

Life Walk

In a Life Walk, each member is asked to literally walk his or her life, sharing experiences at different ages. Ideally, chairs are arranged in a semi circle and the person doing the Life Walk stands in the open end and walks toward the members of the group. A “path” constructed of heavy paper, cardboard, or vinyl numbers in 5 year increments is laid on the floor starting from the place where the member doing the Life Walk would begin.

Each person is asked to walk his or her life beginning at birth and going until the present day, recalling the most significant events that have had an impact on him/her. One key is for participants to speak in the present tense, as if he/she is experiencing the event today. For example, a person might say, “I am five years old. My mother walks into my room where I am playing and tells me that she is leaving my father. I am confused. I wonder whether she is leaving me, too...”

Little preparation is needed for the Life Walk, although you can ask members in advance of the Retreat or Meeting to be thinking about key events in their life that had a significant impact. Five minutes is generally sufficient time to prepare. Notes are not used during the walk. You may wish to give the person doing the walk a lighted candle to hold and dim the lights to increase the impact of the exercise.

Other Guidelines:

- Members can begin their walk at any age, stepping forward to the approximate age next to the path on the floor. (The 5 year increments on the path are only a guide.) The goal is to share as many life impacting events as possible in the time allowed. Some members will be able to walk their entire life, while others will only get part way.
- The Walk is a timed exercise. Eight to 12 minutes is usually sufficient time to allot to each Life Walker. The time keeper holds up fingers at the midpoint and gives a 2 minute warning. At the end of the allotted time, the Life Walker simply wraps up the event that he/she is on and steps to his/her current age on the path.
- Other members of the group should be silent during the Life Walk. Allow 3-5 minutes at the end of each walk for reactions from group members. It is best to keep the comments to statements mirroring what the other members witnessed: “I see a boy/girl who...” or “I see a woman/man who...” No questions.

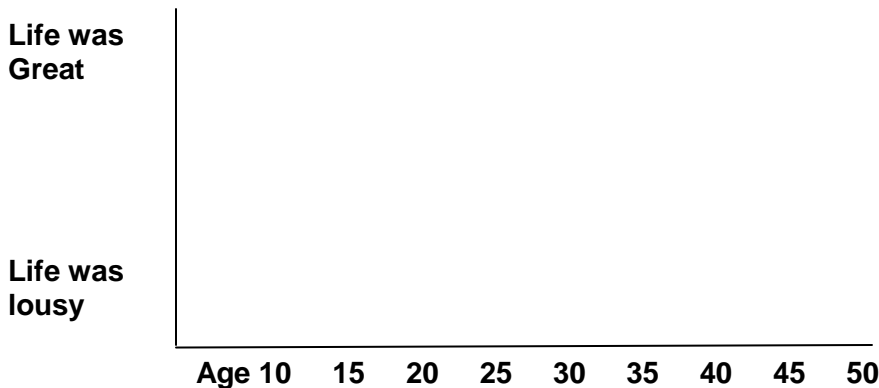
Variations:

Life Walks may be “themed:” Walk your marriage, relationships with your parents/children, career, spiritual journey, etc. They may be future oriented: Walk how you would like your life to be from the present until death. And they may be situational: Walk the period in your life when you had the greatest personal growth.

Lifeline Exercises

Notes from Forum Trainers:

1. Tell the forum that you want to learn more about each other and that they should take 15 -20 minutes reflecting back on their lives in relation to some of the major highs and lows they have experiences. Mark each high and low, perhaps add a word to remind you what the event relates to and when completed join the dots as you would in a graph and then each person shows their graph and takes uninterrupted time to share their story. You as moderator should go first.
2. I've done this 100's of times for 10-15 minutes and I've done 2-3 times for 25-60 minutes. The experience is far more meaningful and emotional when I've done the longer version.
3. The exercise can be enhanced if more advance preparation goes into it to bring things that add meaning. I've seen pictures of parents, kids, spouses; important artifacts like a trophy, a bible, a book that changed someone's life, etc.
4. Bring your childhood photographs and music that you enjoyed at different times of your life.
5. Ask them to put their graph on a large sheet of paper or cardboard and to be prepared to address the group with the graph up for everyone to see. Just seeing the graph should be enough to prompt each person to talk in a spontaneous way about their life. Allow at least a half hour per person. You will find that most people have plenty to reveal, and it will be a most worthwhile way if reflecting on their lives for everyone. Plus you will all get to know a whole lot about each other. I suggest you trust the process, and yourself as the moderator, and you are bound to have a successful topic!



Life Line Exercise 1

The grandfather of retreat topics. Most Forums have done this one but if yours has not, do it next! Each member uses a large piece of paper and marking pen to draw three lines that represent the highs and lows in his personal life, career and financial situation. The lines trend up for periods which overall are remembered as positive and down for periods of decline or difficult experiences. Each member takes a turn describing the various points in his life line and what was going on to lead him to this memory.

In a retreat setting, the use of large art paper and colored crayons significantly enhances the lifeline experience.

Variations

If your Forum did Lifeline years ago, do it again covering the period elapsed since the first presentation. Do the Lifeline exercise focusing only on the first 20 years of your life. Present a lifeline on one of your parents. It is a great way to reflect on your father or mother and understand the influences upon your relationship with him.

