



MODULE 1: MY STORY SO FAR

**Looking Back to Understand
the Man I Have Become**

- Why Looking Back Helps Us Move Forward
- My Life Map
- Significant Moments That Changed Me
- Strengths I Have Built Along The Way
- What My Story Tells Me About Me

Many men reach retirement or later life having spent years - often decades - focused mainly on what needed to be done.

Work.
Family responsibilities.
Practical pressures.
Keeping things moving.

For long stretches of life, there is not always much opportunity to stop and ask deeper questions. The demands of ordinary living tend to take priority, and understandably so.

But when routines begin to change and the pace of life shifts, something interesting often happens.

The past begins to feel more present.

Old memories surface unexpectedly.

Certain decisions make more sense than they once did.

Patterns become easier to spot.

And experiences that seemed simply part of “getting on with things” can start to feel more significant.

This is not about dwelling or becoming stuck in the past.

It is about understanding.

Because the better we understand the pressures, strengths, losses, turning points and habits that have shaped us, the easier it becomes to make sense of where we are now — and what we may need from the years ahead.

This first module is simply an invitation to look back with a little more curiosity than we may usually allow ourselves.

Not to judge.

Not to rewrite.

Just to notice.



Exercise 1.1 Why Looking Back Helps Us Move Forward

Retirement and later-life transitions often create a different kind of mental space.

There may be fewer urgent deadlines.

Fewer people needing immediate answers.

Fewer daily routines running automatically.

That extra space can be welcome.

But it can also feel unfamiliar.

Without the constant forward motion of practical demands, many men notice that older thoughts and reflections begin to surface more readily.

You may find yourself thinking about:

- earlier ambitions
- missed opportunities
- family relationships
- difficult periods
- sacrifices that were made
- things you are proud of
- things you still carry



This is a normal part of life transition.

When the pace slows, the mind often starts taking stock.

Looking back helps because it gives context.

It helps explain:

- why certain changes feel harder than expected
- why some habits are deeply ingrained
- why some losses still carry weight
- why some strengths feel dependable
- why certain values still matter deeply

Without that context, it is easy to feel only confusion.

With that context, things begin to make more sense.

You start to see not just what happened, but what it built in you.

Reflection Prompt

As you begin this workbook, ask yourself:

What parts of my past seem to be asking for attention more than they used to?

A large, empty light blue rectangular area with rounded corners, intended for a reflection prompt.

Exercise 1.2 My Life Map

One useful way to understand ourselves is to stop viewing life as one long blur and instead break it into recognisable chapters.

Each chapter usually carries its own pressures, priorities, identities and emotional tone.

Some chapters feel expansive.

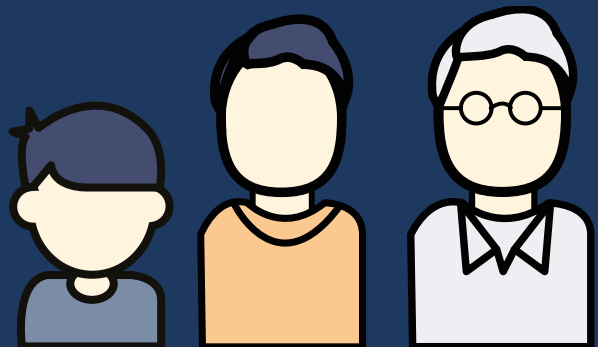
Some feel difficult.

Some pass in a rush.

Some leave a longer mark.

Take a few moments to divide your life into broad sections such as:

- childhood and early family life
- teenage years / early adulthood
- first working years
- partnership / marriage / family-building
- major career phases
- periods of pressure or crisis
- years of change or loss
- retirement / recent years

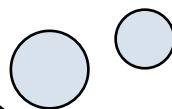


You do not need exact dates unless useful.

The aim is simply to create a visible map.

Then look across that map and notice:

- Which chapters felt most defining?
- Which chapters felt most demanding?
- Where did you feel most confident?
- Where did you feel least in control?
- Which periods still feel emotionally close?



childhood

teenage years

first job

first partner

Workbook Exercise

Create your own life map below.

