A note about the *Lifescapes* process

Normally we would spend months as a group meeting regularly to discuss and develop our collective writing skills, brainstorming ideas and staying motivated to write, review, revise, review, revise (until we get it the way we want it), polish, and finally publish. Like this:



Well, some things don’t have to change. This booklet was created to help you start your memoir writing process by reconnecting you with all sorts of events from your life. Don’t worry if you can’t answer everything; just do your best to answer the prompts carefully and honestly.

Let’s get in the right mindset.   
What is a memoir?

A memoir is a memory that has been given meaning by the author.

It is a piece of autobiographical writing, but it is not the entire story of a life. Memoirs are more about emotional truth than fact checking, about capturing certain highlights or meaningful *moments* in the author’s life.

**Common Characteristics of the Memoir Form**

* Focuses on the past experiences of an author but with a theme connecting the memories.
* Focuses on a brief period of time or series of related events
* The author is usually the central character of the story but the author and the character are treated as two distinct entities. “Separating yourself as writer from yourself as protagonist will help give you the necessary perspective to craft the memoir as a story” (Barrington).
* Has a narrative structure, including many of the usual elements of storytelling such as setting, plot development, imagery, conflict, characterization, foreshadowing and flashback, and irony and symbolism.
* Includes the writer’s contemplation of the meaning of these events in retrospect.
* Has an engaging, personal, conversational voice, usually written in the first person.
* It has a fictional quality even though the story is true. It has many of the characteristics of fiction, moving both backward and forward in time, re-creating believable dialog, switching back and forth between scene and summary, and controlling the pace and tension of the story.

With all that in mind … let’s bring up some old memories!

Hello, World!

Place baby photograph here

Name: Click or tap here to enter text.

Birth Date: Click or tap here to enter text.

Birth Place: Click or tap here to enter text.

Mother’s Maiden Name: Click or tap here to enter text.

Mother’s Birthplace: Click or tap here to enter text.

Father’s Name: Click or tap here to enter text.

Father’s Birthplace: Click or tap here to enter text.

**Your Birth**

Were you born in a hospital or at home?

Click or tap here to enter text.

If in a hospital, what was the name of the hospital and where was it located? If at home, what was the address?

Click or tap here to enter text.

How much did you weigh?

Who was there?

Click or tap here to enter text.

Is there a story surrounding your birth?

Click or tap here to enter text.

What was happening in the world at the time you were born?

Click or tap here to enter text.

Were you named after someone?

Click or tap here to enter text.

Did you have a nickname?

Click or tap here to enter text.

Who gave you the nickname, and what was the inspiration?

Click or tap here to enter text.

**Your Home**

What is your earliest recollection of home? Did you live in the city, out of town, or on a farm?

Click or tap here to enter text.

Is there a reason why your parents lived in this place?

Click or tap here to enter text.

Is this house still owned by your family?

What happened to this home?

Click or tap here to enter text.

Can you describe this house?

Which room did you feel most comfortable in?

Click or tap here to enter text.

How many homes have you lived in?

What were the addresses?

Click or tap here to enter text.

Did you have a favourite home?

Did it have a name?

Click or tap here to enter text.

**Your Family**

List your brothers and sisters from oldest to youngest, with birth dates.

Click or tap here to enter text.

What kind of relationship did you have with your brothers and sisters?

What is your relationship like now (if they are still living?)

Click or tap here to enter text.

What language(s) did you speak in your home? Any regional dialects?

Click or tap here to enter text.

How would you describe traditions & special occasions that you celebrated at home? (Birthdays, anniversaries, Christmas, returning from war, etc.)

Click or tap here to enter text.

Were there any other special family members (aunts, uncles, cousins, etc.?)

Click or tap here to enter text.

Did you have any pets? Describe them.

Click or tap here to enter text.

**Your Mother**

When and where was she born? Where did she grow up?

Click or tap here to enter text.

What kind of childhood did she have? Did she suffer hardships?

Click or tap here to enter text.

Describe your mother. Do you or any of your family resemble her?

Click or tap here to enter text.

What else can you say about your mother? Did she have any special talents or abilities? What was her personality like?

Click or tap here to enter text.

How did she support herself and/or the family?

Click or tap here to enter text.

**Your Father**

When and where was he born? Where did he grow up?

