

# be **real**



scrapbook  
your stories  
with meaning  
that endures



by **Debbie Hodge**

get it  
scrapped!



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## Lesson #1: Discovering Meaning

### Introduction

- Onto the page: Meaning
  1. Use concrete and significant details.
  2. Tell a story with narrative and scene.
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  4. Zoom in and examine individual parts of an event.
  5. Zoom out and consider your subject in a larger context.
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*Seldom, very seldom, does complete truth belong to any human disclosure; seldom can it happen that something is not a little disguised or a little mistaken.*

-- Jane Austen in *Emma*, 1816

### INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the first of six “Be Real” lessons. The goal in all of these lessons is to make pages with everyday life and event photos that have more meaning. This first lesson is about understanding what meaning on a scrapbook page is and how you can achieve it.

Making sense of and recording your life through scrapbooking is immensely satisfying. A huge part of that has to do with managing memories—with adding to the ongoing story that is your life. We tell ourselves our stories, and then we tell other people our stories, often with changes. These stories can be entertaining, self-serving, inspired. They can change depending upon when in your life you tell



them. But somewhere behind these stories is something called the truth. Scrapbook pages that matter are working to get at and record some pieces of that truth—with an understanding of where the diarist-archiver-storyteller behind the message (you!) is in life right now.

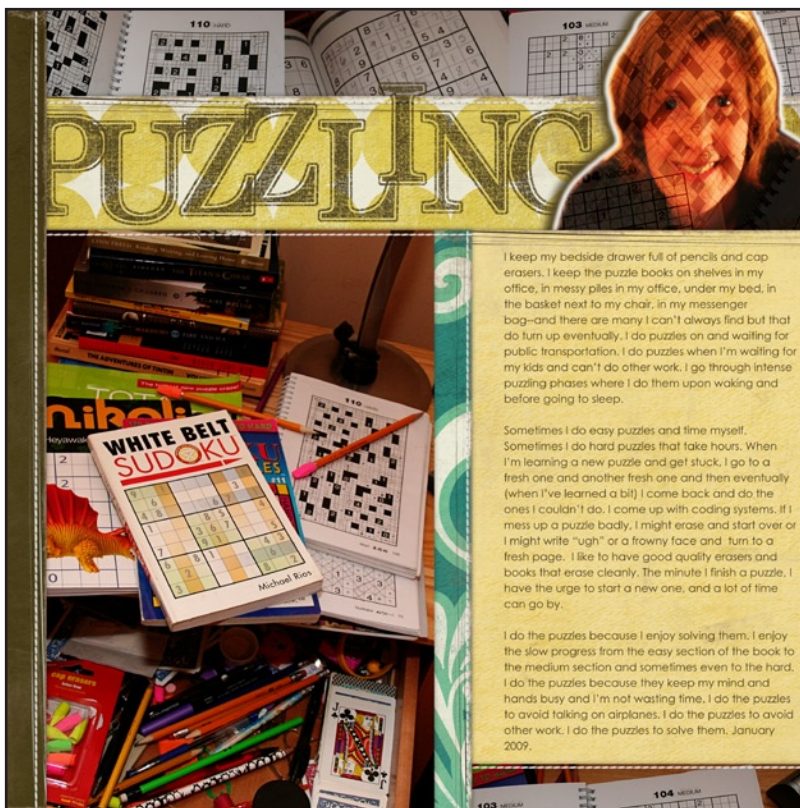
Another thing that meaningful pages do is to go beyond the obvious, to make clear the bits we can't figure out from looking at the photos and integrating our own knowledge of the world. On a page about a fall outing to an orchard we know that apples can be sweet and crunchy, and if we see a photo of someone at the orchard biting into one, we make that connection without being told. What we don't know is that the high-schooler in the photos had to be begged to come along on the outing. Let your photos show the obvious. Use your journaling to tell us what we don't know. Use your design choices to create a mood that supports and expands upon the tone of your subject and stories.

## WAYS TO GET MEANING ON YOUR PAGES

### 1. Use concrete and significant details.

Meaning doesn't have to be a grand epiphany. In "Puzzling" I scrapbooked an activity that's a regular part of my life: doing number and logic puzzles. I began my journaling by listing the physical items --books, pencils, erasers-- and then moved on to my behavior and preferences. The result is a page that shows I'm a little obsessive and unmoderated about this -- without ever using the word "obsessive."

**Concrete details** are those of images that can be sensed (seen, heard, touched, smelled, even tasted). Including details gives your



Journaling for "Puzzling" is on next page.

image specificity. "Creature" is a vague word. "Animal" is more specific but still leaves a lot to the imagination. " But tell us about your "long-haired Persian cat with a wide face" and you're getting specific.

**Significant details** are those that matter to the story. You don't need filler. A significant detail suggests an abstraction or feeling like beauty or stress or joy **without** using that abstract word. When you write the detail rather than the abstraction you've got a more compelling piece.

#### How I used details in scrapbooking a simple thing in my life in "Puzzling:"

- ◇ Photos. I took photos of the items that are a part of my "puzzling" activity: the books, the pencils, those all-important cap erasers that I buy in bulk, and some individual puzzles.
- ◇ Design. The focal point here is the enlarged photo of my puzzle books, pencils, and erasers on my bedside stand. Photos and strips and blocks of paper are blocked in a way that mimics the grid layout of many of my puzzles.
- ◇ Journaling. The journaling begins with the details of the items I use and where I keep them. It moves on to describe how and when I do puzzles. The accumulation of concrete and significant detail conveys that I'm a little extreme about this activity without saying "obsessive" or "extreme." With this much evidence, you can draw your own conclusions.

#### **JOURNALING for "Puzzling:"**

I keep my bedside drawer full of pencils and cap erasers. I keep the puzzle books on shelves in my office, in messy piles in my office, under my bed, in the basket next to my chair, in my messenger bag--and there are many I can't always find but that do turn up eventually. I do puzzles on and waiting for public transportation. I do puzzles when I'm waiting for my kids and can't do other work. I go through intense puzzling phases where I do them upon waking and before going to sleep.

Sometimes I do easy puzzles and time myself. Sometimes I do hard puzzles that take hours. When I'm learning a new puzzle and get stuck, I go to a fresh one and another fresh one and then eventually (when I've learned a bit) I come back and do the ones I couldn't do. I come up with coding systems. If I mess up a puzzle badly, I might erase and start over or I might write "ugh" or a frowny face and turn to a fresh page. I like to have good quality erasers and books that erase cleanly. The minute I finish a puzzle, I have the urge to start a new one, and a lot of time can go by.

I do the puzzles because I enjoy solving them. I enjoy the slow progress from the easy section of the book to the medium section and sometimes even to the hard. I do the puzzles because they keep my mind and hands busy and I'm not wasting time. I do the puzzles to avoid talking on airplanes. I do the puzzles to avoid other work. I do the puzzles to solve them. January 2009.

## 2. Tell a story with narrative and scene.

Take the time to tell the full story of a small incident. The most successful story writing uses a combination of narrative and scene.

**Narrative** is writing that tells and summarizes.

**Scene** is writing that puts your subjects "on stage" speaking and/or interacting with one another. A concise and relevant scene is a fabulous way to break up narrative and keep it from getting dull. The journaling for "It's a Big Memory" is on the next page and begins with narrative that introduces the situation. The scene begins with the discussion of the bear's purchase. Including dialogue gives you a chance to convey more about the personalities of the players.

### How I scrapbooked the story of a small incident in "It's a Big Memory:"

- ◇ Journaling.  
I used dialogue to convey both the details of how the story progressed AND (because you can understand the tone of many of the lines) the subjects' personalities.
- ◇ Design. All black and white product choices support the idea that the page is all about the panda.
- ◇ Title. The title plays with a piece of dialogue in the story: "I wanted him to have a memory of our day." The word "big" is large and has dimension--just like that bear.



*Journaling for this layout is on next page*

## Tips for writing dialogue

- ◇ Do not include every little “yes,” “well,” “hmm” that was said. It’s not necessary and it slows things down.
- ◇ Look to see where you can remove “he said” and “she said.” The speaker is often evident from the flow of your story.
- ◇ If you can’t remember exactly what was said, just be true to the underlying intent and meaning.

**JOURNALING for “A Big Memory:”** I have these photos because Neil said he wanted me to post them on my blog and write about my bad attitude.

On August, 30, 2008, I took Joshua to his first ever Anime convention. It was strange. We left Neil and Isaac on their own and then came home to find out it had been a strange day here, too. I say strange because my frugal husband did several uncharacteristic things. He and Isaac went to Hilltop Fun Center (a place I never thought Neil was going to venture) and they splurged and got all-day passes to ride go-carts and play laser tag and mini golf. It gets better, though.

On the way home they passed a garage sale with a huge panda bear. Isaac loves pandas.

