

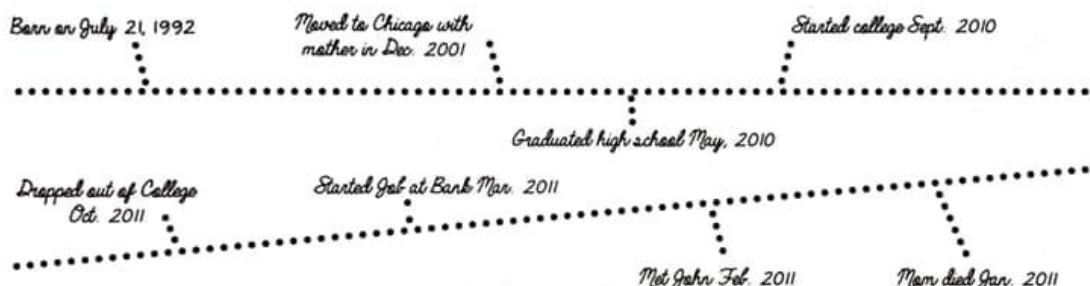


## MY TIMELINE

On the following pages, we will follow six steps to help us create a timeline of our lives. We'll put our early years (the first half of our lives) on page 27 and our most recent years (the second half) on page 28.

**Side Note:** If you have resources like poster board, markers, etc. feel free to do your timeline on that separate paper. You can be as creative as you like. Some people like to draw pictures or add color. Others prefer to keep it black and white with short phrases. Do whatever works for you.

**Step 1:** Add to both pages of your timeline the life events that are common to most people (birthday at the beginning, current age at the end, graduations, big milestones, jobs, moving, etc.). Make sure to draw lines out from your timeline so you have space to write and add in other items.



**Step 2:** On the first page of your timeline (the early years—page 27), add any events, choices, or changes that had a big affect on your life or the life of your family (the great, good, bad, or ugly). Ask yourself, *what really impacted me and/or my family during these times?* Try to put these on your timeline where you remember them happening (don't worry about having the time exactly right—estimating is fine).

**Side Note #1:** If you have memory gaps (from substance abuse), don't let that frustrate you. List those gaps on your timeline. The fact that you lost time and awareness during that period may be a grief point in and of itself.

**Side Note #2:** If you're worried about others seeing some of the events on your timeline, you can use initials or short phrases to describe those events. The important part is that you know what it is.

Step 3: Repeat step two for the second half of your timeline (page 28). Take your time and don't rush through it. If you need to take an extra day to do this, that's fine. Take the time you need to do it right.

Step 4: Read over both pages of your timeline and put a star next to the events that were positive or that helped you to grow. (If you have markers or highlighters, you can highlight these with a color instead.)

Step 5: Now read over your timeline a second time and put an exclamation point next to the events that were difficult or painful—grief points. (If you're using a marker or highlighter, use another color for these.) You may have a star and an exclamation point next to the same event; that's not unusual.

Step 6: Now look at each event with an exclamation point next to it and ask yourself the following questions:



- HOW DID I DEAL WITH THIS MOMENT? DID I FACE IT OR AVOID IT?
- IS THIS STILL AFFECTING MY LIFE? IS THE EFFECT POSITIVE OR NEGATIVE?
- HAVE I GIVEN MYSELF TIME TO GRIEVE, HEAL, AND GROW FROM IT?
- HAVE I INVITED GOD INTO THIS PART OF MY STORY (THROUGH PRAYER)?
- HAVE I INVITED OTHERS INTO THIS PART OF MY STORY (GETTING SUPPORT AND BEING TRANSPARENT)?

