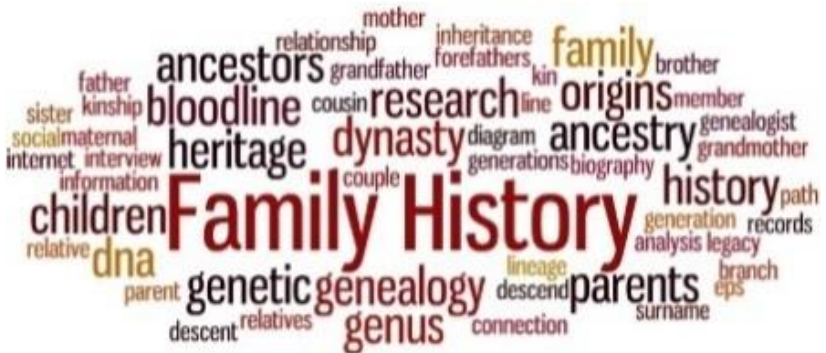


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# Your Family Philanthropic History



*“If you can't feed a hundred people, then  
feed just one.”*

**-Mother Teresa**

## **Your Family History**

In order for your children to give back philanthropically to society, they should have a comprehensive understanding of their own identity and how it fits within the family structure. Once your children know their own family history, they will be better equipped to relate, to communicate, to empathize, and to help others. When a child—or an adult!—better understands all aspects of themselves, he or she can better relate to others, appreciate what they have, and use this knowledge to make a greater impact in the world around them. You and your child may learn some very interesting facts about family members that might inspire them, or even speak to family members that have experienced philanthropy—or hardships—first-hand. It is therefore important that a parent or another family adult teach the children their family history.

Your family history teaches your children how they fit within your family and society. There are a number of activities you can use to teach your children about their family’s past. By exploring the family heritage, your children will learn about their own unique identities, their cultures, and traditions. Listed are seven ideas that you can use to educate your children about the family’s identity. At least one or two of these ideas will be relatively easy to pursue within most families, even those who have very little family tradition. Make this a fun project! Everyone can learn something and have a good time along the way.



## **The Family Reunion**

If your family does not already hold an annual reunion, consider organizing one this year! Bring the generations together. A family reunion gives older and younger members an opportunity to meet and interact with each other. Through talking and interacting with other family members, your children can gain a sense of their position in the family tree. Perhaps give your children a fun project during the reunion to inspire them to interact with all the family.

Two ideas to consider are pictures and interviews:

1. **Pictures:** Put your child in charge of taking pictures of each relative who attends the reunion. They can collect the names and contact information for all the people in the pictures. Later they can send everyone a copy via text, email, or postal mail. This idea gives your child a reason to get to know everyone by both face and name. They can take serious pictures, and even some goofy ones. Imagine Uncle Eddie in Speedo!

2. **Interview:** Your child can interview some of the relatives. This interview could be a customized one tailored to a respective family member or it could include only specific questions about a particular aspect of the family. For instance, an interview question could be, “If you had five million dollars, how would you use it to make the world a better place?” Your child will enjoy getting to know their relatives, and remember to keep those questions fun, so your budding philanthropist will stay interested!



### **Ask Yourself**

Does your family have a reunion where your child can create a project to learn about your family?

Would a family interview project help your child learn about family history?

### **Family Interviews**

Encourage your child to create a project where he interviews family members. The process of interviewing will give your child a “front row seat” to learn details about his family’s history. By interviewing the various family members, your child can learn such things as where they were born, how each relative grew up, how they fit within the family tree, what cultural heritage they celebrate, and what traditions they practice. Have your child ask questions about philanthropy such as: “Who do you help and why?” “How do you ‘give back’ to your community?” Remember to include silly questions as well—there’s nothing like a smile or laugh to get an interviewee to relax. Everyone loves to name their yummiest cereal or answer questions about their favorite childhood memory.

The interview could be extensive, consisting of dozens of questions with just one or two relatives, such as cousins, aunts, or uncles. Conversely, the interview could be brief but include the entire family. These interviews could be part of a larger project that would consist of a family census. For instance, your child could interview a large number of relatives, asking all of them the same questions. They could then formulate the answers into a family census report that documents the answers. Regardless of exactly how the interviews are done, the process will teach your child all about the family and allow him to become friends with relatives. It is important with this type of project that your child is in charge of all details. Family Traditions



Family traditions are rituals, practices, and/or beliefs that are learned from an older generation and passed to a younger generation. These traditions serve to strengthen the family bond and create a sense of togetherness within the family. Your family should make every attempt to retain their cultural heritage by celebrating their origin country's customs, holidays, and history. Through actively incorporating traditions into the family, children will learn what makes their family unique. If your family does not celebrate specific ethnic holidays or family traditions, it is suggested that you start your own.

For instance, I am Italian. In my family, we celebrate an Italian holiday each November 1<sup>st</sup> called All Saints Day. As a Catholic, children in my family learned the rituals of Sunday Mass. We also learned what made each Saint famous. We would enjoy Italian foods, such as homemade pasta, Italian red wine, linguine, fusilli, and lasagna, especially during the holidays. My family passed down the traditional red wine recipe, which was conventionally made in our basements. In fact, each Thanksgiving, our family would help a needy family

### **Ask Yourself**

Does your family have a tradition it celebrates together?