Click or tap here to enter text.

What kind of childhood did he have? Did he suffer hardships?

Click or tap here to enter text.

Describe your father. Do you or any of your family resemble him?

Click or tap here to enter text.

What else can you say about your father? Did he have any special talents or abilities? What was his personality like?

Click or tap here to enter text.

How did he support himself and/or the family?

Click or tap here to enter text.

**Your Parents**

When did they meet? Where and how did it happen?

Click or tap here to enter text.

Do they have a marriage story? Where did it take place? Who was in attendance?

Click or tap here to enter text.

How did your parents handle hardships (financial, physical, emotional etc.?)

Click or tap here to enter text.

If your parents have passed, how, where and when did they die? How did this affect your life?

Click or tap here to enter text.

Is there anything about your parents you would like to share with future generations (great accomplishments, character traits etc.?)

Click or tap here to enter text.

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**Your Grandparents**

What were your father’s parents’ names? Include birth dates and birthplaces if you can.

Click or tap here to enter text.

What were your mother’s parents’ names? Include birth dates and birthplaces if you can.

Click or tap here to enter text.

Were you able to spend time with them?

Do you recall one or two special times you spent with grandparents?

Click or tap here to enter text.

What do you remember most about them?

Were there any stories they told you that you can share?

Click or tap here to enter text.

Looking back to past generations in your family, were there any events that shaped your family history (wartime, depression, hardships, events in history?)

Click or tap here to enter text.

**More Family Memories**

Click or tap here to enter text.

**Memories of School**

Name the schools you attended and their locations.

What grade was your favourite and why?

Click or tap here to enter text.

Did you have a favourite teacher? Least favourite teacher? What did they do to make you form that opinion of them?

Click or tap here to enter text.

What was your favourite subject? Least favourite subject? Why?

Click or tap here to enter text.

Were you involved in sports or other activities?

Were you ever in a theatre production or choir?

Click or tap here to enter text.

Who were your friends? Do you still keep in touch with them?

Click or tap here to enter text.

**Growing Up**

How old were you when you learned to drive? What kind of vehicle was it? Who taught you?

Click or tap here to enter text.

What were the fashions when you were a teenager? Hairstyles, clothing, jewelry…?

Click or tap here to enter text.

When you went out with your friends or on a date, where did you go?

Click or tap here to enter text.

Who were your closest friends when you were a teenager?

Click or tap here to enter text.

When did you move out of your parents’ home? Was there a specific reason why you left?

Click or tap here to enter text.

When you left home, what were your greatest challenges?

Click or tap here to enter text.

**Love and Marriage**

How did you meet your future spouse? Was it love at first sight?

Click or tap here to enter text.

How old were you when you met each other? How long was your courtship?

Click or tap here to enter text.

Describe the type of things you did and places you went when you were dating.

Click or tap here to enter text.

Were there any dating rules? Did you have a curfew or other restrictions?

Click or tap here to enter text.

Describe the marriage proposal.

Click or tap here to enter text.

Describe your wedding. What was the date? Where was it held? Describe what you wore.

Click or tap here to enter text.

Who were the maid of honour, the bridesmaids, the best man, and the ushers?

Click or tap here to enter text.

Where did you live when you first got married? How much did you pay for your first home/apartment? How long did you stay? What kind of memories do you have of that place?

Click or tap here to enter text.

What kind of relationship did you have with your in-laws?

Click or tap here to enter text.

How did you resolve problems in your marriage?

Click or tap here to enter text.

What kind of activities did/do you and your spouse take part in? Social, sports, crafts, hobbies, friends, travel…

Click or tap here to enter text.

What do you think makes a happy marriage?

Click or tap here to enter text.

If your spouse has died, at what age and how did he/she pass away?

How many years had you been married?

Click or tap here to enter text.

If you had the chance to do it all over again, what qualities would you look for in a

partner?

Click or tap here to enter text.

What are some special moments in your marriage? Birth of children, trips together, spending time together …

Click or tap here to enter text.

Did/do you have a special song? Wedding song, anniversary song…

Click or tap here to enter text.

**Children**

What are the names of your children? When and where were they born?

Click or tap here to enter text.

What do you remember about their births?

Click or tap here to enter text.

What stands out in your memory about the birth or early years of any of your

children?

Click or tap here to enter text.

