



Family Journal

Family journals are designed to include adult family members in a student's academic and character education. The student interviews interview adult family members and records in his/her journal what the family members say in their journals. Directions for students follow this section.

The Process

- The student writes the journal questions on a fresh page in a reflective journal or warm-up book.
- After school, they ask a parent, grandparent or other adult in their home environment the question.
- They listen and perhaps take notes as the family member answers.
- The students should be taught how to ask follow-up questions such as "Tell me more about her." "What was she like?" "How did you know she would be fair?" The students should allow the adult time to think about the answer.
- They later record what family members have told them in as much detail as possible underneath the question. You may grade for level of detail.
- Students identify the person they interviewed, their relationship to the student and the circumstances under which the interview took place. They may note if they are translating the interview from another language into English.

Some Tips

- Give the student two or three days to complete the interview; not all students see their parents each night. Consider stamping the family journal entries that are done on time for a few extra points. Students who do not complete the assignment promptly may still do it. If writing in a daily journal, they should skip a blank page before beginning the next days' journal entries.
- Do not have the parent write the entry. Listening and summarizing are valuable skills.
- Encourage the students to reread their entries to make sure the readers can identify who is being interviewed and whom they are talking about.
- Encourage students to interview family members rather than coaches, teachers or clergy.
- You may wish to set limits on whether or not the students can interview over-18 siblings.

An Example

The student writes down the family journal topic:

Tell me about someone in your life you trust (or trusted) to be honest or fair.

The student interviews one or more family members using the family journal topic, and the student uses the page under the question to record or summarize the answer.

My mother told me that my Grandmother Geneva has integrity. She never let her emotions or anger keep her from doing the right thing. Her step-mother Edna had not been good to her when

she was growing up, but when my mother was in 6th grade, Grandma Jenny invited them to come and live with them for a while, and she later took care of her stepmother when she had cancer. She never told her children, my mother said, about the bad things Edna had done to her.

Students identify the person they interviewed and the circumstances.

I interviewed my mother while she was fixing dinner. We talked about it while we ate dinner. The interview was in English.

By Janet Ewell



Student Directions for a Family Journal

Interview an adult family member and record what the family member says in your journal.



What to Do

1. Write the journal question(s) on a fresh page in your journal.
2. After school, ask a parent, grandparent or other adult in your home environment the question.
3. Listen and perhaps take notes as the family member answers. Ask follow-up questions such as "Tell me more about it." "What was it like?" Allow the adult time to think about the answer.
4. After the interview, record what family members have told you in as much detail as possible underneath the question. You may be graded for level of detail and completeness of answer.
5. After you've completed the entry,
 - Identify the person you interviewed;
 - His or her relationship to you;
 - The circumstances under which the interview took place; and
 - Note if you are translating the interview from another language into English.

More Information

- You have ____ days to complete the interview (because you may not see your parents or other family member every night). If you are using a journal, you may need to skip blank pages for the next days' journal entries.
- Do not have your parent or family member write the entry. Interview, listen, and summarize.
- Reread your entry to make sure the readers can identify who is being interviewed. (My great aunt says, ". ...")
- Interview family members rather than coaches, teachers or clergy. Telephone interviews are acceptable.

An Example

Family journal topic: *Tell me about someone in your life you trust (or trusted) to be honest or fair.*

"My mother told me that my Grandmother Geneva has integrity. Grandma never let her emotions or anger keep her from doing the right thing. Grandma's step-mother Edna had not been good to her when she was growing up, but when my mother was in 6th grade, Grandma Jenny invited them to come live with them for a while, and Grandma later took care of her stepmother when she had cancer. Grandma never told us kids, my mother said, about the bad things Edna had done to her.

I interviewed my mother while she was fixing dinner. We talked about it while we ate dinner. The interview was in English.

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