



Centropa Family Education Program Preserving Jewish Memory*

Just as we pass the Torah from one generation to the next at bar and bat mitzvahs, so do we pass family stories *dor l'dor* (from generation to generation). Stories connect us to our history, our traditions, and who we are.

That's why Centropa, a Jewish historical institute in Vienna, Austria, collected the stories of over 1200 elderly Jews in Central and Eastern Europe – and rather than using video we asked these survivors to tell us their *entire* life stories spanning the 20th century as they showed us their old family photographs. In other words, we preserved Jewish memory so it can be passed on *dor l'dor*.

This approach – using photographs to tell stories – not only preserves the images of 20th century Jewish life, but we can use it to tell our own stories, as well. That means that Centropa is a valuable resource for guiding families in preserving their memories. In this program, families will watch and discuss several short films based on Centropa interviews, discuss how to find family stories, identify the stories they want to pass on to future generations, and talk about how they will collect them.

Whether families have done a lot of research or none at all on their family histories, each family will benefit and learn from this program:

- *Starting a family history project* – those interested in starting a family history project going back to the first immigrants to America, or even before, will lay out an action plan for who they need to speak with, what questions they want to ask, etc.
- *Stories of our immediate family* – those interested in making sure the stories from their immediate family do not get lost will identify and outline the stories and photographs they want to collect, as well as any photograph, artifacts, etc.
- *Making a family history film* – those who have done a lot of research on their family history and want to explore telling those stories through film will create a storyboard for the film, using photographs and writing the narrative.
- *Interviewing each other* – those less interested in working on a family history will interview each other using the photographs they brought, as well as questions taken from Storycorps.

Educators interested in extending this program so that families can work on collecting and telling their family stories – either through albums, family trees or videos – are invited to contact us so we can offer assistance in designing the subsequent sessions.

Questions? Please contact Lauren Granite, US Education Director, granite@centropa.org, (301)787-0052.

*This family education program was designed in collaboration with Melissa Cohavi, Director of Education at Temple Sinai in Stamford, CT, and we thank her for sharing it with us.

Program Overview

Activity	Supplies Needed	Time
General Set-up	<p>Tables around the room large enough for two to three families to comfortably sit at each table.</p> <p>Ask people to bring laptops or tablets.</p> <p>Ask each individual attending the program to bring a photograph that shares something meaningful about their lives. Photos from camp, family, vacations, loved ones who have died, etc.</p> <p>Ask each family to bring at least 10 family photographs from one side of the family, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the immediate family together • the first person/people to come to this country (if possible); • photos that include the generations since the first immigrant (if possible); • favorite vacation or holiday photograph; • photographs showing important moments, milestones, or turning points in the family's history. • Any others of their choosing. <p>They will use the photos to start telling their family story so they are welcome to bring any of their choosing, but they should in some way be connected to tell one story.</p>	
Introduction	<p>Welcome</p> <p><i>Introduction to Centropa</i> http://www.centropa.org/centropa-cinema/introduction?subtitle language=</p> <p>Computer, projector, screen and wifi to show film.</p> <p>Each person shows one photograph that tells something they want to share/pass on about his/her life.</p>	20 mins
Family Stories: Hungary	<p>Computer, projector, screen, speakers</p> <p>Chart for taking notes (attached)</p> <p>Centropa films: <i>Growing Up Religious</i> (4:46 mins)</p>	30 mins

	http://www.centropa.org/node/41647?subtitle_language=Life on the Danube (5:08 mins) http://www.centropa.org/node/43686?subtitle_language=The Women Who Taught Me Everything (4:50 mins) http://www.centropa.org/node/45554?subtitle_language=	
Family Stories: US	<p>Paper and pens, or computer, to write down questions and goals for family history projects.</p> <p>Storyboard examples for those who wish to use them (attached)</p> <p>Family photographs</p> <p>Internet access for those wishing to explore PhotoStory or Screencast-o-matic to create video-like family history stories.</p>	30 mins
Conclusion	No supplies needed.	5 mins

Part I: Introduction (20 mins)

A. Facilitator welcomes everyone and introduces the program by saying,

“We live in a visual world – most of us spend most of our days in front of screens of some sort, we carry cameras in our pockets, and we not only take photos of our food, silly faces, pets and daily activities, we upload them so everyone else can see them, as well. And “selfie” is now an official word.

That means we’re telling our stories – daily – through images.

Today we’re going to take this new interest in documenting our lives and apply it to telling our Jewish stories, our family stories. And we’re going to use the methods of an organization called Centropa who did just that – they interviewed over 1200 elderly Jews in 15 Central and Eastern European countries but rather than using video, they said to the survivors, ‘tell us your *entire* life story as you show us your old family photographs.’

