

A photograph of an elderly woman with grey hair and a young boy with short brown hair. They are both looking down at a photo album together, focused on the images inside. The woman is wearing a patterned blouse and the boy is wearing a plaid shirt.

A FAMILY HISTORIAN

Handy Questions Deck

Humble questions bring grand answers

Early life and childhood

- What's your very first memory?
- What did your childhood home look like, and what room was your favorite?
- What games did you play as a child?
- Who was your best friend growing up, and what adventures did you have together?
- What was your favorite food that your mother or grandmother made?
- What chores or responsibilities did you have as a child?
- Who did you want to be when you grow up?



Treasured Objects

- What's the oldest thing you own, and what's its story?
- Is there an object you've kept for many years? Why is it special?
- What moment from your past do you wish you could visit again? How did the scene look like?
- What's something you wish you had kept but didn't?
- How could you describe your life through your favorite belongings?
- What would you take with you immediately when presented with the need to flee home?
- What is your most precious possession?
- What is your favorite look? How do you see the role of clothes in your life?
- Tell me about a thing that is no longer common nowadays but was very present in daily life in your youth?



Family Relationships

- How did you and Grandma/Grandpa meet?
- What do you remember about your first date together?
- What was your wedding day like?
- What's the best advice your parents ever gave you?
- What traditions did your family have when you were growing up?
- Who in your family influenced you the most, and why?
- What were the most important friendships you've had ?
- Do you still have or remember objects that symbolize important bonds of your life?



Work & Career

- What was your first job, and how much did you earn?
- What's the hardest work you ever did?
- What accomplishment in your career are you most proud of?
- If you could have pursued any career, what would it have been?
- Can you describe your classic work day? How did you dress? What kind of daily rituals did you have?



School & Learning

- What was school like when you were young?
- Who was your favorite teacher, and what made them special?
- What subject did you love or hate the most?
- What did you want to be when you grew up?
- What is your favorite book from childhood?
- Can you tell me how the typical day look like? Your backpack, note books, your style back then?



Historical Events

- What major world event affected your life the most?
- Where were you and what were you doing when you heard about? [significant historical event from their era]?
- How did life change during wartime or other major events?
- What invention or technology changed your life the most?
- What objects/souvenirs do you have/had that remind you of historical events?



Daily life & Culture

- What was a typical Saturday like when you were a teenager?
- What music did you listen to, and did you have a favorite song or artist?
- What was dating like in your day?
- How much did things cost when you were young (bread, movies, a car)?
- What clothes or fashion do you remember from your youth?
- What were holidays like in your family?
- What is your favorite meal?
Do you like to cook – what is your spécialité de la maison? Can I learn?



Stories & Adventures

- What's the biggest trouble you ever got into?
- What's the bravest thing you ever did?
- What's the funniest thing that ever happened to you?
- Did you ever meet anyone famous?
- What's a story your friends or family always ask you to tell?
- What adventure or trip do you remember most vividly?
- What is your favorite place?



Values & Wisdom

- What's the most important lesson life has taught you?
- What do you know now that you wish you'd known when you were younger?
- What are you most proud of in your life?
- What does "home" mean to you?
- What kept you going during difficult times?



Hoyer & Reflections

- How is the world different now from when you were young?
- What do you hope people will remember about you?
- What's something about your generation that younger people might not understand?
- If you could relive one day of your life, which would it be?
- What makes you happiest when you think back on your life?



What to use...

- Listen (actively – nod, do affirmative gestures, stay focused on the person, show that you are interested, it works better than any question)
- Ask questions that are open, not ones you can answer with a short yes/no
- Be patient, do not interrupt, even if the answer takes time and effort
- Follow your partner's lead, but always remember to come back to what is important for you too
- Be precise, always ask additional questions if you don't feel like you understand
- Ask about feelings
- Ask about the sensual world – the smells, the colors, the things, the weather, the surroundings
- Have time (and even more time)
- Use objects, photos, dishes as a conversation starting point
- Use your own life experiences as a starting point



What to avoid...

- Don't rush
- Avoid generalisations, gliding over subjects and empty clichés
- Don't judge
- Don't interrupt
- Don't make it about yourself
- Don't push when the story gets rough
 - it will come out when ready, just be present, show that you really care, keep the conversation going
- Put your phone away





**GRAND
PARENTS.
GRAND
STORIES.**

*Family
Treasures*