Lifeline Exercises

Life Line Exercise 2

- The Moderator goes first and it is his/her responsibility to set the **tone of sharing**
- The **timer** has a crucial role in that the presenter is made aware of time passing and moves more evenly thru the life stages.
- The **5 photos** have to be thought about before the retreat - they are often the focal points of the presentation and then can be left up on the Lifeline so that at the end all the members lifelines are displayed
- Around the room with photos affixed – all participants can then have a more in depth image of the presentations.

25 minutes comprising:

- 15 mins lifeline
- 5 mins for some comments and questions from the group (these should be reflections rather than questions)
- 5 mins break

Each member will be given a large sheet/s of paper and marking pens to draw a line/s that represents the highs and low of his/her life.

The lines trend up for the periods which overall are remembered as positive and down for the periods of decline or personal difficulty.

Each person describes the various points in her life and what was going on to lead her to this memory.

To Forum members:

Please bring along a photo to represent each of the following stages: (5 photos only)

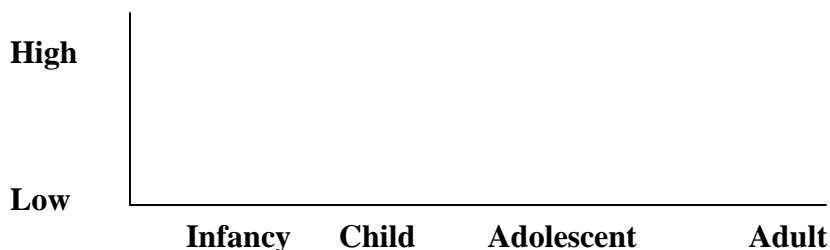
- Infancy
- Childhood
- Adolescence
- Young adult
- Mature adult

As you tell your story, these may be affixed to your Lifeline.

In sharing our lifelines we hope to have a deepening experience. This will depend on the degree to which everyone is prepared to share insights rather than merely relate their life story.

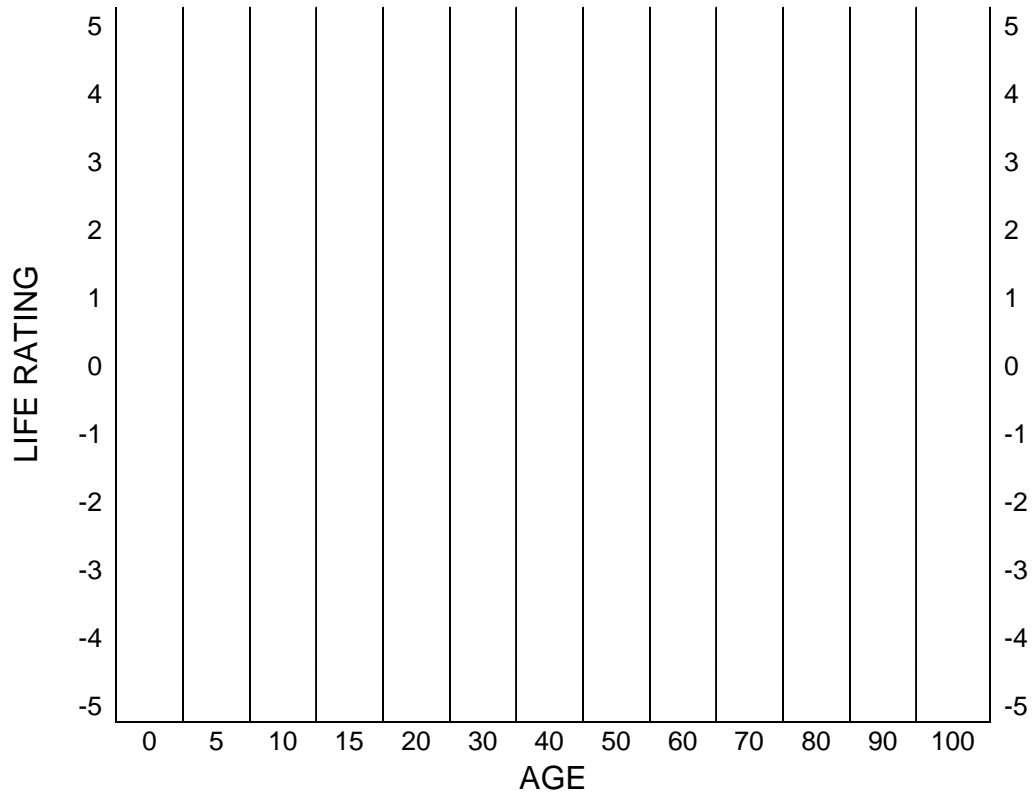
So – give it some thought but not too much preparation. You may like to jot down some key points but rather tell than read.

The graph may take the format below or you can adapt it to suit yourself.



Lifeline Exercises

Life Line Exercise 3 My lifeline, past and future



Focus on the past and future, we will discuss "present" later on
 Reflect on how the events were felt at the time, not with hindsight
 Try to focus the past on facts and related feelings
 Talk about the future in terms of hopes and fears

Resolving Conflict

Choose one of the following questions and give each person 2 minutes to respond.

Describe a time, in your business or personal life, when a friend or acquaintance was disruptive in a group situation. Did you do anything about it? If so, what did you do? If not, why not?

Describe a time you were involved in resolution of a conflict. Was an effective method for resolution used? Why or why not?

How does conflict make you feel? Does it energize you or sap your energy?

Do you believe that conflict can be avoided? If so, what methods do you employ (or hope to employ) to avoid conflict?