“What’s more,” said my very frugal husband, “It was only \$25!” He continued to tell me that the woman they bought it from originally paid \$400 for it and she had it dry-cleaned and she was soooo happy to see it go to someone who would love it. I don’t know if it was a bargain or not, and it wasn’t the cost I was complaining over. “It’s HUGE and HEAVY.” I said. “Isaac’s room is so small already. Where are we going to keep it?”

“It can sit on his bottom bunk. I wanted him to have a memory of our day.”

I refrained from saying that maybe we could put the bear with the white leather ottoman that had also been a final sale purchase of Neil’s.

Neil said. “Iz, tell mom what you named your panda.”

“Kung-pao Panda!”

“You know we’re never going to be able to get rid of this bear,” I said. “We’ll be taking care of it when Isaac goes to college.”

And that’s when Neil told me to go pose with the bear so he could take photos and I could blog and scrapbook my bad attitude for all time. And I did it gladly, knowing there would be many who would hear my story and nod their heads with sympathy.



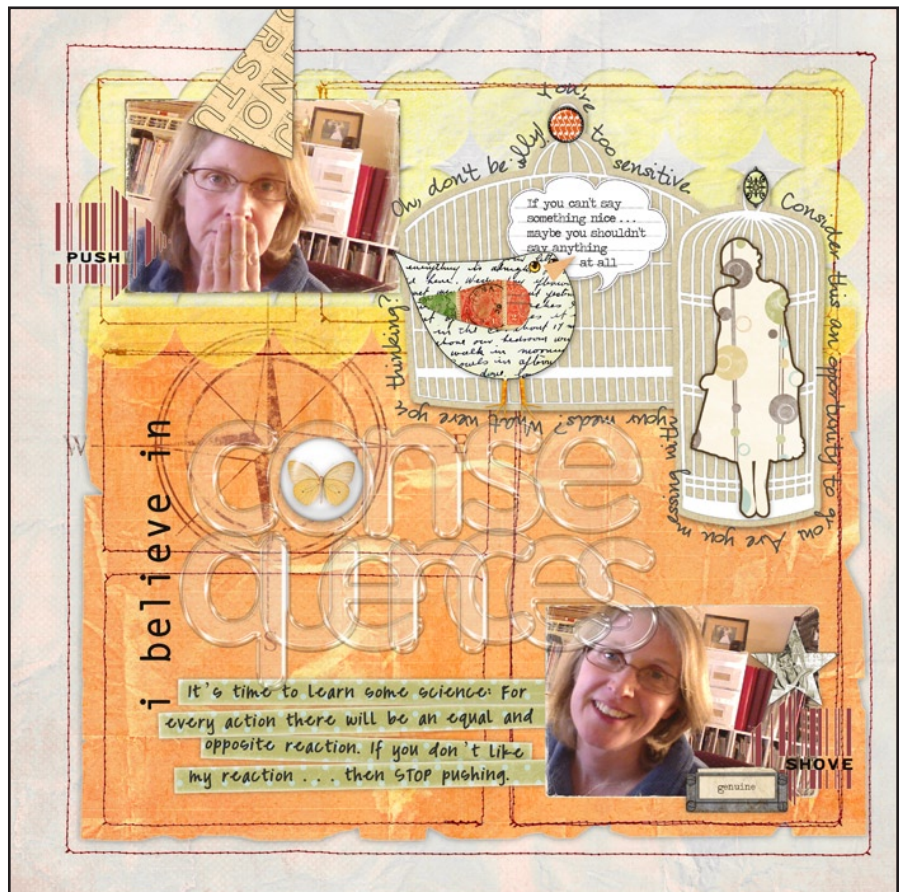
### 3. Combine images, color, and words to express a feeling.

Are there stories that are compelling you but that you don't feel comfortable putting onto a scrapbook page? Is a straightforward telling out of the question? When you're in this situation, consider making an "art-journal" page for your scrapbook. Combine images, photos, words, and color to express what you're feeling.

I made "I Believe in Consequences" when an incident was dogging me, not leaving my mind, and just generally annoying me. I was totally convinced that I was in the right and I felt good about the role I'd played in the incident.

#### How I scrapbooked a story I didn't want to tell straight-on in "I Believe in Consequences:"

- ◇ Design. Because I felt strong and right and even a little happy about my behavior, I used bright colors. I used images of a caged woman and a gossipy bird because they represented parts of the story. The compass is about me finding my way.
- ◇ Photos. I took two photos with my webcam, contrasting a muzzled me with a smiling me, and I positioned them in diagonally opposite corners.
- ◇ Journaling. The journaling here is a series of statements that express how I was feeling.
- ◇ Title. The title is really one more piece of the journaling enlarged.



#### 4. Zoom in and examine individual parts of an event.

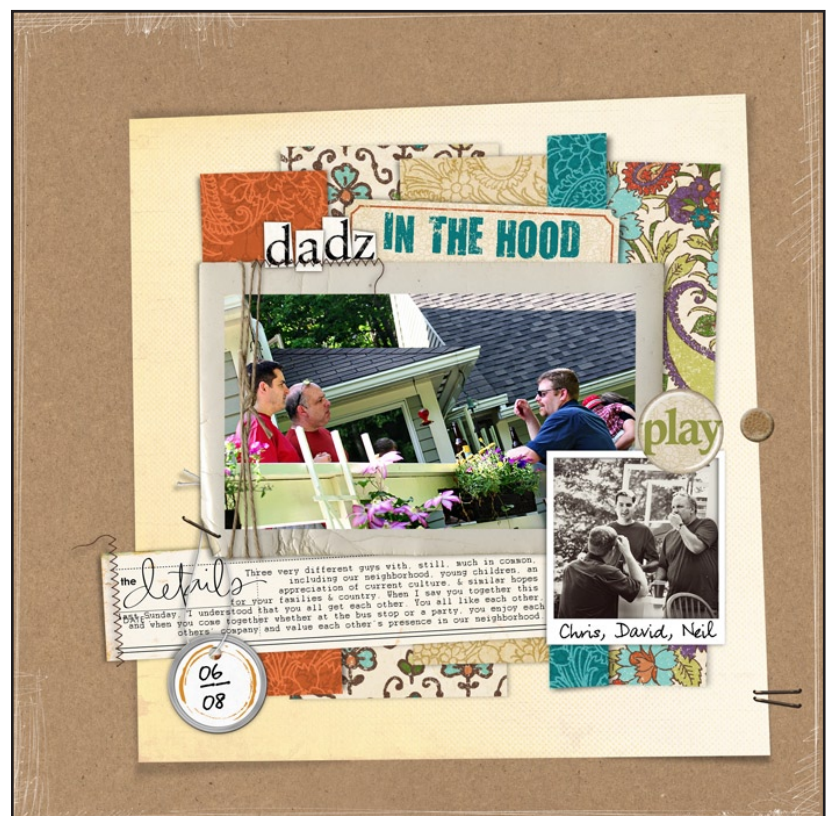
The meaningful parts of an event are the relationships and interactions that play out at the event. As you're looking through your photos (or taking photos) pick one and imagine it in slow motion. Ask yourself what's going on beyond the obvious and let that be your guide to creating a page.

The photos from "Dadz in the Hood" were taken at a neighbor's graduation party. I have many more photos and several other pages from the event. For this one, though, I recalled to myself the specifics of what these three men were talking about and how they were behaving that day and then extrapolated that to what it means about their relationship in general. I've captured a portrait of these three in one of their roles in life at a specific point in time.

**JOURNALING:** Three very different guys with, still, much in common, including our neighborhood, young children, an appreciation of current culture, & similar hopes for your families & country. When I saw you together this last Sunday, I understood that you all get each other. You all like each other, and when you come together whether at the bus stop or a party, you enjoy each others' company and value each other's presence in our neighborhood.

#### How I scrapbooked a small moment from a party:

- ◇ Design. The design is crooked and layered and playful, which I hope reflects the playful tone of the party as well as the unusual angle at which I was considering my subjects, both in my lens and in my mind.
- ◇ Title. The title describes the role these men are in at a neighborhood party -- and implies they have other roles.



## 5. Zoom out and consider your subject in a larger context.

You'll understand and tell different stories when you're looking at your subjects close up then you will when you pull back and consider the context in which a scene is playing out.

**Collect related photos from different times.** In "All Told" I gathered photos from throughout a school year to consider my oldest son's 6th grade experience in retrospect. Any one of these photos has their own story, but they tell yet another story when collected and considered as a whole.



