WORKSHEET 117 · FOR THE PSYCHOLOGIST

The chapters of my life

Telling my life as a book

AIM

Organise the life story into major stages and give them a title, which supports the coherence of the narrative and the search for meaning.

WHO IT IS FOR

Transitions (moving house, separation, retirement, life abroad), a feeling of discontinuity, work on identity.

DURATION

20-30 min

HOW TO RUN IT

1. Suggest seeing one's life as a book and dividing it into 3 to 7 chapters.
2. For each chapter: the dates, a title and what characterises it.
3. Ask what each chapter has taught or left behind.
4. Explore the title of the current chapter: is it the one the person wants?

POINTS TO WATCH

> Inspired by McAdams's life story interview (the "chapters" instruction), without reproducing it. Going back over one's life can bring up painful memories. At home, the instruction is to write just one word for a difficult moment, without going into detail; work on traumatic memories is done in session (EMDR, NET), once there is enough stabilisation.

REFERENCES

McAdams, D. P. (2008). The Life Story Interview. The Foley Center for the Study of Lives, Northwestern University.

McAdams, D. P. (2001). The psychology of life stories. Review of General Psychology, 5(2), 100-122.

McLean, K. C., Pasupathi, M. & Pals, J. L. (2007). Selves creating stories creating selves: A process model of self-development. Personality and Social Psychology Review, 11(3), 262-278.

PSYCHOLOGIST'S NOTES

© 2026 Gonzalo Garzo, clinical psychologist · gonzalogarzo.com · CC BY-NC-ND 4.0: free to share, no commercial use or modifications

WORKSHEET 117 · WORKSHEET TO HAND OUT

The chapters of my life

Imagine your life is a book. Each major stage is a chapter, with a beginning, an end and a title. Looking at it this way helps you see how your story moves forward.

1. Divide your life into 3 to 7 chapters.
2. Give each one its dates and a title, as in a book.
3. Note in a few words what characterises each chapter.
4. Write what each chapter has taught you or left you with.

Chapter (from … to …)	Title	What characterises it	What it taught me

The chapter I am living today is called… and I would like the next one to be called:

These exercises do not replace therapy. If you are in distress or having suicidal thoughts: 112 (European Union), 3114 (France) or the emergency number of the country where you live.

© 2026 Gonzalo Garzo, clinical psychologist · gonzalogarzo.com · CC BY-NC-ND 4.0: free to share, no commercial use or modifications