(Y)Our Family

This exercise is designed to help your students connect with family members’ experiences and align them with their own. Please note that the word “family” is self defined and can apply in a wide variety of ways.

1.) Identify a family member who you want to get to know a little better or from whom you want to more about their youth or early experiences.

2.) Ask this family member if you could schedule a 30 – 60 minute chat, during which they will share a personal experience. Let them know that you would like to record the conversation and ask if you have permission to do so. Also, tell them that you will be making an artistic project from their story to make sure that is alright with them.

3.) Once the discussion is scheduled, ask the family member to think about an experience from their life that they feel shaped who they are in some way. This could be a story from childhood, a recent experience that changed their life, or some other event that they want to share.

4.) During your chat, give your family member the opportunity to tell their story.

5.) If you have questions, you can now ask them of your family member. You might be curious about their feelings or want to know more about where they lived, etc.

6.) Once the chat is over, notice if there are any stories from your own life that remind you of the story you were told. For example:

a.) If they told a story about a good time they had with a sibling, maybe you will think of a fun experience with a member of your family.

b.) If they shared about a time that they were upset and had to find a way to deal with what occurred, your might think of a moment that was challenging for you.

7.) Take some notes or make an audio recording about your own story – What happened? How did you feel? Do you feel the same way about it now?
8.) Listen to the recording of the story that your family member shared. Is there a moment in the story that you can really picture, or is there an emotion that you are left with after hearing the story?

9.) Draw a picture. This could be a “realistic” portrait of the moment that you identified from your family member’s story, or it could be an “abstract” expression of the feeling you experienced.

10.) Look at the notes or listen to the recording about your own story. Is there a moment in the story that you can really picture, or is there an emotion that you are left with?

11.) Draw a picture. This could be a “realistic” portrait of the moment that you identified from your own story, or it could be an “abstract” expression of the feeling you experienced.

12.) Put these two pictures side by side. Share them with your family member, if you’d like.

13.) If you want to take an extra step, you could cut the pictures into pieces and then tape them together, making a collage. In this way, your two stories are part of one picture!