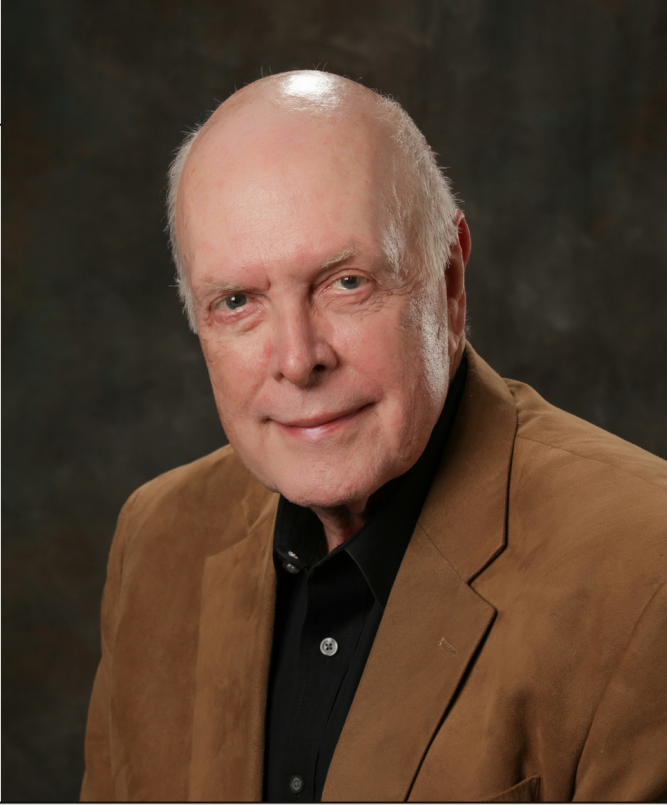


Tell Your Story

Writing Your Memoir



DAVID CARIENS



WELCOME!

Thank you for joining me on a memoir writing journey!

In this book you will discover why writing a memoir is important,
and why I wrote mine.

Thanks again!

David Cariens

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HOW TO USE THIS WORKBOOK



When I decided to write my memoir, I couldn't find a book that dealt with the process from the analytical viewpoint. Because I was a CIA analyst, I was looking for a book to lead the reader through a series of exercises to gain confidence. "It's stories about your life - not the story of your life." I hope this book will encourage you to dig deep into your memories, so that, whether you are a novice or an expert, you can produce a meaningful memoir.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction



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I WISH MOM WAS STILL ALIVE!

Everyone, at one time or another, wishes he or she had paid more attention to his or her parents when they talked about family folklore, growing up, what Grandpa and Grandma were like, or tales of crazy Uncle Silvester or eccentric Aunt Mildred. In other words, the people who came before you are genetically responsible for who you are.

At some point almost every man or woman looks at family pictures or old tintypes and doesn't know who the people are. She looks like mom; he bears a resemblance to my brother. Unfortunately, no one wrote their names on the back of the images or the dates of their births and deaths. All you know is you are tied to them in some way. You have no idea where they lived, when they were alive, what their voices sounded like, or if they had a sense of humor. You know nothing about them. What a shame!



CHALLENGES

Writing a memoir gives you a chance to stop the loss of your family's history and to pass on valuable stories and information to your children, grandchildren and beyond. One reason for writing my memoir was to discuss my brother's and mother's mental illnesses and self-medication with alcohol. I wanted to alert my descendants to what lurks in our gene pool. For me, that was reason enough to write.

IT'S DIFFICULT

Yes, all writing is difficult, good writing is very difficult, and writing about yourself and family is a daunting task. But with a few pointers and guides, writing is not as hard as you may imagine. The following is designed to help you get started telling about your life and heritage.



WHAT CHALLENGES WILL I FACE?