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Is there someone who gave you advice in raising your children, perhaps your own parents or older family friends? Was it good advice?

Click or tap here to enter text.

Did you have any major health concerns about any of your children?

Click or tap here to enter text.

What was the best thing about being a parent?

Click or tap here to enter text.

What was the hardest thing?

Click or tap here to enter text.

Were there any special challenges? Were the teenage years particularly hard?

Click or tap here to enter text.

If you could live these years over, what would you change?

Click or tap here to enter text.

What special memories did your childhood home(s) hold for you?

Where was it located? How big was it? What did it look like?

Click or tap here to enter text.

What would you say were the most important rules and values you tried to instill in your children? E.g., love, compassion, hard work …

Click or tap here to enter text.

**Things I Want My Children To Know**

Click or tap here to enter text.

**The Military and War Years**

Did you serve in the military? What years did you serve?

What was the name of your regiment? What was your rank and regimental no.?

Click or tap here to enter text.

Where were you stationed? Where did you serve? How old were you?

Click or tap here to enter text.

Did you see action during wartime? If so, where? Were you wounded?

Click or tap here to enter text.

What effect did the war have on your life? Did the war change who you were as a person?

Click or tap here to enter text.

What did serving in the war mean to you?

Click or tap here to enter text.

**The Military and War Years**

Were you awarded any medals or citations?

Click or tap here to enter text.

Did any of your family or friends die in the war? How did this affect you?

Click or tap here to enter text.

How do you feel now about your participation in the war? As you look back, is there anything you would like to say about that time in your life?

Click or tap here to enter text.

What did you do to help the war effort? Rationing, building aircraft, training etc.?

Click or tap here to enter text.

If you fought in specific battles, where would one look to find more information?

Books, movies, journals, etc.

Click or tap here to enter text.

**Memories of the Working Years**

What was your very first job? What was the pay? What hours did you work? How did you get the job?

Click or tap here to enter text.

What made you choose your career? Was it a family related choice? Did you go to school for it?

Click or tap here to enter text.

What were some of your job accomplishments? Promotions, awards, perks …

Click or tap here to enter text.

Do you do any volunteer work? Did volunteering have an influence on your life?

Click or tap here to enter text.

If you could do it all again, would you make different choices?

Click or tap here to enter text.

List all of your employers and what positions you held.

Click or tap here to enter text.

What was the best job that you had? What was the worst job? Why was one so rewarding and the other not so good?

Click or tap here to enter text.

Do you have any fond memories of people that you worked with? Did you keep in touch with co-workers over the years?

Click or tap here to enter text.

Do you have any career advice to share?

Click or tap here to enter text.

**Vacation Travel**

What is your favourite vacation memory? Where did you go? Who did you go with? Why was it your favourite?

Click or tap here to enter text.

When you were growing up, did you have a cabin or a special place you would travel to on a regular basis? Who would go? Was there a reason for traveling to this destination?

Click or tap here to enter text.

What was the most beautiful place that you have visited? What makes it the most beautiful?

Click or tap here to enter text.

When was your first airplane flight? What was your destination? How did you feel about flying? What type of aircraft was it?

Click or tap here to enter text.

If you could go anywhere in the world, where would you go and why?

Click or tap here to enter text.

**Leisure Time**

What were/are your favourite hobbies or interests? Are they the same now as they were when you were younger?

Click or tap here to enter text.

Did you have any special animals or pets that hold a special place in you heart?

Name these pets and tell some favourite memories about them.

Click or tap here to enter text.

If retired, how did you accept retirement? Was it challenging or an opportunity for more time for you?

Click or tap here to enter text.

Is there a hobby or craft that you would have liked to take up bur never did?

What was the reason for not doing it?

Click or tap here to enter text.

Were/are you involved in service clubs? How long have you been involved?

Click or tap here to enter text.

**Grandparenting**

How many grandchildren and great-grandchildren do you have? Name them and their parents.

Click or tap here to enter text.

Do they live close by? Do you see your grandchildren/great-grandchildren often?

Click or tap here to enter text.

What do your grandchildren call you? Is this a family nickname that you called your grandparents?

Click or tap here to enter text.

What are your hopes and dreams for your grandchildren?

Click or tap here to enter text.

As a grandparent, what would you like your grandchildren to remember about

you?

