FREE GUIDE · REYNARIE PORTES

20 questions for your parents

Questions for the first conversation with Mama and Papa, or Lola and Lolo. You do not have to follow the order: pick a few questions for each conversation, and follow the story wherever it goes.

BEFORE YOU START

- Record the conversation on your phone. Ask first whether they agree.
- Let them tell it in their own language: Tagalog, Bikol, Ilocano, Bisaya, or a mix.
- Bring an old photo. After every answer, ask: “And then what happened?”
- Do not push painful memories. They decide.

CHILDHOOD

1 Where were you born, and what was the house you grew up in like?

2 Who lived in your house back then, and who looked after you?

3 What did your family eat on special days, and what on ordinary ones?

4 What work did you have to do as a child?

5 What is your earliest memory?

GROWING UP

6 What do you remember about your school, and how did you get there?

7 Who was your best friend back then?

8 What did you dream of when you were young?

9 How did you meet the person you married?

WORK AND LEAVING HOME

10 What was your first job, and what did you do with your first pay?

11 Did you have to leave for work, to another city or another country? What was the goodbye like?

12 What was the hardest time in your life, and what kept you going?

13 What are you proudest of in your work?

FAMILY

14 How did you feel when your first child was born?

15 What stories did your own parents and grandparents tell you?

16 Which feasts, customs or dishes should the family keep?

17 Is there someone you still want to thank, and for what?

LOOKING BACK

18 If you could do it again, what would you do differently?

19 What should the family know about you that they might not know yet?

20 What would you like to pass on to your grandchildren?

From the author of Sa Maliit na Bintana

Reynarie Portes wrote these questions from her own experience of writing her book, the story of her childhood in Libmanan.

reynarie.com

Full guide: reynarie.com/en/how-to-write-a-life-story/