

Resources for Lifewriters

from

SOLEIL LIFESTORY NETWORK

- * **Turning Memories Into Memoirs**, a Handbook for Writing Lifestories, \$24.95
288 pages of how-to information-everything you need to remember, record, and write your memoirs-helpful exercises, accounts of workshop experiences, excerpts from workshopers' lifestories, and 60+ evocative historical photos.
- * **The Lifewriter's Memory Binder**, \$21.95
90 page workbook/binder is a customized 3-ring binder. A companion to *Turning Memories*, it's designed to organize your memoir project-in-process. It features exercises, worksheets, indexed sections complement and supplement the handbook. Also: sturdy photo and artifact pockets.
- * **The Photo Scribe: A Writing Guide / How to Write the Stories Behind Your Photographs**, \$16.95
128 pages of step-by-step photo-journaling exercises, examples, instructions. Friendly tone details how to write short meaningful narratives to expand on photos in albums and memory books. 40+ contemporary and period photos.
- * **The Photo Scribe® Memory Binder**, \$21.95
90 page workbook / binder is a customized three-ring binder and a companion to *The Photo Scribe*. Designed to organize photoscribing projects-in-process, it features exercises, worksheets, and indexed sections to complement and supplement *The Photo Scribe*. Includes sturdy photo and artifact pockets.

* EDITING AND BOOK PRODUCTION SERVICES

Work with a professional to shape work manuscript, to break through or go deeper, or to turn your stories into a book. Our services are based on our experience since 1988 of helping thousands of people just like you write their lifestories. Services are tailored to your needs. Let us help you realize your dream of a well-written book that tells the story of your life!

* FREE E-MAIL NEWSLETTER

A monthly e-mail newsletter for lifewriters, ideas, tips, memory jogs, telling the truth and story share. WEN3@turningmemories.com



SOLEIL LIFESTORY NETWORK
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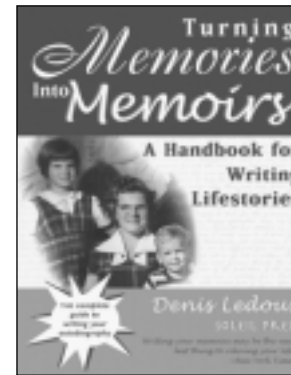
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TIPS FROM

Turning Memories Into Memoirs

A Handbook for Writing Lifestories

WRITING ADVICE FOR PEOPLE WHO WANT TO PRESERVE THEIR MEMORIES



DO YOU DREAM OF WRITING DOWN YOUR STORIES?

Anyone can learn to write personal and family stories. It's not as hard as you may think. The right start can keep you motivated, and a few easy-to-follow guidelines can transform a rambling tale into a meaningful story.

HOW TO BEGIN

Relax. Writing your lifestories will not be as hard as you may be afraid of and the process will bring you great satisfaction. You'll celebrate and honor the life you have lived as you come to new understandings about who you are. Here are suggestions for making your writing go smoothly and be more fun.

Writing Your Lifestories

☞ Ten Simple Steps ☞

FOLLOW THESE STEPS TO LIFEWRITING SUCCESS

1. First, make a Lifestist.

It's a list of every important event, influence, and relationship in your life or in any particular era. It can be hundreds of items long! Why bother with this pre-writing task? Because it's such a handy resource when you do write. Having a Lifestist to refer to will help you focus on the highlights—the stories most deserving of your effort. Detailed information will let you tell the whole story as you truly want it told.

2. Write the most important stories first.

Resist the urge to write from the beginning. Start anywhere! The most important step is to start writing. Concentrate on single stories instead of on your life as a whole. It's discouraging to think of writing 200 pages, but everyone can write one three-page story.

3. *Double check your memories.*

Memory can be false, flattering, and defensive. Interview people who were there and crosscheck your details. Use all the props available: letters, diaries, obituaries, photos, certificates, newspaper articles, etc. Research your locality, your region, the era, history, etc., to give authenticity and context to your personal story.

4. *Tell the truth as much as you can.*

You and your roots are okay no matter what. You don't need to alter your story to prove your worth or to conceal your past. Use Lifewriting as an exploration and a celebration, not an occasion to settle old scores. And remember: you have a right to privacy. While it may be growthful to write certain stories, you only have to share what, when, and with whom you want to.

5. *Be specific.*

Use proper names, give dates, describe in detail. You almost cannot give too many details. Don't be vague or general. Use all five senses.

6. *Explore the myths in your family stories.*

What did the people around you want to believe about them? Every family tells stories about itself that cloud the truth. Try going beyond the official family "line".

7. *Avoid using clichés and stereotypes.*

Personalize and particularize. Let your own voice do the talking. Simplicity is always best. After nine words start to think of ending that sentence. After 15, end it. Always let your first draft be a rough draft. Don't make yourself get it perfect before going on. Polishing your text is a later step.

8. *Set up a schedule for yourself.*

Honor your writing time as you would any important appointment. Ask your family and friends for their support in making time for this commitment. Writing regularly is more important than writing for long period. Be patient and enjoy yourself. Lifewriting can bring you great pleasures.

9. *Start a lifewriting group with friends.*

For encouragement and support, it's great to share with others. But beware of two opposite but equally discouraging reactions: "Isn't

that lovely, dear. Everything you do is wonderful!" or "What a waste of time—all that old stuff?!" You need and deserve kind but constructive criticism. Sharing with those who will honor your effort and challenge you to do your best.

10. *Be a show off!*

Share your stories with friends and family and accept their praise and appreciation for your accomplishment. Putting your lifestories in writing is a valuable gift to give yourself and to all after you.

"A LOT OF PEOPLE TALK ABOUT WRITING.

THE SECRET IS TO WRITE, NOT TALK."

Jackie Collins, novelist

It's helpful to remember that your writing is like anything else in life: practice makes perfect!

First use this list to create your lifelist. Then begin your lifewriting choosing one subject. Write about the people, the events, the relationships, the emotional experiences to do with:

- your ancestors, your grandparents, the oldest person alive when you were young.
- your birth, your first years, what your family was like then.
- your community: geographic, ethnic, religious, cultural, gender, etc. approaches to sickness and death in family of origin.
- your parents' relationship, how they met, what challenges they faced, their emotional style.
- an early conflict between you and your parents or siblings—what light does it shed on who you became?
- your ambitions as a young person; their fulfillment or failure. Your education/training.
- your discovery of gender and sexuality. A time when you were typed (did it help or hinder you) as a person because of your gender. This is an important exercise for men as well as women!
- an early difficulty and how you overcame it. With what help, under what circumstances? How did this experience fit with the family or community messages you received?
- your youthful heroes and enemies. How do they continue to inspire or motivate you?
- work experiences, both what you did and what you wish you'd done.
- relationship and starting a family.
- how you contribute(d) to your community and society.
- time you played a part in history (your WWII nursing, your peace march experience in 1970...)
- a lot of funny stories about "the time when...". Don't forget or neglect the joys you have lived!