



LIFELINE EXERCISE

Believe it or not, your life story is rich with meaning, and a useful way to discover more of that meaning is through this LifeLine Exercise. Everyone has a unique series of personal events that shape their lives through a spectrum of experiences. Reflecting on the highs and lows of our lives and what our experience teaches us can help us better reflect on where we have been, where we are, and where we are going. It can also give us insight into the meaning, purpose, and direction of our lives.

INSTRUCTIONS

For this exercise we would like you to follow these steps:

1. Get a blank sheet of standard size paper and turn it sideways to “landscape” or use the example provided at the end of this exercise.
2. Draw a simple graph with your age on the x-axis (horizontal) and the level of positivity/negativity on the y-axis (vertical).
 - a. The positive aspect is about how much joy and fulfillment you felt at the time, and the negative aspect is about how much unhappiness and frustration you felt at the time.
3. Mark out the x-axis with your age in 2 year increments.
4. Identify the key foundational experiences, or crucibles¹, that have shaped you. Mark them on the graph on the corresponding part of your timeline.
 - a. What are some experiences that have been “*highlights*” in your life? Place a dot above the horizontal axis (+) in order of significance or magnitude for each of these experiences.
 - b. What are some experiences that have been “*lowlights*” in your life? Place a dot below the horizontal axis (-) in order of significance or magnitude for each of these experiences.
 - c. Who are some of the “*guiding lights*” or *mentors* of your life? Place a dot in the time when they first entered your life and their years of influence.
5. Connect the points together.
 - a. Draw lines from the x-axis to your highlights and lowlights.
 - b. Draw lines from your guiding influences to their influence today.
 - c. Remain open to adding events as you complete the timeline; it’s natural for one event to trigger a memory of another.
6. When you feel that you have recorded the most significant events on your timeline, read over it in chronological order. Then reflect on the following:
 - a. Which memories make you smile with gratitude or affection?
 - b. Which make you shake your head or cringe in embarrassment?
 - c. Which still give you pangs of pain or regret?

¹ Read the following for more information on the language and importance of crucible experiences: Bennis, Warren, and Robert J. Thomas, “[Crucibles of Leadership](#)”, Harvard Business Review, 9 Feb. 2018.

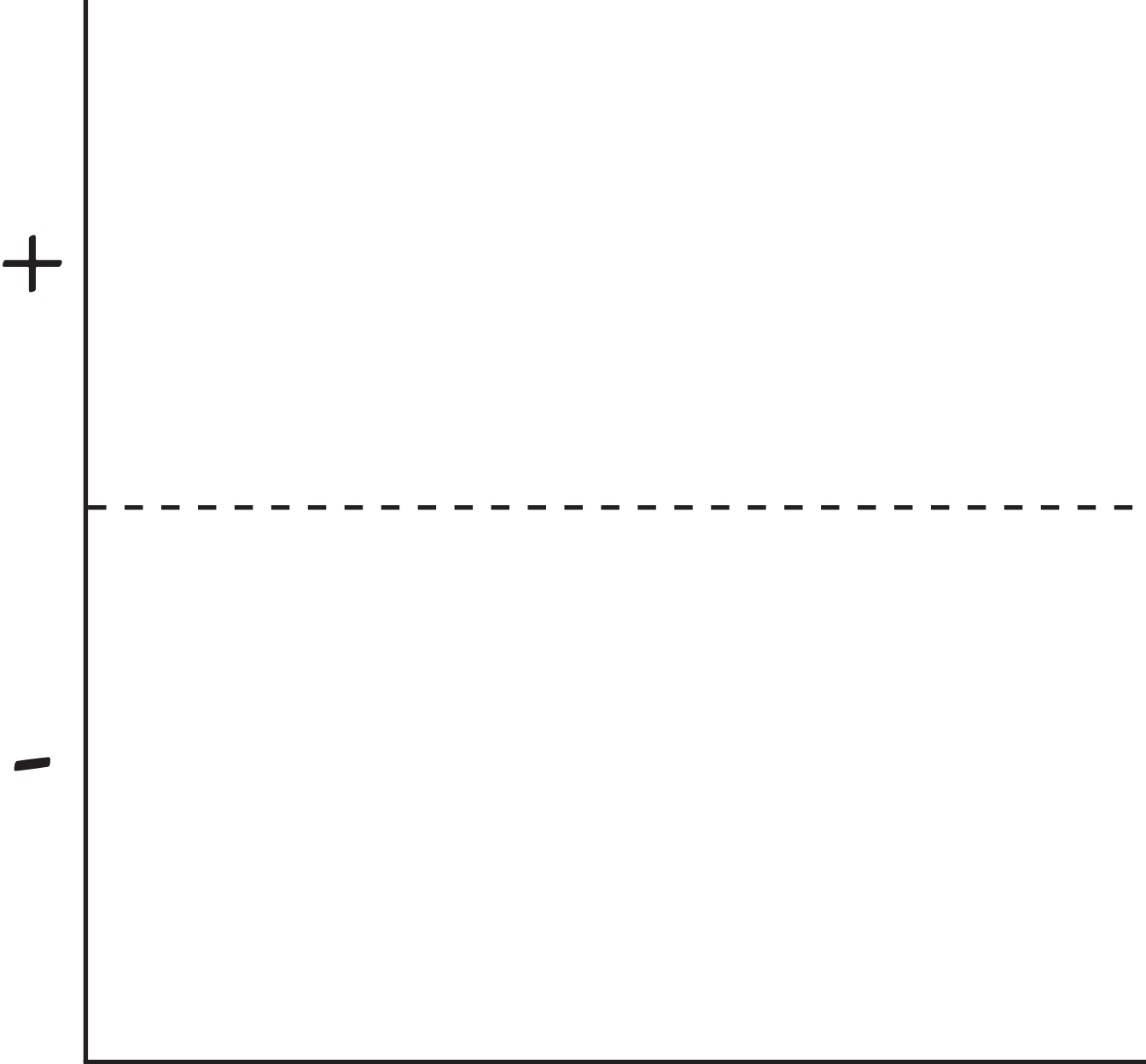
7. Free-write or reflect for a few minutes about the emotions and reflections that this reflective writing activity brought to the surface.
 - a. Which events do you think changed or shaped you the most?
 - b. Which helped you grow?
 - c. Which do you see in a different light now than you did at the time?
 - d. What lessons and values came out of these experiences?

POSSIBLE EVENTS FOR A LIFE LINE:

- The birth or death of a family member or friend
- An important friendship or mentorship
- An illness, injury, or trauma
- Powerful experiences or environments
- A job or major life change
- A move to a new location
- Failures, successes, and achievements
- An epiphany or spiritual realization
- Graduation from high school or college
- The beginning or end of a romantic relationship

LIFELINE

Level of Fulfillment



Your Age
(Mark the increments that make sense for your age.)