Getting to Know You: Interviewing

One of the best things about the holiday season is spending time with family and friends. For some people, it’s the only time of year when they see loved ones who live far away. For 2023, you could make a resolution, or promise, to get to know family and friends better. You can do that by becoming an interviewer. This sort of like being a reporter, but instead of building the story, you let loved ones tell their own stories. The Mini Page talked with some professional interviewers to find out more about this process.

Why ask questions?
When you interview a friend or family member, you are making history. Whether your interview is saved in your own notes, on an audio recorder or a video recorder, the words will be there for others to learn from long after you’re gone. Maybe your own kids will someday read the story you collected.

Sometimes we forget that older relatives were once young and went to school and played with friends. Interviewing an older person helps us see that Grandma or Uncle Paul is not just an old person, but a real person who has lived a full life.

Who do I interview?
It doesn’t matter whether you are related to your interview subject. You might have a kind neighbor or a special teacher you’d like to learn more about. Older people may have more to say simply because they’ve had more experiences. Most people, young or old, love to tell about their lives.

Be organized
Be prepared. Decide if you’re going to record the interview and get your equipment charged and ready. Make a list of the questions you plan to ask. Schedule your interview for no more than 90 minutes. Otherwise, both you and your subject are likely to get tired. Shown up for your interview with your questions clearly outlined. Set up any recording equipment and find comfortable spots for you and the subject.

Talk to your subject about why you’re doing the interview. As you begin questions and answers, try to not to interrupt. Listen carefully. If you’re not clear about an answer, ask your subject to explain it more. If your subject seems cranky, it might be time to stop. Before you leave, make sure to ask if there’s anything else they’d like to tell you. Don’t forget to thank your subject for his or her time.

Try ’n’ Find
Words that remind us of interviews are hidden in this puzzle. Some words are hidden backward, and some words are used twice. See if you can find:

- ANSWER, EXPERIENCES, FAMILY, FRIENDS, INTERVIEW, LISTEN
- LIVES, NOTES, PERSON, PROCESS, QUESTION, REPORTER, RESOLUTION, SCHEDULE, STORY, SUBJECT, TALK.

Cook’s Corner
Energy Snack Mix
You’ll need:
- 1 cup dates, chopped
- 1 cup dried apricots, chopped
- 1 cup dark chocolate yogurt raisins

What to do:
1. Mix all ingredients in a large bowl.
2. Transfer to plastic bag or bowl for storage. Makes 5 cups.

7 Little Words for Kids
Use the letters in the boxes to make a word with the same meaning as the clue. The numbers in parentheses represent the number of letters in the solution. Each letter combination can be used only once, but all letter combinations will be necessary to complete the puzzle.

1. one way to cook eggs (9)
2. small stream (5)
3. leather seat on a home (6)
4. person who grows flowers (8)
5. a, e, i, o, or u (5)
6. 10-legged sea creature (5)
7. area behind the house (8)

Answers: scrambled, brook, saddle, gardener, vowel, squid, backyard.

Mini Fact:
Experts say a good place to start with questions about old photographs.

What can I ask about?
Being an interviewer involves more than just asking a few questions. It’s important to ask in a way that will load your subject into longer stories. For example, if you ask a kid, “Did you have fun as a kid?” Many people can answer “yes” or “no” and stop there. But you can get more interesting stories by asking more open questions, such as “Tell me about the kinds of games you played as a kid. What were your favorites? Why? What sports did you play?”

To get your interview started, you will probably want to start with basic questions about your subject, such as:
- When and where were you born?
- Were you named after anyone?
- Where did you live? In a town, a city or a farm?
- How many brothers and sisters did you have?
- What you like to study in school?

Resources
On the Web:
- youtu.be/ k9Ww7gNoIk

At the library:
- “Interview With My Grandma: An Interactive Journal to Investigate Our Family History” by Courtney Littler

Mini Jokes
Franco: Why are fish so smart? Farrah: They live in schools!

Eco Note
A massive plankton bloom off the eastern coast of Thailand has created a vast dead zone, where untold numbers of fish and other types of marine life have been killed. Marine experts say the bloom covers a quarter of the Gulf of Thailand, where a pungent smell of rotting fish permeates the air. Fishers and mussel farmers say they have suffered a 100% loss of their livelihoods. Some blame the new El Nino for the bloom, while others believe recent intense heat caused by climate change, combined with pollution, are responsible.

For later:
Look in the newspaper for articles that feature quotes from people. Those sources were interviewed for the stories!

Teachers:
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Founded by Betty Debnam

Next Week: Winter reading