Learner Objectives
As a result of participation in this program, participants will be able to:

• Understand the process and value of reminiscence while growing up or in older adulthood
• Identify purposes for actively working to pass on family memories
• Engage in planning that will lead toward personal efforts to pass on family memories

Lesson Planning
• Study and learn the information and ideas presented in the organizational materials
• Decide what you wish to present to your intended audience
• Plan a lesson introduction, which may include a suggested activity or your own ideas
• Make copies of the presentation materials or handouts that you will need

Handouts
Materials to be made available can include: (1) Facilitators Guide – for the individual providing the instruction; (2) Participant Handout 1 – “ABC Memories Page”, Handout 2 – “Family Timeline Activity”, Handout 3 – “Family Recipes and Memories Book”, and Handout 4 – “Family Tech: Tech Options for Making Memories;” (3) Evaluation – one per participant

Time Schedule
Introduction
(5-10 minutes)
• Share a story or memory passed down to you that has been meaningful. Discuss it with group members and ask if any participants have their own memories passed down to them that have been meaningful.
• Display a physical artifact or possession in your family that has aided in capturing and passing on personal or family memories (e.g., scrapbook, journal, photo album, recipe book, etc.). Perhaps arrange beforehand for one, two or all participants to bring their own such items and display or share them.

Presentation of Key Concepts and Lesson
(5-10 minutes each)
• The Value of Reminiscence
• Why Pass on Family Memories?
• Three Activities for Passing on Family Memories

Lesson Review and Program Evaluation
(5-10 minutes)
Slide 1

Key Concept – Passing on Family Memories

What are the memories that come to your mind as you recall the experiences of your life? What are the stories your parents or grandparents have told that you like to remember the most?

Passing on personal and family memories is one of the things that make us human. Passing on family memories allows us to share who we are, connect across the generations and further those values that we hold dear. The most important part of passing on family memories is simply to make a beginning and then share it with others.

Slide 2

Objectives for Learning

What should someone take away from an exploration of passing on family memories? As a result of involvement in this educational lesson, a person should:

- Understand the process and value of reminiscence while growing up or in older adulthood
- Identify purposes for actively working to pass on family memories
- Become familiar with several practical activities for passing on family memories
- Engage in planning that will lead toward personal efforts to pass on family memories

Slide 3

Introduction – Sharing a Personal or Family Memory

Memories are best when they are shared with others. To begin this lesson, a couple of simple activities can help facilitate this process. Select the activity that works best in your educational setting. Please do one of the following:

- **Share** a particular story or memory passed down to you that has been meaningful in your life. Reflect on what you appreciate about that particular memory. Ask others in the group if they have other meaningful memories they would be willing to share.

- **Display** a physical artifact or possession that has aided in capturing or passing on personal or family memories. This might take the form of a scrapbook, journal, photo album, recipe book or other item that helps capture memories. Show that people often can start from where they are and then move forward in passing along their memories.
Slide 4

Key Concept – The Value of Reminiscence

Sharing who we are and how we have experienced life has great value, both for ourselves and for others, especially our family members and close friends. How is it that those people we know and care about truly come to know who we really are? How do they learn what is important to us? It is often by the stories we tell. How do they come to know what has shaped our lives and identity? It is often by the memories we share with them.

Slide 5

The Value of Reminiscence (continued)

Research on human identity suggests that having a sense of who we are is critically important to us as human beings, and that we share who we are through the stories we tell.

In a sense, our stories define us. It has been said: “Without air, our cells die. Without story, our selves die.” If we want to share who we are with others, we need to share the stories and memories that have shaped our lives. This process has great value. It is called reminiscence.

Slide 6

The Value of Reminiscence (continued)

Two things make us unique as human beings. These two things are (1) the ability to create and maintain memories and (2) the ability to pass our experiences and memories into the future through stories. For all its beauty, a bird or a flower cannot consciously pass on its life stories into the future as a human being can.

The memories and stories we share and pass on shape our sense of identity. As we grow into adulthood, we often reflect on the things from our lives that we would like to share with others. Erik Erikson, the psychologist, said that reflecting on what we have passed on to the next generation is one of the great tasks of life before we die. This process of reminiscence has great value for us and those we care about.
What is Reminiscence?

Reminiscence is defined as the process of reviewing and passing on personal and family identity, stories and memories as we grow older. You do not have to be an older individual to engage in this process, but engaging in reminiscence as a person becomes older is common.

Regular patterns of reminiscence are healthy for people. Reminiscence can assist with better mental health. For example, research has shown the value of reminiscence in a number of areas, and regular patterns of reminiscence are associated with greater mental health in later adulthood, less depression, more satisfaction in family relationships and a better transition into retirement.

Why Pass on Personal or Family Memories?

Passing on personal or family memories is an activity that has a variety of important and useful purposes. In addition to the benefits already mentioned, some of the reasons to pass on family memories are to:

- Connect family generations
- Bestow a sense of identity
- Teach family values
- Practice generativity, or caring for the next generation
- Experience personal meaning and resolution in later years

These purposes reflect the value of sharing who we are and illustrate the many benefits that can come into family life and relationships through the activity of passing on our memories.

