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NARRATIVE INTERVIEW IN THE STUDY AND SUPPORT OF ADOLESCENT ADAPTIVE IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT¹

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adjustment
identity
narrative interview

Summary

Objectives: *The purpose of the study was to check if the narrative interview method has a positive effect on the adaptation and psychological functioning of young people at risk of maladjustment.*

Methods: *30 Life Story interviews by McAdams [1,2] were conducted among youth from sociotherapy centers (aged 18–20 years, 16 women), with control of the variables describing feelings for oneself and others according to the model proposed by Hermans in the Self-Confrontation Method [3]. The research was both quantitative and qualitative. Part of the quantitative research in an experimental model with a control group was described by Haertlé and Oleś [4].*

Results: *The narrative interview promotes better adjustment and contributes to increased self-esteem and improved relationships with others by supporting the process of constructing a narrative identity. It also allows the process of identity formation to be traced in terms of changes in maladjustment and adaptation. Subjects report a greater sense of insight into their life story and an increased awareness of the purpose and meaning of life. Conclusions: The interview can be part of therapeutic interventions intended for young people at risk of maladjustment, as it supports their identity and personality development.*

INTRODUCTION

This article complements the findings presented by Haertlé and Oleś [4], who showed that constructing a narrative identity through a narrative interview by adolescents at risk of maladjustment increases their level of adjustment [5], increases their level of commitment to achieving their own goals, decreases their level of diffuse-avoidant identity style [6] and protects against a decrease in ego resiliency [7] in stressful situations. The article contains a description of the Life Story narrative interview method by McAdams [1,2], qualitative analyses of selected interviews with adolescents showing the factors of adjustment and maladjustment,

¹⁾ I would like to thank Professor Piotr Oleś for inspiring me to explore the concept of narrative identity and for his guidance, as well as the subjects – youths from sociotherapy centers – for their full involvement in the research.

and additional quantitative analyses based on indicators from the Self-Confrontation Method included in the interview [3,8]. These analyses indicate the beneficial effect of the narrative interview on the subjects' psychological functioning. The article describes how to support and study the process of identity formation of young people at risk of maladjustment from the perspective of the narrative approach and provides instruction for professionals willing to use the narrative interview method in therapeutic work with this group.

Youth at risk of maladjustment struggle with a variety of mental disorders or environmental burdens that make it difficult to function in important life roles: at school, at work, in the family, among peers, etc. [9-11]. According to Erikson's theory of development [12], during adolescence there is a so-called identity crisis, which leads to the integration of a developing identity that constitutes more than the sum of individual identifications from childhood. Investigating the importance of narrative identity construction for young people's adjustment is important insofar as their identity development can be disrupted and lead to maladjustment.

Research in the cognitive approach confirms [13] that the autonarrative scheme allows the giving of meanings to past and present experiences, and promotes disclosure at the conscious level of a person's true intentions and goals, as well as possible solutions to the difficulties encountered. These, in turn, can stimulate one's motivation to take decisions and actions that close the schema that has been activated in the self-narrative [14,15]. The mechanism that activates such motivation consists of increasing the cognitive control over one's life and stimulating emotions, specifically the desire to transform one's situation in accordance with an imagined desired vision [16-18]. Motivational deficits are associated with maladjustment, whereas self-narration can increase the level of adjustment by stimulating actions aimed at self-fulfillment [16,17].

Narrative identity is an important part of the theory of personality, and the author of this concept based on empirical psychology is McAdams [1]. Narrative identity gives a sense of unity, purpose, and meaning to a person's life and brings together various threads such as important relationships, family, education, work, passions, values, beliefs, and views, that is, everything the person has been and is involved in and how he/she imagines their future. It answers the question of who the person was, is, and will be, and what is their life's meaning.

Based on the concept of narrative identity, McAdams and McLean [19] created the structured Life Story interview method, which helps to discover the continuity between a person's past, present, and future, and to combine them into a story about oneself that has a specific goal and meaning [1]. During an interview, the person talks about the different stages of their life, presents them as chapters of a novel, and gives them themes, identifying key events, characters, and values of a given period, noting those that had a particular impact on their current life. Based on these, he/she designs the next chapters of their life, taking into account their dreams, plans, goals, and fears. This way of talking about one's life, through total immersion in personal history, helps to create a coherent vision of life that has a deeper meaning – that one is the main character in this story, with something important to realize [20]. McAdams concludes that the narrative approach can be important in working with young people, despite their natural tendency to change their perceptions of themselves and the world [21].

Another method of studying narrative identity was proposed by Hermans [22], in which the system of self has a dynamic structure and is polyphonic. It is made up of many voices expressing different meanings and various emotions interacting with each other, which relate to the two basic motives distinguished by Hermans that determine the course of human life: self-enhancement and the longing for contact with others. The voices can have a positive or negative emotional tone. None of them is a permanently dominant voice and their interaction can result in various internal conflicts and motivations for specific actions. Hermans proposed the Self-Confrontation Method, in which, through self-reflection, a person assigns specific value judgments of a positive or negative tone to their experiences, looks at them from a new perspective, and can get to know oneself better [3,23].

The concepts of Hermans and McAdams belong to the field of phenomenological narrative theories, but Hermans' polyphonic self has a different structure than the narrative identity according to McAdams, in which a coherent life story that integrates various autobiographical elements is told with the voice of a single narrator. These concepts are not mutually exclusive but complementary, revealing different aspects of identity [24].

The novelty of the method used in this research is the combination of two narrative interview methods: the Life Story by McAdams [1]; and the Self-Confrontation Method by Hermans [3], first presented by Haertlé and Oleś [4]. According to the research review, combining these two methods in a single interview can play an important therapeutic role by gaining greater insight into the subject's identity, sense of meaning and purpose in his/her life, and activating motivation for self-fulfillment. It will also provide new opportunities for the study of identity and adjustment through the analysis of indices determined on the basis of valuations proposed by Hermans and formulated in the course of the Life Story interview by McAdams.

