

(Y)Our Experience

This exercise is designed to help you and your students engage with family stories in a mindful and empathetic way.

- 1.) Identify a family member whose history you wish you understood more fully.
- 2.) Ask this family member if you could schedule a 30 – 60 minute discussion, 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, inform them that you plan to combine their story with your own reflections and make sure that they are comfortable with that.
- 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 the narrative of a single moment or event, or it could be a reflection on where they grew up and the family dynamics in their household.
- 4.) During your talk, give your family member the opportunity to share their story, uninterrupted.
- 5.) After the story is told, ask any follow-up questions that may arise. These could include queries that address details that were unclear to you, their feelings at certain moments in the story, the implications of the narrative, and so on.
- 6.) Immediately after your time together, take notes about your own reactions to the story – What excited you, what you struggled with, what confirmed your assumptions, what upended your understanding, etc. Most importantly, consider how this will inform your understanding of your own story and yourself going forward.
- 7.) Combine your reflections and experience of the story with your family member's telling of it. This could take one of two forms:
 - a.) Make an audio recording of your impressions of the story (aligned with the notes you took in step six) and then edit together your reflections with your family member's telling of the narrative. To make this simple, one could alternate between the two – 30 seconds to a minute of personal reflection, followed by 30 seconds to a minute of

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storytelling. Follow this pattern until the story is complete.

b.) Make a written record of your reflections and the story you were told. This can follow a similar pattern outlined above – A paragraph of your own experience, followed by a paragraph of the narrative. This can continue until the writing is complete.

8.) Edit. Go back through your audio recording or your written work and notice where you could more closely align your experience with the story that is being communicated. Also notice where your reflections might include more personal details from your own life. Make changes as needed.

9.) Read or listen to your work.

10.) Share your work with your family member if it feels proper to do so.