You may use words, years, arrows or short notes.

Exercise 1.3 Significant Moments That Changed Me

Most lives contain a number of moments that quietly alter the course of who we become.

Some are obvious.

Some are subtle.

Some feel positive.

Some are painful.

Examples might include:

- getting a first serious job
- becoming a parent
- losing someone important
- redundancy or career setback
- illness
- moving house or country
- divorce
- financial pressure
- military service
- caring responsibilities
- retirement itself

These moments matter not only because they happened.

They matter because they often leave behind:

- beliefs
- coping habits
- fears
- confidence
- caution
- gratitude
- determination

Think about three to five moments or periods that changed you in some way.

Then ask:

- what did this experience teach me?
- what did it harden in me?
- what did it strengthen in me?
- what did it make me avoid?
- what did it make me value more?

Workbook Exercise

Significant moment 1:

What changed in me?

Significant moment 2:

What changed in me?

Significant moment 3:

What changed in me?

Exercise 1.4 Strengths I Have Built Along The Way

People often think of strengths as personality traits they either naturally have or do not have.
But many of the most useful strengths in later life are not inborn.

They are built.

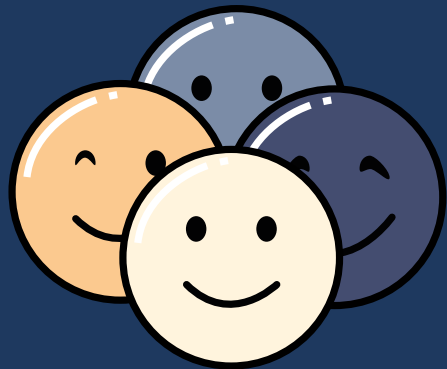
Built through repetition.

Built through necessity.

Built through difficult ordinary years.

Often without much fanfare, men build qualities such as:

- reliability
- persistence
- humour under pressure
- practical competence
- patience
- loyalty
- calmness in emergencies
- problem-solving
- self-discipline
- endurance



Because these qualities become familiar, they are easy to overlook.

But they matter.

Particularly at times of transition.

This stage of life is easier to navigate when we recognise that we are not arriving empty-handed.

We are arriving with resources.

Reflection Prompt

Which strengths have life required me to build?

Which of these still serve me well?

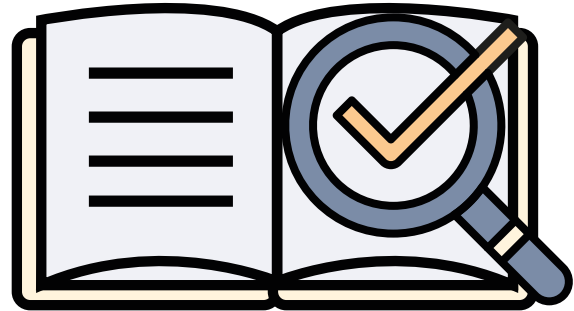
Which strengths do other people probably rely on in me?

Exercise 1.5 What My Story Tells Me About Me

By now, you may already be noticing that certain themes repeat themselves across life.

Perhaps:

- keep going
- stay useful
- do not burden others
- solve the problem
- stay steady
- cope quietly
- keep feelings to yourself
- do what needs doing



These patterns are not random.

They are often the rules we learned — explicitly or implicitly — about how to function.

Some of these rules have been extremely useful.

They may have helped you build a career, support a family, survive difficult years, or become dependable.

But some rules can become restrictive when life changes.

For example:

- The habit of always staying useful can make rest feel uncomfortable.
- The habit of coping quietly can make support feel unnatural.
- The habit of pushing on can make reflection feel unfamiliar.

This is not about abandoning the man you have been.

It is about noticing which internal rules still serve you — and which may need loosening.

Closing Reflection For Module 1

As you finish this section, consider:

What do I understand a little better now about the man life has shaped me into?