



The (R) Evolutionary Story Process for Writing a Compelling Memoir and Solo Show

For over twenty years, through working with over 1,000 people on their personal narratives, I have developed the Evolutionary Story Process. The Evolutionary Story Process is a unique way of moving into a first draft of your memoir, solo show, or monologue for the stage, and completing this journey consistently, steadily, and successfully.

My goal, as your story coach, is to help transform you: identifying your essential story, freeing your writer's blocks; and committing to the process while being in a sacred, quantum container. In the "quantum" container, we work together in a short and intense amount of time. Artists-- especially writers-- seem to have more successful outcomes that way and actually, produce higher quality first drafts within this container. Acclaimed, prolific author Stephen King claims, "If it can't be written in three months, it probably doesn't need to be written." This is the quantum way.

There is great wisdom in this philosophy, particularly for the deep creatives, empaths, artists, and healers who are called to write their story. Quantum wisdom holds true especially for perfectionists. Perfectionism is rooted in shame, born from an old story of never being good enough. This process allows one to break through that kind of rigidity and simply get the story *out*.

It's essential to get the first draft of your story out and bring it to completion. When you do, your confidence grows. Your consciousness grows, and your skills as a storyteller and writer also grow. The first draft of a creative writing project is crucial; If we get stuck in fear, resistance and perfectionism, we're unable to move forward—into revision, and then, to completion. In order to rewrite, we must first *write*... this is the power of the first draft.

I'm here to share with you everything I use when working with individuals or group coaching programs to successfully complete your first draft, in 90 to 120 days.



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PREPARING THE QUANTUM CONTAINER: BEGIN BEFORE YOU BEGIN

1. Write a Letter of intention to Yourself

In this letter, you truly commit to completing your draft in 90 to 120 days. You commit to allowing yourself to move through any blocks of resistance. In your intention, you acknowledge that you are doing this, as both an act of self-love *and* an act of service to the world—for those who will benefit through your sharing your story. Print your letter of intention or write it out by hand, and post it someplace where you will read it daily.

2. Become a Student of The Genre

Your writing journey begins with a critical pre-writing stage. Before we enter the cauldron, we prepare our vessel. As you consider embarking on writing your memoir or nonfiction hybrid book, it's essential to become a student of the genre. If you're attracted to this form, it's likely that you've already read many books in this genre. This part of the process should be enjoyable and validating-- like surrounding yourself with kindred spirits.

Whether you're writing a solo show for the stage or a memoir for the page, it's essential to immerse yourself in the genre; additionally, you will detach from reading (or in the case of solo shows, watching) any other form but your genre. Your subconscious mind is absorbing aspects of these stories that either work or don't work—resonating or not— for you.



3. The Hero and Heroine's Journey

It is vital to study, not just the genre itself, but also the form. Read books on the Hero's journey, the Heroine's journey, and Four-part dramatic structure. This applies to whether you are writing a solo show or a memoir. I favor Anne Valley Fox's book on Hero's Journey and Maureen Murdock's on The Heroine's Journey.

Film screenwriters and novelists use these forms again and again. It's about creating a cinematic plot and seeing how your story works in both the micro and macro—personal and universal. When you study these forms, you start to see your life through a type of lens. Universal human themes show up in our stories that have to do with our personal journey: journeying into the underworld or experiencing an event that helps us respond to the world around us. Look at the points along the way in these journeys to identify which form will best serve your project.

4. Open to Quantum Time

Next, you will open to quantum time...for soon, you will enter your quantum container. You will create what actually becomes a time-bending practice, on a daily basis. When you enter into a quantum container, you are continuously writing and rewriting, held in this sacred space. You never leave the container; this quantum vessel is like a cauldron, simmering and bubbling your story around. You keep adding ingredients and heat into the cauldron, and you continue stirring... creating your stew.

When committing to this daily practice, you'll have good days, and you'll have bad days. You'll have breakthroughs, and you'll have days where you feel like you're just calling it in. But if you keep moving forward, you will continue to create momentum, which supports the excellence in your writing.



THE CAULDRON'S INGREDIENTS: ELEMENTS OF YOUR STORY

5. The Essential Question

As you begin the writing process it is essential to stop and get clear with yourself, using this question as a guideline: *What is the most essential story I need to tell, at this particular moment in my life?* You may continue to write and reflect on that question throughout your time in this container, because that's you essentially listening and then writing into your deeper message.

6. A Dynamic Outline

At the beginning, it is essential to create an extremely strong, clear outline. I always say that your outline is dynamic-- a living, breathing guide. As such, it will change, evolving as your story changes, morphing and more reveals itself. But you need something to evolve *from*, so first it needs to be created-- you need a strong roadmap from which to work.