**JOURNALING:** How do you take the measure of a school year? By its high points, lowpoints, the combination of those points? By your feelings throughout or your overall feelings at the end? Joshua, your 6th grade year found you, once again, the first one out of the house each morning, often in the dark. Your teachers were tough. REALLY tough. Mr. Parsons, Ms. Becker, Ms Fontaine, Mr Mac. Math sucked. Science rocked. You were worried a lot. You had hours of math homework every week, sometimes every night. You climbed a mountain in freezing rain and had the lead in Aladdin and hiked the entire NH seacoast. You loved band and Mr. Nasberg -- in fact starting every day with band while the others were in advisory. Your teachers were not especially warm. It took them way too long to get to know you. You learned to keep track of things and assignments. You enjoyed several friends. You learned a lot. You had major accomplishments. I like to say you earned your "Phoenix Chops." And when I said that to the principle, I was told that THAT was why your old team of teachers had been disbanded. Now that it's done you and your teammates take a lot of pride in all you did and endured. And I know there are parts of it you wouldn't trade away. I think you would go through it again. The lows sure were low, and the highs were extraordinary.

**Use photos from one incident/outing as a springboard to considering their larger context.** In "It's Measure" on the first page of this lesson, I used photos from one particular beach outing while my journaling considered the entire summer and how I thought it compared to others.

**JOURNALING for "It's Measure:"** When I look back at any particular summer, I takes its measure by several guides and one of them is the character of our beach outings. This summer of 2008 it was all about Jenness. When we weren't travelling and it wasn't raining, this was our preferred spot. Our company: the Mangans and the Waters -- the family of Joshua's new friend Charlie. A few others made cameo appearances, many promised to show but didn't, and so these friends predominated. Other memories: we got a rolling cooler, the wagon started is falling apart, Elaine always brought doughnuts, we began using an umbrella instead of the pop-up tent, I was often in pain or sick (tooth & ears, we usually parked in the \$10 lot across from the meters, and our meeting spot was 4 houses down on the non-lifeguard side.

How I scrapbooked photos from several points in time to examine the bigger picture in "All Told:"

- ◇ Title. The title indicates that a reckoning or summing up is being done.
- ◇ Photos. I gathered photos from throughout my son's 6th grade year. Two 4x6 portrait photos bookend the series. On the left is a photo of him on the first day of 6th grade and at far right is a photo of him on the last day of 6th grade.
- ◇ Journaling. I tried to enumerate the high and low points of the year in attempt to say whether it was overall good or bad -- a judgment I never end up making in my journaling. That's really for my son to decide and I think his decision will be different at different points in time.

**MEANING TRIGGER**

**1) Pull out one photo that compels you.**

**2) What are the concrete details around this moment when the photo was taken:**

items

---

---

activities

---

---

behavior

---

---

dialogue

---

---

other

---

---

**3) What were you feeling?**

---

**4) Which details can you use to reveal this feeling without actually saying what you were feeling?**

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## Lesson #2: Revealing Character

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- Introduction
- Onto the page: character
  1. Convey abstract ideas with concrete evidence
  2. Consider what behavior means about character
  3. Study the artifacts
  4. Include voice
- Triggers

*"It is not time or opportunity that is to determine intimacy; it is disposition alone. Seven years would be insufficient to make some people acquainted with each other, and seven days are more than enough for others."* Marianne Dashwood in *Sense and Sensibility*, 1811 by Jane Austen

### **INTRODUCTION**

When you're scrapbooking photos of people, you've got an opportunity to document and show so much more than is immediately obvious. The things they're doing and how they're doing them, what they say and how they say it, and even the items they're holding or using or wearing may all point to more about their personality.

The examination of what people do and what it means has been going on as long ago as 475 B.C., when the Greek philosopher Heraclitus proposed that "A man's character is his fate." Heraclitus placed the fates right inside a person and maintained that we are all in control of our own destiny. Later, Aristotle saw the connection between action and character differently. He believed that individuals do not act in isolation. He spoke of how actions happen within a complex web of relationships and events that affect many more than just one person. Let's take a look at what you can do on your scrapbook pages to reveal character and leave a meaningful record of the people in your life.

## WAYS TO REVEAL CHARACTER ON YOUR PAGES

### 1. Convey abstract ideas with concrete evidence

Whenever you can SHOW something, as opposed to (or in addition to) TELLING, the viewer of your page gets to come to their own conclusion about your subject. Why should you care if the viewer figures it out on their own? To begin with, this draws them more deeply into your page and the events you're scrapbooking. It connects them to your story in an active way, it's satisfying to observe evidence and connect the dots on one's own, and it's all more believed.

The way to show--as opposed to tell--is to accumulate evidence, to build up the concrete details we talked about in lesson #1. Your job is to include the details that reveal your subjects' opinions, sorrows, aspirations, prejudices, phobias, interests, regrets, joys and much more.

An abstract is a concept or idea not associated with any specific instance. Examples are "good," "proud," and "kind," which I used to title my layout here. What was I thinking in so obviously using this abstract? I was thinking I sure better provide some evidence that my son is kind--and I did in my photos and my journaling.



### How I used evidence to support my abstract title in "Kind:"

- ◇ Title. I did something I often consider a "no-no," using an abstract word as a title. It is a great introduction to my subject and a word I'd recently been talking about with my oldest son so it's relevant. HOWEVER I made sure to back it up with evidence in the journaling.
- ◇ Photos. The two photos here are from an instance of kindness related in the journaling. These photos were, in fact, what spurred me to create the page. These everyday photos of a scraped knee took me to an exploration of one aspect of my oldest son's personality.
- ◇ Journaling.
  1. I begin with an introduction to the page's subject by writing about a conversation I'd recently had with my oldest son about him being "kind," I drop in a few lines of dialogue from this moment. This serves as an introduction to the photos, and . . .
  2. the story going on in the photos, which I wrote about next.
  3. From there I added several more pieces of "evidence" to make sure I'd earned my abstract title.
- ◇ Embellishments. Alpha rub-ons saying "Hey, shortstuff" echo the ending of the journaling.

JOURNALING for "Kind:"  
 One day this past school year, Joshua, you talked to me about how you had several friends who were really POPULAR-- and how they were your friends even though you weren't popular. "What do you mean?" I said. "People like you!" "Well, yeah, people like me because I'm kind, but these guys play sports and have their own band." You weren't at all unhappy to consider yourself liked for your kindness and a step removed from being popular. And you ARE kind. Here, you've just brought Isaac in on the WAHHHmbulance after a fall in the yard, and I told him to sit while I got a bath running, but you wanted to soothe him and grabbed this book and started entertaining him. It's more, though, than when one of us is in immediate trouble -- you're the one who remembers if I've been sick or bothered by something the day before and you ask how I am and really wait to hear. I see you sometimes with Dad when he's tired and in pain and you spontaneously give him a huge hug. Even when you're away on a sleepover, if you & your friends are online, you check to see if Isaac's online and give him a holler, calling him "shortstuff" and sending that trademark kindness of yours hurtling through cyberspace to touch us all.



## 2. Consider what behavior means about character

If Aristotle is right and “action is character,” then a look at what your subjects do and the choices they make is a great place to start to make pages that show who the people on your pages really are. When you’ve got photos from an outing, event, or everyday situation that you’d like to scrap, try this:

a. Begin by asking what is/are your subject(s) doing?

*In “Persistence is the Up Side of Stubborn,” my son is rolling a hoop at a local museum.*

b. Connect this obvious action to what it says about the character or personality of your subject(s), including what it might say about attitudes, approaches, and just a general way of being.

*My son did not want to stop trying to get the hang of rolling a hoop. He kept doing it over and over. This is how he approaches many things in life and the journaling uses the photo as a springboard to talk about this aspect of his personality.*

JOURNALING for “Persistence:” Isaac, when you saw hoops at Strawberry Banke you HAD to try rolling them. & then try one more time. & again. You started figuring it out. You love mastering new skills & are willing to stick with a task even though you’re not good at it at the beginning. I love this persistence. & I will try to recall it whenever I’m up against that vein of stubbornness in your personality.



## How I scrapbooked actions being revealing of personality in "After Treasure."



JOURNALING for "After Treasure:" We were each after our own "something" on this trip. I wanted quiet. Jill wanted fun, and Elaine wanted treasure--or at least to look for the kind of shipwreck treasure she'd seen on the travel channel. At restaurants, stores, gas stations and beaches she asked people where we should go and where we could rent metal detectors. We received lots of general ideas but no specifics. Nonetheless, we started driving south along the coast, Elaine, quickly veering and rolling down her window to yell out to people, asking them where we'd find metal detectors.

We found them at Boppy's--that is we found one (seem others had this same idea). Elaine yakked it up with Boppy about where we should go and what kind of a deal he might give her. We discovered he went to UNH for college @ the same time as Jill. We ate the stuffed peppers they sold which were made by a chef who used to "chef" in NYC. The beach was stunning. We played with the rented detector for a short while, finding only bottle caps and soda can pull tabs with it. We did find lovely shells and interesting stones, and we all took home several, cleaning them up and admiring them as if they were doubloons. And while Elaine didn't get doubloons, still she plans to come back better prepared next time --- and we all declared it a fabulous day.

