

Living Out Loud: Sharing Your Story

Have you thought about how you can share your breast cancer experience with others via the written word? Are you motivated to start a blog, write a book or pursue other creative outlets? This session is meant to provide you with strategies for getting started and resources for telling your story.

presented by April Capil, breast cancer survivor and author of "Recipe For Lemonade," and "Life After Lemonade"

Writing Exercises

When you write, plan on writing from 60-90 minutes at a time. Always start with at least 5-10 minutes of Free Writing + 5-10 minutes of Warm-Up Exercises, followed by 15-30 minutes of Writing With Purpose. Spend the last 10-20 minutes reading over and making notes on your piece, and then either commit to expanding on it, writing a second piece, or coming back to your first piece later.

- I. Free Writing: "Free Write" for 5-10 minutes just to get yourself in a writing state of mind.
 - a. Warm-up Exercises – these are just to get you used to writing about something in particular, and to tap your subconscious.
 - b. Alphabet – Pick 5 letters of the alphabet. Write down fruits, cars, people's names, cities, etc. that correspond with the letter. Pick 3 of the five, and write for 2 minutes on each of them.
 - c. Free-Association – Write down the first 10 words that come to your mind. Next to the words, write a second word. Pick 3 of these "second words" and write for 2 minutes on each of them.

2. Writing With Purpose: *This is where you will write a piece that might become an article, or a chapter (do one or two, for 15 or 30 minutes each).*
 - a. Pick a favorite thing that has always meant something to you – a meal, an item of clothing, a quote, a place. Why does it hold a special place in your heart?
 - b. Blessings vs. Miseries: what do you think you have lost because of cancer that you can't get back? What have you lost that you CAN get back? What do you have now, that you didn't have before cancer (good and bad)? If you could get 5 things back that you've lost, how would you get them back? If you couldn't get them back, how would you cope?
 - c. Fairy Tales – using the Hero's Journey model (Google "Joseph Campbell"), craft a short fairy tale based on an image. The image can be 2-D or 3-D, conventional or non-conventional (e.g., the Mona Lisa, or the sculpture from Rockefeller Center, or a movie poster). As a bonus exercise, write about how this fairy tale is similar or dissimilar to your own story.
 - d. Other Works – if you can't seem to grasp onto something using the above examples, sometimes it helps to use another writer's work as a jumping off point. Write about what it feels to lose something, to fear death, to believe in something despite evidence to the contrary, to put up or take down a barrier, or to be trapped in or escape from a dark place. Here are a few to start with: "One Art" by Elizabeth Bishop; "Funeral Blues" by W. H. Auden; "I Carry Your Heart With Me" by e.e. Cummings; "Hope is the Thing With Feathers" by Emily Dickinson; "Fire and Ice" and "Mending Wall" by Robert Frost; "Daddy" by Sylvia Plath.

3. Closing Exercise or Ritual: Always end your writing time with a ritual, to "close" your entry. Think of this like your writing "shivasana."
 - a. Publish your blog/mail your (circle) journal
 - b. Light a candle/blow out a candle
 - c. Take 5 minutes to meditate or recite a Mantra/Affirmation (one of my favorites is Louise Hay: "Out of this situation, only good will come. I am safe.")

Outlets For Your Story

Journaling

- Best for introspection, working out feelings
- “Gratitude Journals” vs. “Thankfulness Journals”
- Other journal types = Letter-Based, Anger Venting, Health Documentation

Blogging

- For sharing thoughts with others – friends, family, general public
- Be aware of privacy issues/future availability of your words
- If you are intending to write a book, blogging can be a way to save your words/explore ideas
- Entries can eventually be developed into chapters/articles
- Syndication options through Kindle
- To Monetize or not to Monetize?

Published Works

- The Bad News: not everyone wants to read your life story of How I Got Cancer Then Beat It
- Ask: what is unique about your story? How can it help people?
- Why do you want it published?
- What outlet(s) and can you afford to publish it?
- If you are seeking a career as an author, what is your follow up? Do you have ideas for other streams of income? If you're serious about getting paid to write, realize you must do the homework and the legwork

Practical Tools and Resources

- Storytelling: *Finding Joe* (documentary about Joseph Campbell; also, the book *The Power of Myth*)
- Journals
 - * Traditional journals/diaries – ensure you LIKE your journal – make it your own
 - * “Circle” Journals – these are paper-based, shared diaries/scrapbooks between friends, other survivors, parents and children, etc.
 - * Caring Bridge – online journals that can be shared with friends
 - * Facebook Groups as an alternative
- Blogging Tools
 - * Blogger, WordPress(.com, not .org), <http://www.problogger.net>
 - * Blog Networks/Circles – wellness, survivor-themed, etc. (e.g., BlogHer network)
 - * Blogs can be syndicated through Kindle
- Self-Published Works
 - * Digital only - best, easiest self-publishing out there = Smashwords.com
 - * Paperback - CreateSpace (Amazon partner)
 - * Another avenue for more adventurous authors - Lightning Source
 - * Resources: <http://www.newselfpublishing.com>

Resources courtesy of April Capil, author and speaker

Blog: <http://teamapril.blogspot.com>

Books (Digital): <http://www.smashwords.com/profile/view/aprilcapil> - 50% off discount code for C4YW

Attendees: EK26E (*Recipe For Lemonade*) and TA77T (*Life After Lemonade*), both good till 9/1/14

Books (Paper): <http://www.amazon.com/April-Capil/e/B003DNFZXS>