

A close-up, high-angle shot of a person's hands writing in a spiral-bound notebook. The notebook is open, showing several pages of handwritten text in cursive. A black pen is held in the right hand, writing on the page. A cup of dark coffee sits on a blue and white patterned surface next to the notebook. The background is blurred, showing more of the person writing.

Highs, Hurts & Elixirs

Exploring and
Learning from
Your Life Story

Highs, Hurts & Elixirs

(Your Treasures of Magic and Wisdom To Share)



Research has shown that understanding, reframing and telling your story has a number of mental health and well-being benefits.

This **Highs, Hurts and Elixirs** exercise can help you begin to reflect on your journey, identify patterns and gain insights into future aspirations – all of which is useful as you consider reaping the benefits of sharing your story and life learnings with others.

Elixir, by the way, is often defined as a ‘medicinal concoction’ or ‘magic potion’.

In the context of reflecting on your storytelling journey, I’m referring to an ‘elixir’ as a treasured lesson learned, which could be love, wisdom, mystical insight or simply the experience of surviving.

Another aspect of an elixir in the ‘heroic journey’ storytelling framework is that the hero discovered or acquired something special for the benefit of helping or healing others. As you get healthier and happier by understanding and making peace with your past, for example, this can also transform how you relate to others in the present. Exploring your story has restorative power for your well-being, but it will also then impact the people in your life now and potentially for generations to come.

This **Highs, Hurts and Elixirs** exercise will guide you through a reflection on your story in 5-10-year increments (depending on your life experience and years of wisdom), focusing on the highs, hurts, and lessons learned of each period.

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Instructions

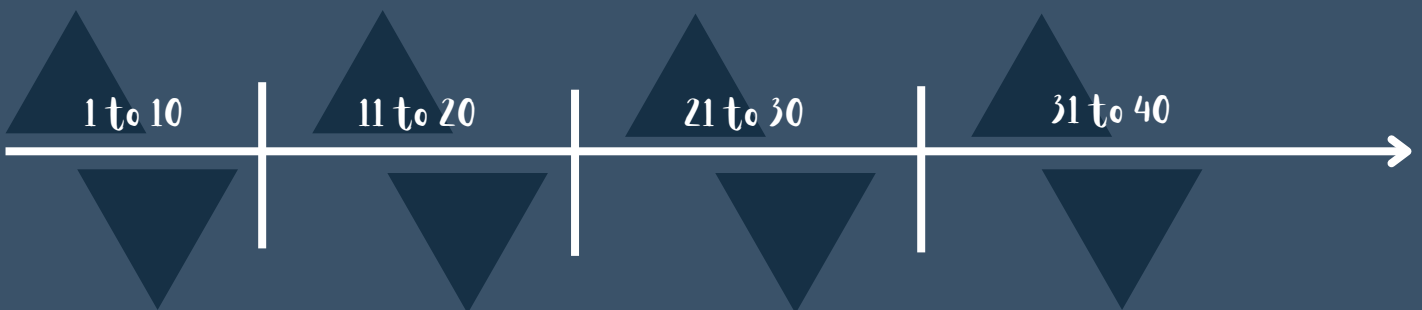
1. **Divide your life into segments:** Think back to significant periods in your life. Try to divide these into roughly 5, 7 or 10 year chunks. The exact years aren't crucial; focus on natural transitions and significant life stages.

For example:

- Childhood (e.g., 0-7, 7-14)
- Adolescence (e.g., 14-21)
- Early Adulthood (e.g., 21-28, 28-35)
- Mid-Adulthood (e.g., 35-42, 42-49)
- etc.

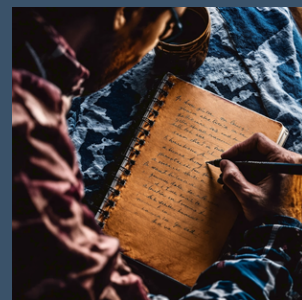
Adjust these age ranges to fit your own life experiences. You might have periods that are shorter or longer depending on what was happening at the time.

