

Beyond Names and Dates: Building Meaningful Connections Through Family History

The Limitations of Basic Genealogy

- Names
- Birth/death dates
- Locations

are starting points

The Power of Context

- Historical events, cultural traditions, and social norms shape lives

Emotional Impact

- Stories create empathy, identity, and a sense of belonging

Finding the Stories

- Oral Histories
- Personal Documents
- Community & Historical Records
- Artifacts & Heirlooms

Interview Techniques

- Prepare thoughtfully
- Create a Comfortable Setting
- Use Open-Ended Questions
- Listen Actively
- Follow Memory Cues
- Be Patient with Timelines
- Record (With Permission)
- Respect Emotional Boundaries
- Summarize and Confirm
- Express Gratitude

Storytelling Techniques

- Reconstructing Daily Life
- Narrative arcs, sensory details, and emotional beats working together
- Balancing Fact & Interpretation
- Connecting Their Story to Yours

Ways Connecting with Living Relatives

- Sharing with Family
- Creative formats—photo books, podcasts, short films, or family history nights
- Encouraging Participation
- Overcoming Challenges
- Handling Discrepancies
- Sensitive Topics

Building Meaningful Connections

- The impact of both family legacies and the broader sweep of history on their identities
- Part of who we are based on the choices our families have made
- These choices create a legacy that influences our identities
- Find personal connections to our communities, our nation, and the world

Traditions and Stories

- Threads weave family together
- **Traditions** provide consistency, stability and comfort
- **Stories** give context for who we are.

Psychology Today article

- **Learning Family History Helps You Understand Yourself** How our family stories connect us to the past and create meaning.
- Posted March 8, 2024 By Robyn Fivush Ph.D.

Key points

- Family stories build self-esteem and create meaning/purpose
- Physical archives can help embody family stories, creating profound connections
- Family stories and family history provide new perspectives on our own lives

How DNA Testing Works

- Sample Collection (Saliva/Cheek Swab)
- Laboratory Analysis
- Comparison to Databases
- Interpreting Results

DNA Matching Algorithms

- Testing companies use sophisticated algorithms to compare your genetic profile from your test with every other profile in their database
- The goal is to identify **shared DNA segments** (cM)— stretches of genetic code that are identical between two people because *they were inherited from a common ancestor*

Using DNA matches

- **Bucketing:** Grouping matches into maternal/paternal sides based on shared DNA with known relatives
- **Clustering:** Group matches who also match each other
- **Triangulation:** Confirming that you, Match A, and Match B all share the same DNA segment, suggesting a shared ancestor
- **Contextualizing** - Combining match data with traditional records (census data, birth certificates, immigration logs), you can confirm suspected relationships and identify unknown ancestors

Names and dates are the skeleton; Stories are the soul