

Recording Life Stories: 5 Ways to Help Seniors Share Special Memories



Creating a storytelling connection with an older adult by recording life stories is one of the most meaningful and rewarding activities you can enjoy together.

Seniors who reflect on their life experiences are often surprised and appreciative of how much they've been through. Thinking about and discussing the past also helps keep their minds active and engaged.

In addition, sharing stories often leads to improved communication, which has been shown to reduce care-related stress. This helps prevent caregiver burnout and its negative effects on the relationship.

Overall, the main benefit of storytelling is the bond it creates between people.

Having someone to share life stories with improves a person's sense of self worth and provides a worthwhile project to work on.

Plus, while you share these true bonding moments with your older adult, they might surprise you with stories you've never heard before or share valuable life advice.

But you might wonder how to get started with recording life stories for your older adult. At Vita Life Story, we help families preserve their special life stories.

Here, we share 5 simple tips and free resources that have helped families start their own life story projects.

1. Ask questions to keep the conversation flowing

To guide a storytelling session, you can find plenty of life story interview questions online and in life story journals.

For additional ideas, we share our Vita Storytime Cards as a free resource.

Our life story questions come with fun, nostalgic images designed by professional personal historians to inspire memories.

2. Record their story for a legacy project

Preserving life stories through audio recordings is a wonderful legacy project.

Audio recording your older adult's voice as they share stories adds meaning by showcasing their voice and personality.

Plus, having an audio recording means that there's no need to take notes by hand.

Most smartphones come with basic voice recording apps already installed. But if you'd prefer not to bother with apps or manage uploading and downloading files, Vita Life Story has a free audio recording service.

It works just like leaving a phone message — just dial a number and record your interview after the beep.

3. Go at their pace and ask follow-up questions

The keys to being a great interviewer are to give the storyteller time to share at their own pace and to prompt them for additional details.

While you do want to keep the conversation flowing, it's okay if your older adult takes long pauses. That gives them time to think and tell the story in their own way.

But don't be shy about asking questions when the timing feels right. Some of the most wonderful stories are told when the interviewer asks thoughtful follow-up questions to help them add context and interesting details.

Also keep in mind that even if your older adult's story doesn't seem 100% accurate, they're telling their life story from their unique perspective and memory.

4. Look through old photo albums

Another meaningful way to prompt life stories is to flip through old photo albums. Looking at photos from the past often brings back a flood of memories.

Plus, looking through old albums helps you identify cherished photos that you want to preserve in digital format in case they get lost or damaged. You could scan these photos or take a picture of them with a smartphone or digital camera.

5. Honor their life with a memoir

If you'd like to transform the audio recordings into a true keepsake, Vita Life Story has memoirists available to help transcribe your stories, edit audio clips, and preserve family photos.

A memoir of their life experiences makes a wonderful gift that honors your older adult's life and can be treasured as a family heirloom.