



CORE SKILLS

Module 1

Life Review



IEOLCA

International End-of-Life
Care Association™

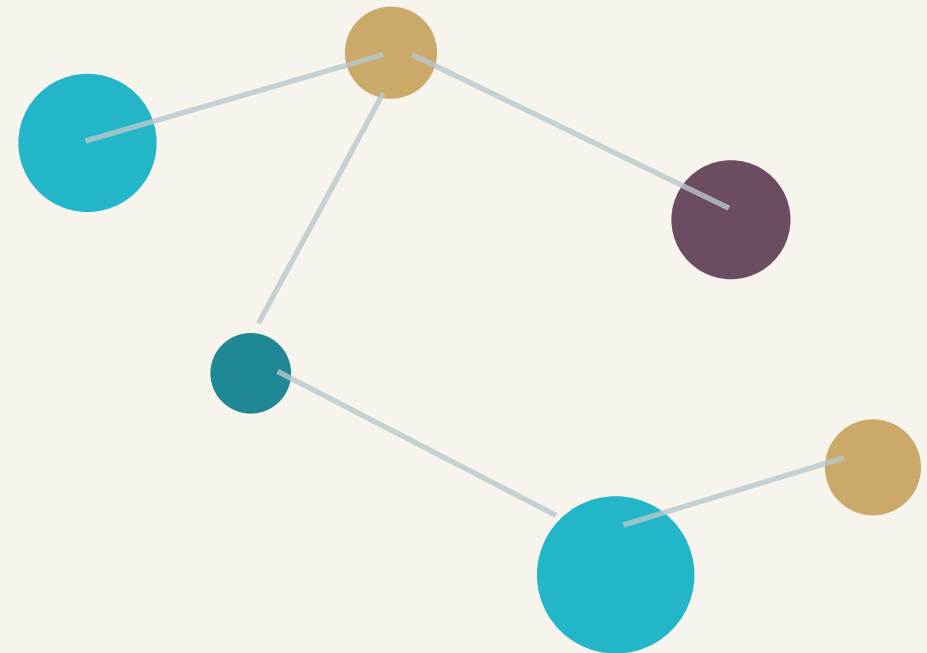


What is a life review?

A space to revisit experiences, relationships, accomplishments, regrets, and lessons learned.

Life review is deeply personal.

It gives a person room to make sense of their journey, revisit pivotal moments, and explore the emotions and meanings connected to their story.



*A life story is rarely linear.
Meaning can emerge from the connections between
moments.*

A life review can hold many kinds of memories

The goal is not to create a perfect story. It is to make room for what matters to the person.



Experiences

Pivotal moments, turning points, adventures, changes and everyday memories.



Relationships

People who shaped the person's life, belonging, connection and loss.



Accomplishments

What they built, contributed, learned, survived or feel proud of.



Regrets & lessons

Unfinished chapters, difficult choices, meaning, growth and reflection.

Memories may surface through conversation, photographs, music, familiar objects—or unexpectedly.

Walk alongside. Do not steer.

Life review asks us to practice presence more than performance.

Your role

- Create a safe, compassionate space.
- Listen deeply and with curiosity.
- Invite storytelling without directing it.
- Allow meaning to emerge in the client's own way.

What this is not

- Judging the person's life or choices.
- Pushing for resolution or reconciliation.
- Forcing a "positive" ending.
- Making the conversation about our own reactions.

The Platinum Rule in life review

“Treat others as they wish to be treated.”

**Some people find comfort in revisiting memories. Others may avoid certain reflections.
Our work is to meet them where they are.**

No pressure to process

Honor their pace

Follow their lead

Stay curious

PAUSE & REFLECT

Before we accompany another person, we begin with ourselves.

Take a moment with your journal.

- 1 What does the term “life review” mean to you?
- 2 How do you feel about looking back on your own life?
- 3 What emotions do you associate with your own life experiences?
- 4 Have you ever had a conversation that felt like a life review? What stood out?

There are no “right” reflections here. Notice what comes up.

Sometimes the invitation is very small.

A question. A photograph. A piece of music. A moment of silence.

A question

"Tell me about a time when you felt truly alive."

PRESENCE

listen • notice • allow

A photograph

"What memories does this bring up for you?"

A relationship

"Who has had the biggest impact on your life?"

A meaningful moment

"What made that experience so important to you?"

Offer an entry point, not an agenda.

Life review does not need to follow a timeline or a script.



GENTLE INVITATION

“Would you like to begin with a time in your life that felt especially significant?”

Follow the memory that arrives. Storytelling may move backward, forward, sideways—or pause entirely.

Keep the conversation centered on the client's experience.

Affirm. Paraphrase. Gently invite more reflection.

When pride appears

"That sounds like such a defining moment in your life. What made it so significant?"

When regret appears

"It sounds like that experience still carries weight for you. How do you feel about it now?"

When silence appears

*Give the person time.
Silence can be part of the life review, too.*

The purpose is not to steer toward a particular meaning. It is to help the person hear and explore their own story.

A life fully lived can hold more than one feeling at once.

Joy, sorrow, pride, regret and uncertainty may sit beside each other.

JOY Moments of connection, love, pride, beauty or delight.

REGRET Missed opportunities, difficult choices or words left unsaid.

SORROW Loss, grief, painful memories or unfinished experiences.

MEANING What was learned, carried forward, survived or understood differently over time.

There is no “right” emotional response to looking back.

Acknowledge. Invite. Leave room.

Support does not require solving the memory.

PAINFUL MEMORY

"That sounds like a heavy burden to carry.
Would you like to talk more about it?"

REGRET

"Would it help to write down what you're feeling? Sometimes putting thoughts into words can bring clarity or release."

JOYFUL MEMORY

"That sounds like a beautiful time in your life.
What made it so special for you?"

UNSPOKEN WORDS

"Is there anything you feel you'd like to say to someone from your past?"

Reflection can be meaningful without requiring resolution.

The person remains in control of the conversation.

Pause, regulate, and return only if it feels right to them.

**“Would you like to pause and take a deep breath?
We don’t have to go any further if this feels too heavy right
now.”**

1

Notice

Watch for distress, overwhelm or withdrawal.

2

Pause

Slow the conversation and offer a breath or a break.

3

Return choice

Remind them that they decide what to explore and when to stop.

Sometimes life review naturally leads to legacy.

The reflection may create a desire to preserve wisdom, values, stories or memories.

Life review

Stories • memories • meaning



An invitation may emerge

Legacy work

Letters • recordings • keepsakes • stories

Offer, do not assign.

Not everyone will want to create something tangible. That is okay.

Legacy projects are explored more fully in Module 9.



MODULE 1 • CLOSING THOUGHT

Life review is not about creating a perfect narrative.

It is about presence, listening, and honoring the richness
of a person's lived experience.

Hold space with an open heart.