



WHOA COURSE MATERIALS

WRITING THE HISTORY OF THE HEART

The Timeline, the Birth Story and the Parent Narrative

There are three parts to writing the History of the Heart: The Timeline, The Birth Story and The Parent Narrative.

TIMELINE

To write a personal history, you must first create a timeline starting with your birth and extending to present day. Split your life into three equal parts. Each part should have the people and events that influenced the way you think and feel about yourself and others. Analyze the results. Do you see patterns of behavior or actions that relate to relationships and parenting? What changes affected you the most?

Practice your timeline below. Split your life up into three parts: the first third of your life begins with birth, the middle third of your life demonstrates events and people that shaped your values, and the last third of your life leads to the person and circumstances of your present life.

BIRTH STORY

Birth Stories are “creation” stories. These stories explain how your family prepared for your coming and welcomed you into their lives. The birth story has within it certain elements that help illustrate the character of a person. When writing your birth story use the following elements: atmosphere, attention, symbols and prophecy.

Atmosphere: This is a detailed description of the world at the time of the birth. It can have historical references, physical descriptions such as the time of day (sunrise) and events leading up to and including the birth. Negative aspects such as difficult deliveries or unforeseen emergencies can be turned into positive attributes. A child can be told that they overcame great obstacles to live, or that they were courageous fighters in their struggle for life. Aligning children with positive strengths will reinforce their feelings of confidence, self-worth and capability.

Attention: The people involved in the preparation and anticipation of the birth will have a lasting effect on how a child feels about being “wanted.” Make a list of all the people involved in the birth including nurses, doctors, cab drivers and passersby that may have made positive comments or helped in bringing the child into the world. It is important to establish this welcoming framework of family and community.

Symbols: A rainbow, a candle, a sunrise, a flock of birds that flew over . . . anything that can be a positive symbol representing the celebration of a new life should be chronicled for later reference. Studies show that symbols are powerful psychic images of our relationship to the world. They give clues into our character and our values. Be sure you research the full meaning of any symbol you use and emphasize its greatest value.

Prophecy: Make a wish. Write down the wish of others. It is a way of setting expectations for the future. Avoid specific predictions such as “I know you will be a fireman when you grow up.” Lean more toward values that you hope for such as happiness, good fortune and strength of character. Avoid setting an expectation that, if broken, cannot be forgiven.

THE FULL PARENT NARRATIVE STORY

The full narrative starts with what you know about your parents. What culture or region did they come from? How do you think it influenced how they parented you? Now add your birth story to let people know how you fit into your family. Next, look at your timeline and tell the story behind it. Reflect back on what your history has to do with how you think about parenting.

Ask yourself two questions: Will you parent the way your parents did? What do you want to do differently?