

# Using Timelines in CBT: Concise Guide

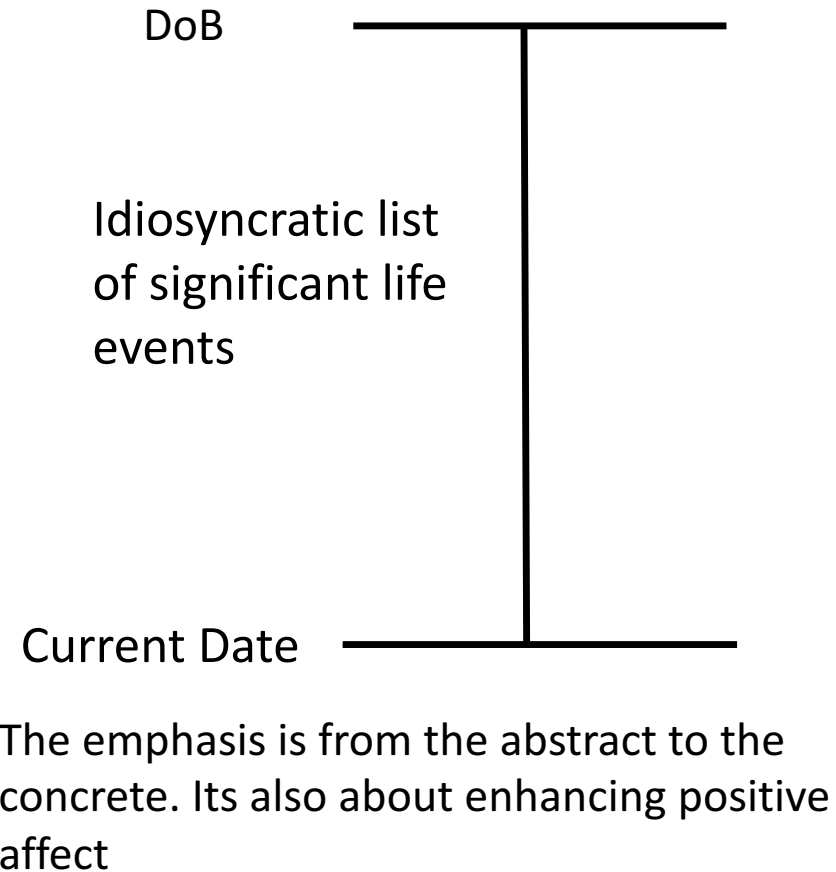
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# Making use of life experience in therapy

- Timeline in Therapy:



when a person reviews their life they may do so in an abstract overgeneralised way and may confirm negative age stereotypes (e.g. Levy, 2009: ).

Asking people to reflect on difficult life experiences in structured way can help them develop a more elaborated account of their recall.

- It helps the individual to recognise their resilience in the face of difficult circumstance – increases confidence in their coping.

Timelines afford a targeted and specific review of past experiences and facilitate a discussion about how clients have coped with setbacks.

How do you make sense of life experiences?

I have never tried to block out memories of the past, even though some are painful.

I don't understand people who hide from their past.

