

Self-Defining Memory Task

This part of the experiment concerns the recall of a special kind of personal memory called a self-defining memory. A self-defining memory has the following attributes:

1. It is at least one year old.
2. It is a memory from your life that you remembered very clearly and that still feels important to you even as you think about it.
3. It is a memory about an important enduring theme, issue, or conflict from your life. It is a memory that helps explain who you are as an individual and might be the memory you would tell someone else if you wanted that person to understand you in a profound way.
4. It is a memory linked to other similar memories that share the same theme or concern.
5. It may be a memory that is positive or negative, or both, in how it makes you feel. The only important aspect is that it leads to strong feelings.
6. It is a memory that you have thought about many times. It should be familiar to you like a picture you have studied or a song (happy or sad) you have learned by heart.

To understand best what a self-defining memory is, imagine you have just met someone you like very much and are going for a walk together. Each of you is very committed to helping the other get to know the “Real You”. You are not trying to play a role or to strike a pose. While, inevitably, we say things that present a picture of ourselves that might not be completely accurate, imagine that you are making every effort to be honest. In the course of the conversation, you describe a memory that you feel conveys powerfully how you have come to be the person you currently are. It is precisely this memory, which you tell the other person and simultaneously repeat to yourself, that constitutes a self-defining memory.

On the following pages you will be asked to recall and write ten self-defining memories.

Memory Rating Sheet – Memory 1

Please go back and recall your first self-defining memory. Using the rating scale below, please indicate how you felt today in recalling and thinking about your memory. Please also indicate the vividness and importance of the memory and the approximate number of years ago the memory took place (to the nearest whole number). Please note that you should not put your age when the memory took place, but instead how many years ago it took place.

0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Not at all			Moderately			Extremely

- 1. Happy _____
- 2. Sad _____
- 3. Angry _____
- 4. Fearful _____
- 5. Surprised _____
- 6. Ashamed _____
- 7. Disgusted _____
- 8. Guilty _____
- 9. Interested _____
- 10. Embarrassed _____
- 11. Contemptful _____
- 12. Proud _____

Using the same 0 – 6 scale, please rate how vividly you recalled the memory and how important the memory is to you.

- 13. Vivid _____
- 14. Important _____

How many years ago did the memory take place?

- 15. Years Ago _____ (to the nearest whole number)

PLEASE MAKE SURE YOU HAVE NOT LEFT ANY ANSWERS BLANK. THANK YOU!