

Older Women's Legacy Circle Workbook



Memoirs:
Piecing Together
the Patterns
of Our
Lives

The OWL-Circle Memoir Workshops are a project of
The Story Circle Network
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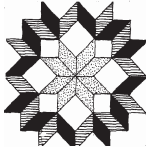
What legacy do you wish to leave?

Session One:
You
and the People
Who Shaped You

Who are you?

What legacies did you
inherit from your family?

Who Are You?



As you think about the various pieces of experience that go to make up your story, "who am I?" becomes a central question.

"Who am I?" can be a way of describing yourself in relationship to the important people in your life, in your original family, in the family you may have helped to create, and in the friendships you chose.

"Who am I?" can be a way of describing your physical, psychological, emotional, or spiritual self. It can also be a way of describing the work you have done and the various roles you have taken on and surrendered during your lifetime. Here are some possibilities:

"I am (or have been) a wife, mother, daughter, sister, aunt, grandmother..."

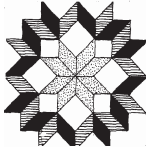
"I am (or have been) a teacher, writer, artist, homemaker, gardener, musician..."

"I am (or have been) a caregiver, creator, listener, initiator, organizer, positive thinker..."

"I am (or have been) strong, flexible, tall, alert..."

"I am (or have been) curious, honest, intelligent, fun-loving..."

Who I Am



Your facilitator will give you only a few minutes to complete this exercise, so the point is to write fast, without taking much time to think. In the spaces provided below, complete the sentence "I am..." as many times as you can—up to a dozen.

You may surprise even yourself at the number of diverse aspects that go into making the whole woman: you.

I am _____

I am _____

I am _____

I am _____

I am _____

I am _____

I am _____

I am _____

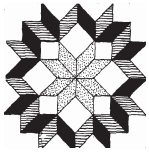
I am _____

I am _____

I am _____

I am _____

What Legacies Did You Inherit From Your Family?

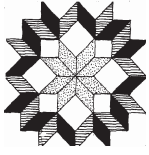


Most of us have seen those figures called "family trees," that outline the relationships among the people that make up a family—immediate and extended. Perhaps you have seen (or even created) your own family tree.

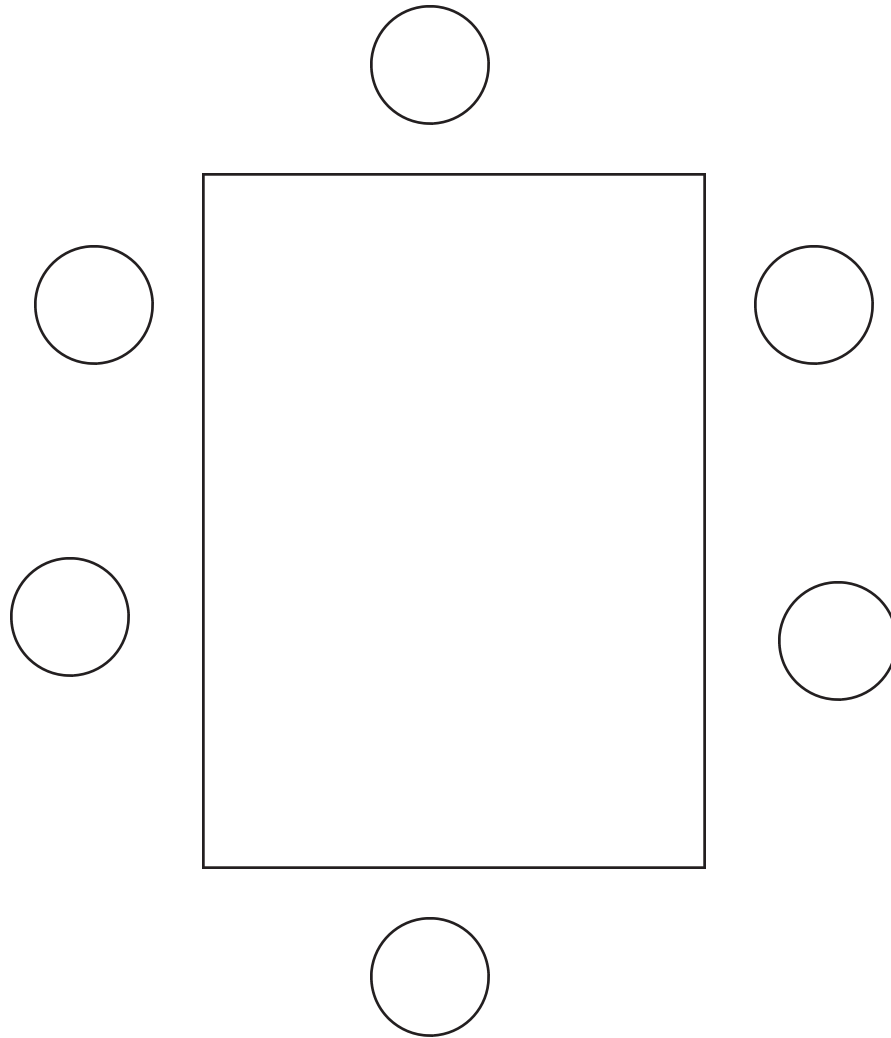
Family trees can bring up memories of people who shaped us, some we knew well, others barely at all: the cousin who was your childhood playmate, an aunt who died when you were young, someone you still see every day, a person you haven't thought of for years. They can bring up feelings: sadness, joy, nostalgia, even anger. Sometimes these feelings can be so intense that you will feel them in your body. This is normal, and a healthy part of the process of remembering. It can be helpful, too, for strong feelings can help you get in touch with your past and bring it into the present, where you can write about it.

Most of us gain a part of our sense of self—our identity—from hearing the stories of our relatives, telling us who our ancestors were, where we came from, and what values and beliefs our family has held. This is the legacy that came to you from your family, a varied and colorful family history, a gift to you from a time before you were born. You have carried this legacy throughout your life, changing it, adding to it, perhaps even deliberately subtracting from it. However you have shaped this legacy, though, it has shaped you, and it is important to understand it.

A Family Dinner



Imagine that you could invite any five of your relatives (living or dead) to a dinner party with you. The figure on this page represents a "bird's eye view" of the dinner table. At each seat, write the name of one of your guests—your relatives—and a short descriptive label that you would use to describe that person. For example, Ramona, "my free-spirited bachelor aunt," or Sarah, "my best-buddy cousin," or Mac, "my brother who couldn't keep a job." Don't forget to leave one place for yourself!



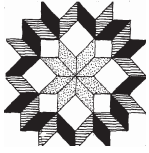


More Story Ideas

We hope that your first workshop session has given you lots of ideas for piecing together the scraps of experience and fragments of memory that make up your unique and valuable life story.

If you have time for writing between the session you've just concluded and the next session, the topic on the following page may help you to create more stories about yourself and the people who shaped you. If you do this writing, please bring it to the next workshop session, to share with others if you wish.

Life Line



Your Life Line is a list of important events in your life, with the dates on which they occurred. If you think of things out of order, that's fine—just jot them down as you remember them. On the left side of the chart, describe the event in a few words or a phrase, perhaps a sentence: "first boyfriend," "my daughter was born," or "started back to school," for example. On the right side, give the year (and month, if you remember it) that each event occurred.

Important Events	Dates