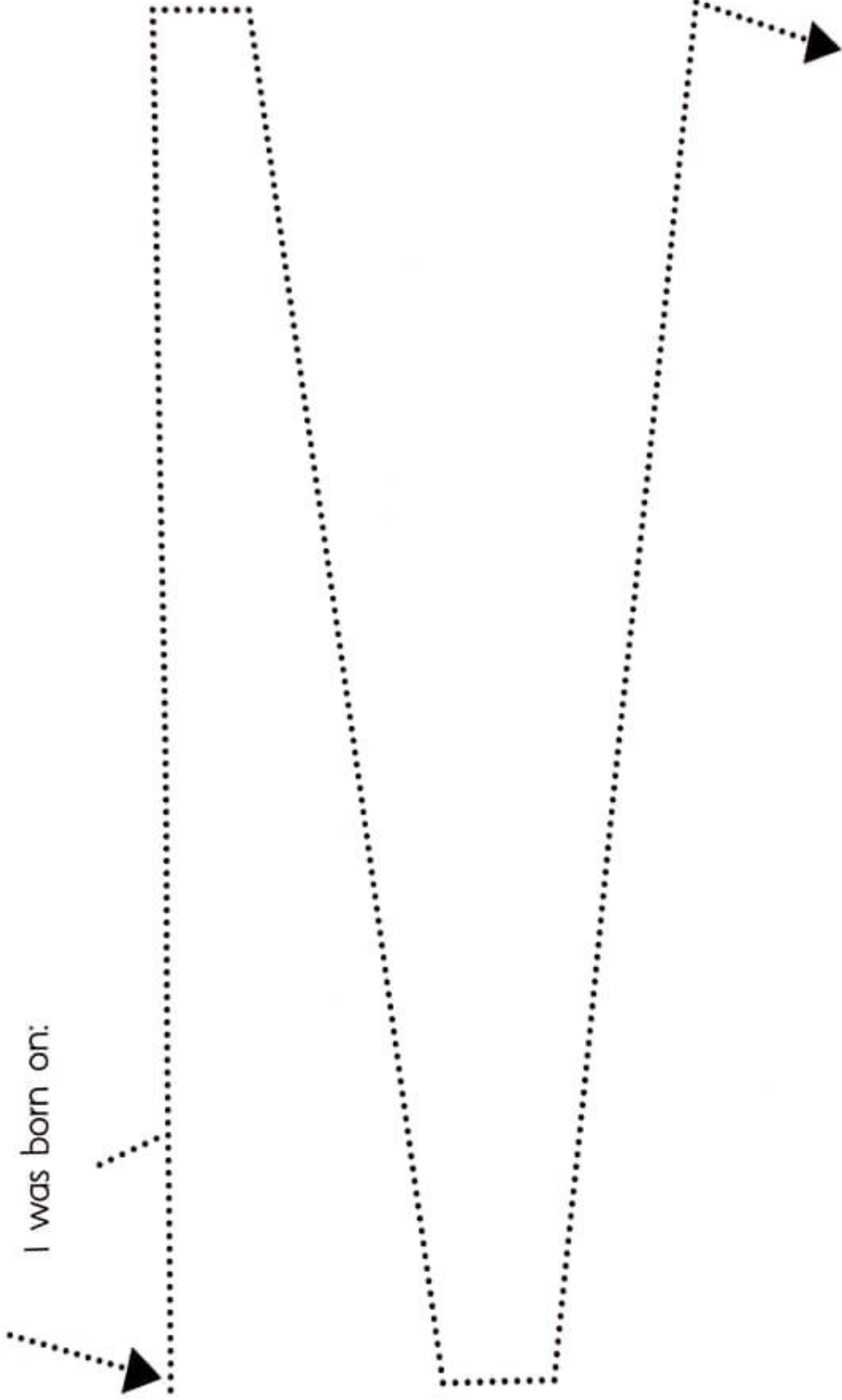
If you ask yourself these questions and realize that you need healing, help, or time to deal with this issue, draw a box around that grief point (event) on your timeline.

**Side Note:** *This doesn't mean that we're going to ignore these events. Drawing the box just allows us to see where we need to ask God and others for help. It gives us a visual of where to focus our time and attention.*

# MY TIMELINE: MY EARLY YEARS



I was born on:



**MY TIMELINE: MY RECENT YEARS**