METHOD

The purpose of this study was to examine whether the construction of narrative identity by adolescents at risk of maladjustment improves their functioning. An interview procedure consisting of two methods applied simultaneously – the Life Story by McAdams [1,2] and Hermans' Self-Confrontation Method [3] – was designed to activate the narrative mode in the subjects and help them, through immersion in their own story, to better understand who they are, their goals, their life mission and what has influenced their current situation. After the interview (Appendix 2), the subjects made an affective assessment of the valuations formed during the interview, according to the Self-Confrontation Method [3], using a special sheet (Appendix 1). They made this assessment again after 2 months to check whether the effect of constructing a narrative identity persists in the long term.

Participants

The study included 30 youths of Warsaw sociotherapy centers (16 women) and high school students (18–20 years old), residing in the institution for at least a year, with a certificate of special needs in education due to risk of social maladjustment issued by

a psychological-educational counseling center, meaning the co-existence of at least several risk factors. They were recruited randomly from among those willing to take part in the study. A condition that excluded a person from participating in the study was a current emotional crisis, because such a situation could make it difficult to look from an appropriate distance at hard life experiences.

Table 1 shows the risk factors in the study group based on diagnoses from psychological and pedagogical evaluations.

Table 1. **Risk factors in the study group**

Risk factors	Number of subjects N = 30
Single-parent family	15
Psychiatric treatment hospitalizations and/or psychiatrist care	15
Victims of violence	15
Chronic somatic illness and/or eating disorders	10
Depressive-anxiety disorders	17
Strong experience of affect	15
Presence of «S» thoughts, self-harm, attempted «S»	14
Oppositional defiant disorder	17
Courtship	5
Abuse of psychoactive substances	7
Difficulties in social functioning	12
Specific developmental disorders of scholastic skills	9
Asperger's syndrome	2

Procedure

The study took place at the sociotherapy center in a room set aside for interviews. The full text of the interview can be found on the website of the Foley Center for Study of Lives [25] in English and a Polish translation from 1995 by Budziszewska [26]. For the purposes of the present study, the Polish translation was revised to take into account the corrections made by McAdams [25]. Thus, the most current version of the method was used (Appendix 2).

During the interview, the interviewer noted some of the subject's statements describing his/her feelings and beliefs about him/herself and the world, strongly marked by emotions. At the end of the interview, the subject assessed the intensity of 16 affects, that is, the affective tone of these affirmations (Appendix 1). Based on this matrix, the dominance of the motives of self-enhancement (S) and desire for contact (O), as well as positive (P) and negative (N) affects were identified during the analysis. This essence

of Hermans' Self-Confrontation Method [3] was thus woven into the McAdams Life Story interview [1].

The subjects formulated a dozen such valuations (no more than 15, as required by the Self-Confrontation Method) during the interview, and afterwards selected the most important 13, revising and possibly correcting them so that they fully reflected their beliefs (the basic version of the tool contains 24 affect terms, but due to the potential difficulties of adolescents in naming emotions, a simpler variant with 16 affect terms was used). The subject's task was to mark on a scale from 0 to 5 (0, *not at all*; 5, *very much*) the intensity to which they experience each of these affects in relation to each of the 15 valuations. Valuations 14 and 15 referred to the subject's responses to the following questions, respectively: How have you been feeling in recent days? and How would you like to feel? This additional component of the Self-Confrontation Method [3] makes it possible to compare individual valuations with general and ideal feelings. The results described in Table 2 were entered into a program that allows the calculation of the intensity of various indices [23].

Table 2. **Indices developed on the basis of affective assessment of valuations (Self-Confrontation Method)**

Index name		Affective terms used to rate valuations
S	Total points	Motive of self-enhancement
		self-esteem, strength, self-confidence, pride
O		Motive of desire for contact and union with others
P		caring, love, tenderness, intimacy
N		Positive affect terms
		joy, happiness, enjoyment, inner calm
		Negative affect terms
		worry, unhappiness, despondency, disappointment
Sx, Ox, Nx, Px		Average scores for 4 basic indices from 13 valuations

After 2 months, the subject was asked to perform an affective assessment of the formulated valuations again, using the same sheet. Before proceeding with the reassessment, he/she was allowed to reformulate them if their content was outdated.

The study was conducted following the recommendations and guidelines for conducting such interviews provided in the manual for the Self-Confrontation Method [3,8,23]. For example, when the subject formulated negative generalizing beliefs about him/herself, the interviewer asked a provocative question to find an example of a situation in which the belief was not confirmed. Thus, when the subject said, *I am good for nothing*, the researcher replied: *Try to recall such a situation in which you were satisfied with yourself*. Or he encouraged the subject to specify statements instead of generalizing: for example, when the subject said, *Nothing ever works out for me*, the researcher asked: *What specifically didn't work out for you?* This was intended to direct the subject to a more objective view of one's situation and oneself, and to reduce the negative emotional tension that goes along with formulating generalized negative beliefs.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the analyses, mainly qualitative, on the influence of this method on the functioning of young people at risk of social maladjustment are presented here and they expand on the conclusions obtained through quantitative analyses described by Haertlé and Oleś [4]. The names of the subjects have been changed.

First, it was verified whether the construction of narrative identity affects the level of the variables listed in Table 2, obtained from the affective assessment of valuations made by the subjects immediately after the narrative interview and 2 months later. For this purpose, a differential analysis was performed using Student's *t*-test for dependent samples. The variables were measured twice in the same group ($N = 30$) with a 2-month interval. The results of the analysis allowed us to conclude that in the second measurement, the level of the Sx variable increased significantly ($t[29] = -2.025$; $p = 0.052$; cf. Table 3), with significance at the level of statistical tendency. The level of the Ox variable also increased significantly ($t[29] = -2.11$; $p = 0.044$; cf. Table 3). There were no significant differences for the other variables (cf. Table 3).

Table 3. Differences between measures of variables obtained from the affective assessment of valuations

Variables	Immediately after the narrative interview		2 months later		t	p
	M	SD	M	SD		
S	9.00	5.26	10.53	6.19	-1.54	0.13
O	10.20	5.71	11.86	6.35	-1.69	0.10
P	9.50	5.15	10.86	5.80	-1.55	0.13
N	8.66	4.34	7.50	5.60	1.15	0.26
Sx	10.80	4.16	11.86	4.59	-2.02	0.052
Ox	6.61	3.93	7.63	4.63	-2.11	0.044
Px	10.22	3.98	10.91	4.36	-1.77	0.09
Nx	5.54	3.07	5.27	3.73	0.80	0.42

These results may suggest an increase in the subjects' self-esteem, self-confidence and improvement in contact with others. However, further research would be needed to assess whether this was the influence of construction of a narrative identity or of other factors (such as the sociotherapeutic process). In this case, there was no control group to compare these results.

