

Conference on Aging

Finding Your Own True Stories Story Discovery Worksheet Process

Shared by Nell Weatherwax

1. On a separate piece of paper for each category, make a list of 3 – 10 items for each category below. (Go with your gut – don't think about it too much. Don't evaluate – just list.)
2. Review the lists and circle one or two items from each that feel “juicy,” “ripe,” or seem to carry “heat.”
3. Pick any one of those that seems to be the most fun and easy to explore.
4. Describe it physically in as much detail as you can (make up what it “could have” looked like).
5. Describe your experiences with that item –
Identify metaphors for color and flavor and to share your point of view.
How did it impact you?

People (include pets in this category)

Family, teachers, bosses, co-workers, friends, love interests, arch nemesis

Places (geographical as well as dwellings)

Work, school, friends' houses, where you played at age 10, college dorm, military barracks, ball courts/fields, summer camp, parks, vacation locations

Bonus prompt: A place you spent more time in than most people.

Example: pediatric floor of the Bloomington Hospital circa 1970

Things

“Walk” through your current or long-ago home in your imagination now – notice the objects in the kitchen, living Room, bedroom. List the ones that seem to be ripe for exploring. Your teddy bear, your mother's watch, the mixing bowl you inherited from your grandmother's kitchen

Example: Object: My grandmother's mirror hanging over my dresser brings to mind 4-year-old me, bouncing on the huge “bouncing bed” and her rolling her waist-length hair into a bun and smiling at me through the reflection.

Events

Weddings, funerals, parties, bar/bat mitzvahs, birth of a child, the first times* eating in a restaurant alone, first days of high school

Emotions as Events - A time you felt: You became an “adult”, joy, fear, in-love, lost, belonging, achievement, beautiful, handsome

*Avoid being too literal – it could be an amalgam or montage of those first days, first times.

Combinations to generate more ideas for your lists (many possible, this is just a start)

Places & Events

- School: Coming back to school after missing weeks to discover my best friend was now wildly popular, had a boyfriend and now I was her goofy sidekick at best
- Work: The day I got fired from my first full time job

People & Events

- dates, wedding, friends' weddings

People & Places

- teachers at school, school nurse

Presenting Partner:



Supporting Partners:



Contributing Partners:

