

## Life Span Assignment

Students will observe interview and document life span developmental issues and concepts through observations of individuals outside of class. Students are to submit their findings in a written report of 2-5 pages in length, and will discuss findings in class.

### **Part 1:**

You are to interview two individuals between the ages of 2 and 102 and then interpret the interview *through the lens of a developmental psychologist*.

Whenever possible, you should relate observations and interpretations to what you have learned in class and in text. Do not simply describe or list observations. Interpret or explain the observations and what they illustrate about the stages of development. This is the most important part of this assignment. These interpretations should be thoughtful and should apply terms concepts and theories found in course material or outside research writings. You may also end the paper with personal reflections on the interview.

There are a couple of ways to approach this observation:

#### Option # 1:

Interview two different people about a significant issue, such as relationships, Divorce, loss, life transitions, friendship, successes and failures, self image/self esteem, alcoholism/drug abuse, hobbies and interests, dealing with hurdles/challenges, adoption, sexual orientation, dealing with a sick parent, or a variety of other topics. Compare the two in terms of similarities and differences, and interpret your findings based on life span development research, theories and concepts discussed in class, in text or in outside research which support or explain the interview material.

#### Option # 2:

Listen to people in different age spans. The following suggestions may help you grasp differences and similarities across ages. You may want to experiment with these:

### **Young children:**

Ask them to tell you a joke.

Ask them to draw you a picture and tell you a story about it.

Ask them to teach you how to play a game.

Ask them to explain their favorite something (show, game, song).

### **Middle childhood:**

Ask them to tell you a joke.

Ask them to teach you how to play a game.

Ask them to teach you about something that is important in their world about which you know nothing.

Ask them to explain their family and the “jobs” each person in their family has.

### **Teens**

See if they will talk to you.

Ask them what you should be asking to help you understand their world and

Listen.

### **Young adults**

Check in with a friend you had in high school and see what has happened since then. Ask about their job(s), their family, their hopes and dreams and their plans for what’s next.

### **Middle adults**

Sit with someone in this age group and ask about a typical day in their life, their hopes and dreams, their joys and sorrows and the sources of their strengths. Check about their career and what they see as ways they have changed as they have matured.

### **Older adults**

Hopefully with someone you know well or want to know well, ask them any questions in the section for middle adults, and also include questions about how their perspective on things has changed as they have aged, and what things have remained the same.

## PART 2: Self Reflected in Art/Life

For this portion of the assignment, you are to reflect on a piece of art, song, literature, nature etc. which in some way resonates with you or symbolizes something in your own life. Integrate this with any concept from the readings or lecture. Be creative, explore, enjoy. Self exploration is a necessary trait of a quality therapist, and we will visit the issue of who we are and how this effects are treatment throughout your courses in the program.

**Where can you find art or literature to explore?** The Web is loaded with sites on various styles of art, specific artists, etc. Music is best explored via the Web. For up close experiences, you may consider attending a concert, a church or Temple music event, or local museums and libraries. Some of the great museums available:

Laguna Beach, has great museums and galleries

Orange County Contemporary Museum is located in the art district in Santa Ana. There is wonderful dining in the area, an artists' colony, and the third Saturday of each month is the Art Walk, a great festival style day to explore shops, crafts and music.

In LA: The Getty Museum hosts an amazing and vast collection of famous arts of all types from all over the world, and it's FREE. Pay for parking only.

Norton Simon Museum in Pasadena is another fabulous collection from around the world. Picasso, Rembrandt, Degas and Van Gogh can be found here, as well as arts of Asia, India the Renaissance and Greek antiquities.

LA County Museum of Art – Another vast and diverse collection of classic and modern art.

Museum of Latin American Art – in Long Beach a wonderful collection that hosts artists of Latin American cultures

Museum of Tolerance – In Los Angeles, this museum's main permanent exhibit takes the visitor on a walk through the Holocaust in Nazi Germany, following the

passport of a child during the time. Other exhibits focus on other types of racism, discrimination and prejudice. It is a moving and thought provoking experience.

Balboa Park – Sand Diego, is home to acres of beautiful park walkways, a Palm Canyon and a plaza of numerous museums and arboretums.

All of these excursions are child friendly with the exception of the Tolerance museum being best for older children and teens, although children are usually given the passport of a child who did not perish in the war.

## **Some Possible Questions To Explore**

How does the piece you encountered relate to your own life?

Describe the symbolism in a piece and how it relates to a particular life struggle, life triumph, developmental stage or process?

Is there a piece which brings up particular feelings or ideas which gives you a new perspective on yourself or your life?

Is there a piece which strongly illustrates an experience, or issue you struggled with or are struggling with? One that you grew from? Something you celebrate in your accomplishments or triumphs?

Is there a song that you relate to in a particular way? Describe how it speaks to you personally.

These are just a few ideas, but there are many other ways to approach this as well. Please feel free to ask if you have further questions.

**Here is an interesting article synopsis concerning what happens to us neurologically when we enjoy art:**

## **Art appreciation, self-reflection may go together in the brain**

April 26, 2012  
Courtesy  
and World Science staff

**A network of brain structures activated during intense aesthetic experiences overlaps with another that's associated with inward contemplation and self-assessment, researchers have found.**

**New York University scientists asked 16 paid study subjects, having slight to moderate levels of past exposure or education in art, to examine 109 images of pictures from museums in a database. The artworks were from a wide range of cultures, time periods and styles, including some abstract works; none were particularly famous.**

**Subjects were asked to rate each work based on how strongly it "moved" them—not focusing necessarily on beauty, but rather on what struck them as "powerful, pleasing, or profound." During all this, their brain activity was scanned with a technology called functional magnetic resonance imaging.**

**There was little agreement among viewers in terms of which artworks received their highest ratings—fours, on a scale from one to four. But one consistent finding was that a specific network of brain regions went into action for viewers as they looked at those artworks that they found special, according to the researchers.**

**The network consisted of frontal areas of the brain, just behind the forehead, and "subcortical" regions, which are relatively deep in the brain. This activity also included several regions belonging to the brain's "default mode network," which had previously been associated with self-referential thinking, the investigators said.**

**"Aesthetic judgments for paintings are highly individual, in that the paintings experienced as moving differ widely across people," they wrote, reporting their findings in the journal *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience*. "But the neural systems supporting aesthetic reactions remain largely the same from person to person. Moreover, the most moving paintings produce a selective activation of a network of brain regions which is known to activate when we think about personally relevant matters such as our own personality traits and daydreams, or when we contemplate our future."**