What are your personal challenges? Dealing with bad memories? Finding information? Keeping it real?
Write them here.

notes

CHAPTER 2

Types of Personal Stories



TYPES OF PERSONAL STORIES

Understanding the Difference Between Biography, Autobiography, and Memoir

--A biography is not written by the person whose story is being told. It requires research, not memory, and is often written in chronological order. That is not what you are going to do. A biography is detail-rich in capturing the nitty-gritty of a person's life.

--An autobiography is written by the person whose story is being told. It may require some research, but a great deal depends on the author's memory. It is frequently, but not always written in chronological order.

--A memoir is creative nonfiction. It is built around a theme in the author's life. A memoir does not have to follow a linear timeline; it can move about in time. The memoir author is trying to capture a mood. The author most likely cannot remember the exact words of a conversation, but does remember his or her emotions. Recreating those conversations is where the creativity comes in, but it is important for the writer to record them as closely as memory allows.

WHAT IS KEEPING YOU FROM GETTING STARTED?

notes

CHAPTER 3

Think About the Message



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YOU CAN MIX AND MATCH

My youngest son wanted me to write a biography. But as I delved into the project, I realized I did not want to write a biography. I wanted to write three memoirs about three distinct aspects of my life: my mother's and brother's alcohol and mental problems, which resulted in the disintegration of the loving family that raised me; my life as an intelligence officer; and my life as a victims' rights advocate after the murder of the mother of my oldest grandchild.

Each of those themes has a different message, and to include them all in one book would mean one or more of the messages suffered.

Once you decide to move ahead, you will need to determine what type of memoir you will pursue. On the following pages, I discuss the eight types you might consider in writing your personal story. The categories do not exist in isolation. They are intertwined.

TYPE 1 - FAMILY MEMOIR

In this memoir you are relating to your lineage and the stories associated with it. It is a journey down memory lane, and allows you to retell the stories told to you by family members. Write below why this would or would not work for you.

notes

TYPE 2 - SPIRITUAL GUIDE

Here you feel that throughout much of your life you were lost, but someone or something helped you find your path. In the notes section, write why this would or would not work for you.

notes

TYPE 3 - PATH TO ENLIGHTENMENT

At some point you felt you needed to change your life,
and through a series of experiences, you made those
changes.

notes

TYPE 4 - WHAT I DID AND WHAT I WOULD DO DIFFERENTLY

In this memoir, you are giving advice. You may have done something wrong repeatedly until you got it right, e.g. repeatedly marrying an alcoholic. Would this work for you? Why or why not?

notes

TYPE 5 - COMING OF AGE

There are many spins on this category. For example, trying to understand your parents; being abandoned, then adopted, and then trying to find your natural parents; living with a mentally ill sibling; or growing up in a refugee camp. Would this work for you? Why?

notes

TYPE 6 - OVERCOMING ADVERSITY

This group of memoirs can also be described as the INSPIRATIONAL mode because part of your motivation for writing is to impart lessons and inspire. Would this work for you? Why or why not?

notes

TYPE 7 - MULTICULTURAL MEMOIR

We live in a multicultural world. More people of different faiths, races, ethnicity, and backgrounds are marrying. There are many stories these people can tell. Would this work for you? Why or why not?

notes

TYPE 8- TRAVEL MEMOIR

You may have traveled extensively or lived around the world. You have experiences to share, and in the process, you can help readers understand people of different religions and cultures. Would this work for you? Why or why not?

notes

CHAPTER 4

Potential Stumbling Blocks



WHAT DOORS WILL YOU OPEN?

As you write, memories will begin to surface. These long-repressed memories may be painful.

You need to decide what doors you will open and what doors best remain closed. If you decide to raise the subject, you must be honest. Otherwise, your writing will come across as inauthentic.

I once read a manuscript in which the author spent half the time talking about how she had been accused of things and drummed out of her church. She professed she was innocent and had been wronged, but I never knew what had happened. For me, the manuscript collapsed because the author opened a door and only peeked in, alluding to all the awful things she saw.

BE FLEXIBLE

As you write your memoir, more and more memories will come back to you. Suddenly you will get a memory that changes some of your initial ideas. Capture the moment, stop and write down your thoughts.

