LEAVING A PIECE OF YOURSELF: WRITING AN ETHICAL WILL

Adapted from Erica Brown, *Happier Endings*, by Carol Kodish-Butt

WHY WRITE AN ETHICAL WILL?

• To make our deepest wishes and values known
  • To be remembered

• We realize that our wisdom and life experience are our most important legacy and sometimes our only legacy

• To bless others and become more aware of our own blessings – to fill us with gratitude
Why write an ethical will?

• To celebrate life even when the end of life may be painful and grim
  • Grand retrospective on what our lives have been all about, what has shaped us and what we have shaped over the course of a lifetime
• Help us age with a greater sense of dignity as we sift out priorities and what has been essential to living well and what has not
  • To confront mistakes and regrets
• To give ourselves a sense of self-worth and accomplishment
• To provide completion to the writer and direction to the reader
WHY WRITE AN ETHICAL WILL?

ANSWERS THREE ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS:

• Do those I care about know what is most important to me and what I’ve learned through experience?

• Have I said everything that I need to say to my family and friends?

• Do those nearest to me know my burial wishes?

Purpose of the exercise is to think about your own identity and values, how you plan to strengthen and transmit those values and the legacy you wish to leave.
I. PERSONAL INFORMATION

• Birthdate, birthplace, information about your home town

• Favourite photo of yourself and why (Bring to next session, if you wish)

• Your personal story/history
  
  3-4 sentences on childhood  
  3-4 sentences on adolescence  
  3-4 sentences on young adulthood  
  3-4 sentences on middle age (if applicable)  
  3-4 sentences on seniorhood (if applicable)

• Transformative events in your life

• Critical decisions and critical conversations in your life

• Historical events that you lived through that shaped the way you think and act

• Objects of significance that tell a piece of your life story.
II. PERSONAL HAPPINESS AND SATISFACTION

• Most impactful quote

• Places of significance to you and why

• Small things that have brought you happiness

• Favorite or important rituals

• Role of religion/spirituality in your life

• What are you most proud of in your life?
III. THE ROLE OF OTHERS

• Enumerating what you love about each person who is significant in your life

• Thanking and acknowledging what each significant person in your life has brought to you

• What you learned from your parents

• What your children taught you

• Thoughts on family
IV. LIFE ADVICE

• Your spiritual values or rules you live by

• What have you done in your life to stand up for your values and beliefs?

• Your life advice about friendship

• Your life advice about love/marriage

• Your life advice about work

• Your life advice about education/knowledge
V. FORGIVENESS

• Regrets

• Mistakes

• Request for forgiveness generally or from certain individuals

• Granting of forgiveness generally or to certain individuals

• Thoughts of Gratitude
VI. (a) FINAL WISHES
Do you have any specific wishes for arrangements following your death? If so, what are they? (examples: funeral, celebration of life, memorial, rituals, burial or cremation, etc.)

(b) WISHES FOR THE NEXT GENERATION:
_________________________________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________________________________
(c) WHAT ARE THE THINGS THAT ONLY YOU KNOW ABOUT, CARE ABOUT – THOSE CONNECTIONS THAT WILL DIE WITH YOU?
(d) WHAT WILL YOU MISS MOST?

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WHAT WILL YOU DO WITH YOUR

ETHICAL WILL?