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Nazis tried to erase a people & memory. We are here to witness those memories were real.

You are here today because you feel a responsibility to pass these memories on the best you can.

Fears of Starting the Process

- Our own feelings of guilt
- Feeling overwhelmed with the task
- Lack of knowledge
- Lack of skill

Acceptance

- Our own youth, lack of knowledge & education, self-absorption
 - What I know or do not know now
 - We did not want to cause our parent pain
 - That as the children of Survivors we & our families were “different”
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Remember

- Some of our parents spoke too much & some not enough or not at all
- We were bestowed with both their gifts & their burdens
- Memory is tricky
- You are not an historian or scholar
- If both your parents were Survivors, you may not be able to tackle both stories at once
- There may need to be gaps or an absence of detail
- That writing can be therapeutic in and of itself



Making a Start

- Write as if no one will ever read this
 - Polishing & editing can come later
 - It does not have to be chronological
 - Just start thinking about what you know & what you don't know
 - Keep a pad of paper on which you can jot a note to yourself as thoughts, memories come
 - If you are procrastinating, set a date
 - Remember there is never a “perfect time”
 - Find a writing partner to check in with
 - Only write about one of your parents at a time
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Roughly Four Categories:

- Your parent is still living & able to talk
- Your parent made a video or audio testimony
- Your parent told you or others his/her story
- You know little

The path you take will depend somewhat on which category you fall into but the questions you will answer & research, will be very similar.

Questions

- What is your first memory of your parent speaking of his/her experiences? OR what is your memory of the first time you realized he/she was a Survivor?
- How old were you? Did you overhear him/her speaking to someone else or was this directed to you?
- Check in with how you felt. This may not be a part of what you write, but it may be helpful for you to note.
- Who is your audience? What do you want your children, grandchildren & family to know?

Questions

- When your parent spoke, what made him/her feel the most emotional?
- What most touches your own heart about the story—not just the experience but of the emotions your parent must have experienced?
- What would your parent most want to have shared or remembered?
- What are the good memories of childhood shared?
- If your parent spoke publicly to schools or other venues, what was told in the 50 or so minutes he/she spoke?
- Did you have relatives? Are any still living? Did you ever talk to them or cousins?

Questions

- Are you named for anyone who was lost? Why were you named for him/her?
- Did you have friends whose parents were Survivors? Did you ever talk to them or can you now?
- Did your parent have Survivor friends? Did they speak of their pasts? Were they from the same countries? Did family friends become a substitute for family?
- Who in the family was lost? Do you know their names?
- What was happening in the country/area in the year your parent was born?

Questions

- Did your parent's family try to leave? Was there fear or denial of the worsening situation?
- Did your parent experience antisemitism growing up?
- What do you know about the country, shtetl, town, city, ghetto, camp(s), hiding place at the time of your parent's experience?
- What do you know about your parent's parents, grandparents? What was life like for the families growing up?
- What do you know about the place your parent was born? His/her childhood? His/her family's livelihood?

Questions

- Was the family religious? What do you know about their religious practices? How were holidays celebrated or observed?
- What are the family recipes, traditions, artifacts or photos handed down?
- How do you think your parent's experiences shaped them as parents?
- What were the traits & messages, both negative & positive you inherited as the child of a Survivor?

(fear, mistrust, over-protection, emotional detachment, anxiety, worry, high expectations, strong work ethic, emphasis on education, optimism, perseverance, patriotism, activism, involvement in the community, altruism)

Questions

- What admonishments or lessons did your parent repeat?
- What are the gaps I need to fill in before I feel I can write? Do I have a general overview of what was happening in Europe before & during? Of your parent's own country?