

Structure and the “Herstory Bill of Rights”

While we avoid the sort of exercises common in many memoir writing workshops (such as: “Write of an experience of sadness or joy, or a moment that changed your life”), we have our own kind of structure in that:

1. We take for granted that some ways of telling stories are more effective than others.
2. We take for granted that where each workshop member begins and how well they understand the principles of framing a story will have a profound effect on the success of the endeavor.
3. We take for granted that there is no single correct way of telling any story.
 - ▶ For each new participant, the writing journey will be different. The facilitator must work on level ground with each participant to help them find their particular best way.
4. We must respect the fact that the wish to share private facts, thoughts and experiences with a Stranger/Reader is complicated and fraught with contradictions.
 - ▶ The invitation to share intimate truths can feel like a betrayal, if that sharing is not met with a response that is genuine and full.
 - ▶ Conversely, if stories are told in a way that is half-hearted or anxiously overwhelming, the Listener/Reader cannot be brought in with caring, unless they (through you as the facilitator) can be helped into a more effective way of telling.
5. We must help each new member to experience their own reasons for self revelation, while working out a storytelling structure around what is essential in their wish “to tell.”
 - ▶ Simultaneously we must work to protect those parts of them that they wish to keep silent.