

Exicting Your Personal History

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You may have contemplated, perhaps, the need to write YOUR story, or already have decided to write your story. Your life is as unique as your fingerprints. Only you can leave the stories, born out of a lifetime of experiences, for grandchildren to return to over and over again. You do not need writing experience to write an autobiography. Everyone can write a life story. Instead of limiting it to a chronological listing of factual experiences consider preparing a readable document interesting enough so the members of your family and others will enjoy reading it.

Sharing your life story with others can be awkward. This session will be an interactive discussion of 1) why writing your story is important, 2) some difficulties involved, and 3) suggestions for creating your story in an entertaining and creative way that not only informs those you want but also make it interesting enough so they will enjoy reading it.

What are some reasons for writing

- Healing- self discovery -Remembering our lives and understanding ourselves
- History- knowledge for future generations
- Wisdom- leaving a record of experiences- Writing it down before it's too late.
- Providing inspiration to others facing a challenge.

What's involved in writing at the beginning

Free style writing is a way to get the story out of there a bit at a time.

- Don't edit yourself. You can edit later. Grammar and structure are not important.
- Start with a single subject
- All ideas are good.

If you have dialogue, include it. If you have a description, include it.

- At first - Just sit down and write! You already have the material-it's in your head

Consider who's your audience--- Grandchild's child

An overview of a lifetime of learning, joys, achievements, and failures can be told through **different mediums** including old love letters, a family newsletter, who's who in the family's history, favorite family recipes or cook book or health etc., a visual history

What are the resources

- Audio, Voice synthesizer - Accessibility on computer- Screen readers
- Speech recognition- Talking word processors -Tape recorder
- Research- Documents, Geographical, Computer Search

What are some of the difficulties

You must consider

- Feelings of other people in your life and the pain of stirring up old emotions.
- Disclosure of hidden information or experience
- Unreliability of memory

Suggestions! "This is the way I saw it" "This is the way I feel" Tell others," Feel free to write their own version" **OR** have them write their version in yours.

- Other Obstacles- in doing the writing
 - Stumbling Blocks
 - Procrastination
 - Feeling Overwhelmed
 - Lack of time
 - Fear of failure, what others may say, exposure, what you may learn
 - Nothing comes to mind

Modifications

- Writing in the present tense
- Finding your voice----Imagine you're talking to a trusted friend
- Tone- ---Be aware of how it may sound to another person
- Show vs. Tell-- Paint a picture with your words
- Dialogue – use it--Body language-include this as well

Ways of enhancing the writings.

- Recipes, favorite sayings, poems etc.
- Charts- Ancestor and Descendant
- Maps- Where were the travels
- Scans of Family Photographs, Letters or other documents

Writing Exercises- Get an official document of your life; Birth certificate, school report, marriage certificate etc. Look at it.

- What comes to mind?
- What happened in your life because of it?
- What happened that day/ what happened before?

Structure

Chronology

- Time sequence - life stages- birth, childhood, teen, early adult, middle, later life.
- Major life events - birth, arrival of siblings, school, first job, marriage, children.
- Imagery of seasons- spring, summer, autumn, winter of your life.
- Social history- depression, second world war, post war years, 60's,90's.

Topics

- Interesting individuals –People that impacted your life-Unusual situations.

Themes

- .Never give up; Searching for an identity; Being disabled. Growing up a Nun; A Gift of Memories; From Stumbling Blocks to Stepping Stones

Resources;

- How to write Your Personal and Family History- A Resource manual- by Keith E. Banks, ways of preserving your and your family history in a variety of creative ways
- Turning Memories into Memoirs" A Handbook for Writing LifeStories" by Dennis Ledoux
- How to Write the Story of your life by Frank P. Thomas- F & W Publications, Incorporated / August 1989
- Writing Life Stories by Bill Roorbach
- You Can Write a Memoir by Susan Carol Houser