The following presents feedback from subjects immediately after the narrative interview and also observation data. When asked how they perceived the experience of this interview, more than half of the subjects (17 people) gave elaborate answers. The others answered briefly: *good*, *OK* or *fine*. None of the subjects stated that they perceived the interview experience negatively. Examples of feedback from the subjects are as follows:

- Adam, age 20 years: *It was interesting in my opinion because I was able to look at my life as a whole thing, [...] I realized that everything was slowly starting to be arranged in me.*

-
- Marcin, age 19 years: *It was purifying for me.*
 - Piotr, age 19 years: *A little bit of stress, because different feelings came up, but anyway it was positive [...] It was very important for me because now I know that I no longer allow the past to hurt me.*
 - Kamila, age 18 years: *I've been to various therapies, but there I've always focused on single events, threads, and here this interview for the first time showed me my whole life as if from a bird's eye view. It was different and interesting.*

The subjects' feedback shows that they found the interview moving, touching on deep, highly personal issues and strongly marked by emotions. The subjects perceived it as a positive, purifying experience, giving them a new perspective on their life story at a distance from what had already happened. Their feedback indicates that the interview helped them to connect their various experiences and life stages into a logical unity, creating a clearer background for their current situation and directions for their future actions. They perceived their past as no longer threatening, enclosed in a story that can be told.

The subjects willingly participated in the interview and were very involved in telling their story, including difficult and even traumatic threads. Emotional activation was visible in all the subjects at certain points in the interview: they cried, had tears in their eyes, spoke in a breaking voice, were flushed and their tone of voice was tinged with emotion. The interview lasted a long time, on average 110 minutes, but no less than 90 minutes and sometimes over 2 hours, and usually took place in the afternoon. Despite this and some signs of fatigue at the end of the interview, most subjects reported positive feelings about the interview. Some of them made rather neutral comments about their impressions. There were no negative comments or reflections. This proves that the method is well suited to the needs and abilities of young people at risk of maladjustment.

To determine the dominant motives in the sphere of maladjustment and adaptation of the subjects, the valuations obtained during the interviews were analyzed for the presence of symptoms of maladjustment and adaptation. Table 4 shows literal examples and quotes of the valuations. The first three cases show the affective patterns of the selected valuations [3] and the level of adaptation measured by Rotter's test (RISB; for a description of the tool, see the article by Haertlé and Oleś [4]) in both measurements, which together show three different trends: Maladjustment to Adaptation (Krystian); Stabilization to Adaptation (Dominika); and Stagnation to Maladjustment (Beata).

Table 4. Examples of valuations containing motives of maladjustment and adaptation

