**Creating Your Autobiography**

*Adapted from both the Adult Attachment Questionnaire and Chapter 9 of The Emotional Incest Syndrome; ‘ Making Your Personal History, History’, by Dr Patricia Love.*

*Your autobiography can be as personal and unique as you are. You can ‘begin at the beginning’ and develop your own structure or refer to the outline provided below. As you will see the outline is very thorough. You do not need to answer every question and you may wish to focus only on those questions that really resonate with you*. *I would also encourage you* *to complete one life stage at a time (and please take as long as you need over this) or if you would rather complete it with me during our sessions rather than for homework that is also fine and for some people this may feel like a safer option.*

*When you have finished writing each section of your autobiography you may feel exhausted, especially if it brought up a lot of strong feelings. You may feel unusually open and vulnerable. Be kind to yourself and allow yourself time to relax and regroup. If you find yourself thinking about the past more than usual in the days following this exercise encourage these thoughts. This is your emotional processing system kicking into gear and I can help you with this by taking time to process your autobiography with you during our sessions.*

**1. Before you were born**

1. Do you know the atmosphere of the family both your parents grew up in?
2. Did either of your parents experience trauma/abuse?

1. If so can you describe what they experienced?

2. Did they ever get professional help to process this?

1. Do you know how your parents met?
2. Do you know what the quality/health of their relationship was like?
3. How long after meeting did your parents have you or your older sibling?

**2. Infancy**

1. Do you know much about your birth e.g. whether there were any complications?
2. Where were you born?
3. What was the atmosphere of the family into which you were born?
4. Were your parents together?
5. Were they happy?
6. Were they loving and warm with each other and to you/your siblings?
7. Were you a planned baby?
8. Were your parents happy with you?
9. Do you know if they were hoping for a boy or a girl?
10. Did you have siblings?
11. Who was your primary caretaker?
12. Was either of your parents heavy drinkers/alcoholics?
13. Were either of your parents workaholics?

B. What kind of baby were you?

1. How was your health?
2. What was your personality as an infant?
3. Where did you sleep? What were your sleep habits?

**3. Early Childhood (ages 1-5).**

1. What do early pictures say about you?
2. What are your earliest memories?
3. List the most prominent feelings you had as a child (e.g., sadness, happiness, anxiety, anger, disappointment, hurt, shame, guilt, love etc).
4. Chose 3-5 words that reflect your relationship with your mom as a young child and any memories related to this
5. Chose 3-5 words that reflect your relationship with your dad as a young child and any memories related to this
6. Were any younger siblings born during your early childhood?
7. If so what do you remember about this
8. How did you feel?
9. If you had siblings, describe your relationships with them
10. Which one(s) were you closest to?
11. Which one(s) did you have problems with?

H. Did one of your siblings have a special relationship with a parent?

1. Can you describe this
2. How did it made you feel?
3. How much fun and playfulness was there for you as a young child?
4. Were there any traumatic or aversive events during your early childhood?
5. What did you like the most about your early childhood?

L. What did you like the least about your early childhood?

**4. Later Childhood (ages 5-11)**

1. Chose 3-5 words that reflect your relationship with your mom as an older child and any memories related to this
2. Chose 3-5 words that reflect your relationship with your dad as an older child and any memories related to this
3. Were any younger siblings born during your later childhood?
4. If so what do you remember about this
5. How did you feel?
6. What was your school experience like?
7. How did your caretakers respond to your school performance?
8. Were you given much praise from your parents?
9. Did you have friends?
10. Who were your friends?
11. Describe your relationships with them?
12. How did you spend your time?
13. Did you experience any bullying/isolation?
14. What was your home like?
15. How did you feel about where you lived?
16. When you were upset as a child what would you do and how would your parents respond to your feelings?
17. How much fun and playfulness was there for you as an older child?
18. Did they demonstrate healthy ways of dealing with their own feelings?
19. Did you (or could you) express feelings of anger, fear, sadness, guilt, love, affection?
20. Did you feel safe as a child?
21. With whom did you feel safest?
22. Did you feel unsafe with anyone?
23. Were you held and cuddled by your caretakers?
24. If yes by whom?
25. If not, do you know why not?
26. How did it feel to be (or not to be) held and cuddled?
27. How were you disciplined?
28. By whom?
29. Was it fair and humane?
30. What were you disciplined for?
31. Were you ‘spoiled’ by anyone?
32. How, in what way?
33. How did others respond to you being spoiled?
34. Were you anyone’s favorite in your immediate or extended family?
35. How was this favoritism shown?
36. How did others respond to this favoritism?
37. Were there any traumatic or aversive events during your later childhood?
38. Was your family flexible?
39. Were the adults clearly in charge?
40. Did the adults have a clear, healthy support system from friends, family, neighbors?
41. Did the family relate to the broader community (school, neighbors, friends, work) in a healthy manner?
42. In a word or phrase, how would you describe your life from ages 5 to 11?
43. What were the high spots?
44. What were the low spots?
45. What would you change if you could?

**5. Adolescence (ages 12-20)**

1. What type of young teenager were you?
2. What were your major feelings as a teenager?
3. Chose 3-5 words that reflect your relationship with your mom as a teenager and any memories related to this
4. Chose 3-5 words that reflect your relationship with your dad as a teenager and any memories related to this
5. What were your parents expectations of you?
6. What was your school/college/university experience like?
7. What kind of student were you?
8. How much guidance/support did you receive and by whom?
9. How did you relate to your friends/classmates?
10. Was there any traumatic or aversive events during your adolescence such as abuse, bullying, losses, illness?
11. How did you feel about your appearance?
12. To whom were you closest?
13. How did your parents set limits with you and shape pro social/healthy behaviour?
14. As you moved through adolescence how did your parents manage your need for increasing autonomy?
15. Describe your sexual development
16. Did you have any anxieties about it?
17. How did your caretakers respond to your sexual maturity?
18. Were you given adequate information?

P. Describe your relationship with friends of the opposite sex

1. Did you date?
2. How did your caretakers respond to your interest in the same or opposite sex?
3. Did you experiment with sex?
4. Did you have personal privacy at home?

R. Were your caretakers happy with their lives?

S. In later years were you given support to leave home and become more independent?

1. Did you feel any pressure to stay at home or to stay close to home?
2. Did you feel guilt or anxiety about leaving home?
3. Were you eager to leave home?

T. What were the hardest times of your adolescence?

1. What were the highlights?

V. If you could now change your adolescence, how would you change it?

**6. Young adulthood (ages 21-30)**

1. Chose 3-5 words that reflect your relationship with your mom as a young adult and any memories related to this
2. Chose 3-5 words that reflect your relationship with your dad as a young adult and any memories related to this
3. List and summarise each of your significant love relationships
4. What was your job history?
5. Describe any additional schooling and how you felt about it.
6. Describe your physical health
7. If you got married during this period, discuss your marriage(s).
8. If you had children, discuss your relationship with your children
9. What were the highlights of your young adulthood?
10. If you had to do it over, what would you change about your young adulthood?

**7. How has your life been since young adulthood?**

1. High points
2. Low points
3. Job or career history
4. Health
5. Friends
6. Family relationships
7. Love relationships

**8. Present day**

1. What feelings do you experience on a regular basis? (e.g. tiredness, anger, sadness, depression, joy, elation, anxiety, aimlessness, confusion, stress, confidence, a feeling of purpose etc)
2. What recurring thoughts and fantasies do you have?
3. To whom are you closest?