Why Pass on Personal or Family Memories? (continued)

We usually find that passing on our personal or family memories in a tangible way - writing down stories that we’d like to share and have remembered or putting pictures into a scrapbook to be passed down between generations — is valuable. Malcolm Cowley, who wrote a book in his later years called “A View from 80,” made the following insightful observation about sharing of one’s memories:

“There are tangible aids to remembering, notably letters, old snapshots, daybooks and mementos. … We tell stories about it, and then arrange the stories in sequence. … Our efforts will not have been wasted if they help us to possess our own identities as an artist possesses his work. At least we can say to the world of the future, or to ourselves, ‘I really was’—or even, with greater self-confidence, ‘I was and am this.’”

- Malcolm Cowley, 1980
have been wasted if they help us to possess our own identities as an artist possesses his work. At least we can say to the world of the future, or to ourselves, 'I really was' — or even, with greater self-confidence, 'I was and am this.'

Passing on personal or family memories not only helps others know us, but it helps us know ourselves and what we value about our lives.

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Slide 10

Why Pass on Personal or Family Memories? (continued)

Another insight into the value of preserving and passing on personal or family memories comes from a stirring discussion in the famous book “The Brothers Karamazov.” In this brief selection, the character Alyosha shares this insight:

“My dear children … you must know that there is nothing higher and stronger and more good for life in the future than some good memory, especially a memory of childhood, of home. People talk to you a great deal about your education, but some good, sacred memory, preserved from childhood, is perhaps the best education. If one carries many such memories into life, one is safe to the end of one’s days, and if one has only one good memory left in one’s heart, even that may be the means of saving us.”

Power and meaning can be found even in one good memory. Thus, identifying and passing on many good memories can bring substantial benefits to both individuals and families.

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Slide 11

Four Activities for Passing on Family Memories

To assist with the process of passing on family memories, four possible activities are suggested here that can be used as starting points in passing on family memories. The four activities discussed briefly here that can be carried out as part of an educational setting are:

1 – ABC Memories Activity
2 – Family Timeline Activity
3 – Family Recipes and Memories Book
4 – Family Tech: Tech Options for Making Memories
Activity 1 – ABC Memories Activity

What is an ABC Memories activity? It is a fun way to pass on family memories by recording pages or memories that are associated with the ABCs. This can be an especially fun way to pass on memories to children, grandchildren or other relatives, teaching them both memories and ABCs at the same time. An example page of what an ABC Memories alphabet page might look like is included in the handout for this activity. For this lesson, two ABC Memories activities are possible.

1) ABC Memories List – This is a list of potential memories listed either on small pieces of paper or in another fashion and then organized by alphabet letters, such as “A for Adventure” or “B for Birthday.”

As an example, the approach to “A” might be to “Describe your biggest Adventure” or for “K” it might be to “Share your first Kiss.” The memory can be written and then put on a page to be created for a memory book.

Another way to use this activity might be to select one piece of paper or a topic from the ABC Memories list once a week and then write down a specific memory.

2) ABC Memories Alphabet Pages – These are pages a person creates to form an alphabet book that passes on memories and children can use to learn more about you. Use the formula “A is for _____” or “B is for _____” to list a meaningful personal memory and then record it for a memory book. Sample pages for this activity, along with an example page, are included in the handout.

Activity 2 – Family Timeline Activity

A personal or family timeline is a list of historical events or memories arranged in the time sequence in which they occurred. A timeline is a very useful tool in passing on individual or family memories, particularly because a lot of information can be shared in a brief way. It also can be a valuable part of a family history.

Putting together a family timeline is among the easiest ways to pass on family memories. It is a good place to begin such a task. It is a simple and straightforward process. Most people who wish to pass on family memories probably should begin by compiling a timeline. Detailed instructions for the process of creating a family timeline, as well as sample timeline entries, are included in the handout provided for this activity.
When recording information and memories for a timeline, provide a short description of three to four sentences for a particular entry. First, write the date of a specific memory, event or experience, then write the description of one single event or memory that you wish to pass on. In particular, focus on experiences or memories that affected your life in a significant or memorable way.

**Slide 14**

*Timeline Entry - An Example*

A sample entry might be similar to the one noted in the slide “March 1964 – I was elected as secretary of the 10th-grade class in high school. Three other people ran for the office and I received 56 percent of the votes.”

**Slide 15**

*Activity 3 – Family Recipes and Memories Book*

What would a book contain that passed on your family identity? Pictures and stories, of course. What about your family recipes? Many families have a tradition of passing down cherished recipes that recall family meals and fun desserts. Recipes are important not only because they provide instruction on preparing food, but because they are linked with family memories.

This activity involves recording selected family recipes that include the recipe, cooking instructions and the family stories or memories associated with these recipes. Sharing the memories of family meals and recipes provides an experience that touches all of our senses — sight, touch, taste, smell and listening to warm laughter or good conversation. A sample page that can be copied for this purpose is provided with the handout for this activity. Questions to ponder might include:

- What is a favorite memory associated with a family recipe?
- How have a particular family recipe and related memories been important in family celebrations?

**Slide 16**

*Activity 4 – Family Tech: Tech Options for Making Memories*

Modern technology gives new, exciting options for capturing and sharing memories. While many options abound, the most important thing is to start somewhere – make a beginning. We suggest four “starting activities” in the related handout (see Handout 4) to help you begin the adventure of using technology to capture and share personal or family memories.
Suggested activity options are:

- Create a Digital Family Album
- Do a PowerPoint Presentation on Family Memories
- Capture a Family Story Orally Using Audio Technology
- Make a Video Recording of a Family Story

Review the related handout (Handout 4) to find useful resources and directions for pursuing each of the suggested activity options.

Slide 17
Thank You

Review the lesson and have the participants complete the program evaluation form.