You also have to be flexible if a terrible truth is recalled as you write. You either accept it and address it honestly, or drop the whole subject from your writing—there are no half-way measures.

WRITER'S BLOCK

All writers experience a bit of writer's block at some point. There are many ways to address this problem.

You can call it brainstorming or stream of consciousness, but the important thing is to get the ideas out and let those ideas take you where they want. At this stage don't worry about spelling, grammar, and punctuation.

If you are an introvert you will need a quiet place where you can pull your ideas together uninterrupted. If you are an extravert you may want to put on music or go to a coffee shop and let the noise of customers energize you. Only you know what motivates you. The important thing is to write a little bit every day.

Perhaps you will want to write some short essays about the people or topics you will address. Those essays can become the foundation for chapters in your memoir.

You are not compelled to use everything you write. You may need to explore an issue to understand it; later you can pull it out. Start writing down your ideas and let them perk.

WRITING FOR YOUR AUDIENCE

Concentrate on the message of your memoir. Does it have universal appeal?

If you are writing for your family, you may want to think about a detailed approach. Adding anecdotes about Uncle Willie's pet pig would be interesting to your family, but not necessarily to the world at large.

If you hope to market your book to a broader audience, you will probably want to cut back on some of the personal details that could distract.

Always think about your audience.

EDIT, PROOFREAD, EDIT, REPEAT

Whether you are an experienced writer or not, you should be prepared for a little rough going.

You do not see yourself objectively, and what is clear to you (because you lived it) may not be clear to a reviewer, editor, or reader.

Seek brutal editorial feedback. The memoir is your story, and you do not want to be embarrassed by a finished product riddled with errors.

Remember, it is editing, not correcting. The ideas and thoughts are yours, but there may be better ways to express them. Be open to feedback and editorial comments. This is hard because every time you write, you are exposing a lot about yourself—your level of education, your knowledge and use of English, and your ability to put ideas on paper.

I speak from experience. I spent years doing nonfiction writing where the goal was for the reader not to see the author. Then I moved into memoir writing where it is all about the author. The transition was painful, and I am still adjusting.

Candid, even blunt, feedback has helped me through the process.

THE "ENGLISH" CHALLENGE

English has the largest working vocabulary of any major Western language. However it is one of the most difficult languages to use correctly. Additionally, English is not phonetic. You cannot spell a word accurately based on the way it sounds. Of all the major languages, English has more words that sound the same but are spelled differently and have different meanings (like tale and tail, for example).

English is the fastest changing language in the world—it is almost in a continual state of flux. As a result, many rules have recently changed, e.g. Now there is only one space after instead of two at the end of a sentence, it is okay to split an infinitive, and you can end a sentence with a preposition. Think of a rule in English as a suggestion because there are so many exceptions to the rule.

CHAPTER 5

Some Final Points



SOME FINAL POINTS TO HELP YOU

You can write as many memoirs as you want about different aspects of your life.

Writing is thinking on paper, and in a memoir both the substance and the way you write tell a lot about you.

