

# **Raising Family Historians: Capturing the Hearts of Future Genealogists**

Why teach youth about family history?

Teaching family history and genealogy to youth can affect the mental/emotional capacity of youth as evidenced by the following studies:

- Driessnack, Martha. “Who Are You From?': The Importance of Family Stories.” *Journal of Family Nursing* 23, no. 4 (November 2017): 434-49.
- Fivush, Robyn; Duke, Marshal; Bohanek, Jennifer G. “Do you know...? The power of family history in adolescent identity and well-being.” *Journal of Family Life* (February 2010)
- Fivush, Robyn, and Natalie Merrill. “An Ecological Systems Approach to Family Narratives.” *Memory Studies* 9, no. 3 (July 2016): 305-14.
- Fischer, P., Sauer, A., Vogrincic, C. and Weisweiler, S. (2011), The ancestor effect: Thinking about our genetic origin enhances intellectual performance. *Eur. J. Soc. Psychol.*, 41: 11-16.
- BOHANEK, J.G., MARIN, K.A., FIVUSH, R. and DUKE, M.P. (2006), Family Narrative Interaction and Children's Sense of Self. *Family Process*, 45: 39-54.
- Merrill, Natalie and Robyn Fivush. “Intergenerational Narratives and Identity Across Development.” *Developmental Review*, Vol. 40 (June 2016): 72-92
- Emory University Family Narrative Lab

Youth who know about their family history show more resilience, intergenerational identity, and genealogical consciousness.

The goals of teaching children family history:

1. Create a family narrative.

Through story, help youth understand what your family is all about. For example, we have our ups and downs but we stick together and help each other to get through them.

The “Do you know?” questions:

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-stories-our-lives/201611/the-do-you-know-20-questions-about-family-stories>

2. Capture their hearts.

Help youth make emotional connections with you and your ancestors. Emphasize qualities and characteristics over dates and places.

Teaching methods:

1. Tell them their story.

Use narrative to help youth learn and retain their family stories.

2. Teach by example.

If you want them to be a family historian, you need to be a family historian.

3. Create experiences.

Tell stories by helping youth make connections with places and items that have significance for family members. Be creative with these connections. Virtual experiences are a great alternative when you live far from the actual location.

4. Encourage exploration.

Allow youth to be in the driver’s seat. Help them follow their natural curiosity in choosing what their favorite family history activities are and what branches of their tree they’d like to know more about.

Any questions? Feel free to reach out to me!

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