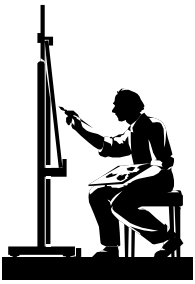


# TELLING PERSONAL TALES

Who are you? What is your story?



You are the stories that you tell. You are the author of your life story. You are the artist and the world is your canvas. How you know the world is through the stories you hear, live, create, and tell. You have all done this: think about a time when you were doing something really cool and you were thinking in the back of your mind I can not wait to get home and tell my friends about this. What was it that was so amazing, amusing, inspiring, or insane? Your life is filled with these stories. Have you ever met someone, been somewhere, or done something? These are the characters, setting and plot of your life.

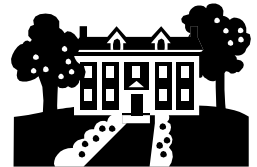
Like a biographer researching your life, begin with questions. Tell me about your childhood home. Tell me about your first day of school or some early school memory. Tell me about a favorite pet. Tell me about your family, mother, father, brothers, sisters, cousins, aunts and uncles. (You are more than a skin encased ego; you are a mixture of your friends' and family's influences.) Tell me about learning to ride a bike. Tell me about \_\_\_\_\_ and you fill in the blanks. Sit down with a partner, and tell each other stories based on these and other similar questions. With a pen and paper answer these types of questions for yourself. You could even interview your parents or older relatives and ask them questions about your childhood. Use your answers to shape a story.

Reading the memoirs of famous people may inspire you to become a greater person. Look for biographies of people that you admire. As you read these biographies look at the way the writer moves back and forth between facts about their life to stories. Use these stories as a model for your autobiography. Tell us the facts of your life and give us background information, but more importantly tell us stories and take us into the important moments of your life.



Who are your heroes and mentors? Who are the people who have inspired you, shaped you, influenced you? One way to tell us about yourself is to tell us about the people who you look up to. Choose a person from your life who has been there for you when you needed them. Write a brief character sketch of this person. Describe a time when you did something together or a time when they helped you out of a jam. What did you learn from them? What did you learn from this experience?

Another way to approach these stories is to draw a floor plan of your home, a diagram of your yard, and a map of your neighborhood. Take a partner on a tour of these places looking for stories. What happened in this room or under this tree or down on the corner? Use these maps and diagrams as the key to unlock long forgotten memories.



Family photographs are another great key for unlocking stories. They say a picture is worth a thousand words and it is true. Look through old family photos to help you remember the Kodak® moments. Choose a photo or two that capture a particular adventure. Look the picture over carefully to help you remember the details leading up to and following this moment. What stories can this picture tell? You might want to put together a sequence of two or three pictures from a particular vacation or baseball season to help tell your tale.

With all of these stories the most important and difficult task is to look for issues and ideas that have meaning for your listener. How can you make your personal story universal? What did you learn from this experience or how did it make you a wiser, better person? Show us the answer to this question; do not tell us. Allow the reader to discover the meaning as you discovered it.

Tell your story to a partner and they can help you discover the deeper layers. It is your job to highlight these layers of depth for the reader or listener.