you had to deal with throughout your life?**

**Are there food dishes your mother or father made that make you think of them?**

**What are some of your talents and how did you discover them?**

**What are you grateful for in this life?**

**Has any significant events or experiences effected you, if so how?**

**What are some personal values that are important to you?**

**What were some of the jobs you had throughout your life? Have you any memorable experiences from them?**

**Is there anybody who has had a memorable influence on your life and if so, why**

**Name a few things about yourself that make you you?**

**What makes you really happy or excited?**

**Have you lived many places during your lifetime? If so what was each place like and why did you go there.**

**If you could go back in time and do things over again, what would you change?**

**Where have you traveled and where was best and why?**

**How is my father/mother like/Unlike me?**

**What do you remember about me when I was born?**

**What about when I was younger than I am now?**

**What the best thing about being a parent? A grandparent?**

**Identity**

**Do you know the meaning of your family name?**

**Are there stories about the origins of your family name?**

**Have you ever had any nicknames as a child or as an adult?**

**Where did they come from?**

**How are you like / Unlike your mother? How are you like / Unlike your father? What was most important to your parents?**

**Do you feel you’re like any of your grandparents? In what ways?**

**How are your children like / Unlike you?**

**What do you think are your three best qualities? Your three worst?**

**Which do you think you have the most of: talent, intelligence, education, or persistence?**

**How has it helped you in your life?**

**Do you have any special sayings or expressions?**

**What’s your favorite book and why? What’s your favorite movie and why?**

**Who are three people in history you admire most and why?**

**What have been the three biggest news events during your lifetime and why?**

**If you could travel into the future, would you rather see something that specifically relates to you, or**

**something that relates to the future of the country in general? Why?**

**If you could have three wishes, what would they be?**

**If you won $100 million tomorrow, what would you do with the money?**

**What’s the highest honor or award you’ve ever received?**

**What’s the most memorable phone call you’ve ever received?**

**What’s the best compliment you ever received?**

**What kinds of things bring you the most pleasure now? When you were a younger adult? A child?**

**What things frighten you now?**

**What frightened you when you were a younger adult? A child?**

**What’s the one thing you’ve always wanted but still don’t have?**

**Do you feel differently about yourself now from how you felt when you were younger?**

**How?**

**What do you think has stayed the same about you throughout life?**

**What do you think has changed?**

**The Present**

**Do you have any hobbies or special interests?**

**Do you enjoy any particular sports?**

**What’s your typical day like now?**

**How is it different from your daily routines in the past?**

**Is the present better or worse than when you were younger?**

**What do you do for fun?**

**Who do you trust and depend on?**

**What things are most important to you now? Why?**

**How have your dreams and goals changed through your life?**

**What do you see when you look in the mirror?**

**Aging**

**What do you remember about your 20s? 30s? 40s? 50s? 60s?**

**What events stand out in your mind? How was each age different from the one before it?**

**There are some ages we don’t look forward to. What birthday were you least enthusiastic about? Why?**

**If you could go back to any age, which age would it be and why?**

**How do you feel now about growing old? What’s the hardest thing about growing older?**

**The best thing?**

**What were your parents like when they got older?**

**Did you have any expectations at points in your life about what growing older would be like for you?**

**How should a person prepare for old age?**

**Is there anything you wish you’d done differently?**

**Do you think about the future and make plans?**

**What are your concerns for the future?**

**If you live another 20-30 years, what will you do?**

**Do you want to live another 20-30 years?**

**What do you look forward to now?**

**Life Lessons and Legacies**

**What’s your most cherished family tradition?**

**Why is it important?**

**What have you liked best about your life so far?**

**What’s your happiest or proudest moment?**

**What do you feel have been the important successes in your life?**

**The frustrations?**

**What’s the most difficult thing that ever happened to you?**

**How did you deal with it?**

**What do you think the turning points have been in your life?**

**What were you like then?**

**Are there times of your life that you remember more vividly than others? Why?**

**What have been the most influential experiences in your life?**

**Describe a person or situation from your childhood that had a profound effect on the way you look at life.**

**If you were writing the story of your life, how would you divide it into chapters?**

**What, if anything, would you have done differently in your life?**

**What do you know now that you wish you’d known when you were young?**

**What have you thrown away in your life that you wish you hadn’t?**

**What have you held on to that’s**

**important and why is it important?