

The Memoir Writing Workbook

Memories into Memoir

The Road to Memoir

We write to taste life twice

– in the moment, and in retrospection.

Anais Nin

Our lives are full of memories. A multitude of experiences that have shaped the paths that led us to where we are now in our personal life journeys.

Within the trillion incidents that have created our selves, what is extraordinary is that our experiences - however shared at the same moment in time with another - are nevertheless completely individual. It is this individuality and how we relate to our shared experiences that make our memories personal, our struggles interesting, and our lives unique. It is our challenge as writers to find our unique writing voice and in turn find our creative expression so that we can translate our stories into a form that will be of interest to readers.

Writing is a form of self-discovery. Through writing one gains a sense of self and healing. Writing demands reflection, and the more willing you are to be truthful with your self and examine the incidents in your life, the more intriguing your memoir becomes.

In this age of high-end technology and fast-paced living, what I refer to as 'the old world' is fast becoming extinct. The lives of our children are very different to that of our elders. It is the stories of our elders that are being lost. These stories are treasures, precious

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insights into life that should be written for your family and future generations – before they are buried forever.

Up until quite recently, many people believed that to be qualified to write, one had to study the classics and have a PhD in literature. The memoir genre has changed that. There is currently a great interest in personal writing; it's viewed as an art form that can be practised by anyone.

Memoir writing is not solely for the purpose of being published. Besides the desire to leave memoirs for family and friends, memoir writing is now often undertaken as a therapeutic form of medicine. It is seen as a positive method for alleviating trauma and loss, for healing life wounds. Writing is very constructive in aiding self-healing and personal development. Of course, this doesn't mean that memoir should be filled solely with the traumatic events of a life – far from it. Avoiding slipping into what has been labelled the 'misery memoir' is something we should be aware of.

As children we are inherently creative. We use our senses, we explore the world with fresh and inquisitive eyes, and our imaginations have no boundaries. As life demands more from us and as we enter the workforce and concentrate upon jobs that we don't always enjoy but *have* to do, we seem to lose our sense of exploration and become pigeon-holed and blinkered. In many circumstances, we forget to nurture our creativity, putting aside our imaginations. We lose sight of who we once were and how we feel. Our inherent creative abilities become dormant and we forget how to create. *The Memoir Writing Workbook* redresses this imbalance, showing you how to rekindle your creativity and write from the heart.

The Memoir Writing Workbook is about evoking your ability to express your truth through writing – using personal experiences as

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your bedrock material. It is based upon right-brain/left-brain exercises that show you ways to access your well of memory. You build upon your memoir in easy stages and engage in simple and fun exercises. On completion of the workbook, you will understand how to tap into your life experiences and know how to continue with your writing. The exercises can be used on an ongoing basis to aid creativity, imagination and creative writing.

The more you write, the more you will want to write. It is important to follow the exercises here in chronological order, one after the other. They are set out in a way that allows you to build from the foundation, step by step, as in any building project. As you progress through the workbook you will notice your writing voice change and develop. Your thoughts become focused. Your ability to create increases and your memories become refined. You will find the way – your way – of saying what you want to say, as you learn how to express yourself creatively.

Complete the workbook with personal honesty – that is the key to good memoir writing. You can decide when you complete the workbook what you want to do with it; you don't have to decide that before you begin. Just write and see what happens. See what comes up for you, see what the workbook helps you to let go of. See where it brings you to.

The most important thing is to have fun! Release yourself from expectation; it is your private journey, you need never show it to anyone if you choose not to but I do hope you will. My hope is that you will be inspired, that you'll read your work aloud and feel proud of what you've written.

Whatever happens to your writing when you have completed this workbook will be a bonus; least of all, you will have uncovered your life story and learnt how to write your memoir. Maybe you will give it

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to your family and friends. You may even find a publisher that wants to publish your work. But most of all you will have put *your* story down on paper in your unique way. You will have found something within that you were searching for when you started to write.