

## Life Interview Questions

### Childhood - Youth

What year were you born? On what date? What day of the week was it?

Did your parents tell you anything about the day you were born?

Where were you born?

Why were you given the first (and middle) name(s) that you have?

What's your first, most vivid memory?

What was the apartment or house like that you grew up in?

How many bedrooms did it have? Bathrooms?

What was your bedroom like?

Can you describe the neighborhood you grew up in?

Did you have any pets? Tell me about them...

Tell me about your parents: Where were they born? When were they born?

What memories do you have of them?

Who was stricter: your mother or your father?

Do you have a vivid memory of something you did that you were disciplined for?

Did your parents have a good marriage?

How did your family earn money?

How did your family compare to others in the neighborhood - richer, poorer, the same?

What kinds of things did your family spend money on?

How many brothers and sisters do you have? When were they born?

What memories do you have of each of them from when you were growing up?

Do/did you have grandparents? Where were they born?

When were they born? What can you tell me about them?

If applicable: When did they die?

What were you like as a child?

What did you like to eat?

What did you do for fun?

What were your favorite toys or games?

Did you ever have a secret place or a favorite hiding spot?

What did you wear?

Did you get an allowance? How much? Did you spend it right away, or save it? What did you buy?

What responsibilities did you have at home when you were young?

How did you spend your summer holidays?

What were your favorite summer activities?

Where did your family go on vacations?

How did your family celebrate holidays (e.g., Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Year, Easter, Hannukah, Diwali, etc.)?

Did lots of relatives get together?

What traditions did you have year after year? What food was served?

What was the best gift you remember receiving as a child?

What kind of school did you go to?

Were you a good student?

What was your favorite subject? Least favorite?

Who were your friends?

Who was your favorite teacher and why?

Did you have any heroes or role models when you were a child?

What did you want to be when you grew up?

What big world events do you remember from the time you were growing up?

What inventions do you most remember?

What's different about growing up today from when you were growing up?

When you were a teenager, what did you do for fun?

Did you have a favorite spot to "hang out"?

What time did you have to be home at night?

Did you ever get into any trouble?

Were there any phrases that were popular when you were a teenager?

What did you like to wear?

How did your parents feel about the way you talked and what you wore?

When did you learn how to drive? Who taught you?

What was your first car like?

What was your graduation from high school like?

What dreams and goals did you have for your life when you graduated?

## Adulthood

Did you go to university or college?

How did you decide what you wanted to study?

Did you serve in the military?

What did you do and what kind of experience was it?

How did you decide what you wanted to do with your life?

How do you feel about that choice?

What was your first job?

What did you like or not like about it?

What job did you do most of your life?

What did you like most about it? Least?

Do/Did you have a spouse or partner?

How did you meet?

What did you like about them?

Did you get engaged? How?

Did you get married? When? How old were you?

Where did you get married?

What was your wedding like?

What was the first big purchase you made with your spouse/partner?

What makes/made your spouse /partner special or unique?

Do you have children?

How many? When were they born?

How did you decide what to name each?

What's your favorite story about each of your children?

What is something funny or embarrassing one of your children said at an early age that you'll never forget?

What's the most memorable family vacation you took?

What do you remember about holiday celebrations?

Is there one holiday memory that stands out for you?

How do you feel about raising your children? What was the best part? The hardest part?

What makes you proud of your children?

*When interviewing a parent:*

How is my father/mother like me? Unlike me?

What do you remember about me when I was born?

What about when I was younger than I am now?

What's the best thing about being a parent? A grandparent?

## Identity

Do you know the meaning of your family name?

Are there stories about the origins of your family name?

Have you ever had any nicknames as a child or as an adult?

Where did they come from?

How are you like your mother? Unlike her?

How are you like your father? Unlike him?

What was most important to your parents?

Do you feel you're like any of your grandparents? In what ways?

How are your children like you? Unlike you?

What do you think are your three best qualities? Your three worst?

Which do you think you have the most of: talent, intelligence, education, or persistence? How has it helped you in your life?

Do you have any special sayings or expressions?

What's your favorite book and why?

What's your favorite movie and why?

Who are three people in history you admire most and why?

What have been the three biggest news events during your lifetime and why?

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If you could travel into the future, would you rather see something that specifically relates to you, or something that relates to the future of humanity in general? Why?

If you could have three wishes, what would they be?

If you won \$1 million tomorrow, what would you do with the money?

What's the highest honor or award you've ever received?

What's the most memorable phone call you've ever received?

What's the best compliment you ever received?

What kinds of things bring you the most pleasure now?

What things frighten you now?

What frightened you when you were a younger adult? A child?

What's the one thing you've always wanted but still don't have?

Do you feel differently about yourself now from how you felt when you were younger? How?

What do you think has stayed the same about you throughout life? What do you think has changed?

## The Present

Do you have any hobbies or special interests?

Do you enjoy any particular sports?

What's your typical day like now?

How is it different from your daily routines in the past?

Is the present better or worse than when you were younger?

What do you do for fun?

Who do you trust and depend on?

What things are most important to you now? Why?

How have your dreams and goals changed through your life?

## Aging

What do you remember about your 20s? 30s? 40s? 50s? 60s?

What events stand out in your mind?

How was each age different from the one before it?

There are some ages we don't look forward to. What birthday were you least enthusiastic about? Why?

If you could go back to any age, which age would it be and why?

How do you feel about growing old?

What's the hardest thing about growing older? The best thing?

What were your parents like as they got older?

Did you have any expectations at points in your life about what growing older would be like for you?

How should a person prepare for old age?

Is there anything you wish you'd done differently?

Do you think about the future and make plans?

What are your concerns for the future?

If you lived another 20-30 years, what will you do?

Do you want to live another 20-30 years?

What do you look forward to now?

## Life Lessons and Legacies

What's your most cherished family tradition? Why is it important?

What have you liked best about your life so far?

What's your happiest or proudest moment?

What do you feel have been the important successes in your life? The frustrations?

What's the most difficult thing that ever happened to you?

How did you deal with it?

What do you think the turning points have been in your life? What were you like then?

Are there times of your life that you remember more vividly than others?

What have been the most influential experiences in your life?

Describe a person or situation that had a profound effect on the way you look at life.

If you were writing the story of your life, how would you divide it into chapters?

What, if anything, would you have done differently in your life?

What do you know now that you wish you'd known when you were young?

What have you thrown away in your life that you wish you hadn't?

What have you held on to that's important and why is it important?

What "junk" have you held on to and why?

Over time, how have you changed the way you look at life/people?

What advice did your grandparents or parents give you that you remember best?

Do you have a philosophy of life?

What's your best piece of advice for living?

If a young person came to you asking what's the most important thing for living a good life, what would you say?

How do you define a "good life" or a "successful life"?



Do you think a person needs to first overcome serious setbacks or challenges to be truly successful?

In what way is it important to know your limitations in your life or career?

If you had the power to solve one and only one problem in the world, what would it be and why?

What do you see as your place or purpose in life? How did you come to that conclusion?

What would you like your family to remember about you?

If you could write a message to each of your loved ones and put it in a time capsule for them to read 20 years from now, what would you write to each?