



Tool Thirteen:

The River of Family Life

DIFFICULTY: ●●○○○
FOR: FAMILIES

The River of Family Life was adapted from the River of Life method by Joyce Mercer. The Ashoka Indonesia team adapted the exercise for an intergenerational family setting. During the process, all generations in the family can be involved in discovery, reflection and connection.

BASICS:

When: Ideal for families seeking a memorable reflective experience.

Time Needed: 60 to 90 minutes.

Materials: Large paper or poster board, markers, and a quiet space.

Objective: The River of Family Life aims to provide families with a reflective space to explore and share their journey, fostering understanding, empathy, and the identification of key family values and lessons.

STEPS:

1. Visualize: Ask family members to visualize their family life as a river. What does it look like? Are there twists, turns, rocks, or waterfalls? Encourage them to associate these elements with happy or challenging moments in the family's journey.

2. Frame: Identify important events in the family's life, categorizing them by specific periods (e.g., since the parents' marriage). Discuss when these events occurred and their impact on the family.

3. Guide: Identify the significant influencers or key relationships that played a role in shaping the family's important events. Discuss how these influencers contributed to the family's journey.

4. Contextualize: Explore the connection between the family's events and external factors outside the family. Consider natural disasters, economic crises, pandemics, or any other relevant contextual elements that may have influenced the family's journey.

5. Reflect: Discuss and reflect on the values or key lessons learned from the family's life journey. Engage all family members in this discussion, encouraging open and honest communication.

6. Share and Inspire: Once the family has created their River of Family Life, encourage them to share their story with friends, within their social circle, or on social media. Emphasize the potential for inspiring others with their unique family journey.

THINGS TO CONSIDER:

- ✦ Create a comfortable and safe space for open discussion, where people listen rather than react.
- ✦ Encourage each family member to actively participate.
- ✦ Emphasize the importance of understanding and respecting different perspectives within the family.

Source: [Adapted from the River of Life method developed by Joyce Mercer of Yale University, as implemented by Gerakan Pembaharu Keluarga \(Gaharu Keluarga\) in Indonesia.](#)