So, what goes into an outline? First you will do some writing on the plot or storyline. You will do some story mapping. You want it to be cinematic and flowing; you want it to be a page-turner, more like a novel. In the case of a solo show, it's an embodied memoir onstage; and by that nature, it needs to be theatrical.



Many deep creatives over the years have resisted having an outline; they just want to sit down and write. Having an outline doesn't mean you can't sit down and write. It also doesn't mean that if inspiration comes and something doesn't conveniently fit in your outline that you ignore it. If it's meant to be in your story, it will be. But in a world of unlimited possibilities and distractions, an outline is your ally. The outline holds together the integrity of telling *this* story-- the essential story you are longing to tell in *this* moment of your life.

You may have other stories to tell. Most deep creatives do. But without a roadmap, you may end up with a stack of 400 pages with no beginning, middle or end. You may look at it all with complete overwhelm. Without an outline, you may wonder, '*How do I turn this mess into a book or show?*' An outline keeps the right ingredients in the cauldron. When my clients show resistance to an outline, they are generally the ones who need it most. That's why, these days when anyone works with me, I insist on an outline.

7. The Fire Stories

I work with plot structure is on two levels: level one are the Fire stories. Fire stories essentially represent the archetypes of your life. These are the shimmering and glaring memories from your past. Fire stories are often the easiest to write, due to the strong emotional associations they conjure up. Fire stories inform the backstory of the plot or subplot. Sometimes they are presented as flashbacks, sometimes moving back and forth, in terms of narrative threads in your story. Fire stories illustrate how we have transformed.

8. The Bridge Stories

The scaffold holds your fire together and gives it context; your Bridge stories are your



scaffolding. The bridge needs to be cinematic, like a movie or novel. The best memoirs have bridges. Take the memoir, *Wild*, by Cheryl Strayed, which is a book I teach from. Her bridge or cinematic arc is her hike along the Pacific Coast trail and all the things that happen to her along the way.

The Fire stories were all her memories, as she walked along the trail encountering people and getting into dangerous situations. She was walking through these memories-- her drug use, her childhood trauma, her mother dying of cancer, and having to kill her mother's horse after she died. Her Fire stories informed the bridge. *Wild* has a clear beginning, middle and end. Not all Fire and Bridge stories are that clean, but it is a wonderful model for understanding.

Having a simple bridge-- moving from one event in your life to another-- is so natural to these forms of narrative expression. Often, the simpler the bridge, the more elegantly it unfolds. The late Spalding Gray, who was my mentor, was great at finding his Bridge stories. In *Swimming to Cambodia*, about shooting the film, *The Killing Fields* in Cambodia, Spalding explored all the adventures he had on that trip. The Fire stories were memories of his mother and childhood, including his mother's suicide, his obsessive quest for the perfect moment, and reflections on his girlfriend, Renée. And the bridge of his assignment kept us moving along.

In your outline, you will identify your Fire stories, your Archetypal stories, and then you will eventually marry this with a second outline, which has the Bridge stories. You will discover how the two can inform each other.

9. The Central Metaphor

Your theme or central metaphor is a thread, slowly unraveling in the book. For you, the writer, it serves as a roadmap to understand the inquiry you're writing into, as you go deeper. For the reader, the theme is a little taste of magic. The theme should be presented along the way, chapter by chapter, like an *amuse-bouche*-- a little appetizer that whets their appetite for more. It can be a poetic metaphor (Strayed's hiking trail), or more straightforward. It might reveal the story's central conflict. It may show how you are transforming. Ultimately, the theme serves as foreshadowing of where you are



taking them.

10. Point of View: Your Unique Perspective

Any kind of personal narrative writing involves from our authentic voice. What you ultimately have to share with the world is your own consciousness. The more evolved your consciousness is, the better, the stronger your book or show. Your consciousness is your unique point of view.

An inner voice is the point of view, your unique perspective, your soul stamp that cannot be recreated. If you've got a great sense of humor, invite it in: embody how you were able to overcome adversity in deep, intimate ways while honoring the humor. Show the irony, the awkwardness, and the contradictory nature of the situation.

Whoever you are, show it. Find the resiliency, insight, and wisdom. Be specific. Use intimate details that are your story and yours alone. Share your willingness to reveal. Be intimate in the midst, from the middle of your pain, your joy, and your struggle. Get real.

The more real you are in your writing, the greater the opportunity your writing has to change your own life first and effectively, the world. Always lean into and surrender your own ego-- there is such a great opportunity here, for each of us.

11. Your Life Language

You want to create the Life Language of your book. Your Life Language is your own poetry-- how you speak your story, through your unique perspective and voice, point of view and reflection. It is the language of the soul-- who you are, the themes in your life that you're grappling with, and even the challenges you face in creating this book or show. What are your inquiries in this process? What do you love, and what do you



resist?