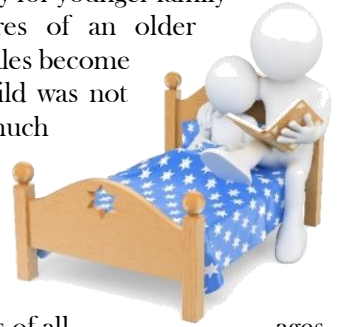
How did the tradition begin?

How do you celebrate it with your family?





Family stories are an interesting and memorable way for younger family members to connect to the life and adventures of an older generation. When we tell our children stories, the tales become a part of the child’s memory even though the child was not present for the event. Telling the stories with as much detail as can be remembered helps the child imagine the previous life of his relatives. Fill the stories with humor—they’ll remember them better. Including a good story-telling session in family traditional events is a great way to impart knowledge and entertain at the same time. Relatives of all



ages can add details to the stories. It helps the child weave a mental history of the family. Positive, uplifting stories are encouraged, particularly those that detail how various family members helped others, but it’s short-sighted to include only those stories. Many families overcome great difficulties and children benefit from knowing how hard families struggle to be successful. For instance, my grandparents arrived from Italy with nothing but the clothes on their backs and minimal English-speaking skills. I remember my father telling me a story about the struggles his parents encountered and how they were able endure, later to start their own grocery store business. Although their business created wealth for the family, it also helped the community. Often when people could not afford groceries, my grandparents would allow them to pay later or not at all. During the holiday season, we always delivered care packages from our store to needy people in our community. Stories teach children to strive to improve their lives and to encourage others to improve theirs as well. It is also best to refrain from stories that are “off color,” negative, violent, or extremely boastful.



### **Ask Yourself**

How can you work with your children to research your family tree?

What family stories can you tell your children to teach them about their family?

## **Family Picture Album**

A family photo album is a wonderfully rich source of history. If you have photo albums, then they are a good starting point for exploring your history with your children. Other excellent sources for family history are scrapbooks and journals or diaries. What a unique supply of first-hand records! Explore the attic, dig in that dusty wooden chest, or call up Grandma and ask if she has an old box of memories . . . and remember to have fun on your heritage adventure!

You can also encourage your children to develop their own online photo albums, scrapbooks, or journals. Then invite other family members to add their photos and memories to the albums. Developing a family website would be an excellent way for you to share your history of photos and stories with other family members.

When sharing photos with a child, it's important to help them see the overall context of events. The photos are not just about the subjects, but also about the reason for the pictures. Through a well-developed series of photographs, your child can learn much about the events of his family history.

Significant events such as school graduation, purchasing a home, having a baby, or buying a new car show your child the steps family members take to be successful. Through the various photographs, your child can also learn about the social events, trends “Dad, did you really have long hair?” fashions, “Why were Uncle Jerry’s pants so wide at the bottom,” and ideas, “Wow, was Grandma Sarah really the first woman in our family to go to college?” that were popular when the photographs were taken. These are excellent clues in learning family history. For those interested, old photographs can be turned into videos. You can share these with other family members, possibly at a family gathering like a reunion. Sharing pictures may also lead to shared stories of philanthropy in the family, which will inspire your children.





## Ask Yourself

Is your child interested in taking pictures or producing videos?

How can he use modern technology to complete a project to discover family history?

## Family Field Trip

You may want to introduce your children to places where their ancestors lived and worked. Time for a nearby field trip! Some families may even want to explore their history through an extended vacation to ancestral places. Your family could visit an old family house, a farm, or a former family business as a starting point. For families who owned their businesses or worked in a particular industry, returning to the founding sight would be a useful and entertaining family historical experience. Maybe your family originated in Switzerland and migrated to Philadelphia. After arriving in Philadelphia, they started a furniture-making business. Visiting Philadelphia and the furniture section of the local museum would give your child a connection to the family's current furniture business. You could visit a local store to show your child how much the business has changed. Doing this would help your child form a deeper connection with his past. Invite an older family member to serve as a historical guide and add even more meaning to the trip!

As you can see, there are many ideas you can use to teach your children about your family's history. When possible, the ideas used by your family should also serve as a philanthropic lesson. For instance, family stories can be told about how the grandparents helped their community. The family reunion can be a time where your children interview relatives about their acts of charity or obstacles they've overcome. The family picture album could focus on new pictures that show relatives "in action" helping people and charities. Spend part of the family field trip showing your children the charitable causes in the community your family would support. Remember to make it fun and exciting for your child so they will be more inclined to participate—in other words, always have snacks and a sense of humor. So use your most accessible tool to teach philanthropy to your children: your own family. Inspire them with stories from



the past, about giving and inspirational family members, and show your kids how they can become the next generation's most successful philanthropists.



### **Ask Yourself**

Where can your family travel together to explore your family history?



## Call to Action Family History



<b>My Family History Research Worksheet</b> <b>Do you know your family's history?</b>	
Today's Date	
Did someone in your family teach you about family history when you were a child? If so, how?	
Did someone in your family inspire you to be philanthropic when you were a child? If so, how?	
What philanthropic activities, if any, did your family do?	
Describe the activities.	
Remembering your family's past, what are 3-4 history based activities you could do now?	1. 2. 3. 4.

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<b>Teaching Children</b>	
What activities, if any, do your family do together to teach family history?	
Which activities covered in this chapter will you use to teach family history?	
How will your child be involved in these activities?	
What do you want your child to learn from these activities?	

<b>Further Activities</b>	
What other opportunities will you encourage or create for your child to learn about his family history?	

What would you like your child to understand about his family?	
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**Morgan Stanley Smith Barney LLC. Member**

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