**

**What “junk” have you held on to and why?**

**Over time, how have you changed the way you look at life/people?**

**What advice did your grandparents or parents give you that you remember best?**

**Do you have a philosophy of life?**

**What’s your best piece of advice for living?**

**If a young person came to you**

**asking what’s the most important thing for living a good life, what would you say?**

**How do you define a “good life” or a “successful life”?**

**Do you think a person needs to first overcome serious setbacks or challenges to be truly successful?**

**In what way is it important to know your limitations in your life or career?**

**If you had the power to solve one and only one problem in the world, what would it be and why?**

**What do you see as your place or purpose in life?**

**How did you come to that conclusion?**

**What would you like your children and grandchildren to remember about you?**

**If you could write a message to each of your children and grandchildren and put it in a time capsule for them to read 20 years from now, what would you write to each?**

**How would you describe yourself?**

**What is your biggest accomplishment?**

**Have you read any good books lately?**

**What is your dream job?**

**Who is your personal hero?**

**Who has been the most important person in your life? Can you tell me about him or her?**

**What was the happiest moment of your life? The saddest?**

**Who has been the biggest influence on your life? What lessons did that person teach you?**

**Who has been the kindest to you in your life?**

**What are the most important lessons you’ve learned in life?**

**What advice would you give to your teenage self?**

**What is your earliest memory?**

**What is your favorite memory of me?**

**Are there any funny stories your family tells about you that come to mind?**

**Are there any funny stories or memories or characters from your life that you want to tell me about?**

1. **What are you proudest of?**
2. **When in life have you felt most alone?**

**If you could hold on to one memory from your life forever, what would that be?**

**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?**

**What are your hopes for what the future holds for me? For my children?**

**If this was to be our very last conversation, is there anything you’d want to say to me**

**For your great-great grandchildren listening to this, years from now: is there any wisdom you’d want to pass on to them? What would you want them to know?**

**Is there anything that you’ve never told me but want to tell me now?**

**Is there something about me that you’ve always wanted to know but have never asked?**

**Friends or Colleagues**

**If you could interview anyone from your life living or dead, but not a celebrity, who would it be and why?**

**What is your first memory of me?**

**Was there a time when you didn’t like me?**

**What makes us such good friends?**

**How would you describe me?**

**How would you describe yourself?**

**Where will we be in 10 years? 20 years?**

**Do you think we’ll ever lose touch with each other?**

**Is there anything that you’ve always wanted to tell me but haven’t?**

**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?**

**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?**

**Children questioning 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?**

**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?**

**School**

* **Did you enjoy school?**
* **What kind of student were you?**
* **What would you do for fun?**
* **How would your classmates remember you?**
* **Are you still friends with anyone from that time in your life?**
* **What are your best memories of grade school/high school/college/graduate school? Worst memories?**
* **Was there a teacher or teachers who had a particularly strong influence on your life? Tell me about them.**
* **Do you have any favorite stories from school?**

**Love & Relationships**

* **Do you have a love of your life?**
* **When did you first fall in love?**
* **Can you tell me about your first kiss?**
* **What was your first serious relationship?**
* **Do you believe in love at first sight?**
* **Do you ever think about previous lovers?**
* **What lessons have you learned from your relationships?**

**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?**

**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?**
* **What are the hardest times?**

**Elections & Civic Engagement**

* **A lot of people are talking about the divide in the country today. Do you believe there is one? Does it concern you? If so, do you have any thoughts on how we might begin to heal it?**
* **Does the divide concern you? Why?**
* **What does it mean to you to be an American?**
* **Has this election changed how you feel about any of the people in your life? If so, why?**
* **Looking ahead four years, what significant changes do you anticipate seeing in the country as a result of this presidential election?**
* **What were your feelings when you learned about the outcome of the presidential election?**
* **What are your hopes going forward?**
* **What are your fears going forward?**
* **Do you think this election will drive you to be more or less politically involved?**
* **What was it like for you the first time you voted?**
* **Can you tell me about a presidential race that meant a lot to you? What do you remember about that election?**
* **Is voting important to you? Why or why not?**
* **Is it important to you that I vote when I turn 18 years old? Why or why not?**