Click or tap here to enter text.

**Things I Want My Grandchildren/Great-Grandchildren To Know**

Click or tap here to enter text.

**Your Life**

What were the best years of your life?

Click or tap here to enter text.

What do you wish you had done that you never got a chance to do?

Click or tap here to enter text.

Is there a time in your life that was especially hard, maybe a time when money was hard to come by?

Click or tap here to enter text.

Is there anything about your life that you would change if you could?

Were there any relationships that ended because of something you did?

Click or tap here to enter text.

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Are there any great moments in your life that, if you could, you would like to

re-live?

Click or tap here to enter text.

If you could have had more of something, what would it have been? Love, money, freedom, skills, etc.?

Click or tap here to enter text.

What traits do you admire in others? Honesty, integrity, ability to speak languages, etc.

Click or tap here to enter text.

What traits do you know that you possess?

Click or tap here to enter text.

Who or what influenced you most in your life? Parents, friends, mentors, life-changing events, etc.

Click or tap here to enter text.

Would you say that you have been lucky in life? Why or why not? Would you say that you “reaped the rewards” of hard work?

Click or tap here to enter text.

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**My Favourite Things**

Colour Click or tap here to enter text.

Flower Click or tap here to enter text.

Place Click or tap here to enter text.

Season Click or tap here to enter text.

Food Click or tap here to enter text.

Famous Person/Hero Click or tap here to enter text.

Beverage Click or tap here to enter text.

Animal Click or tap here to enter text.

Song/Hymn Click or tap here to enter text.

What is the most amazing thing you have witnessed during your lifetime?

Click or tap here to enter text.

What is the worst thing you have witnessed during your lifetime?

Click or tap here to enter text.

**I Would Like My Family To Know….**

Click or tap here to enter text.

**More Ideas for Your Writing**

One of the happiest times in my life was …

Click or tap here to enter text.

One of the saddest times in my life was …

Click or tap here to enter text.

I came to the important realization that …

Click or tap here to enter text.

I realized I was no longer a child when …

Click or tap here to enter text.

The best birthday present I ever received was …

Click or tap here to enter text.

My favourite holiday is … because …

Click or tap here to enter text.

My favourite place is …

Click or tap here to enter text.

**More Ideas for Your Writing**

When I was little, I used to …

Click or tap here to enter text.

I was proud of myself for …

Click or tap here to enter text.

I was ashamed of myself for …

Click or tap here to enter text.

I have never been as engrossed in learning as when …

Click or tap here to enter text.

I spent time with someone who was much different from me when …

Click or tap here to enter text.

A time when I decided to so something differently from everyone else around me was …

Click or tap here to enter text.

The person who has had the biggest influence on me is …

Click or tap here to enter text.

**More Ideas for Your Writing**

An experience that challenged me was …

Click or tap here to enter text.

One of my biggest successes was …

Click or tap here to enter text.

One of my biggest failures was …

Click or tap here to enter text.

I realized that I had a talent for …

Click or tap here to enter text.

The worst thing that has ever happened to me is …

Click or tap here to enter text.

I was in grave danger when …

Click or tap here to enter text.

**Dares and Adventures**: Have you taken/given dares? Paid the consequences?

Regretted your actions? What are some of you adventures, great & small?

Click or tap here to enter text.

**Ideas & Ideals, Causes & Commitments**: What are the central moral, ethical, & spiritual values that you’ve held in your life: Where did they come form? How

have they been tested?

Click or tap here to enter text.

**Traditions/Maxims/Advice**: Ok, so your kids & grandkids never take your advice. Put it down anyway, along with the experiences that generated it.

Maybe somebody will read and even listen!

Click or tap here to enter text.

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**Possessions**: Favourite possessions you enjoy, stories about what makes them

precious.

Click or tap here to enter text.

**Formative Events**: These events helped shape me into who I am today.

Click or tap here to enter text.

**Forgettables (not):** Sometimes isolated, sometimes not, we all have times we

would like to forget but cannot. List yours.

Click or tap here to enter text.

**And Finally….**

**Miscellaneous**: (*Of shoes and ships and sealing wax, of cabbages and kings*…): We are by human nature storytellers. Go back through your notes and put down the rough outlines of the key stories you think you want to share with others.

Click or tap here to enter text.