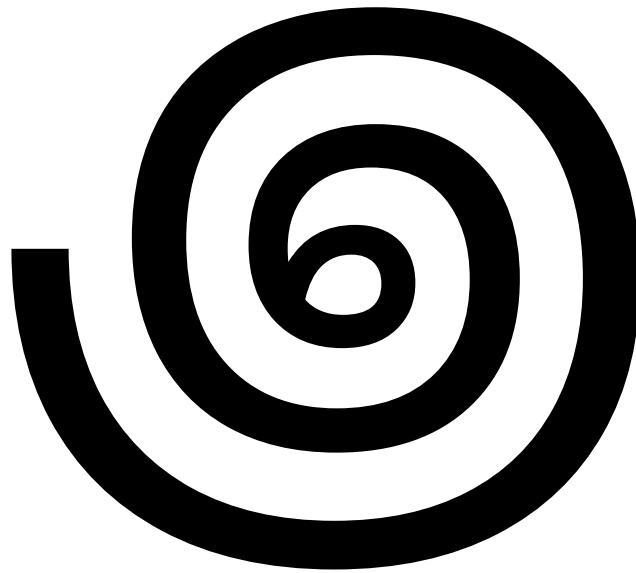


Life Review
Workbook



By Carolyn E. Cooper

About the Life Review and Workbook

In many hospices, clients are encouraged to do a Life Review. Instead of waiting until the end of life, however, many therapists recommend everyone do a periodic Life Review to identify their accomplishments (and regrets), changes in their values, and refocus on their goals and life legacy as they age. And some folks like to do one each year, often around New Year's to help them develop goals, projects, or tasks for the coming year.

I have compiled questions from various Life Review and End of Life questionnaires. I have also added a few of my own variations. There is an old belief in parts of Japan that when we die, we must choose one moment in our lives to experience and remember through eternity. There is a wonderful cult Japanese movie called “After Life” (available from the Criterion Collection) based on this concept. I've included a couple of questions using this idea to help you identify (and appreciate) what truly brings meaning and joy into your life.

Some Guides on Completing Your Life Review

- **There are two approaches to these questions.** The first approach is to answer them quickly with your first response. And then, after a day (or week), do them again and note any changes. Repeat as necessary until you feel you've found your actual answers.

The second approach is to take your time to answer the questions. It doesn't matter if you take a day, a week, or come back and edit them in a month. You are considering the questions intentionally and mindfully.

- **Record your answers.** Write them down. You can use this workbook, notebook, or journal, or type them into a file. *If you don't like to write*, you can record them as audio or video. Whatever method you choose, record your answers and make a record you can return to later.
- **Review your responses.** Are there patterns or themes in your responses? What caused you to change an answer? Is there something consistent in your answers to any question? For example, does everything that energizes you involve groups of people? Or nature? Or solving problems? These consistencies are clues on how you can add more meaning, joy, and satisfaction to your life.

- **Focus on the big, overarching themes** like meaning, purpose, identity, connections, relationships, and legacy. If in doubt, ask yourself why your answer is crucial to you.
- **Keep and collect your responses.** Consider using a folder, a 3-ring binder, or a journal. **Use your Life Review for refocusing and planning your goals, aspirations, career(s), relationships, leisure... well, your life.** What do you want more of in your life in the future? What do you want less of? What choices should you make to achieve your desired life? What legacy do you genuinely want to leave? How does this affect your goal-setting or planning for the future?
- **Also, use your answers as a guide for your response to changes and events in your life.** You can't control everything that happens in life, but you can control your reaction to what happens.
- Remember, these answers are not carved in stone or remotely permanent. We change with time and circumstances. Our answers at 20 *should* differ from those at 30, 40, 50, or 60.

Do I Have to Answer the Questions in Order?

No. Some questions will spark immediate answers. Others will require some thought and consideration. Do what feels comfortable to you. Maybe a question — or response — makes you *uncomfortable*. Explore that response and feeling. Ask yourself why? If the question is incredibly easy, also ask yourself why? Have you been thinking about that subject? Or are you giving pat answers.

Can I Change My Answers?

Yes. But don't erase your first answer. Cross it out and make note of your first response as well as your change. Was the first response due to family, cultural, or peer expectations? What did you realize that made you change your answer?

Can I Do This With a Group?

I certainly can't stop you, and you may find the support and structure of a group helpful. However, I would not share my actual answers with others. At least not directly. You may want to

share what surprised you in your answers and what changes occurred in your focus, but not specific answers. Why? People can too easily express approval or disapproval, even when they don't intend to. It might be an unconscious frown (or smile). Maybe a word choice that shades the meaning of what they are saying. Perhaps you compare your answers to others and judge them as too dull or outrageous. We, as a species, are too easily swayed by the ideas and opinions of others. And you want to live your best life, not how someone else thinks you should live it.

A Brief Request

If you want to share this workbook with others, please send them to the website for the free download: <http://carolyncooper.com/freebies> . Tracking the downloads lets me know how far the reach and interest are in the subject and encourages me to make more. And if you want to know when I make more, please sign up for my email newsletter on the site.

The Life Review Questions

- Before leaving this Earth, what do you want to do, experience, or achieve?

- What are your biggest regrets to date?

- What would you regret most not achieving in your life?

- What are your biggest successes?
- What needs have you not fulfilled yet?
- Who are the most important people in your life?

- What relationships need repair?

- What relationships or connections do you need to build?

- What gives you energy?

- What moments in your life would you consider spending eternity — and why?

- If your house was on fire, what three things would you save (after yourself & your loved ones)?

- What can you still do to reduce your regrets and increase your sense of a life well lived?

Additional Notes or Thoughts