

Legacy Tips & Tools

Transforming Memories into Legacies

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**Memories celebrate relationships,
cement connections,
and are the very footprints of our lives.**

There are personal and cultural occasions in our lives when we are flooded with memories of relationships -- like this weekend; (I'm writing on Memorial Day, when our country officially remembers and honors its lost veterans).

One way to prepare for a special occasion in your life is to write a memory / legacy letter to commemorate the moment and the relationship.

Launching a child is one of those times. Author Sharon Strassfeld wrote her daughter a legacy book as a "home-leaving gift" in 1998 to protect her on her life journey, to share values, to express her own life learning, and to tell her family stories so that her roots would be "satisfactorily entwined with those of her ancestors."

My first granddaughter, Sophie, is having her bat mitzvah ceremony in just three weeks. I decided to give her a legacy letter tracing the 13 year journey of our relationship.

Last week to prepare to write I waded through boxes of disorganized pictures and was reminded of adventures and sweet times we've spent together. I can't tell you how poignant and fun that was, my joy in the delicious memories those photos recalled: Of me holding precious Sophie as a newborn; of she, my daughter and I going to the Children's Museum to celebrate her first birthday; of our excursion to the local fire station when she was three. And more domestic moments--our tea parties on my kitchen floor, helping her master riding the red tricycle up and down--up and down-- my driveway, sitting on my front stoop to free a butterfly just transformed from its chrysalis state, reading bedtime stories during sleep-overs, writing in our joint journal begun when she was just four and could barely print her name.



And now, feeling blessed by her existence and our relationship, I am ready to write her a letter that I hope will prompt her memories and treasure our relationship now and after I'm gone.

Reflection, Writing & Practice:

What follows is a guide for you to write a legacy letter to celebrate your relationships and memories commemorating a special occasion (anniversary, birthday, transition) or just because you feel blessed by your relationship.

1. As preparation, reflect (use pictures and other memorabilia if you choose) and journal for 15 minutes for several days about a relationship (and/or occasion) you want to commemorate.
2. Consider these statements to deepen your reflections and writing.

Christian theologian, Emilie M. Townes, writes:
"A woman's theology of wholeness is, finally, radically relational."

Rachel Naomi Remen reflected in *Kitchen Table Wisdom*, that life satisfaction and contentment "lies in the inner world, the world of stories and memories. It comes not from any outer achievement but from the richness of experiencing life and sharing the inner experience of life with others."

3. Write a draft of your memory letter. Put it away for at least one day before editing. (Tip: Ask yourself whether what you wrote conveys the memories and celebrates relationship, not whether the syntax or punctuation is perfect.)
4. Consider legacy letters to honor other relationships and celebrate occasions.

May your legacy letters
celebrate your relationships
and honor the lives of those for whom you care.

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Register for an East Coast Legacy Writing Retreat in the Great Smoky Mountains...September 21-26, 2008
www.WomensLegacies.com/programs.htm