Subject	Signs of maladjustment	Towards adaptation																																												
Krystian, age 19 years, RISB = 133 (Measurement 1) RISB = 115 (Measurement 2)	<p data-bbox="379 464 637 518"><i>Breaking the rules has always attracted me.</i></p> <table border="1" data-bbox="345 538 671 657"> <thead> <tr> <th>Measurement</th> <th>S</th> <th>O</th> <th>P</th> <th>N</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1</td> <td>18</td> <td>0</td> <td>10</td> <td>2</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2</td> <td>12</td> <td>0</td> <td>8</td> <td>8</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Measurement	S	O	P	N	1	18	0	10	2	2	12	0	8	8	<p data-bbox="740 278 1053 333"><i>At the sociotherapy center, I opened up to people.</i></p> <table border="1" data-bbox="718 353 1074 473"> <thead> <tr> <th>Measurement</th> <th>S</th> <th>O</th> <th>P</th> <th>N</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1</td> <td>20</td> <td>17</td> <td>19</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2</td> <td>18</td> <td>14</td> <td>19</td> <td>0</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p data-bbox="696 504 1096 584">In both measurements, fulfillment and satisfaction with self and with relationships with others.</p> <p data-bbox="718 596 1074 651"><i>Now, for example, I feel good when I help someone.</i></p>	Measurement	S	O	P	N	1	20	17	19	0	2	18	14	19	0														
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<p data-bbox="354 693 658 828">The change from self-fulfillment in a rule-breaking situation in Measurement 1, to self-disappointment and concern about it in Measurement 2.</p> <p data-bbox="358 840 654 895"><i>Sometimes I can intentionally say something unpleasant to someone.</i></p> <table border="1" data-bbox="345 915 671 1035"> <thead> <tr> <th>Measurement</th> <th>S</th> <th>O</th> <th>P</th> <th>N</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1</td> <td>14</td> <td>1</td> <td>9</td> <td>5</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2</td> <td>17</td> <td>0</td> <td>8</td> <td>4</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p data-bbox="358 1066 658 1175">In both measurements, fulfillment in a situation of bullying others with the addition of guilt and self-disappointment.</p>	Measurement	S	O	P	N	1	14	1	9	5	2	17	0	8	4	<table border="1" data-bbox="718 669 1074 789"> <thead> <tr> <th>Measurement</th> <th>S</th> <th>O</th> <th>P</th> <th>N</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1</td> <td>20</td> <td>14</td> <td>20</td> <td>1</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2</td> <td>19</td> <td>14</td> <td>19</td> <td>0</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p data-bbox="718 820 1074 900">In both measurements, fulfillment and satisfaction with self and relationships with others in a helping situation.</p> <p data-bbox="828 913 964 940">General feeling:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="718 960 1074 1081"> <thead> <tr> <th>Measurement</th> <th>S</th> <th>O</th> <th>P</th> <th>N</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1</td> <td>13</td> <td>20</td> <td>16</td> <td>8</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2</td> <td>10</td> <td>20</td> <td>9</td> <td>14</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p data-bbox="696 1112 1096 1359">Krystian has experienced a change toward adaptation (RISB). Despite feeling worse in Measurement 2, he is generally satisfied with himself and his relationships. He has also made a change in himself: from a person who finds strength and satisfaction in breaking norms and teasing others, he has become helpful and more open. He also looks at himself more critically than he used to.</p>	Measurement	S	O	P	N	1	20	14	20	1	2	19	14	19	0	Measurement	S	O	P	N	1	13	20	16	8	2	10	20	9	14
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Dominika, age 18 years, RISB = 99 (Measurement 1) RISB = 99 (Measurement 2)	<p><i>I felt anger and hatred toward the math teacher, the school, to the school system.</i></p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Measurement</th> <th>S</th> <th>O</th> <th>P</th> <th>N</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1</td> <td>0</td> <td>0</td> <td>0</td> <td>20</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2</td> <td>0</td> <td>4</td> <td>0</td> <td>19</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Measurement	S	O	P	N	1	0	0	0	20	2	0	4	0	19	<p><i>At the sociotherapy center, I regained my self-confidence.</i></p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Measurement</th> <th>S</th> <th>O</th> <th>P</th> <th>N</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1</td> <td>17</td> <td>9</td> <td>20</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2</td> <td>18</td> <td>7</td> <td>20</td> <td>0</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Measurement	S	O	P	N	1	17	9	20	0	2	18	7	20	0																													
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<p><i>Failure at my previous school made me think I would not make it.</i></p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Measurement</th> <th>S</th> <th>O</th> <th>P</th> <th>N</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1</td> <td>0</td> <td>0</td> <td>0</td> <td>20</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2</td> <td>0</td> <td>5</td> <td>0</td> <td>20</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>The valuations above show a strong saturation of negative feelings in both measurements. The second one is more clearly oriented toward others.</p>	Measurement	S	O	P	N	1	0	0	0	20	2	0	5	0	20	<p><i>During my rescue instructor course, I felt that I was in a place where I wanted to be.</i></p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Measurement</th> <th>S</th> <th>O</th> <th>P</th> <th>N</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1</td> <td>20</td> <td>8</td> <td>18</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2</td> <td>20</td> <td>7</td> <td>20</td> <td>0</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p><i>I need to develop my competence.</i></p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Measurement</th> <th>S</th> <th>O</th> <th>P</th> <th>N</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1</td> <td>17</td> <td>2</td> <td>16</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2</td> <td>16</td> <td>3</td> <td>13</td> <td>0</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>The valuations above reveal a high sense of self-esteem, and satisfaction with oneself, but also with one's relationships</p> <p>General feeling:</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Measurement</th> <th>S</th> <th>O</th> <th>P</th> <th>N</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1</td> <td>18</td> <td>16</td> <td>13</td> <td>1</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2</td> <td>17</td> <td>7</td> <td>14</td> <td>0</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Dominica is fulfilled, satisfied with herself, believes in herself and has satisfying relationships. Her results indicate adjustment (RISB).</p>	Measurement	S	O	P	N	1	20	8	18	0	2	20	7	20	0	Measurement	S	O	P	N	1	17	2	16	0	2	16	3	13	0	Measurement	S	O	P	N	1	18	16	13	1	2	17	7	14	0
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<p>Beata, age 19 years, RISB = 133 (Measurement 1) RISB = 140 (Measurement 2)</p>	<p><i>Sometimes I feel turned off.</i></p> <table border="1" data-bbox="345 298 671 420"> <thead> <tr> <th>Measurement</th> <th>S</th> <th>O</th> <th>P</th> <th>N</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1</td> <td>0</td> <td>7</td> <td>1</td> <td>11</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2</td> <td>0</td> <td>15</td> <td>0</td> <td>17</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>In Measurement 2, dissatisfaction with relationships increased.</p> <p><i>I don't feel good about myself.</i></p> <table border="1" data-bbox="345 560 671 682"> <thead> <tr> <th>Measurement</th> <th>S</th> <th>O</th> <th>P</th> <th>N</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1</td> <td>0</td> <td>6</td> <td>0</td> <td>13</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2</td> <td>0</td> <td>17</td> <td>0</td> <td>19</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Growing dissatisfaction with relationships with others.</p> <p><i>Sometimes I feel like running away.</i></p> <table border="1" data-bbox="345 822 671 944"> <thead> <tr> <th>Measurement</th> <th>S</th> <th>O</th> <th>P</th> <th>N</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1</td> <td>2</td> <td>10</td> <td>1</td> <td>13</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2</td> <td>0</td> <td>20</td> <td>4</td> <td>19</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>id.</p>	Measurement	S	O	P	N	1	0	7	1	11	2	0	15	0	17	Measurement	S	O	P	N	1	0	6	0	13	2	0	17	0	19	Measurement	S	O	P	N	1	2	10	1	13	2	0	20	4	19	<p><i>I will fight for myself more than I used to.</i></p> <table border="1" data-bbox="718 251 1075 373"> <thead> <tr> <th>Measurement</th> <th>S</th> <th>O</th> <th>P</th> <th>N</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1</td> <td>9</td> <td>12</td> <td>7</td> <td>5</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2</td> <td>8</td> <td>18</td> <td>9</td> <td>10</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p><i>I would like to love myself and be not afraid to speak up.</i></p> <table border="1" data-bbox="718 476 1075 598"> <thead> <tr> <th>Measurement</th> <th>S</th> <th>O</th> <th>P</th> <th>N</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1</td> <td>8</td> <td>9</td> <td>6</td> <td>9</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2</td> <td>5</td> <td>19</td> <td>8</td> <td>16</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Both of the above valuations show a growing dissatisfaction with their relationships over the course of 2 months and hope for change in this sphere.</p> <p>General feeling:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="718 793 1075 915"> <thead> <tr> <th>Measurement</th> <th>S</th> <th>O</th> <th>P</th> <th>N</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1</td> <td>3</td> <td>13</td> <td>2</td> <td>14</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2</td> <td>1</td> <td>13</td> <td>4</td> <td>19</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Valuations and current well-being are dominated by increasing relationship dissatisfaction. Both measurements (RISB) and Beata's valuations indicate maladjustment</p>	Measurement	S	O	P	N	1	9	12	7	5	2	8	18	9	10	Measurement	S	O	P	N	1	8	9	6	9	2	5	19	8	16	Measurement	S	O	P	N	1	3	13	2	14	2	1	13	4	19
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<p>Dagmara, age 19 years</p>	<p><i>The world is fiction.</i></p> <p><i>The main challenge in my life is to find the strength to live.</i></p> <p><i>I like unpredictable people because then I feel some emotions.</i></p>	<p><i>At the sociotherapy center, I got acclimated to school for the first time.</i></p> <p><i>I am rather resourceful.</i></p> <p><i>I am a helpful person.</i></p>																																																																																										
<p>Emil, age 18 years</p>	<p><i>I am mentally weak.</i></p> <p><i>When I experience disappointment, I think negatively of myself.</i></p>	<p><i>I would like to embrace my emotional life.</i></p> <p><i>Thanks to scouting, I've started to come out to people.</i></p> <p><i>I can wisely resolve conflicts between kids.</i></p> <p><i>Youth often see me as an authority.</i></p>																																																																																										
<p>Jowita, age 18 years</p>	<p><i>I often felt isolated from people I cared about.</i></p> <p><i>I still lack self-confidence.</i></p> <p><i>I judge myself harshly.</i></p>	<p><i>I have always cared about true friendship.</i></p> <p><i>I am proud that I handled the crisis.</i></p>																																																																																										