Your Life Language emerges from your passions and obsessions. My Life Language has to do with my deeper inquiry: galaxies, stardust, desert, blooming, titration, inner marriage, queer, queer fem, divine, divine fem, sacred masculine, shadow-light play, walking in the underworlds, and the myth of being human.

Allow yourself to just play. Create a list and keep it next to your writing space. Pepper your Life Language into your book, as the poetry of your story. The Life Language raises your prose to compose beautiful sentences, stretching your voice. If it doesn't flow at first, no worries. It may be something that you don't even use in your first draft, but will begin to infuse into the first rewrite.

ENTER THE QUANTUM CONTAINER

12. Remain in the Cauldron... No Matter What

After you've done this preparation work, you're ready to dive into your quantum container. Entering your cauldron essentially means that you will write, daily, for 90 to 120 days. The intention is to write three pages a day, which becomes a chapter a week. (The average memoir manuscript is around 80,000 words). Once you enter the cauldron, you will remain there... no matter what. It's essential that you put the intention out there for yourself, each and every day; and if you do, your book will happen.

At the same time, continue taking good self-care and receiving support around your energy and creative process. If you need to be super-introverted, taking care of yourself



with gentle walks and warm baths and lots of sleep, then do it. Your commitment to your book or show is fully supported by your commitment to self-care. Plus, you'll enjoy the journey even more!

13. Now, Get Writing.

Initially, you want to write the prologue to your book. The prologue is kind of like a stone you're throwing into the future. It guides you, pulling you along the way. The prologue kind of teases your reader, tempting them to read on...

Identify your central metaphor, write your prologue, and then begin to write the chapters. For most people I work with, Fire stories come first and then their Bridge stories. You're starting to write the Bridge stories, and they're moving back and forth, between fire and bridge. Remain open throughout, as to their order. If your outline is clearly mapped out, you may naturally see their natural progression, how they move back and forth between each other, even in the first draft.

14. Clear Inquiry, Clear Stories.

The clearer you are in the beginning, the freer you are to explore throughout: *Why are you writing this book? What are you learning and figuring out? What theme is revealing itself, through you and your story?*

Getting clear on your stories allows you to essentially know yourself and receive self-revelation; this, in turn, allows your readers to have more of a revelation in their lives. The same is true with a solo show. The clearer you make your Bridge stories the more you can drop into your Fire stories-- those stories with a lot of heat, that are cinematic and dramatic. The clearer you are in your Fire and Bridge stories, the more spaciousness you will have to write into the deeper inquiry within yourself, which is always a soul inquiry.



15. Show, Don't Tell

As you move into your book, you will start to write more and more scenes of dialogue. Dialogue shows action, rather than telling or explaining. The mantra you will carry throughout this writing process is, “Show, don’t tell.” Dialogue brings characters alive.

In both genres, in terms of voice, you're striking a balance between narration and dialogue. Dialogue is one of the best ways to “show not tell.” In showing, we illustrate our story with examples and descriptions. We are in the present moment, in real time, verses explaining how we felt, after the fact. Narrative will stay present, too; instead of explaining what happened, you will describe the moment, using all the sensory details, and igniting your inner voice.

It can be difficult, even for the most adept writers, to create natural sounding dialogue, because we don't speak the way we write. We speak in fragments and incomplete sentences. How we speak, our grammar, our pauses, all have to do with who we are as a person. That applies to every character in our story. Shifting from “show, don’t tell” is a stumbling block for new writers. You can always tell a beginning writer, because their story lacks dialogue. New writers shy away from it, relying on telling their story in a “journal-like” manner.

You have to nail it on the page or on stage. When starting to write dialogue, begin to be an investigator: listen and notice how other people speak. When reading your story, speak the dialogue aloud. Go back and forth. Actors do this in improvisation: speak it, record it, listen to it, and write from there.

16. Sit Down and Bleed

As you commit to entering this sacred cauldron and remaining in it, while writing every day, for 90 to 120 days, no matter what... you will encounter resistance. Ultimately, the



key to unlocking all the resistance in this process is about the willingness to *feel all your pain and resistance and keep writing, anyway*. That is the magic and the fortitude of anybody who writes any kind of powerful work of art. As Hemingway said, “There is nothing to writing. All you do is sit down at a typewriter and bleed.”

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After all the things I've done, over the last 20 years: story leader, story coach and mentor, directing so many shows, working with so many clients, performing my own solo shows and publishing a book... I've learned that, ultimately, this work is about surrendering and surrendering and surrendering our ego, so that the deeper consciousness, the deeper soul, as well as the great joy and humor and life, has the opportunity to reveal itself past our trauma and our struggles.

It's about changing global narratives... one story at a time. Beginning with your own.