- ◇ Photos. When I went to Florida with two friends for a getaway, my friend Elaine wanted to go looking for treasure from sunken ships, and these are the photos of us tracking down a metal detector and then using it at the beach. A series of smaller photos supports a larger focal point photo.
- ◇ Title. The title echoes the opening line of my journaling and references not only the act of looking for treasure on the beach but that we were all after some kind of treasure on this trip.
- 1. Journaling. The journaling doesn't ever say that my friend is someone who is determined to make things that she really wants happen, but, rather, tells of the things she did on our trip to bring us to this point on the beach.

## 2. Study the artifacts

Look to the items in your photos--clothes, toys, tools, trinkets--and think about what they reveal about your subject that may not be obvious from the photo alone. As in the allegorical paintings I studied in art history, these artifacts often function as a metaphor or symbol for something more, perhaps a preoccupation, a style, or a need.



JOURNALING for “Much to Admire:”

At about 5 years old, Joshua loved getting and playing with Papo figures of knights, horses, kings and other soldiers. By his 10th birthday he wasn't playing with or thinking to buy them very often. I got him a knight and horse for his birthday, though, because I know he always appreciates treasures.

He opened this gift last, and his eyes started watering when he saw it. I thought maybe he was disappointed--maybe he had his hopes on something he didn't get. I started making apologies: “Maybe this is too young--”

He said that he wasn't upset.. “I'm happy,”

“Are you crying?”

“I'm happy, though. I've wanted this exact one forever.”

Here he is a growing-up 10-year-old who not only loves his knights, he understands what these toys have meant to him AND about him.

## How I looked at what clothing choices tell about a subject in "Stranger Than Fiction:"

- ◇ Photos. One enlarged photo is the focal point of the page and indicates that my husband, in his matching lime green glasses and coat, is the subject.
- ◇ Title. Inspired by the older science fiction publications on display in this museum, I used a title that sounds and looks like it comes from a tabloid.
- ◇ Design. The motifs and materials on this page support its subject. Patterned paper with images of clothing is combined with another pattern of retro-space-age ovals. I made the sci-fi cover tag from a photo I took in the museum. The gutters between blocks on the page are made with seam binding.
- ◇ Journaling. The journaling is written in a reportorial styles that goes with the tabloid title and that continues the light tone of this page.



### JOURNALING for "STRANGER THAN FICTION."

Fashionista Mistaken for Time Traveler July 2005. Seattle, Washington. The Museum of Science Fiction. Neil, my lover of sportswear and color, you have taken a lot of guff from New Hampshire folk who can't quite reconcile themselves to your style. There you are every week at Town Council Meetings and what do people comment on first? The issues? No! They want to talk about your footwear: the clogs, the Keens, the colorful athletic shoes. Maybe it's the California in you making itself known. Here you are in Seattle, on vacation, looking so . . . YOU! We came to the Museum of Science Fiction, a spectacular, multi-metal, shape-morphing building, and before we went in and saw what they thought belonged there--I had to get a picture of you, who I thought so belonged there. I love your independent sense of style, and your sweet smile, and your general lack of concern for what anyone else might think.

#### 4. Include voice

“Let’s see what she says about that!” or “What did he say about it?” How often do you hear or even express this exact sentiment? There’s an anticipation and satisfaction in hearing people speak. Whenever you can convey what a person says and how they say it, you’ve got a character-revealing record.

You can convey voice by:

- Including direct dialogue. This would be specific things said and placed in quotation marks.
- Including indirect dialogue. This would be a recounting a conversation but not with the specific words of the speaker.
- Writing from your own point of view in the way that you speak and think to capture your own voice.
- Writing with a 1st-person point of view, but as if you were your subject, trying to express thoughts as they would.

#### How I scrapbooked my father’s voice in “My Inheritance:”

- ◇ Journaling. The journaling is brief and to the point and includes one short line of dialogue. I don’t need to comment on how he said it because of the wry humor behind the statement. What I do include, though, is his tough health situation which



JOURNALING for “My Inheritance:” Icy cold temperatures don’t go well with lung and heart disease, so Dad has been inside a lot recently. One thing he’s been filling time with is rolling coins. He pointed it out last night saying, “I’ve been working on your inheritance.” At least the cold weather hasn’t affected his sense of humor . . . or . . . hmmm . . . at least I hope not

is important context since it shows how he's bearing up and keeping a sense of humor in hard times.

- ◇ Photos. I included a photo of my Dad smiling at me which cues the viewer to his good humor. I also included a photo of the "artifact" here -- the rolled pennies.

### Several voices

In "Big Old Stick in the Muds," several voices come through. The journaling is written in a conversational tone from my own 1st-person point of view. Punctuation and grammar are ignored with a focus on voice. My own judgment and opinion on things is conveyed by my "asides."

Indirect dialogue is used to relate that Bev is saving her money for a trip to Uganda.

Direct dialogue from Elaine conveys tone and personality -- and the page title comes from one of her lines.

JOURNALING for "Big Old Stick in the Muds:" Every group of friends needs that one member who makes things happens, who functions as the oil, and that's Elaine here. She was so determined to go to Florida, and she called us about dates and we said "sure, sure" not really understanding she was for real and that we were talking Florida, and then Elaine told me to bring my laptop to coffee, and she flicked it open (Elaine only recently learned how to google anything & that first thing was shoes) and wanted us to all buy our plane tickets right then and there. Jill & I were immediately . . . ummmmm . . . not ready. And Bev said she was saving her \$ and hours away from home for Uganda (thanks, Bev!) Right here in this photo, I believe Elaine is saying "You're the biggest old stick in the muds I ever met." Over the course of the next week, Jill and I came to see the sense in this trip and are now happily anticipating the getaway. It just takes us a little longer to come around to things. The debate now: Elaine called me up yesterday, and said "Get packed & no checked luggage!" It's a month away, and I hadn't even thought about it but my response was "I think I might want to check luggage." So we'll need a little more time to see how that plays out. Mar 08



**TRIGGER for revealing character**

Trigger: Artifacts

Look through your photos for one in which the subject is holding an item that he/she often holds or uses or has nearby and answer the following:

- What is the item? \_\_\_\_\_
- What is the item’s history? \_\_\_\_\_
- Where did it come from? \_\_\_\_\_
- Who obtained it? Did your subject get it on their own or was it a gift? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- How long has your subject had it? \_\_\_\_\_
- Does your subject have others? \_\_\_\_\_
- When and how does she/he use it? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Does anyone else use it? \_\_\_\_\_
- What compelled you to select this photo? \_\_\_\_\_

## Lesson #3: Getting Perspective

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- Introduction
- Onto the page: perspective
  1. Compare two opposing points of view
  2. Figure out how you fit into someone else's life
  3. Look at your own behavior from someone else's perspective
  4. Consider how others do things
  5. Think about a time when someone's thoughts surprised you
- Triggers

*It is a truth universally acknowledged that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife.*

-Pride and Prejudice, 1813

### **INTRODUCTION**

The beauty of the opening line to *Pride and Prejudice* (above) is that it plays with perspective. Who acknowledges this truth? The single man? Probably not. The mothers of young women? It is, in fact, Mrs. Bennett, who has five unmarried daughters, who says this to her husband upon learning that a new neighbor is a gentleman of wealth.

Considering different perspectives as you scrap your own stories and photos will give you pages that tell stories with more complexity and truth. As you're remembering a story, think about having a camera on your shoulder, filming what goes on. You'd get a good idea of your own perspective. What about, though, putting the camera on someone else's shoulder, or up in a corner near the ceiling, aimed to take in the whole wide angle of the room? This is the point at which your perspective diminishes and others enter.



## WAYS TO USE PERSPECTIVE ON YOUR PAGES

### 1. Compare two opposing points of view

In the musical "Bye Bye Birdie" there's a scene in which the girls are marching to the town square singing "We love you, Conrad. Oh, yes, we do-oo!" while the boys are marching in from another direction singing, "We hate you, Conrad. Oh, yes, we do-oo!" Neither side is wrong -- they just have differing perspectives. It's the continued look at those perspectives throughout the story that gives it tension and makes it believable and interesting.