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Kamil, age 18 years	<p><i>I was an alien – shy and afraid of meeting new people.</i></p> <p><i>The intolerance made me feel a bit isolated from society.</i></p> <p><i>In middle school, I felt overwhelmed, sad and bullied.</i></p>	<p><i>The sociotherapy center showed me a better world – people are different, but they can support each other. The sociotherapy center also helped me open up to the world.</i></p> <p><i>My biggest challenge is to find someone for myself for a relationship and purpose in life.</i></p>
Marta, age 19 years	<p><i>I am sensitive to the fact that someone may have bad intentions toward me.</i></p> <p><i>I struggle with myself – this is my challenge in life.</i></p>	<p><i>At the sociotherapy center, I understood what I had been fighting for all these years – for my dignity, to be able to be myself, to do what I like and to respect others.</i></p> <p><i>I put a lot of effort into getting where I am.</i></p>
Anna, age 18 years	<p><i>I have lost faith in people/ humanity.</i></p> <p><i>The biggest challenge for me is opening up to people.</i></p>	<p><i>Riding in a wheelchair taught me humility, patience and the fact that others can have it worse.</i></p> <p><i>In the sociotherapy center, I started to fight for myself more and regained my faith in people.</i></p>

Among the quoted valuations relating to the sphere of maladjustment, the following mental states dominate: loneliness, isolation, lack of faith in people, lack of self-confidence, difficulties in dealing with emotions, feeling of no influence on one's own life, passivity, depressed mood, sadness, feeling overwhelmed and regret. The interviews showed that the subjects (pupils of sociotherapy centers) are at different stages when it comes to these struggles. Some report that they have coped with difficult experiences and completely changed the perception of themselves and the world, whereas others have succeeded in part and others are still confronting these difficult struggles.

The manifestations of change towards adaptation are visible in the interviews through motives such as attempts to defend one's dignity, increasing faith in oneself and in people, feeling of being oneself, taking advantage of the facility's support, feeling better among people, greater trust in them, openness, agency and helping others. They may indicate an increase in the subjects' sense of control over their own lives, taking actions to improve their social functioning, self-fulfillment and self-esteem.

The following examples (cf. Table 5) illustrate the most important life challenges that the subjects have faced so far in the context of maladjustment and adaptation. They show how a narrative interview allows one to trace the motives related to maladjustment and adaptation in the process of a young person's identity formation.

Table 5. Examples of key motives and challenges in subjects' lives from the perspective of factors related to maladjustment and adaptation

Motives related to maladjustment	Motives related to adaptation	The challenge of life, the theme of life, the greatest value in life
Michał, age 19 years		
<p>In the past, he experienced violence from his peers.</p> <p>As a result, he avoided school, isolated himself and felt a lot of frustration, confusion, dissatisfaction with the school system and disappointment with people. He also experienced a love disappointment. He experiences emotions intensely.</p>	<p>He relieved aggression by hitting pillows. He found relief in reading and doing puzzles.</p> <p>The turning point came when he found himself in a sociotherapy center. There he found respite, and understanding, had positive relationships with peers, calmed down, and opened up to people.</p>	<p>Today, Michał is satisfied that in difficult times he did not give up. He still struggles with his emotionality, but: <i>I haven't lost faith in love, in people, I don't hate them.</i></p> <p>The greatest value in his life is love. He would like to have <i>a house by the sea, peace and love.</i></p> <p><i>I struggle with my emotionality, that's my curse.</i></p> <p><i>The most important thing in my life is not giving up. It's essential.</i></p>
Dominika, age 18 years		
<p>She experienced school problems. She could not do well in her studies. Frustrated, she dropped out of school and lost her self-confidence. As a result, she failed the next class twice.</p> <p><i>I felt anger and hatred toward my math teacher, the school, to the school system, she says.</i></p> <p><i>Failure at the previous school made me think I wouldn't handle it.</i></p>	<p>She was always a very involved and socially active person – she belonged to art groups, sports and scouting. She had a lot of social relationships. Her passion became lifeguarding. The turning point came when she went to a sociotherapy center. She gained new hope then. Her school situation began to stabilize.</p> <p><i>At the sociotherapy center, I regained my self-confidence, she says.</i></p> <p><i>During the course to become a rescue instructor, I felt that I was where I wanted to be.</i></p> <p><i>It's important for me to develop my competence.</i></p>	<p>Dominika's challenge is <i>to prove to myself that failure doesn't mean I'm hopeless. I like to confirm my value, be successful, do something difficult, and keep growing. If you have problems, you need to understand that it's not you that is wrong, it's just that you need to change the environment.</i></p> <p>The theme of her life is <i>not to give up, to look for solutions and to choose challenges wisely.</i></p>

