

# If Life Was a Card Game...

from *Where to Go from Here: Discovering your own life's wisdom in the second half of your life* by James E. Birren and Linda Feldman

## Part A. Where did I come from?

### 1. *What you were dealt*

Reluctance can be caused by the fear that your life might not be appreciated. Once you begin to understand your own life, that fear will disappear.

You gain the strength to plot your own future after you understand your past.

What kind of hand were you dealt in life? What is your birth story? How has it make its impression on you as you look back on the details? Are there family stories about it? What do you know of your earliest history? How did you arrive at the poker table?

What kind of health cards were you dealt at birth and along the way? How did you choose to experience pain?

How would you describe the kind of family you were born into? How would you describe that same family today? Was there one specific characteristic of you family that still influences you?

Were you the oldest child? The youngest? What was that like? What were your parents' expectations? What were some of your early experiences with justice? How were infractions of the rules handled?

What did you like about the hand you were dealt in life? What did you dislike most about the hand you were dealt?

What did you learn about money when you were growing up and from whom did you learn it? Whom did you ask for money? When you were given your cards of life how many chips were piled in front of you and what were you told about them? What kind of childhood enterprises did you have? What did you do with the money?

Home... What is the first room you remember? Did you grow up in a male or female home? Who cleaned your home? Is your home in order now? Who's in charge of creating order

What were your history lessons? However your history unfolded, no matter what cards were dealt out in your hand of life, the task was the same: to make something of yourself. Do you feel that anyone has ever received a perfect hand?

## ***2. How you played the hand***

How did you play the hand you were dealt? When did your childhood end? When did you feel you were taking care of yourself? When did you first feel accountable? What was the first decision you made for yourself?

How active were you in making decisions for yourself? Did your decision making most resemble your father's style or your mother's? What was the best decision you made for yourself?

What kind of bets have you made on yourself? What did you invest? Whom did you ask to invest with you? What experiences influenced the way you played your hand? What bets didn't you make?

Were you caught in any ups and downs of your family? How was your initiative harmed or helped? Did your life return to its earlier status? How did it change?

Did you follow the rules or break them? How did you deal with success and failure? What skills did you most rely on? What experiences did you have with waiting?

Have you stood in your own way? What were some of your best moves?

What went into your decision making? Were you a farmer who planted seeds for new opportunities, or did you show up for the harvest? Were you a map reader who plotted the next move in an already explored land, or did you sketch in pencil where you might be next? How did you define success? How did you achieve success? What gives you satisfaction?

Were you a risk taker? In what areas of your life did you take risks? In what areas do you wish you had taken risks?

## ***3. The Dreams***

How were you trying to be?

When you were a small child, what person did you most admire? What quality in that person attracted you - power, beauty, kindness, skill? Have any of these qualities stayed with you?

Can you trace your early dreams back to certain people? Did you know your father's dreams? Your mother's? Which characteristics do your models have in common?

Did you experience something in your life comparable to the great killer of dreams? What transitions did you make? Under what circumstances did they come about?

What models are with you today? What did they teach you? Did you have models who taught you your limits? How did you react? Who were your negative models? What were the benefits? What were the costs? Did any originality emerge? What became of the originality? Did you follow the originality to any specific goal?

## **Part B. Where am I now?**

### ***1. How do I feel about my life?***

What are the lifelong threads that hold the fabric of your life together? Has your life developed like a branching tree, a winding river, or crabgrass? Or is it a huge unfolding tapestry with a few major threads?

What kind of animal would you like to be? What kind of animal are you really like? How would your friends answer that question about you?

What's going on in your emotional life right now? What are your needs? What's missing? When do you feel most comfortable in your own skin? When was the last time you listened to your second nature? When did you not listen? What happened? When did you last take a stand on something?

How do you react when your passion level drops? What do you tell yourself? What's the balance between your passion level and your satisfaction level?

When do you feel satisfied? Which people and events do you feel satisfied with? When are you pleased with yourself? When are you not? Do some people in your life take from you? Is there enough unfulfilment to balance the takers?

What are some of your best times? How do you make good times happen?

What feelings have you gotten used to being without? How do you react when you feel depressed?

What are your distractions? Have you discovered an emotional theme from your past that stands in your way? How much armor-loosening do you have to do? How light do you travel?

### ***2. What do I think about love?***

What moves your heart? How do you go about understanding someone? How do you make yourself known to someone you love?

What are your ideas about love? When did you formulate your ideas? Which idea about love have you changed?

What acts in everyday life speak love to you? How do you alert someone that you love him or her? When was the last time you fell in love?

How much of your love life is you sex life?

How do you feel in the presence of someone you say you love? How do you know you're loved?

What is it that you feel when you feel loved? When was the last time you felt loved?

### **3. How to I balance my life portfolio?**

Is your portfolio balanced? Do you get satisfying returns on your time investment? Are you diversified? What absorbs you creatively? Artistically? Romantically? In nature? How do you spend your Sundays? How much time do you spend having fun? What do you do that is purely unselfish?

What would you be willing to do less of in order to receive a greater return?

Does your life portfolio have heavy investment in your career? Your physical attractiveness? Your public image? Your athletic ability? Where are your other investments?

What do you contribute to someone else's life? What are the returns? What do you need to do to get more out of your investments?

### **C. Where am I going?**

When you think about the future, what do you imagine?

If the question 'Where am I going' feels like a demand for an answer, allow it to become an invitation to explore – Where do I want to go? Where could I go? Where haven't I been before?

- *Create drawings.* Use crayons (buy a small box if you haven't got children or grandchildren) or an inexpensive tray of water colors. Let your imagination soar. Hang the drawing on your refrigerator, your bathroom mirror, a door or file cabinet. Tell nosy people it was a gift from a neighbor.
- *Make a list of scenes* that represent who you want to be, what you want to do, what you imagine might be possible. Include anything that sparks a visual image; dreams, movies or television, or memories of real life circumstances. Watch them in your mind's eye. How do they sing to your heart?
- *Place objects on a table or floor area* to represent your yearnings for adventure. Leave rational logic in the next room! If you don't already have the object you need, create a representation that sparks a sensory memory of the actual item or event. A paper sailboat floating in a bowl of water, a houseplant standing in for a jungle adventure, a old cell phone for the potential to connect globally. Let this be fun!

Once you have found something that symbolizes your dreams for the future, figure out how to keep a version on the dashboard of your car, the sink in your bathroom, your desk or work space, in your backpack or your wallet. Place hand-made stickers or labels in discreet places that only you will notice.

-- *Imagine 1 additional way* to do this exercise. Try it out.

-- *Change your mind?* See change as the natural result of a successful process = spiritual evolution. Repeat this exercise as often as you feel inspired to.

-- *Repeat the entire worksheet occasionally*, noticing if your perceptions of the past evolve as well.

-- *Do something new each week* that feels as if it expands your understanding of the world and how it operates. Talk to someone whom you have overlooked, ask someone about their life 20 years ago, walk down an unfamiliar street.

Challenge a perception. Find a bias and explore why it is there.