"Alliances & Allegations" is a layout that records a contentious afternoon between siblings and cousins. Both sides were so adamant in their protests that I

#### JOURNALING: "Alliances & Allegations"

*"Joshua & Sara won't let us help them build a fort!"*

*That's the complaint that dragged adults to the door to ask what was going on.*

*"They can build their own fort."*

*"Why can't they just help you?"*

*"Why can't they build their own?"*

*Isaac & Hannah & Emma eventually came in cold and tired and generally annoyed and got in a bed at Grandma's to watch Frosty. Joshua and Sara came in and announced, "We've got a surprise for you guys. Come on!" No one really wanted to get out from under the covers and leave the movie, but they eventually did go see the surprise--a fort that had been built just for them. Their enthusiasm and thanks were luke-warm.*

*Several times that evening we heard, "Isaac & Hannah & Emma are ungrateful. We built them a fort and they didn't even say thanks or play in it. They're ungrateful."*

*It was just as I fell asleep that night, finally in quiet after a busy day, that I realized they weren't ungrateful. It's just that they never wanted a fort. What they wanted was to play with Joshua and Sara.*



went to bed that night thinking about them. That's when I realized I needed to let go of my own perspective, which was: 1) an adult being interrupted all day with complaints; 2) a mom to two of the players; and 3) the only defender of the group being called whiners by the other children and adults. The journaling tells of what I came to understand when I thought more about what was going on from other points of view.

#### How I scrapbooked two perspectives colliding in "Alliances & Allegations"

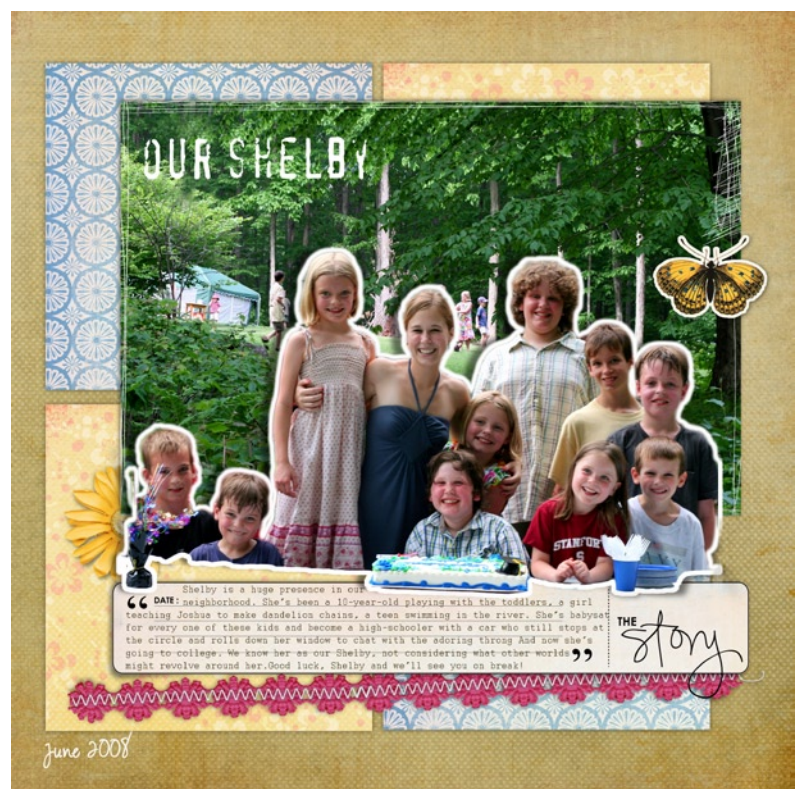
- ◇ Design. The page is split in half with two vertical blocks of patterned paper providing the backdrop to the page.
- ◇ Title. The title begins on one side and clearly ends on the other side. The title is rendered in two distinctly different fonts.
- ◇ Photos. An outdoor photo of the builders sits on the left mat and an outdoor photo of the other group sits to the right.
- ◇ Journaling. The journaling recounts the story with a mix of dialogue and telling (narrative).
- ◇ Embellishments. I added the flourishes thinking they looked like the wind blowing things around -- a metaphor for the gusty moods.

## 2. Figure out how you fit into someone else's life (vs. how they fit into your life)

Hard as it sometimes is for me to admit: it's NOT always all about me. I remind myself of this especially when I'm at an event that my kids are loving (and at which they have probably run off with their friends leaving me alone) and I'm making small talk, leaning against walls, and even wandering aimlessly. I think: what am I to them at this point? And my answer is: a safety net, a source of money, someone to hold their coats, someone to show cool things to, mom. And from there it becomes even easier to imagine how they are experiencing this same event.

### How I scrapbooked this topic in "Our Shelby"

- ◇ Journaling. I began with the facts: the actual incidents in which we've all interacted with Shelby. From there, I springboarded to the idea that we are a small part of this young girl's rapidly-expanding life.
- ◇ Photos. The group photo was taken at a picnic table with an empty yard beyond. To give the sense of there being more going on than just at that table (which is my point in the journaling) I trimmed out the group, backed them with white and then cut that out a bit larger (I did this digitally, but it's totally doable with a photo print and scissors -- the idea is to create a fun sticker, and you don't need to be precise in your trimming). I layered the "stickerized" group onto a shot of the busy yard when the kids were running around earlier.



#### **JOURNALING for "Our Shelby"**

*Shelby is a huge presence in our neighborhood. She's been a 10-year-old playing with the toddlers, a girl teaching Joshua to make dandelion chains, a teen swimming in the river. She's babysat for every one of these kids and become a high-schooler with a car who still stops at the circle and rolls down her window to chat with the adoring throng And now she's going to college. We know her as our Shelby, not considering what other worlds might revolve around her. Good luck, Shelby and we'll see you on break!*

### 3. Look at your own behavior from someone else's perspective

Have you ever been misunderstood? There's a children's song on Sandra Boynton's *Philadelphia Chickens* CD that expresses just this kind of frustration:

*Nobody understands me,  
though memmily blitt each day.  
Nobody understands me,  
but I guess zooglobber that way.*

Here's a chance for you to look at just how this might happen in your own life. Put that imaginary camera I talked about on the first page of this lesson on to someone else's shoulder and imagine an incident through

#### JOURNALING for "Your Point?"

*Summer was almost over and we still hadn't gone to Newcastle Beach -- the beach of our preschool days--small with tidepools & no waves, grassy areas, and a playground. Every summer we visit at least once, and last summer we had some of our best times here--including a final cookout with friends.*

*I did know I was pushing things--that maybe I should let it go, but I felt like I'd be letting us all down if I didn't make sure we got there. There were signals that I said were just obstacles that we could get over: Elaine had a new job & was working. Jill's kids were away. Joshua had hives. And then, when we arrived, there was a warning sign about bacteria levels. I persisted, though, (I'd stopped at Barnes & Noble & bought Josh a new Foxtrot collection convinced that once he was settled with it under an umbrella, he'd be happy.) Mike showed up with Lily, and so, while Joshua was uncomfortable (but engrossed) Isaac had a good time. He and Lily can yak and play in the water forever (and we made sure no one put their heads under) & I was thinking we'd be having the dinner I'd packed on the beach.*

*And then--while seaweed sliding--Isaac cut up his toe & ripped off a good chunk of the nail. So we packed it all in -- quickly,*

*On the way home, I asked Joshua if he was glad we came anyway--looking for that silver lining.*

*He said, "I don't know."*

*"Well (I said this with a hopeful tone). . . it's a memory., , What about you, Isaac?"*

*Isaac was in the way back with his foot on the seat in front of him to keep the bleeding from starting again. "I don't know." Again, I said, "Well ...it's a memory."*

*And that's when Joshua said, "This reminds me of when Calvin (of Calvin & Hobbes) said: I'd hate to think that all my current experiences will someday become stories with no point."*



their eyes only. You don't necessarily need to scrap the story from their perspective, but if you can understand where they're coming from it can inform how you do tell the story.

#### How I scrapbooked this in "Your Point?"

- ◇ Journaling. I tell the story from my point of view and end with the zinger from my oldest son, thus showing that moment when I finally realized just what the day had been like for him.
- ◇ Embellishments. I used embellishments that hint at how the day wasn't all sun and sand with the "rough day" tab and the surprised-face button in the middle of sun-like rays.
- ◇ Photos. One photo shows the beauty of the beach and my younger son playing with a friend, while the other photo shows my older son looking uncomfortable under an umbrella with his book and hives.
- ◇ Title. The title has a sarcastic tone that hints at something more than a happy beach outing going on here. I hadn't realized until I made and selected all of the layouts for this lesson, but the titles of all but one of the pages here include words that get at the idea of multiple players and/or perspectives: "**Your** Point?," "**Everybody** Choose A Boat," "**Our** Shelby," and "It's Freaking **Me** Out."

#### 4. Consider how others do things

A still-current expression for acknowledging that there are different ways to approach routine activities is: "When in Rome, do as the Romans do." This comes from 387 AD when St. Ambrose explained to St. Augustine that when he was in Rome he fasted on Saturday, while, when he was in Milan, he did not.

Be alert to situations in which you get a glimpse of how others approach routines differently than you do, and consider scrapping the moment. While I could have scrapped our outing to Newburyport with posed shots and a run-down of what we did, I chose, instead, to focus on this one moment, and the resulting page is one that immediately triggers the tone of the day for me while revealing a little bit about all of us there.