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Karol, age 18 years		
<p>As a child, he felt a lot of anxiety, was rebellious and got into fights. He was bullied by his classmates. Later he withdrew and closed himself from his world related to his interests. He felt misunderstood, different and rejected, and experienced severe stress and fear of being judged negatively. He fell into depression. He has difficulty establishing relationships with peers. Karol's valuations:</p> <p><i>I am tired and disappointed with people.</i></p> <p><i>I am very withdrawn.</i></p> <p><i>I find it difficult to make friends with my peers.</i></p>	<p>He is interested in cinema, music, literature and art. He writes songs and scripts, and creates music. He has an artistic soul and great sensitivity.</p> <p><i>Without creativity, my life would be unbearable, he says.</i></p> <p><i>I would like to create something for others.</i></p> <p><i>Creativity allows me to express myself.</i></p> <p><i>I used to escape from depression into my world – diaries, music, movies.</i></p>	<p><i>Love is the greatest value and meaning of existence. I would like to do something artistic in life, something through which I could fulfill myself, express my feelings and be appreciated. Karol struggles with himself in life. He says: I can often make myself feel very down because I feel like I'm no good, that I'm failing. I experience both successes and failures very strongly. Each successive failure, and I've had more failures than successes, has the effect of keeping me more and more convinced that I'm good for nothing.</i></p> <p><i>In the future, I wouldn't want to do anything that I would hate, that I don't feel satisfied with, he said.</i></p> <p><i>I alternate between feeling indifferent about what's to come and strongly committed. And sometimes I am hopeful. I have a state in which I feel that I could achieve everything and get everything, and sometimes I feel like I'm good for nothing and everything comes to me with great difficulty.</i></p>

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Piotr, age 19 years		
<p>Left by his father as a child, he felt unwanted and abandoned. He had a lot of anger inside of him, which he would discharge through aggressive behavior. He felt disliked by other children. He had great difficulty in bonding a relationship with others. He was humiliated by his peers and rejected. At the same time, he was a victim of physical violence from his father, with whom he would meet from time to time. He cared about his classmates, so he allowed himself to be ridiculed and humiliated by them to gain their approval. He mutilated himself and made several suicide attempts.</p> <p><i>I used to be able to sacrifice my dignity for relationships,</i> he says.</p> <p><i>I have courted others a lot, so much so that others took advantage of me.</i></p> <p><i>I had a great need to establish any kind of relationship with someone, but these attempts always failed.</i></p>	<p>He broke up the destructive relationship with his father. He stopped allowing his peers to humiliate and solicit him. Then, at the new school, he found that others began to seek after him. He met new classmates and became sociable. He was always interested in music and in creating it. He started playing at events as a DJ. This became his passion and goal in life.</p> <p><i>I learned to fight for my own and not to be a 'passive dumpling',</i> he says.</p> <p><i>I can pick myself up from my knees whenever I fall on them.</i></p> <p><i>I began to feel good about myself and my life.</i></p> <p><i>I can make others laugh with a healthy distance to myself.</i></p> <p>The turning point was when he confessed to his psychiatrist that he was going to take his own life. He felt he wanted to do something about it. He ended up in a sociotherapy center, where he found himself in a friendly, safe environment.</p>	<p>The biggest challenge of his life was the confrontation with his father, settling accounts with him for the difficult past. The best time in his life is the present time. He now feels he is dealing with his emotions, his life and his relationships. The guiding idea of his life is perseverance. The greatest value in his life is his family, loved ones and also the family he will set up in the future.</p> <p><i>My family has never been very good, that's why... and I think it's the most important thing to have a good home. A sense of security, a good upbringing, and coping in life, that's why I would like to give as much good as possible to my future family.</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>To make it the best.</i></p>

Agnieszka, age 18 years		
<p>She experienced a lot of physical and mental abuse from her mother and stepfather. She struggled with depression and an eating disorder. She felt frightened and overwhelmed. She was placed in foster care. She felt guilty for losing contact with her family. She became demoralized: she used psychoactive drugs, used to party and skipped school.</p> <p><i>I had a feeling of deep loneliness inside me, she says.</i></p> <p><i>There was a time in my life when I was like an amoeba – a vegetable.</i></p> <p><i>I am aware that for the rest of my life, I will be alone, without my old family.</i></p>	<p>She ran away from home to a psychiatric hospital. She was looking for a safe place. With the help of institutions, she became independent quite early. She reevaluated her life – she gave up a prosperous life with her family in favor of a sense of security and defense of her dignity.</p> <p>Since childhood, she has found solace through her passion – drawing. This is also where she sees her future – she thinks of studying graphic design.</p> <p><i>I used to run away from home to a psychiatric hospital, she says.</i></p> <p><i>I live in such a way that every day could be the last one. I live my life at 100%.</i></p> <p><i>I feel like I am myself now, and it feels very good.</i></p>	<p>The most important values in her life are to feel happy, fulfilled, and loved, to do what is right, and to be in harmony with herself.</p> <p>As the most important idea in her life, Agnieszka sees the following: <i>Feeling myself is important. All this time I have been searching for myself, and I found myself. Even though I am still in a difficult situation, eg. I don't even have enough money to eat sometimes, I don't have a phone because I don't have money for a phone, also I don't know how I meet people all the time, I don't have a family, but it's really good because I feel myself and I know that no matter what would happen in my life, it will still be good because I will be myself.</i></p>

As the most important challenge in their lives, the respondents usually indicated not giving up, surviving difficult times and persevering in life. Perseverance, fighting for oneself, one's dignity, a sense of security and strengthening one's self-esteem are the key motives for most of them. For many, an important challenge was also to control the strong experience of affect, defined as struggling with oneself and one's feelings.

The interviews made it possible to trace how the respondents see the process they have gone through or are going through. The past can no longer harm them, but it is a source of experiences that also have the power to strengthen and develop their identity, with new strategies for coping with each other, and for many it has become a stimulus to find themselves, that is, to define their needs, desires, goals and directions of activities. The results of the analysis indicate that the subjects developed more self-awareness, are more conscious of personal goals and have a lot of positive feelings resulting from seeing themselves as a person who is able to cope with difficulties and develop.

CONCLUSIONS

Quantitative studies described by Haertlé and Oleś [4] have shown that narrative interviews affect measurable aspects of identity. Together with the analyses presented above, this means that the narrative interview method, which combines McAdams' approach [1] with Hermans' Self-Confrontation Method [3], is a promising tool for working with

adolescents and young adults at risk of maladjustment. Supporting the construction of narrative identity in such a group may be important for the development and adjustment of the subjects. The interview makes it possible to trace the various important motives that shaped the subject's identity and to get closer to what constitutes the main theme and purpose of his/her life. This can also be important in a clinical context, as psychiatric patients tend to identify their identity mainly with their symptoms, illness or trauma they have experienced [27].

