

# Let Me Tell You About Myself

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A picture is worth thousand words. Many people who are less responsive towards words and who have few verbal skills respond to pictures. Photography is a perfect medium, therefore, by which the verbally challenged can create their own objects of communication. The photo-project, "Let Me Tell You About Myself," is designed to allow a person to create pictures that express something about that person's life. The images that a person chooses to select for photographing can be used to explore the person's life. Not only do the images themselves communicate something about the person's life, but also do aesthetic dimensions—composition, for example—make suggestive comments about the person's feelings.

The photo-project has advantages beyond the communication value. It can enhance the person's awareness of his life, his associates and his environment. It serves as an active project to help the person become more involved with his surroundings. It can also bring to light conflicts or painful issues that may be confronting the person. As a new skill, it may help to discover new talents and creativity. For some persons, the photo-project becomes a life-long personal project and, in some cases, a new interesting hobby

Possible topics of pictures for the project:

- Things/people I like
- Things I can/like do
- What makes me happy?
- What makes me upset?
- My dreams and wishes

Work on that project could take different forms. Here is one of them. The first step is an interview.

## Step1: Interview



*Discussing picture*

The goal of an Interview is the initial introduction through discussion of pictures. An instructor presents to a person a pile of pictures on different topics and starts the discussion of these pictures. His main goal is to make a person talk, express himself, evoke his interest (without being influenced by instructor's ideas). It is also recommended for an initial interview to get as much information as possible from discussing those pictures which caught the person's interest or attention.

It is very important to let the person talk as much as he wants about the subject which evoked his interest and help him only a little to get to the point of expressing his own thoughts and understanding of things.

During that initial discussion the instructor could see the level of understanding/awareness of things a person achieves, some of his knowledge in different areas as counting, colors, etc. The instructor writes this information on post-it notes which should be attached to every picture being discussed. The choice of pictures should be something very similar to the person's present life, his daily routine, the area where he lives; that is,

anything which could make a person respond with interest and involvement.



*Writing post-on notes*



*Attaching notes to the picture*

Based on these notes the instructor creates the initial profile of a person based on the information the person provides during the interview. This information can also give the instructor some ideas about the person's main interests on which the work with that person could be based, for example, his love of animals, sports or music.

The information gathered during the interview is typed and put on the first page of a future project along with the person's picture, placed in a protecting sheet and given to the person. Usually the person is very happy to read (or, in case if he is illiterate, hear) about himself. He can make some corrections or additions, which are appreciated and valued. Often people respond with: "Yes, it is true about me" and they really like seeing or reading the information about themselves and enjoy being an equal participant in work on that project with instructor's help.

## Step 2: Taking pictures



*Introducing a camera to a child*



*Practicing taking pictures*

The next step is taking pictures. There are many situations and topics for taking pictures. Here, for example, are two of them: Creating Still Life and Camera Trip.

### 2a. Creating Still Life

The instructor brings a variety of artificial fruits and vegetables, also a variety of different dishes and some decoration like trays or table-napkins, a vase with a variety of flowers. He selects some of the

items, arranges them and takes the first picture, explaining how he went about the task of arranging objects for a still life photograph. Then the instructor invites someone else to try it.

When a volunteer steps forward, the instructor tells him to explain everybody what he is picking up and why - maybe it's a taste, a color, or a shape. During this activity clients learn a lot of things, such as paying attention to the properties of things, arranging things to look better and it also introduces the difference of taking pictures from different angles. "Still Life" pictures could be repeated on different topics. It helps to practice picture taking as well as arranging things. It is a great opportunity to create beautiful self-made cards which could make nice gifts for friends and relatives.



*Taking pictures of different fruits*



*Taking pictures of Jewish holidays*



*Arranging still life*



## 2b. Camera Trip

The instructor and a few participants go on a trip to visit a museum, a park, an exposition, or a garden, each of them carrying their own camera.

In the "free choice" version of the camera trip, the instructor asks everybody to go around and take pictures of whatever attracts their eyes. This way, the pictures reflect the inclinations and interests of the individual participants.



*Sweet-tooth photographing candies*



*Nature lover photographing birds*

In the "topical" version of the camera trip, the instructor designates a special focus for the photos, as for example "shopping and paying money."



*Paying money for shopping*

### Step 3: Pictures I like



*Choosing pictures*

This activity is similar to the Interview, only here a person is given a choice of pictures and he can pick those that he likes and that also reflects his interests and preferences. It is very good to have discussion about these pictures. It helps to improve language and thinking.

The instructor presents to a person an album with pictures on different topics such as nature, animals, flowers, birds, scenes from city life and suggests that a person selects some pictures which attract his eye. During this activity the instructor encourages a person to talk about a picture that he chose. Why did he chose it? What is attractive about this pictures? Does it remind him of something? Or, is that something that he would like to have or dreams about? All those questions could bring out some information about the person's hidden wishes or knowledge or encourage him to explore new ideas. Then these pictures should be glued to the paper with the person's comments and placed in protective sheets of paper.

### Step 4: Manipulating pictures

The next step is manipulating pictures. It includes:

1. sorting
2. cutting - cropping out
3. Making a book

Each step is an opportunity to learn new skills or improve what is already mastered.

#### 4a. Sorting

Sorting pictures is an extremely important step that helps to develop the power of observation and attention to details.

For example, at first glance two pictures can look identical, but in reality they could be the same pictures but with slight variation. The same person sitting in the same position, but looking in different direction in each pictures. Or, a person sitting in the same environment and in the same position, but writing in one picture and reading in the other. Or, the person could be doing the same thing but is dressed differently in each picture. Pictures could also be different by being horizontal or vertical. Sorting by themes includes a lot of discussion about contents of pictures and by that, again, emphasizes that a picture has a meaning and that a person

is able to give different meanings to the same picture depending of what he wants to show by that picture. It teaches a person to look at a picture in a new way and learn divergent thinking. Thus, sorting pictures gives a person a lot of valuable skills.

