

Finally - A Gift To Your Kids That Will Last

Connecting Generations through Family Stories

You work hard at being a good Mom and daughter, getting the kids together with your parents and grandparents whenever you can and hoping that spending time together will build lasting memories. But did you ever stop to think about trying to connect the generations in a more meaningful way?

Your parents and grandparents have rich stories about life during another era with family members who are long gone. They undoubtedly lived through challenging circumstances and gained great insight along the way. Capturing those stories on video is one of the best ways to make sure your children truly understand their family history and where they came from.

I hear all the time from my clients how being able to hear someone's voice and see the expression on their face as they're sharing family history and words of wisdom—especially after they have passed away—is priceless. It's also one of the greatest gifts you can give to your children. Here are my top three things you can do right now to get started.

1. Make It A Collaboration

Figure out who is the best person (or people) to tell the story you want told. Then involve other family members and brainstorm a list of topics and questions to ask. Think of those things you've always wanted to know but felt too uncomfortable to ask. (Now you have an excuse!) I often hear from my clients that when they've pulled out albums to choose photos for their documentary projects, it always jogs their parents' memories and amazing conversations ensue. (They also get a whole bunch of old photos identified and labeled at the same time.)

2. Make It Manageable

Who said getting a life story means it has to include every single life detail? What matters most is getting loved ones to share the most meaningful parts of their life. These are usually stories that were somehow life changing and gave the person greater wisdom. Tap into your resources to help with the interview. I've had clients tell me how surprised they were at how much their loved one shared with me in an interview. I tell people that the closer they are to someone, often the more difficult it is to get natural answers on video. I recommend having a neutral party (like an in-law, family friend, or video professional) conduct the interview for the best results.

3. Make It Memorable

One of the things people like best about creating a personal documentary is the fact that it's more than just a video interview. It includes old photos, documents, home movies and music that add texture to the story. Consider investing in

editing software (iMovie and Pinnacle Studio are both user-friendly) to really make the stories come alive. Also think about capturing other moments on video, such as your Mom cooking a favorite recipe or Grandpa reading a story.

It's easy to get inspired to capture family stories, but I've seen too many people put it off only to regret it when it's too late. I recommend that you give yourself a deadline for completing a family history project. Having an end goal like a special birthday or anniversary will ensure you get it done and it gives the whole family a reason to celebrate. As my client Heidi Isenberg-Feig said, "I cannot describe how grateful I am that we made this investment." It's an investment in yourself and future generations that will give you true peace of mind.

BIO:

Debbie is an Emmy award-winning producer and the owner of DMB Pictures, a boutique video production company specializing in capturing life stories on DVD. She lives with her husband and two boys in Bethesda, MD. For more info, visit dmbpictures.com.