

# The Tree of Life Assignment

The tree of life concept is pretty simple and straightforward. It is a visual metaphor in which a tree represents your life and the various elements that make it up—past, present, and future.

By labeling these parts, you not only begin to discover (or perhaps rediscover) aspects of yourself shaped by the past, but you can then begin to actively cultivate your tree to reflect the kind of person you want to be moving forward.

Follow the instructions below to describe your tree of life:

## The Roots

Write down where you come from on the roots. This can be your hometown, state, country, etc. You could also write down the culture you grew up in, a club or organization that shaped your youth, or a parent/guardian.

## The Ground

Write down the things you choose to do on a weekly basis on the ground. These should not be things you are forced to do, but rather things you have chosen to do for yourself.

## The Trunk

Write your skills and values on the trunk. I chose to write my values starting at the base of the trunk going up. I then transitioned into listing my skills. For me this felt like a natural progression from roots to values to skills.

## The Branches

Write down your hopes, dreams, and wishes on the branches. These can be personal, communal, or general to all of mankind. Think both long and short term. Spread them around the various branches.

## The Leaves

Write down the names of those who are significant to you in a positive way. Your friends, family, pets, heroes, etc.

## The Fruits

Write down the legacies that have been passed on to you. You can begin by looking at the names you just listed as leaves and thinking about the impact they've had on you and what they've given to you over the years. This can be material, such as an inheritance, but most often this will be attributes such as courage, generosity, kindness, etc.

### **The Flowers & Seeds**

Write down the legacies you wish to leave to others on the flowers and seeds.

### **The Compost Heap (Optional)**

Write down anything in your compost heap that would normally go in the other sections described below but which are now things you no longer want to be defined by.

These are often sources of trauma, abuse, cultural standards of normality/beauty/etc. or anything else that shapes negative thoughts about yourself in your mind. You can write down places, people, problems, experiences. Whatever you need to.

Generally they all have to do with past trauma and damaging relationships I'm trying to let go of. I've found that the idea of a compost heap is an extremely helpful way to think about these things. Especially since many of them are not neatly categorized as "all bad".

There are in fact quite a few life defining lessons I learned through the things that ended up in my compost heap. And like a compost heap is supposed to do, I will eventually break those things down and re-sow the rich parts back into my life.

**Now that you are done - Please Email your Tree of Life Assignment to me at  
kristy.james@miller-motte.edu**