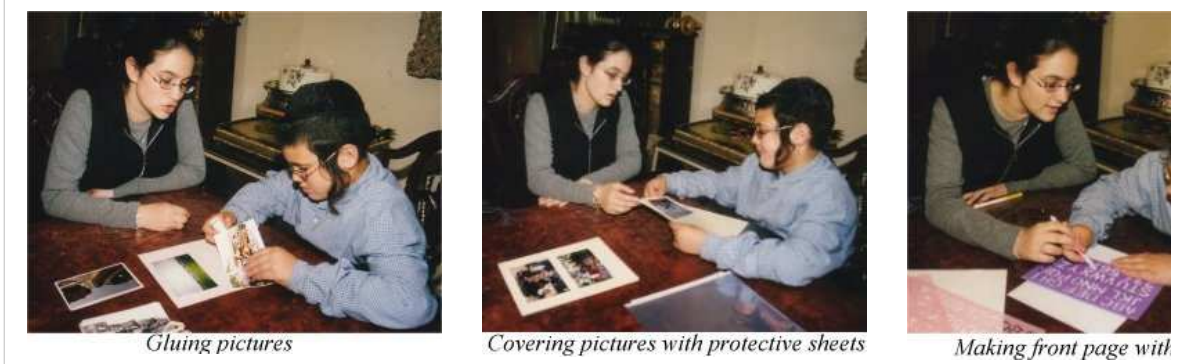


#### 4b. Cutting - cropping out



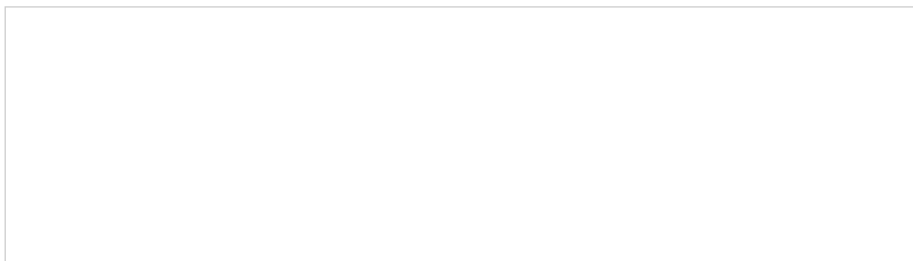
Cutting involves some creativity and also introduces the idea of "a special meaning or a goal of a picture." During cutting the instructor discusses the meaning of the picture: "If we want to show on this picture that John reads a book, then the clogged environment around John would probably distract our attention from John. So it is nice to cut it out, but if we want to show that our John can read in any environment and nobody and nothing bothers him, then we should leave the picture the way it is." Or: "If we want to have a picture of Hannah, but there is Jane also on that picture, what happens if we didn't cut out Jane?" - "Right, nobody would know who is Hannah on the picture." Cropping out involves some creative element. The instructor should cut out of white paper 2 L-shape corners (or, semi-frames), the size of the picture. By placing them in different positions the instructor changes the look of a ready picture so that a person could see how different a picture looks when the unnecessary background is cut out, or the attention is focused on the main subject of the picture. The instructor helps to see the difference explaining why that or this look is preferable. The process of cutting helps to develop such geometrical knowledge as vertical and horizontal, parallel, using a ruler, making a straight line and using scissors.

#### 4c. Making a photo book



Making an a book involves placing pictures on sheets of paper, then putting them in protective sheets and then in a folder. It could be done permanently by gluing pictures, or temporarily by using scotch tape or 2 ways glue. Temporary way is preferable as it allows to replace pictures any time or use them for something else. Attaching also involves the element of design which can develop creativity when people are involved, exchange suggestions and opinions. It is a good source of communication. It also shows a person's awareness about many things such as space, size, matching, etc. Putting pictures in protective sheets develops fine motor skills and attention to the right position of a picture on a paper and the right placement of a sheet with pictures in a protective sheet.

#### Step 5: Describing pictures







*Discussing every picture*



*Writing description of pictures*

This is the most important step as it summarizes the goal of that project. From the beginning the instructor lets a person read his profile description from the initial interview (or, in case if a person cannot read, then read it to him) and explains to the person this project is about himself and that pictures which follow the first page have a goal or show the information written on the first page and give some more information about the person. So, as that project is about that person he is the one who has to tell about himself. Then both the person and the instructor go through the pictures and discuss them. The instructor writes the main points on post-it notes and attaches them to every picture being discussed. That step should be done only when a person is in a good mood and willing to cooperate. It shouldn't be done by force under any circumstances, because the main goal here is to make a person to like getting involved, to be interested, to express himself, to participate willingly. It could happen that from the beginning a person could be reserved, shy or even afraid to say "wrong" things or could experience something else which could prevent him from participation in discussion. Here is a big opportunity for the instructor to try different ways to get a person involved. It could be the use of humor or giving some examples of other people or involve another person-a friend for example. Here everything depends on special situations, an instructor's creativity and abilities and many other factors. The most important thing here is that if all attempts to get a person involved fail, the person should be left not with bad feelings, but with some warm good words "Ok, we will try it another time when we both would be more ready!" Anything which wouldn't make a person feel guilty that he failed work or experience any other negative feelings. If a person is cooperative and discussion starts, the goal of the instructor is to stay away from giving a person different information, pushing his own opinion or point of view on a person or making him say what the instructor would like to hear, but at the same time encouraging the person to talk more about himself. After the discussion the notes from post-it papers could be typed and placed next to the picture it belongs. Label paper could be also used.

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