Based on an analysis of the valuations that are part of the Self-Confrontation Method, it can be concluded that by constructing a narrative identity, the subjects' self-esteem, self-confidence and contact with others improved, and this could also have a positive effect on adjustment. These conclusions are similar to those of other studies on the effects of narrative identity construction on behavior [16, 17, 20, 21, 28, 29].

Thus, the proposed method seems not only promising in terms of effectiveness but also attractive to adolescents: it is intensive, yet interactive, brief and provides an opportunity to look at one's entire life safely and to get to know oneself better, as well as the purpose and meaning of life. It gives a feeling of arrangement, closure and increased insight, as well as a feeling of being understood and accepted by the psychologist. Adolescents, depending on their stage of development, may find it difficult to make such a deep autoreflection of their life story on their own. The narrative interview is thus a collaboration between the subject and the researcher in which mutual interaction stimulates the subject's insights [3].

This method can be included in the design of specific programs in the field of psychotherapy, sociotherapy or other psychological and pedagogical or preventive interventions addressed at adolescents. For example, it could be the basis of a preventive program helping to develop the identity of youth at risk of social maladjustment. The idea would be based on the narrative identity model and would aim to broaden insight into one's identity, the meaning and purpose of one's life and strengthen the motivation to act. A central part of this program would be the narrative interview by McAdams. At the same time, changes in identity and adjustment could be monitored with the tools proposed in this study, such as the RISB or the ISI-5 questionnaire [4]. The RISB test also provides opportunities for qualitative analysis and, with repeated measurement, allows the results to be compared in terms of improvement, stabilization or impairment in adaptation. Such a measurement would also serve, among other things, to evaluate the program and could be taken several times at appropriate intervals during and after the program. Additional techniques that could be part of such a program would include, for example, a life road map illustrating the various stages of one's personal history, Block's Q-sort technique [30], and techniques based on the concept of the possible self [31], which involve generating desirable visions of oneself and one's future, as well as those that the person would prefer to avoid. A part of the program could be Spezzano's internal recognition cards and Dixit cards created by Jean Louis-Roubira, which stimulate the participants' self-inquiry and encourage them to formulate evaluations about themselves and the surrounding world. It is recommended to include in such a program various methods that contain themes of narration about one's life. After all, narration about one's past, present and future is the main way of giving one's life meaning.

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Appendix 1. Hermans' affective assessment of the valuations worksheet

Affective terms																
V	Joy	Self-esteem	Happiness	Worry	Strength	Enjoyment	Caring	Love	Unhappiness	Tenderness	Self-confidence	Intimacy	Despondency	Pride	Disappointment	Inner calm
1																
2																
3																
4																
5																
6																
7																
8																
9																
10																
11																
12																
13																
14																
15																

0 – not at all

1 – very little

2 – somewhat

3 – quite much

4 – much

5 – very much

14. general feeling – how do you generally feel these days?

15. ideal feeling – how would you like to feel?

Appendix 2. The Life Story Interview – II

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Revised, 2007

Introduction

This is an interview about the story of your life. As a social scientist, I am interested in hearing your story, including parts of the past as you remember them and the future as you imagine it. The story is selective; it does not include everything that has ever happened to you. Instead, I will ask you to focus on a few key things in your life – a few key scenes, characters, and ideas. There are no right or wrong answers to my questions. Instead, your task is simply to tell me about some of the most important things that have happened in your life and how you imagine your life developing in the future. I will guide you through the interview so that we finish it all in about two hours or less.

Please know that my purpose in doing this interview is not to figure out what is wrong with you or to do some kind of deep clinical analysis! Nor should you think of this interview as a “therapy session” of some kind. The interview is for research purposes only, and its main goal is simply to hear your story. As social scientists, my colleagues and I collect people’s life stories in order to understand the different ways in which people in our society and in others live their lives and the different ways in which they understand who they are.

I think you will enjoy the interview. Do you have any questions?

A. Life Chapters

Please begin by thinking about your life as if it were a book or novel. Imagine that the book has a table of contents containing the titles of the main chapters in the story. To begin here, please describe very briefly what the main chapters in the book might be. Please give each chapter a title, tell me just a little bit about what each chapter is about, and say a word or two about how we get from one chapter to the next. As a storyteller here, what you want to do is to give me an overall plot summary of your story, going chapter by chapter. You may have as many chapters as you want, but I would suggest having between about 2 and 7 of them. We will want to spend no more than about 20 minutes on this first section of the interview, so please keep your descriptions of the chapters relatively brief.

[Note to interviewer: The interviewer should feel free to ask questions of clarification and elaboration throughout the interview, but especially in this first part. This first section of the interview should run between 15 and 30 minutes.]

B. Key Scenes in the Life Story

Now that you have described the overall plot outline for your life, I would like you to focus in on a few key scenes that stand out in the story. A key scene would be an event or specific incident that took place at a particular time and place. Consider a key scene to

be a moment in your life story that stands out for a particular reason – perhaps because it was especially good or bad, particularly vivid, important, or memorable. For each of the eight key events we will consider, I ask that you describe in detail what happened, when and where it happened, who was involved, and what you were thinking and feeling in the event. In addition, I ask that you tell me why you think this particular scene is important or significant in your life. What does the scene say about you as a person? Please be specific.

1. **High point.**

Please describe a scene, episode, or moment in your life that stands out as an especially positive experience. This might be the high point scene of your entire life, or else an especially happy, joyous, exciting, or wonderful moment in the story. Please describe this high point scene in detail. What happened, when and where, who was involved, and what were you thinking and feeling? Also, please say a word or two about why you think this particular moment was so good and what the scene may say about who you are as a person.

