

DIGNITY HISTORY

AN ORAL HISTORY GUIDE

AGES 10 +

You will be interviewing a member of your family to understand their dignity story and what it means for your family. Use the following information to help you prepare for your interview.

ASK A MEMBER OF YOUR FAMILY ABOUT

His/her experiences with dignity. You may want to start by asking what dignity means to him/her. Then ask him/her to tell you about a time s/he demonstrated or witnessed dignity. You can use Donna Hicks' *Essential Elements of Dignity* as a way of explaining what dignity looks like. Finally, you will want to ask him/her about what dignity means to and for your family. How do you show dignity as members of your family?

PREPARATION

- Select a quiet place to conduct the interview. Select an interview time when you will not be interrupted.
 - TECHNOLOGY OPTION:** Record the interview with a cell phone or other recording device.
 - TECHNOLOGY FREE OPTION:** Take notes. Consider breaking the interview into two shorter sessions. Also consider taking a photo of the person, or draw a picture of them, then transcribe your story.
- Familiarize yourself with the questions you want to ask (see above).
- Provide your interviewee a copy of Donna Hicks' *Essential Elements of Dignity* to review before the interview.



INTERVIEW

Think of yourself as a reporter. A good reporter knows that being interested and politely persistent usually allows you to get the most information.

Begin with an open-ended question – one that can't be answered with a yes, no, name, or date. The first question you ask will set the tone for the responses you get throughout the entire interview. An example of an open-ended question is: "What does dignity mean to you?"

Ask only one question at a time. Wait for the complete answer. If there is a pause, don't feel obligated to fill it in with another question. This allows the subject to fill the space with his or her own thoughts and feelings.

Use words like "Why," "How," "Describe," "Tell me about" when you ask your questions.

Don't interrupt a good story. It may not relate to what you asked, but let it run its course. You might like the ending.

Do not antagonize your interviewee by pressing him/her too hard to answer a question he/she has indicated he/she does not wish to discuss.

One question in particular that is important to ask is, "How can our family work together to incorporate dignity into our family life?"

POST INTERVIEW TASKS

Thank your interviewee for the time and effort made.

Work together with the person you interviewed to come up with at least three ways you can show dignity together as a family.

As soon as possible after finishing the interview, listen to the recording or review your notes and write down any follow-up questions you might have. Ask your interviewee these questions as soon as possible.

REPORT

Summarize your interviewee's dignity story in a 1 – 2 page biographical paper. Be sure to include how you and your family plan to work together to incorporate dignity into your family life.

This guide has been modified from the [Tell Me Your Stories course](#) taught by Ellie Kahn of Living Legacies.

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