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LIFE REVIEW

“Life review” has become a standard method of working with older people in clinical settings and adult learning centers. Life review gives older people an opportunity to arrange the threads of their biographies. They can review afresh both the primary and dystonic motifs that become manifest in the process. Ideally, life review—rarely a one-time exercise—prepares subjects to face finitude with equanimity, possibly to tie up loose ends in representations of self and relationships with others.

I start with life review because Butler, at age thirty-six, stressed its value for treating the aged—even those abandoned in nursing homes. His ideas and methods quickly gained wide usage for younger persons as well. He himself engaged in life reviews of his own at several junctures, including the very end of his life. Life review thus affords us a synoptic aperçu into Butler and his ideas as he aged.



Early in his scientific career Butler fired gerontological imaginations with a path-breaking article, “The Life Review: An Interpretation of Reminiscence