**Have you ever experienced any obstacles to voting in your lifetime?**

**Biography Interview Questions**

**Early Childhood (Choose 2-3)**

**4. Who was the most influential person to you as a child?**

**Grade School/High School (Choose 2-3)**

**What was your favorite sport?**

**How would you describe yourself as a student, both socially and academically?**

**What sort of extracurricular activities did you participate in as a teen?**

**Did you have a teen idol?  If so, who was it and how did they spark your interest?**

**What was your favorite music/band/dance in high school?**

**What would people you know find surprising about you as a teen?**

**College (Optional)**

**Did you go to university or college?**

**How did you decide what you wanted to study?**

**What are your most memorable college moments?**

**Who was your most memorable roommate?**

**Why did you decide to attend college?**

**What subject(s) did you study and why?**

**Did you get a degree?  In what?**

**If you could do it again, would you take a different academic path, or are you satisfied with the route you followed?**

**What on-campus activities did you participate in?**

**What was your graduation from high school like?**

**What dreams and goals did you have for your life when you graduated?**

**Military Experience (Optional)**

**Did you serve in the military?**

**What did you do and what kind of experience was it?**

**How did it come about that you went into the military?**

**Did you ever serve duty in another country?  If so, where and for what reason?**

**For how many years did you serve?**

**What rank were you while in the service?**

**Did you form any long lasting relationships?**

**What is your fondest memory while serving duty?**

**What was the most difficult aspect of participating in the military?**

**Were you ever in combat?  Explain the circumstances.**

**What is your opinion regarding war as a means to resolve conflict?**

**Would you (or did you) encourage your child to enlist?  Why or why not?**

**Do you consider your duty as having been a positive or negative life experience?  Why?**

**What did you learn from the military that benefited you most in life?**

**Career (Choose 2)**

**How did you decide what you wanted to do with your life?**

**How do you feel about that choice?**

**What was your first job?**

**What was your best job?**

**What was your worst job?**

**Who was the biggest influence in your career?**

**What would be your ideal job?**

**What kind of work do/did your parents do?**

**Family (Choose 2-3)**

**Have you any brothers or sisters, if so what’s their name and how would you describe them?**

**What was life like growing up?**

**Are there any obvious or unusual genetic traits that run in your family line?**

**What were some of your family traditions that you remember?**

**Did your family have special ways of celebrating specific holidays?**

**Describe your grandparents and share some memories of them.**

**Do you have children?  If so, how many and what age and gender are they?**

**What is your goal as a parent?**

**How would your children describe you as a parent?**

**How do you describe yourself as a parent?**

**In what ways have your parents influenced you the most?**

**Do you wish you had been raised differently?  How so?**

**What is your relationship with your parents like today?**

**Who are you closest to in your family?**

**Who do you admire most in your family and why?**

**Have any family members died?**

**If so, what was your relationship to them and how did their death affect you/your family?**

**Love (Optional)**

**Who was your first love?**

**Have you had your heart broken?**

**Have you broken any hearts?**

**Have you ever been married? To whom and for how long?**

**How did you and your spouse first meet?**

**Do you believe in love at first sight?**

**What was the most special way you’ve shown someone that you loved them?**

**What was the most special way you’ve been shown you’re loved?**

**Politics/History (Choose 2)**

**What do you consider to be the most significant political event that has occurred during your life?**

**Which political figure do you most admire?**

**Other than the present, which historical era would you like to have lived in?**

**What do you consider to be the most important war fought during your lifetime?  In all of history?**

**Have you ever fought for a political cause?**

**What would you like to see change in the current political/social atmosphere?**

**If you could meet any historical figure, of the past or present, who would it be and why?**

**General (Choose 2-3)**

**What is your definition of “happiness”?**

**What is your most memorable travel experience?**

**What is the funniest thing that’s ever happened to you?**

**What is your happiest memory?**

**What accomplishment are you most proud of?**

**How do you think people will remember you?**

**Who is your biggest fan?**

**Whose biggest fan are you?**

**What do you like to do in your spare time?**

**What is your most embarrassing moment?**

**If you could possess one super-human power, what would it be?**

**What is your greatest fear?**

**What is your greatest hope?**

**What do you think happens after death?**

**What place does religion have in your life?**

**What are the main lessons you’ve learned in life?**

**Age Specific Questions (Choose 1 or more)**

**Are there any specific historic events that stand out for you and you remember exactly where you where and what you were doing at that moment???**

**If you had a chance for a “do-over” in life, what would you do differently?**