



## Tool Ten:

# Drawing an Individual Timeline

**DIFFICULTY:** ●●○○○

**FOR:** ORGANIZATIONS

Drawing an Individual Timeline is a powerful tool that helps individuals visually map out the major milestones, setbacks, values, and influential people in their lives. It allows participants to reflect on their personal journeys, fostering a deeper understanding of their life narratives. This tactile and creative exercise helps individuals curate their past, identify key moments that have shaped them, and see patterns across a diverse group. This can be done in a variety of settings, such as family, community, organization, and more.

### BASICS:

**When:** Can be done in a variety of settings to create story and meaning in a group context.

**Time Needed:** At least one hour for participants to draw their timelines, plus additional time for group discussions.

**Materials:** Paper, Scissors, Glue, Colored pens, and Images (these can be taken from magazines, newspapers, or photocopies of old photographs).

**Objective:** The objective is to encourage adult participants to create a visual representation of their life stories through timelines. Participants are guided to identify major life milestones, setbacks, enduring values, and influential individuals who have played significant roles in their lives.

### STEPS:

#### 1. Distribute Materials:

Distribute paper, scissors, glue, colored pens, and images to the participants. Ensure that there are enough materials for each participant to construct their timeline. Participants can bring their own visual materials or use images provided by the facilitator.

#### 2. Set Context:

Instruct each person to draw a timeline of their life story. They can present this as a paper poster for display or create a digital presentation if technology is available.

#### 3. Guiding Questions:

Pose thought-provoking questions to stimulate participants' thinking about the construction of their timelines. These questions may include:

- \* What are the major milestones of your life?
- \* Why do you consider them milestones?
- \* What are the main stumbling blocks or setbacks?
- \* Why do you consider them setbacks?
- \* What are your permanent values?
- \* Who are the most influential people in your life?

#### 4. Making the Timeline:

Allow participants at least an hour to draw out their timelines. Encourage creativity and personal expression in the visual representation of their life stories.



### 5. Group Discussion:

Organize participants into groups of three or four to share their stories with one another. Encourage each group to identify the main similarities and differences that appear in their timelines. This fosters dialogue and connections between participants.

### 6. Sharing with the Larger Group:

Select one person from each group to present the identified differences and similarities to the larger group.

### THINGS TO CONSIDER:

Emphasize that participants are the curators of their own past and that the exercise is not about merely putting facts together in chronological order. It's about selecting and articulating the essential happenings and events that have shaped their lives.

Consider placing a limit on the number of events participants can include (e.g., 10 events, comprising five milestones and five setbacks) to encourage thoughtful selection.

Use this exercise as an opportunity to discuss the concepts of memory and history, helping participants differentiate between personal memories and broader historical narratives.

Encourage participants to view their life stories as part of a collective and connective narrative which opens the door to exploring the construction of collective and connective narratives within a community, family, or group.

[Source: Museu da Pessoa](#)

Photo: Museu da Pessoa