2. **Create a Timeline:** Craft a timeline with these periods marked out. You can do this linearly across a page or use a more visual format.



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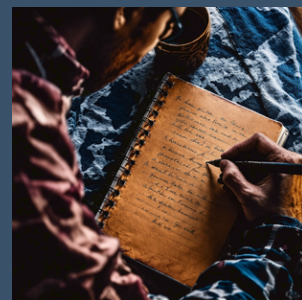


3. Reflect on Each Period: For each 5, 7 or 10 year segment you've identified, consider the following questions as you capture key moments in writing; take bullet point notes on a separate page, if necessary, and then transfer the core elements to your timeline.

- What were the major events and most impactful experiences of this time? (e.g., school, jobs, relationships, moves, personal growth, challenges) List as many as you can recall.
- What were the "highs" of this period? From your list of major events and experiences, identify the best moments, accomplishments, or positive experiences? What brought you joy and fulfillment? You can circle those that stand out from your list or add more if something new comes to mind.
- What were the "hurts" of this period? Review your list again and find the most challenging moments, setbacks, or negative experiences? What caused you stress or pain? Be honest with yourself; capture and underline the most hurtful memories.
- Transfer key highs and hurts to your timeline. Take a few minutes to identify and transfer the most significant or transformative experiences from each period to your timeline.
- What were your biggest lessons learned, your elixirs, during this period? What did you take away from both the highs and the lows? On your timeline, summarize with a concise phrase or symbolize these insights for each segment.

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4. Review and Synthesize: Once you've reflected and written down your thoughts on each period, take some time to review your notes.

Consider the following:

- **Patterns:** Do you notice any recurring themes or patterns in your life? Are there certain types of experiences that tend to bring you joy or stress or sadness?
- **Growth:** How have you grown and changed over time? What strengths or realizations have you developed?

Example (for the "Adolescence" period):

- **Major Events:** High school, first job, learning to drive, marriage, divorce, exploring interests, travels.
- **Highs:** Getting my driver's license, winning the science fair, first real relationship, discovering my love for music.
- **Hurts:** Dealing with peer pressure, struggling with self-esteem, experiencing heartbreak, feeling overwhelmed by schoolwork, family trauma.
- **Elixirs (Lessons Learned for Yourself and Others):** The importance of self-acceptance, the value of true friendships, the need to balance independence and responsibility.

This exercise is meant to be a personal journey of reflection. Take your time, be honest, and allow yourself to feel the emotions that arise as you revisit different stages of your life. The insights you gain can be invaluable in understanding your past, finding a little more peace, and moving more fully into your future with greater awareness and sense of self.

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Example from My Life: Perhaps you've seen the three part video series titled, **60 Trips Around the Sun**; I completed it on my 60th birthday and is a companion to this exercise. If not, you can find it here on YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y1_w7f_hgi4

This series provides an example of how I reflected on my journey and captured it on film, which was a learning experience in and of itself. I'd recommend recording your some of your key thoughts from this exercise in some way as you refine your ideas and the lessons you've learned.

I had a mentor in graduate school who did a similar exercise to pass onto his kids, grandkids and great grandkids. He and his wife, in their late 80s, got together and reflected on their lives; they discovered that their most significant, meaningful memories were attached to their most difficult moments.

As I've reviewed my life journey these past few weeks, and identified the highs, hurts and lessons learned from my past **60 trips around the sun** (wow, still can't believe I've travelled so far and long), I do feel a bit more whole, more at ease within myself.

It has helped that I've done a lot of this self-reflective storytelling and therapeutic work at various turning points in my life, but I do believe taking the time to continue to review my history and identify memories, challenges, failures, wounds, milestones, and more help me acknowledge, accept and appreciate the grandeur of the quest so far. I hope the same for you.