How I scrapbooked this in "Everybody Choose One Boat"

#### JOURNALING for "Everybody Choose One Boat"

*"You get one boat. Which one will it be? And what are you going to name it?"*

*On a fall day off from school, the Aldriches met us (on the spur of the moment) in Newburyport and we walked around the fall festival and then the docks.*

*At the waterfront, Alyssa announced that everyone got one boat. It was obviously something she and her boys had done before. And my boys loved entering into the fantasy of boat ownership just for a while. Sharing this small custom of theirs was an unexpected treat & just one more reason for treasuring & building friendships.*

- ◇ Photos. The largest photo is not necessarily the best for showing the participants in this story. It is, however, the one that shows the group in the process of choosing their boats, which is the subject of the page.
- ◇ Title. The title comes from what our friend Alyssa said to us all that day that pulled us into her family's way of doing things.
- ◇ Journaling. When journaling begins with dialogue, the reader is pulled quickly into the story. Notice that I didn't explain who was speaking or where we were until the second paragraph, and yet the story is clear.



## 5. Think about when someone's thoughts surprised you

Be on the lookout for those moments when someone confides in you about how they're feeling and your response is: "YOU? No way!"

How I scrapbooked this in "It's Freaking Me Out"

- ◇ Photos. When my oldest son told me it was freaking him out to be getting as tall as me, I knew I wanted to scrapbook that moment. I pulled out the camera and asked my younger son to take these photos of us. There's one of us looking straight at each other and then just other fun ones.
- ◇ Title. The title came straight from what my son said that surprised me.
- ◇ Journaling. The journaling is short and tells the story with one key line of dialogue -- which is repeated in the title.
- ◇ Embellishments. I used a mix of bold and tough papers and embellishments to go with the ideas of: 1) being "freaked" out and 2) a boy growing up.
- ◇ Design. Tilted mats and papers provide a bit of disorientation that plays up the "freaked out" theme.



### JOURNALING for "It's Freaking Me Out"

*The other day \*YOU\* noticed what I feel like I've been remarking on for a while -- that when you stand with me it seems your eyes are getting nearer to my eye level. I said that I knew this but you insisted it was more than usual. "And it's freaking me out!" you said. Freaking \*you\* out? It never occurred to me that we'd have similar reactions to this. Dec 2007.*

## TRIGGERS

This section of each lesson will provide you with prompts or quotes or an exercise to get you thinking about the lesson's topic.

**Perspective trigger #1:** Quotes on assumptions, point of view and perspective.

While you may want to use the quotes in this sidebar on your pages as embellishments, your best results will come from thinking about them and using them jumpstart ideas and new understandings. Be sure to make notes as you consider them.

**Perspective trigger #2:** Point of view exercise. (See chart on next page.)

Pull out a stack of photos from an outing or gathering and use the chart on the following page to do the following:

1. Make a list of all the major participants.
2. For each participant imagine and record their answers to the following questions about the occasion:
  - what was your mood?
  - what did you want?
  - what did you get?
  - what was your favorite part?
  - what was your least favorite part?
  - which photo would you enlarge?
  - which photo would you toss?
3. Scrap a page while all these thoughts are fresh in your mind.

“One ship sails East,  
And another West,  
By the self-same winds that blow,  
Tis the set of the sails  
And not the gales,  
That tells the way we go.”—Ella Wheeler Wilcox:

“Assumptions are the termites of relationships.”—Henry Winkler

“Won’t you come into the garden? I would like my roses to see you.”—Richard Brinsley Sheridan

“If there is any one secret of success, it lies in the ability to get the other person’s point of view and see things from that person’s angle as well as from your own.”—Henry Ford

“From a dog’s point of view his master is an elongated and abnormally cunning dog.”—Mabel L. Robinson

“When you look at yourself from a universal standpoint, something inside always reminds or informs you that there are bigger and better things to worry about.”—Albert Einstein

“If we could see the miracle of a single flower clearly, our whole life would change.”—Buddha

“We simply assume that the way we see things is the way they really are or the way they should be. And our attitudes and behaviors grow out of these assumptions.”—Stephen R. Covey

“When I give food to the poor, they call me a saint. When I ask why the poor have no food, they call me a communist.”—Dom Helder Camara

“Normal is in the eyes of the beholder.”—Whoopi Goldberg:

“Nothing’s beautiful from every point of view.”—Horace

“People who look through keyholes are apt to get the idea that most things are keyhole shaped.”—Author Unknown





## Lesson #4: Avoiding Sentimentality (Hold the Schmaltz)

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- Introduction
- Onto the page: emotion without sentimentality
  1. Eliminate fuzziness by paying attention to the senses.
  2. Evoke an emotional response with color, image, motif and design choices.
  3. Refrain from judgment.
  4. Let one incident stand for the rest.
  5. Insert distance.
  6. Explore complexity.
- Triggers

*"Our ball was rather more amusing than I expected. ... The melancholy part was, to see so many dozen young women standing by without partners, and each of them with two ugly naked shoulders! It was the same room in which we danced fifteen years ago! I thought it all over, and in spite of the shame of being so much older, felt with thankfulness that I was quite as happy now as then."* Jane Austen, letter of December 9, 1808

### INTRODUCTION

Sentimentality is the exaggerated and affected use of emotion in writing. It bypasses complexity, looking at things as clear-cut, black and white, relying on cliches and abstracts to grab at a reader's heartstrings.

*Sentimentality is indulgence in emotion of its own sake, or expression of more emotion than an occasion warrants.... Sentimental literature is "tear-jerking" literature. It aims primarily at stimulating the emotions directly rather than at communicating experience truly and freshly; it depends on trite and well-tried formulas for exciting emotion; it revels in old oaken buckets, rocking chairs, mother love, and the pitter-patter of little feet; it oversimplifies; it is unfaithful to the full complexity of human experience."* Sound and Sense, Laurence Perrine

This lesson addresses ways to convey emotions in a meaningful way. Do you have to totally abandon colorful adjectives and abstract names for your feelings? Not totally. If you can present the concrete details that prove those abstracts, then go right ahead. In the opening quote to this lesson, Jane Austen speaks of “amusement,” “melancholy,” and “happiness.” Take a look at the quote, though, and see how she earns these abstracts. It’s that concrete detail—*to see so many dozen young women standing by without partners, and each of them with two ugly naked shoulders!*—that evokes the world and the very emotions Austen names.

Several actions to take when scrapbooking pages that have a lot of emotional content follow, with examples. Here are some particular instances when we’re all susceptible to “schmaltz” or sentimentality:

- **celebrating people, accomplishments, personalities.**

“See Why” on page 36 and “I Think You Sparkle” on page 38 are examples of this.

- **telling a hard truth or sharing something difficult.**

See “Open Invitation” on page 40 for an example of this kind of page.

- **recounting an experience that evoked a lot of feelings.**

“Power Outage Day 5” on page 42 is a recount with distance in the journaling.

- **exploring disappointments.**

“Late To the Party” on page 44 goes beneath the surface of a small disappointment.

## GET EMOTION WITHOUT SENTIMENTALITY ONTO THE PAGE

### 1. Eliminate fuzziness by paying attention to the senses.

In both your writing and your photos, focus on conveying how you experienced something concretely (as opposed to naming your feelings) including any of the five senses for which you have **relevant** information. Relevant is key -- detail for details sake can weigh things down and make it hard for the reader to figure out what's important.

Photos can show lighting, colors, and specific sights. In your writing, you can include smell, sound, touch, and taste.



The best way to do this writing is to allow yourself to initially free write and then revise with a checklist:

- Use no more than 20% abstract concepts and 80% concrete description. (We talked about abstracts and concrete details in class #1.)

- Avoid “pretty prose” by eliminating streams of adjectives, adverbs, and metaphors.
- Avoid clichés, simplistic expressions, and “Hallmark”-isms.
- Be clear. Revise language that’s “fuzzy,” i.e., sweet and abstract, and replace it with concrete details.

How I used concrete details in a celebration of my father in “See Why:”

- ◇ Photos. Views of land with lots of green grass, blue sky, bits of water and trees all give a sense of the natural world in which my father has moved about his entire life. He is in most of these photos and highlighted in one.
- ◇ Journaling. The journaling opens with a listing of the constants of a farmer’s life and a brief history of how my father got here, then moves in to a recounting of a specific outing. This outing provides a few concrete details that supplement the photos -- and that build up to provide the basis for my new understanding of where he’s coming from.
- ◇ Title. The title (and the opening lines of the journaling) set the focus here -- an exploration of why my father has chosen and stuck with his way of life.

JOURNALING for “See Why:” Mostly, we’ve all said this about you rather than to you: Why? Did the work of farmer choose you or did you choose it? Why choose work that goes 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, fixing machinery in the cold garage at night, putting up hay in the heat, being always available, subject to the whims of weather and animals?

