

## A Case for Dead Ancestors and Our Posterity

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Believe it or not, ancestors are important in our lives as well as the lives of our children and grandchildren. Studies have shown that the benefits of knowing our ancestors' life stories can help us all by building our self-esteem, giving us a sense of belonging, emotional stability and becoming more resilient. (1) Therefore, we need to create an interest and desire for our posterity to want to discover and become familiar with their kindred dead.

To start with, let's talk about improving self-esteem. If children don't feel connected to their family, then they go other places to find a connection. Giving them an opportunity to find a more meaningful connection through family history, helps build confidence and gives them a sense of pride knowing that they are connected to a long line of ancestors that lived, loved, and laughed during their own lifetime. It helps them realize that they too, are loved and have value in their family and that perhaps their life stories will someday help *their* posterity.

The best place to begin learning about their ancestors is with their grandparents. Getting together and sharing stories about Grandma and Grandpa and also stories from the lives of their great grandparents will paint a better picture and understanding of who they are and where they come from. Doing things such as making family trees that show connections to their extended family, having a family heirloom treasure hunt, making an ancestor quilt, or visiting countries virtually where their ancestors emigrated from, all help to build enthusiasm to want to learn more. (2)

Another factor that helps children cope is knowing about their relative's trials and tribulations and how they were able to get through them. Researchers found that the single most important thing you can do for your family may be the simplest of all: develop a strong family narrative. (3) It can give them confidence in knowing that if their ancestors went through hard things, then they can too. We can use our own stories and those of our ancestors to teach important life skills such as honesty, perseverance, or courage. If the stories are shared often enough, then the seeds will be planted in their minds and coping with their problems will be easier.

In closing, it is important to remember that parents and grandparents won't be around forever, so our ancestor's stories will be lost if they are not recorded. This is where our posterity can in turn, help *us* by compiling *our* histories so future generations can benefit from them. As they share their family stories from one generation to the next,

they can feel connected, loved, and important, just as their ancestor's lives were important. They are a part of us, and we, a part of them. Together, we make one big happy family!

References:

(1) & (2) *"Turning Little Hearts-- Over 90 Activities to Connect Children With Their Ancestors"* By Jonah and Charlotte Barnes  
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(3) *New York Times Newspaper Article* under *"This Life"* Section

*"The Stories That Bind"* By Bruce Feiler

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