*Everything you live through helps to make you the person you are today.*

Sophia Loren



# Making use of lifeskills in CBT

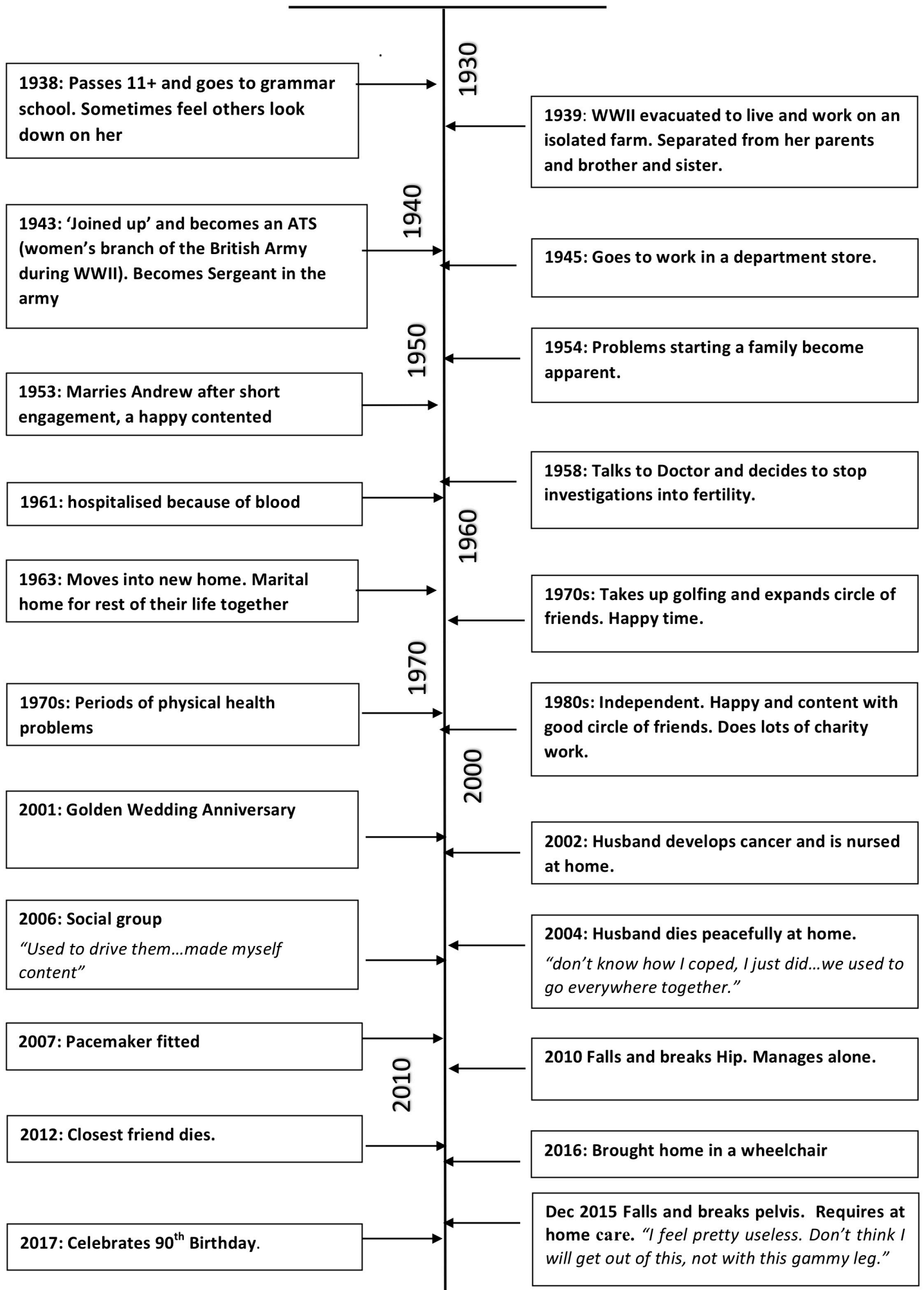
- Step one: Develop a timeline (homework) Acknowledge strengths and resilience
- Step Two: Consider specific experiences from the past that evoke some emotion – *Examine them as factually as possible.*
- Step Three: When examining past experiences agree certain rules apply:
  - Reflection rather than blame – Shame is not helpful or constructive
  - No hindsight bias – Assess on what was known at the time.
- Step Four: Ask client is there a time in your life when you did something wise... or when you coped with adversity?
- Step Five: Can these skills/competences in handling ambiguous situations help the client deal with their current problems?



## Key Questions to use when reviewing a timeline:

- when examining a life event on a T/L: looking back on that now, what does that tell you about yourself?
- Events from the T/L can be used to help people with difficult decisions: Have you been in a similar position in the past? If so how did that turn out? How does this help you?
- Enhancing sense of resilience: If you could somehow go back in time, as you are now and talk to your younger self, what would you say to yourself about how you coped?
- Encouraging Self-acceptance/compassion: In the past, in times of crisis how, and in what way, has being self-critical been helpful to you.
- Realist appraisal of coping: Looking back at this timeline, what do you learn from dealing with crises? What does that tell you?

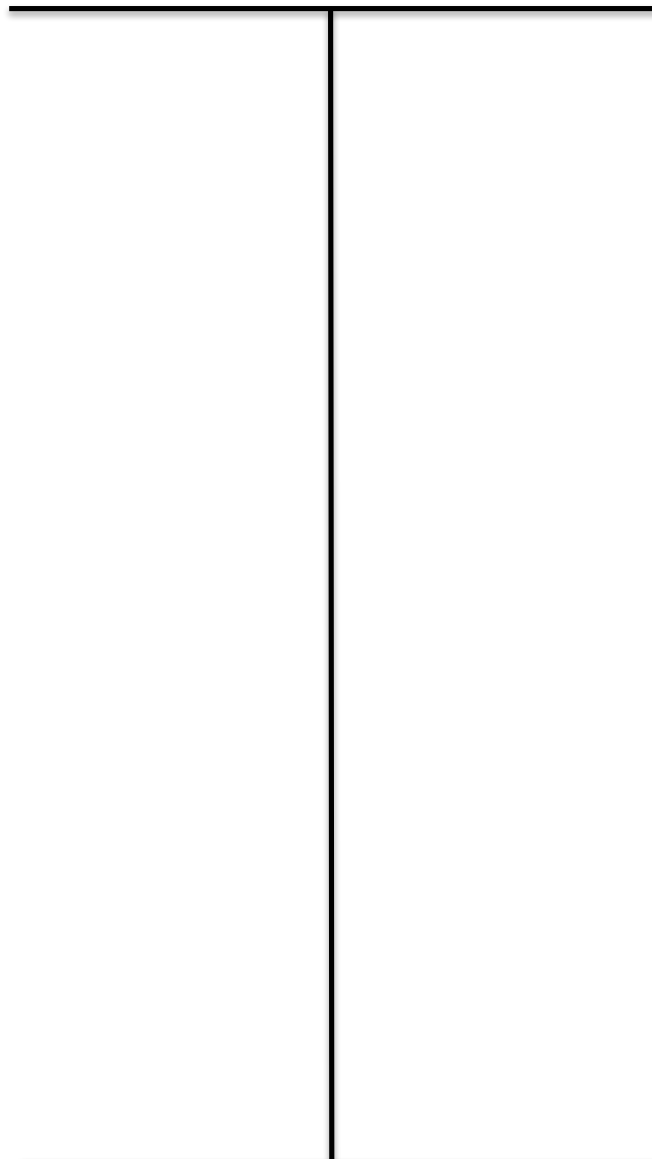
## Born 1927



Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Next Appointment: \_\_/\_\_/\_\_\_\_

Life is full of ups and downs, and experiences may sometimes challenge our beliefs about ourselves or may 'teach' us something. *Everything we live through helps make us the person we are today.* This worksheet may help you review your own ups and downs in your own lifetime. When completing this sheet try not to evaluate whether the experience is good or bad or even **whether you are good or bad**. It may be that as you look back on your life (your timeline) you can identify a few key moments in life. These may be events you are proud, but equally they be events that evoke feelings of shame or embarrassment. Alternatively there may be some bittersweet moments. **When you complete this task, think of your whole lifetime and add all that you think is important.** If you need to, please use the back of this sheet to add additional events. Please complete the 'timeline' here by first putting your date of birth at the top of the timeline and under the bottom horizontal line write today's date. Use this space in-between to note events across your life you consider important. Use both sides of the line to make the most of the space. Your therapist will want to review your timeline with you at your next appointment.

DoB



Today's date