You came here at 10 years old. Your dad died when you were 19. You are 64 now, and the cows are gone and your body has been so well used, you cannot walk any great distance. This July day, I have come with you to the dump--riding in the wagon your tractor pulls--to help unload the heavy stuff. The sun is bright and warm and we bump down a rutted road, leafy branches brushing the wagon sides. When we are done, you say, “You want to go for a ride?” These photos show only a bit of where we went, through this land that is yours, that you have known for over fifty years, that you have cared for and that has cared for you back, and I’m seeing it all now as you choose to show it: both simple and grand. And now is when I think: So, this is why. Of course. This is why.

## 2. Evoke an emotional response with color, image, motif and design choices.

On a scrapbook page, you have more than your journaling available for conveying a feeling. It's possible to use a combination of images, color, and motif to convey the joy or disappointment of a moment, place, or subject. In writing about art (specifically about Hamlet), T.S. Eliot talked about the "objective correlative," a set of objects, or a situation, or a chain of events that evoke an emotion in the audience. Rather than writing "He felt sad," in a story, the author can use weather, gestures, and even the things the character observes to the same purpose. On many of the pages you scrapbook, you will absolutely have a feeling or attitude about the subject you're scrapping. Consciously think about every choice you make to create a whole that's evocative of a mood or emotion.



JOURNALING for "I Think You Sparkle" Isaac, I've recently started calling you "Sparkles." In addition to always looking for a joke (combing your hair weird or dancing "like an Egyptian") you've become a constant companion to me on all kinds of errands and outings. What's more, you smile and yak as you show me things like ice scrapers at the gas station. You just enjoy getting out & being my company no matter where I'm going--even coming along to the hairdresser last week. Time with you is a joy. Love, Mom

Specifically, you can work with:

- ◇ color associations;
- ◇ pattern (oversized, stylized florals convey a different tone than bright dots on white background);
- ◇ photo cropping and editing; and
- ◇ image and motif

How I use image, color, and motif to convey a feeling in "I Think You Sparkle:"

- ◇ Design. Strong contrasts in color and alignments give the page an energy that goes with the main subject.
- ◇ Title. Oversized acrylic alphas give a sense of shining. The title itself borders on being cliché, so the details on the page need to earn that statement. The insertion of "I think you" into the title adds perspective and lets you know that this is a personal statement.
- ◇ Photos. Repeated photos of the boy I think sparkles show him smiling and playing around AND with me --- because this page is about how \*I\* regard him. It's about our relationship right now as much as about his "sparkling."
- ◇ Embellishment. Glittery flourishes, a star and a heart all support the page themes and add to its "sparkle."
- ◇ Journaling. The journaling is minimal here -- with a few specific details to support my assertion that my son "sparkles."

### 3. REFRAIN from judgment.

Hold back from telling the viewer what they should think about your subject (or at least save it for the end). Trust that if you report an experience as truly and accurately as possible that it will speak for itself. Do not try to shape response, but, rather, seek to present the kind of clear picture that lets viewers come to their own understanding of meaning.

### 4. Let one incident stand for the rest.

When you have an incident that evokes an emotion that you've encountered more than once with a particular person or people, the telling of that one story will stand for more.



JOURNALING for "Open Invitation:" Matt is getting divorced, currently living with Mom and Dad, and Jenna and Kass are with him on Wednesdays and every other weekend. When we visit in the summer, we get to see them a bit. The three of them are in and out, running of errands, eating most of their meals out. There are times when they say "hi" and answer our questions and there are times when they don't respond. While I initially persisted in trying to get a response from then, I no longer do.

This summer day, Mark & Pepper were down with their kids, and everyone (including Matt but not including Kass and Jenna) was engaged in a water war -- guns, hoses, buckets, coolers--everything was fair. Kass and Jenna watched from the backroom, and we invited them to join in but didn't insist. While they didn't play, they did watch and we're all hoping they know that any time they want to play with us they have an open invitation.



How I scrapbooked an incident that represents ongoing behavior and tried to refrain from judgment in "Open Invitation:"

- ◇ Title. The title comes from the last line of the journaling and sums up the relationship our extended family has with my brother's daughters.
- ◇ Journaling. The journaling presents the facts--both background that needs to be known and the details of this one incident. I tried to keep my own judgment and feelings out of this journaling, trusting the details to reveal the obvious and guide viewers to their own understanding of what's going on under the surface.
- ◇ Photos. The photo of the girls watching the play outside is set apart from a grouping of photos of the play they are watching. I had many more photos from the water war, but for this page, I only selected two so that the emphasis was on the girls.

### 5. Insert distance.

If you're having a hard time telling a story without inserting your own judgment or including a lot of adverbs and cliches and abstracts, try stepping back. You'll need to understand, first, where you stand in relation to the experience you're conveying. Once you've established that, push back a little, including multiple viewpoints even, perhaps, writing in 3rd person point of view, and minimizing the number of sentences starting with "I."

### How I inserted distance in scrapbooking "Power Outage Day 5:"

◇ Journaling. So much went on every day during our recent 6-day power outage and our emotions fluctuated from depression at the ongoing inconveniences to the joy of coming together with others in the community. I am scrapbooking each day of the outage, and on this one, I decided to take a journalistic approach. I reported from my point of view, but tried to get back far enough to include how others were feeling. I included a lengthy letter from our town administrator that reveals many

Tuesday December 16, 2008 - 11:30 AM

Dear Members of the Community, Progress Being Made in Durham. I am pleased to report that FSNH deployed a french-speaking Canadian Hydro Electric crew in Durham Monday evening which was successful in restoring power to the High School and Middle School. No determination has been made concerning school opening for Wednesday but many roadways in Durham, Lee and Hadbury are still blocked. We will make this call on Tuesday afternoon. In addition, power was restored last evening to Wootton Road, Denison Road, Ose Drive, parts of Emerson Road, Little Hale Road, and the Hadbury Road side of Bagdad Road. This morning, 10/10/08, a FSNH crew are in town working along Canney Road and Bagdad Road. In the last three hours, power has been restored to Edgewood Road, Emerson Road, and Mansueto Avenue. We believe the work being undertaken at this time at Canney/Bagdad will bring the entire Canney Farm development back on line.

Seacoast FSNH Crews ARE NOT Being redeployed to Southwestern RN. Until work is accomplished here, about two dozen residents have called us this morning outraged by information on the FSNH web site indicating that crews from the Seacoast were being redeployed to southwestern RN, essentially abandoning residents here. We immediately contacted FSNH and were assured that until power is restored here, the crews would not be redeployed. Durham is serviced by the Spigg Office and, in actuality, 10 additional crews arrive in the Spigg region this morning.

Shelter Information. The regional Red Cross shelter located at the Oyster River High School located on Ose Drive in Durham will remain open until no longer needed. Numerous families have stopped in to warm themselves, eat a warm meal, or to spend the night. In addition, residents can fill water jugs if needed at the shelter for drinking or for toilets.

Downtown Durham Is Open for Business! A reminder that the businesses and restaurants in downtown Durham have power and are open for business. Downtown has been hopping over the last two days. If you need supplies, consider shopping locally and supporting our downtown area.

FSNH and Durham offer Additional Resources to Residents and Students in Off-Campus Housing without Power.

- The Hazel Leo Center and the UN Field House are available as additional resources to all residents who want to take a shower.
- Holloway Commons and Fairbrook dining halls are serving meals to Durham residents until power is restored. The reduced cost for an all-you-can-eat buffet-style breakfast, lunch, and dinner is \$5 for adults, \$2.50 for children under 10, and free for children under four years of age during this period of duress. Holloway was teaming with Durham families last evening at dinner. It was a wonderful way for UNH to make itself of benefit to the Durham community.
- The Memorial Union Building began screening "kid-friendly entertainment" beginning at 10am on Monday morning. Children must be supervised. I have heard from a number of Durham families with small children who are climbing the walls at home that this was a great resource.

What Should Individual Residents Do to let FSNH Know They Still Have No Power? It is recommended that residents contact FSNH daily to inform/resist them that power is still out at individual residences. Don't be shy, and don't be put off by operators who may not have information from the day before. The magnitude of this event is stretching FSNH to its limits so expect that information may be last/dropped. By expecting information will be lost or confused within a large bureaucratic entity, it is rarely disappointing. The FSNH customer number is 1-800-662-7964.

Need Assistance? If residents need assistance, please contact the Durham Police Department 267 at 864-2526. We'll be happy to assist you in any way that we can.

Sept late, burned rolls on the stove, & did puzzles. Continued to grade exams & started to get depressed. Swept the hearth again & carried in MORE wood. At long last! Debbie's laptop arrived!

dinner in Neil's office: DHCOP pizza, smart food, green apples, bananas, gouda & baguette, bottled water, wine, chocolate, and ... computers for everyone!!!

day 5

winter

power outage

Hey! That's what got us into this trouble to begin with. With reports of more snow & school opening uncertain, Isaac was taking no chances and put his pig on inside out end backwards AND he put a egg on under his pillow—which they'd both done last Thursday night.