2. **Low point.**

The second scene is the opposite of the first. Thinking back over your entire life, please identify a scene that stands out as a low point, if not the low point in your life story. Even though this event is unpleasant, I would appreciate your providing as much detail as you can about it. What happened in the event, where and when, who was involved, and what were you thinking and feeling? Also, please say a word or two about why you think this particular moment was so bad and what the scene may say about you or your life. [Note to interviewer: *If the participant balks at doing this, tell him or her that the event does not really have to be the lowest point in the story but merely a very bad experience of some kind.*]

3. **Turning point.**

In looking back over your life, it may be possible to identify certain key moments that stand out as turning points — episodes that marked an important change in you or your life story. Please identify a particular episode in your life story that you now see as a turning point in your life. If you cannot identify a key turning point that stands out clearly, please describe some event in your life wherein you went through an important change of some kind. Again, for this event please describe what happened, where and when, who was involved, and what you were thinking and feeling. Also, please say a word or two about what you think this event says about you as a person or about your life.

4. **Positive childhood memory.**

The fourth scene is an early memory – from childhood or your teen-aged years – that stands out as especially positive in some way. This would be a very positive, happy memory from your early years. Please describe this good memory in detail. What happened, where

and when, who was involved, and what were you thinking and feeling? Also, what does this memory say about you or about your life?

5. Negative childhood memory.

The fifth scene is an early memory – from childhood or your teen-aged years – that stands out as especially negative in some way. This would be a very negative, unhappy memory from your early years, perhaps entailing sadness, fear, or some other very negative emotional experience. Please describe this bad memory in detail. What happened, where and when, who was involved, and what were you thinking and feeling? Also, what does this memory say about you or your life?

6. Vivid adult memory.

Moving ahead to your adult years, please identify one scene that you have not already described in this section (in other words, do not repeat your high point, low point, or turning point scene) that stands out as especially vivid or meaningful. This would be an especially memorable, vivid, or important scene from your adult years. Please describe this scene in detail, tell what happened, when and where, who was involved, and what you were thinking and feeling. Also, what does this memory say about you or your life?

7. Religious, spiritual, or mystical experience.

Whether they are religious or not, many people report that they have had experiences in their lives where they felt a sense of the transcendent or sacred, a sense of God or some almighty or ultimate force, or a feeling of oneness with nature, the world, or the universe. Thinking back on your entire life, please identify an episode or moment in which you felt something like this. This might be an experience that occurred within the context of your own religious tradition, if you have one, or it may be a spiritual or mystical experience of any kind. Please describe this transcendent experience in detail. What happened, where and when, who was involved, and what were you thinking and feeling? Also, what does this memory say about you or your life?

8. Wisdom event.

Please describe an event in your life in which you displayed wisdom. The episode might be one in which you acted or interacted in an especially wise way or provided wise counsel or advice, made a wise decision, or otherwise behaved in a particularly wise manner. What happened, where and when, who was involved, and what were you thinking and feeling? Also, what does this memory say about you and your life?

C. Future Script

1. The next chapter.

Your life story includes key chapters and scenes from your past, as you have described them, and it also includes how you see or imagine your future. Please describe what you see to be the next chapter in your life. What is going to come next in your life story?

2. Dreams, hopes, and plans for the future.

Please describe your plans, dreams, or hopes for the future. What do you hope to accomplish in the next chapter of your life story?

3. Life project.

Do you have a project in life? A life project is something that you have been working on and plan to work on in the future chapters of your life story. The project might involve your family or your work life, or it might be a hobby, avocation, or pastime. Please describe any project that you are currently working on or plan to work on in the future. Tell me what the project is, how you got involved in the project or will get involved in the project, how the project might develop, and why you think this project is important for you and/or for other people.

D. Challenges

This next section considers the various challenges, struggles, and problems you have encountered in your life. I will begin with a general challenge, and then I will focus in on three particular areas or issues where many people experience challenges, problems, or crises.

1. Life challenge.

Looking back over your entire life, please identify and describe what you now consider to be the greatest single challenge you have faced in your life. What is or was the challenge or problem? How did the challenge or problem develop? How did you address or deal with this challenge or problem? What is the significance of this challenge or problem in your own life story?

2. Health.

Looking back over your entire life, please identify and describe a scene or period in your life, including the present time, wherein you or a close family member confronted a major health problem, challenge, or crisis. Please describe in detail what the health problem is or was and how it developed. If relevant, please discuss any experience you had with the

health-care system regarding this crisis or problem. In addition, please talk about how you coped with the problem and what impact this health crisis, problem, or challenge has had on you and your overall life story.

3. Loss.

As people get older, they invariably suffer losses of one kind or another. By loss I am referring here to the loss of important people in your life, perhaps through death or separation. These are interpersonal losses – the loss of a person. Looking back over your entire life, please identify and describe the greatest interpersonal loss you have experienced. This could be a loss you experienced at any time in your life, going back to childhood and up to the present day. Please describe this loss and the process of the loss. How have you coped with the loss? What effect has this loss had on you and your life story?

4. Failure, regret.

Everybody experiences failure and regrets in life, even for the happiest and luckiest lives. Looking back over your entire life, please identify and describe the greatest failure or regret you have experienced. The failure or regret can occur in any area of your life – work, family, friendships, or any other area. Please describe the failure or regret and the way in which the failure or regret came to be. How have you coped with this failure or regret? What effect has this failure or regret had on you and your life story?

E. Personal Ideology

Now, I would like to ask a few questions about your fundamental beliefs and values and about questions of meaning and morality in your life. Please give some thought to each of these questions.

1. Religious/ethical values.

Consider for a moment the religious or spiritual aspects of your life. Please describe in a nutshell your religious beliefs and values, if indeed these are important to you. Whether you are religious or not, please describe your overall ethical or moral approach to life.

2. Political/social values.

How do you approach political or social issues? Do you have a particular political point of view? Are there particular social issues or causes about which you feel strongly? Please explain.

3. Change, development of religious and political views.

Please tell the story of how your religious, moral, and/or political views and values have developed over time. Have they changed in any important ways? Please explain.

4. Single value.

What is the most important value in human living? Please explain.

5. Other.

What else can you tell me that would help me understand your most fundamental beliefs and values about life and the world? What else can you tell me that would help me understand your overall philosophy of life?

F. Life Theme

Looking back over your entire life story with all its chapters, scenes, and challenges, and extending back into the past and ahead into the future, do you discern a central theme, message, or idea that runs throughout the story? What is the major theme in your life story? Please explain.

G. Other

What else should I know to understand your life story?