

## Exercise: Life Shaping Experiences & People

**FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION:** The people and situations that influence the development of your character are as varied as they are numerous. Influence may stem from parents, extended family members, friends, teachers, coaches, clubs, associations, religious organizations, or memorable events. There are likely many people and events to recall, but try to identify those that influenced what you have come to believe, place value on or prioritize, or that guide your ethical decision-making.

**EXAMPLE:** The Continental Army was starving over a long, hard winter at Valley Forge. Many died due to the harsh conditions. George Washington had a standing order not to steal food from colonists, despite the challenges faced by his troops and that Congress had denied funding for the Army's needs with an expectation that soldiers would take what was needed. He punished those who disobeyed, as he believed that a new nation must operate with public support and justice.

Washington was profoundly shaped by the repeated harsh winter bivouacs he experienced as the senior leader of the Continental Army. They led him to favor a strong executive branch and central government with the ability to extend credit and manage and repay national debts. Never again did he want to see America's soldiers in such destitute circumstances without a supporting Government that could feed, clothe, and supply them.

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Character develops and evolves over time, changing and adapting as one goes through new experiences. Understanding how your character evolved based on your experiences can help you better understand your character development and how it influences you today.

Reflect on your character in terms of how it has developed over the years. How has it been shaped through your professional and personal life experiences? Recall some of the key incidents and individuals that have shaped your personal values and ethical leadership, as well as resolutions made and lapses in judgment or successes. Document these incidents and individuals using the timeline graphic and add the highs and lows of your life. Then, answer the question following the timeline graphic.



How have your current personal values and ethical leadership been shaped and influenced by your life experiences? What are the implications of this lifelong development of character for your present self? Is there anything you are reminded of that you feel you should again put into practice?