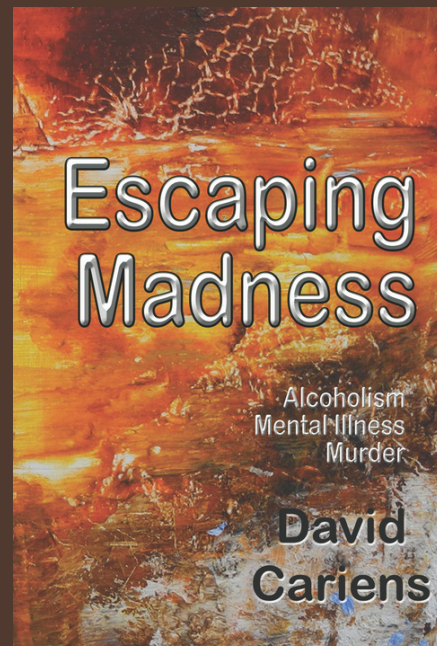
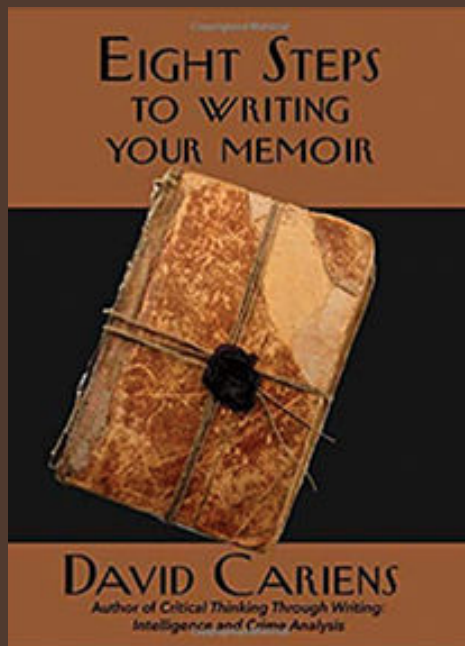
Don't get discouraged. Writing is hard work; keep at it. If you master writing your memoir you will have an enormous sense of pride and satisfaction. Remember the words of Dorothy Parker, "I hated writing, I love having written."

Good luck, and I hope to read your memoir some day.

THANK YOU FOR FINISHING THE WORKBOOK

CONGRATULATIONS

Hopefully you are on your way to writing your memoir. For additional information, please read my textbook ***Eight Steps to Writing Your Memoir*** (March 2019 - High Tide Publications, Inc.) It is available from Amazon, Barnes and Noble, and most bookstores.



Information about my memoir *Escaping Madness* is on the final page of this workbook.

Other Books by David Cariens

A Handbook for Intelligence and Crime Analysis

Critical Thinking Through Writing: Intelligence and Crime Analysis

The Murder of Angela Dales: A Question of Accountability

The America We All Want: Protecting Your Community from Gun Violence

Intelligence and Crime Terminology A Glossary of Terms and Acronyms

Virginia Tech - Make Sure It Doesn't Get Out

Effective Intelligence Briefings (A Guide for Intelligence Officers and Educators)

Escaping Madness: A Memoir—An Account of Alcoholism, Mental Illness and Murder

All the above books are available from Amazon, Barnes & Noble and other bookstores. For a signed copy, contact the author directly at dcariens@gmail.com

Cariens' book beautifully, and at times painfully, captures what alcoholism, mental illness, and violence do to a family. I know, I went through similar experiences in my own life. It is exceptionally well written—I could not put it down.

Dr. Frank Kober, retired professor and dean,
University of Maryland

I am struck by the author's transparency, vulnerability, and resilience. It takes great strength and courage to sift through and reflect upon one's life and family dynamics in such detail.

Eva Abel, clinical psychologist



David Cariens is a retired CIA officer--31-year career. Most of his time at the Agency was spent as a political analyst dealing with Eastern Europe. He is the author of nine books, and is a victim rights advocate.



Escaping Madness

Alcoholism
Mental Illness
Murder

David
Cariens

Reviews from Readers Like You

Well written account of a lifetime struggle dealing with mental illness in family. Thoughtful!

Wow! Just Wow! I was given this book as a gift. I am glad I got it. I received the book last night and couldn't stop reading until I finished just now. The book is well written by an established author and reflects a lifetime struggle (similar to mine) to rise above madness of others in our life.

David writes in a compassionate manner the way it feels to be in the midst of angry mental illness by our friends and family. It is especially meaningful to read that I am not alone. I am reminded of the Dionne Warwick song, "Killing me Softly". He writes like it really feels to be bewildered by the senseless actions of those close to us and not know how to react. The book is a very meaningful part of my library. I treasure this book.

I was given this book, and I enjoyed it thoroughly. Cariens gives a powerful, moving account of his family's history, helped by a vibrant prose style. I'm looking forward to the next two installments!



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