Centropa’s stories model for us how to tell our family stories, with an emphasis on doing so through photographs.

(Please note: in this film the narrator says interviews are being conducted “right now,” but this film was made in 2006. Centropa stopped conducting interviews in 2008.)”

Show *Introduction to Centropa*. Discussion questions after:

- Did you see any photos in this short film that look like your any of your photographs? Explain.
- How do photographs help us tell our stories?

B. Each person at each table shares a photograph that is important to them and tells a story related to the photograph, whether it's what was happening when the photo was taken or even just the meaning of the photo to the person who owns it. People can ask questions, but **each person has only 1 minute to share the photo and story.** (This is partly due to time, but also a great way to ensure that people get to the point of their story quickly.)

Then, discuss:

- Did people bring photos associated with sad or happy memories?
- What parts of the photograph help you tell the story you want to tell?
- What can we learn just from looking at photographs – no other information – about the story told or the people in them? (dress, where it is taken, who takes the photograph)

Switch tables – parents should not sit with their children, but each table should have both adults and children.

Part II. Family Stories: Hungary

Three stories of Jewish life in Hungary will serve as models for telling family histories with photographs. Before the film, the facilitator should hand out the chart (attached) and go over it with everyone, to make sure they understand each question. After each film, each table will discuss the questions and use the chart (attached) to jot down a few notes. Each person will take their chart with them to the next activity, so these notes will be a reminder of their discussions.

The three films include:

- A. Ernst Galpert
- B. Piroska Hamos
- C. Mariann Szamosi

Brief follow-up discussion of the films, discussing participants' answers to the questions on the chart.

Children switch tables – go to sit with their parents.

Part III: Telling your family stories

Families now have an opportunity to begin constructing their family history using photographs. If some families are not interested in this project they will spend this time interviewing each other.

There are four options for this activity, each based on how much the families know about their history and how interested they are in creating a family history project. Some families may want to focus on the stories of their immediate family, and others may want to go back to when the first person in their family arrived in America.

- a) **Starting a family history project.** Those who want to do a family history from the beginning of their arrival in America (or even before), but know little about that history, will use this time to plan out – in as little or great detail as desired – what they want to learn about their family history and how they will go about it. They should do the following:

- Go through the photographs they brought with them and parents tell their children the stories they know about whoever and whatever is in the photographs. If they don't know someone or something, make a note to find out.
- Make a list of things they would like to know about their family history.
- Make a list of people they want to talk to or contact so they can learn more about their family history, or collect other photographs.
- Think about if they want to collect the photos in an album, create a video or tell their story in a visual way through some other digital means (e.g., PhotoStory).
- Final outcome: these families will leave the program with a game plan for pulling together their family stories.

b) **Stories of our immediate family.** Those interested in writing a family history focused on their immediate families can begin by:

- Going through the photographs they brought and starting to construct the story they want to tell by putting them in order and deciding what events are important to include.
- Make a list of any photos they don't currently have with them they want to include.
- Think about if they want to collect the photos in an album, create a video or tell their story in a visual way through some other digital means (e.g., PhotoStory).
- Final outcome: they will leave the program with an outline of the stories they want to tell about their immediate family and a list of the photos they will use to tell the story.

c) **Making a film.** Families who already know a lot about their family histories will use the time to shape a Centropa-like film about one of the members of the family. This can be done either on a computer, or it can be done through online sites such as PhotoStory (you can upload photos, include audio, and create a narrative – it plays just like a film). Another option would be to create a PowerPoint that you record through Screencast-o-matic, as you narrate.

In order to do this, you will need to create a storyboard (see attached sample) – which is simply an outline of the images you will show and what will be narrated as you show each image. Most moviemakers create storyboards to keep them on track.

In addition, you will want to make sure that your story has a distinct beginning, middle and end.

Final outcome: these families will leave with the beginning of a storyboard that they can continue to develop.

d) **Interviewing each other.** Those not ready to start a family history project will use this time to interview each other, using the photographs they brought and questions from Storycorps (www.storycorps.org).

- Families will go through the photographs they brought and share the stories they know. Looking carefully at the pictures, everyone is encouraged to ask questions about each photograph and the people in them.
- Using questions from Storycorps, parents and children interview each other.
- Final outcome: parents and children will return home knowing each other a bit better from interviewing each other.

Part IV. Conclusion

Facilitator concludes by asking people what stories they want to pass on to future generations.