

## **Your Life Matters! Four Vital Reasons to Tell Your Life Story**

Are your children or grandchildren pestering you to “write those stories down!”? Perhaps you feel that you don’t have time to remember your life – you’re still too busy living it! It is a daunting endeavor to write down 30, 50, 80 years of living. It is often an overwhelming task just to remember it.

Many of us think we will write our memoirs – someday. Maybe if we do something fabulous, outrageous, something which alters the course of history. Maybe if we become famous. Or maybe just when we have the time, whenever that will be. But few of us ever get around to it. And the truth is that if you don’t preserve your stories – what you did, what you thought, what you felt, what you witnessed – then your stories will die when you do. No one else can tell them like you can. No one else has your eyes, your heart or your mind.

“Well so what?” you may ask. “I’m just an average person. I didn’t do anything important.” We’ve been taught that modesty is good manners. You shouldn’t toot your own horn. Who are we to think we’re important enough to warrant a memoir? No one wants to be an egotist. Or some of us feel that we’re just cogs in a vast machine, with little personal power or meaning. We think only those with wealth, power or influence, can make a difference in the world.

If these are your beliefs, you are wrong. Preserving your stories is not about ego. The meaning of your life does not depend upon fame or wealth or even “great” deeds. We make wills to ensure our possessions are passed on to those who cherish them or can use them. But possessions are just things. Stories are alive. One of the greatest gifts you can give your descendants is the story of who you are. What were your hopes, your dreams, your fears, your griefs? What did you learn? What did you teach? Who did you love?

At this time in history, when we as a world are grappling with global difficulties unprecedented in scope, such as terrorism, plague, ecological disasters and more, it is more important than ever that we share our stories with each other. It is vital that we know our individual stories matter. If we all knew that what we do, say, think or feel – no matter how trivial -- has meaning and consequences, how would we behave differently? Would we be less inclined to apathy, despair and fear? Would we be more impelled to action, and to using our power to make this world a better place?

Stories show us how we connect with each other, they allow us to teach and learn, they inspire us, and they heal our divisions and our wounds.

Stories of connection show how we fit into the great tapestry of life on earth. Today many of us feel isolated and alone. Families tend to be scattered around the globe, and many of our institutions are breaking apart. We have lost touch with our past and are afraid of the future. But when we share our experiences, we are reminded that we are still connected with each other. Each of us has a place and a part and a lineage.

Teaching stories allow us to pass along our accumulated wisdom. With technology advancing at a rate never seen before, and becoming more and more specialized, we can start to feel that we don't understand how the world works anymore. But when we tell our stories, we are reminded that we are the keepers of wisdom – not machines or chemicals. That lessons on how to dream, how to love, how to laugh, can only be taught by example, and we are the only ones who can teach each other.

In this time of terrorism and disaster, with news media around the world blaring stories of violence and greed, heroic stories give us hope. They remind us that people can not only cope with disaster, but turn it into triumph. That ordinary people, folks just like us, have depths of courage, compassion and creativity. When we hear their stories, we are inspired to believe in the possibility of our own heroism.

Today fear, with its consequence of anger, permeates our society. Stories of hatred, revenge, and pathological madness abound. We have come to expect lies and secrets from our leaders. Our society is urgently in need of healing. In order to do so we need to forgive each other, and ourselves. Sharing our stories comforts us and reminds us that we can be whole. We walk along a path whose way stations are understanding, compassion, and finally forgiveness. We can be healed of our anger and our fear.

Connection, wisdom, inspiration and healing: these are the reasons we tell our stories. Telling our stories is important because we are.

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