Tuesday, December 16, 2008 was day 5 without power for many of us in New Hampshire, and the point of which everyone in the Niman home was staying in bed as long as possible – not even feeling like stoking the fire early, not feeling like figuring out how yet another day with no electricity would go. We had become frozen—not as in cold, but as in unable to function normally—preparations for Christmas were halted, work as we knew it was stalled. Rumor was we'd be getting power by 11pm ... the NEXT day, but at this point, we just didn't know what to think.

The rolls that Iz and I tried to make in frying pan on the wood stove burned while we got lost in our puzzles. (Again for me—& sorry I was now able to do "hard" ones). Neil had been bearing up the best I'd ever seen in a power outage, but today, we were all feeling discouraged—though at least his exams were getting graded. Isaac tricked Joshua out of bed with the promise of crescent rolls—which we'd just burned and put out on the deck so they wouldn't smell up the house.

There was no way I was leaving the house until my new laptop arrived & I kind of just wanted to be done to wallow in puzzles & bring order to the house, so Neil and the boys set out for his office and warmth and computers, while I toiled, & carried in wood—getting things in order for when we finally got power. The computer's arrival was the high point of the day for me. A party given by the UNH President (to which Neil was invited) was the high point for the boys—they experienced their first chocolate fountain! & while it might have been nice if they'd held back on the buffet since they were technically party crashers, everyone was in storm-mode & feeling generous & cookie-grabbing boys were welcome! It did help that the President's kids are the same age and came, too).

For dinner, it was an office picnic of pizza from DHCOP & goodies from the DUMP (Durham Market Place). At dinner time, there was no news about whether school would open the next day, BUT there was news of a significant amount of snow moving in the early hours—so we just stayed until 10pm—me loving getting her new laptop set up—and all of us charging our electronics for some screen time at home the next morning. Before bed, the boys did the snowstorm-routine ... which preceded this mess to begin with!

details about daily life and community actions during the outage.

- ◇ Photos. As series of photos--none of them particularly outstanding--documents the details of this one day.
- ◇ Design. The design is journal heavy with the look of a dense report--which is how things were feeling at that point with everyday slogging along.

JOURNALING for “Power Outage Day 5:” Tuesday, December 16, 2008 was day 5 without power for many of us in New Hampshire, and the point at which everyone in the Niman home was staying in bed as long as possible – not even feeling like stoking the fire early, not feeling like figuring out how yet another day with no electricity would go. We had become frozen--not as in cold, but as in unable to function normally--preparations for Christmas were halted, work as we knew it was stalled. Rumor was we’d be getting power by 11pm . . . the NEXT day, but at this point, we just didn’t know what to think.

The rolls that Iz and I tried to make in a frying pan on the wood stove burned while we got lost in our puzzles (Akari for me--& sadly I was now able to do “hard” ones). Neil had been bearing up the best I’d ever seen in a power outage, but today, we were all feeling discouraged--though at least his exams were getting graded. Isaac tricked Joshua out of bed with the promise of crescent rolls--which we’d just burned and put out on the deck so they wouldn’t smell up the house.

There was no way I was leaving the house until my new laptop arrived & I kind of just wanted to be alone to wallow in puzzles & bring order to the house, so Neil and the boys set out for his office and warmth and computers, while I tidied, & carried in wood--getting things in order for when we finally got power. The computer’s arrival was the high point of the day for me. A party given by the UNH President (to which Neil was invited) was the high point for the boys--they experienced their first chocolate fountain! & while it might have been nice if they’d held back on the buffet since they were technically party crashers, everyone was in storm mode & feeling generous & cookie-grabbing boys were welcome (it did help that the President’s kids are the same age and came, too).

For dinner, it was an office picnic of pizza from DHOP & goodies from the DuMP (Durham Market Place). At dinner time, there was no news about whether school would open the next day, BUT there was news of a significant amount of snow moving in in the early hours--so we just stayed until 9ish--me loving getting my new laptop set up--and all of us charging our electronics for some screen time at home the next morning. Before bed, the boys did the snowstorm-pj routine . . . which I really didn’t think was a good idea since that was what they did the night before all of this started.

**6. Explore complexities.**

Admitting or describing complicated situations is hard. Using sentimentality means you present them in black and white--but you're not delving into the complications that actually exist. Dare to dive into this complexity rather than staying on the surface.



### How I went beneath the surface in “Late to the Party:”

- ◇ Journaling. This page is what writers call a bit of “naval-gazing.” The feelings I journaled are not tremendously earth-shattering and they’re not real important to the state of our world, but, they are feelings that I, nonetheless, thought a lot about. I do use abstract names for what I’m feeling at the beginning and then move into the details of what happened during the campaign and on election day to explore the many aspects of how I was feeling.
- ◇ Photos. Photos covering over one year help show the complexity of this story.
- ◇ Design. Patriotic motifs and colors cue the viewer to the page subject and to the double meaning of the title. The photos from my time on Hillary Clinton’s campaign are grouped together, while the photo of Obama’s supporters on election day is the focus and counterpoint.

JOURNALING for “Late to the Party:” I hadn’t anticipated how sad I would feel on election day ‘08 until it came. Even though I was now supporting and voting for Barack Obama, and believing he would win, and thrilled at what his win would mean--I was grumpy and dragging and just feeling down. My sadness was two-part: 1) I’m really, really sad that Hillary isn’t going to be our president; and 2) I contributed to my boys being “late to the party.”

Living in NH, they could have been a really active part of this major event in their lifetimes. I early on encouraged them to make their own choice, and, to my surprise--their friends all loved Obama--they chose Hillary (& surely the phone calls they heard me make, the signs they held, the speeches they attended, & the hours they spent sitting around campaign offices contributed to this). When Obama was nominated, I decided to support him, but I didn’t put a sign in the yard or even get a button or one of those \*awesome frameable posters\*. It seemed phony--’cause there were a lot of things I really disliked about him during the primary--to put on his button after the many more months I’d worn a Clinton button.

When we arrived at the polls, one of the Obama supporters was a UNH student we’d worked with on the Clinton campaign and he came up and hugged us dramatically-- with a little regret and a lot of optimism. And while we were late--it \*was\* nice to be welcomed to the party just the same.

**TRIGGERS: evoking emotion without sentimentality**

When you compare two unlike things and suggest a unity between them you are using metaphor. Aristotle in Poetics said: "The greatest thing by far is to be a master of metaphor." It is "a sign of genius, since a good metaphor implies an intuitive perception of the similarity in dissimilars."

**examples of metaphors:**

- heart of stone
- heart of a lion
- pull your socks up
- elephant in the room
- window of opportunity
- couch potato
- road hog

One challenge in writing without sentimentality is to come up with original metaphors that make the right connections for your subject.

Check out the exercise on the next page for developing your own metaphors.

**WRITE YOUR OWN METAPHOR**

Select an item you'd like to describe: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What qualities does it have? Brainstorm here (i.e., is it useful? does it fly? does it shine? does it have a smell?) Jot down whatever comes to mind.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What are are some other, different, items that have these same qualities?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Make comparisons between your original object and to your comparing object. Try to develop a metaphor from this.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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## Be Real #5: Telling Stories

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- Introduction
- Onto the page: stories
  1. Tell a bear-at-the-door story
  2. Connect the specific to the general (or vice versa)
  3. Scrapbook a journey--small or large, figurative or real
  4. Tell the story of when a stranger came to town
  5. Write a six-word memoir (or biography)
- Triggers

*"I begin already to weigh my words and sentences more than I did, and am looking about for a sentiment, an illustration or a metaphor in every corner of the room. Could my Ideas flow as fast as the rain in the Store closet it would be charming.  
Letter, January 24, 1809, to her sister, Cassandra.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

When are you at your storytelling best? Is it when you're recounting recent events at coffee with friends? on the phone? at the dinner table with family? And what makes that your best? What are you doing at that point? Are you entertaining, informing, presenting your life the way you'd like it to be understood? Maybe all of the above?

This lesson is about using tried storytelling approaches on scrapbook pages. While you may not use the forms exactly as others have, knowing about them and seeing how your own stories fit with them, gets you thinking about what the incidents in your life mean beyond the obvious. It spurs you to think about causes and effects and the impact of and on your characters' personalities. The result of this thinking yields stories with complexity and layers of meaning.



## TELLING STORIES ON YOUR SCRAPBOOK PAGES

### 1. Tell a “bear at the door” story.

The beginning of your story is your hook, the element that you use to draw your listener in. One of the easiest kinds of stories to “hook” a reader with is the “bear-at-the-door” story. This is a story in which there’s an immediate and pressing problem -- like, say, if there really were a bear at your door.

#### **beginning**

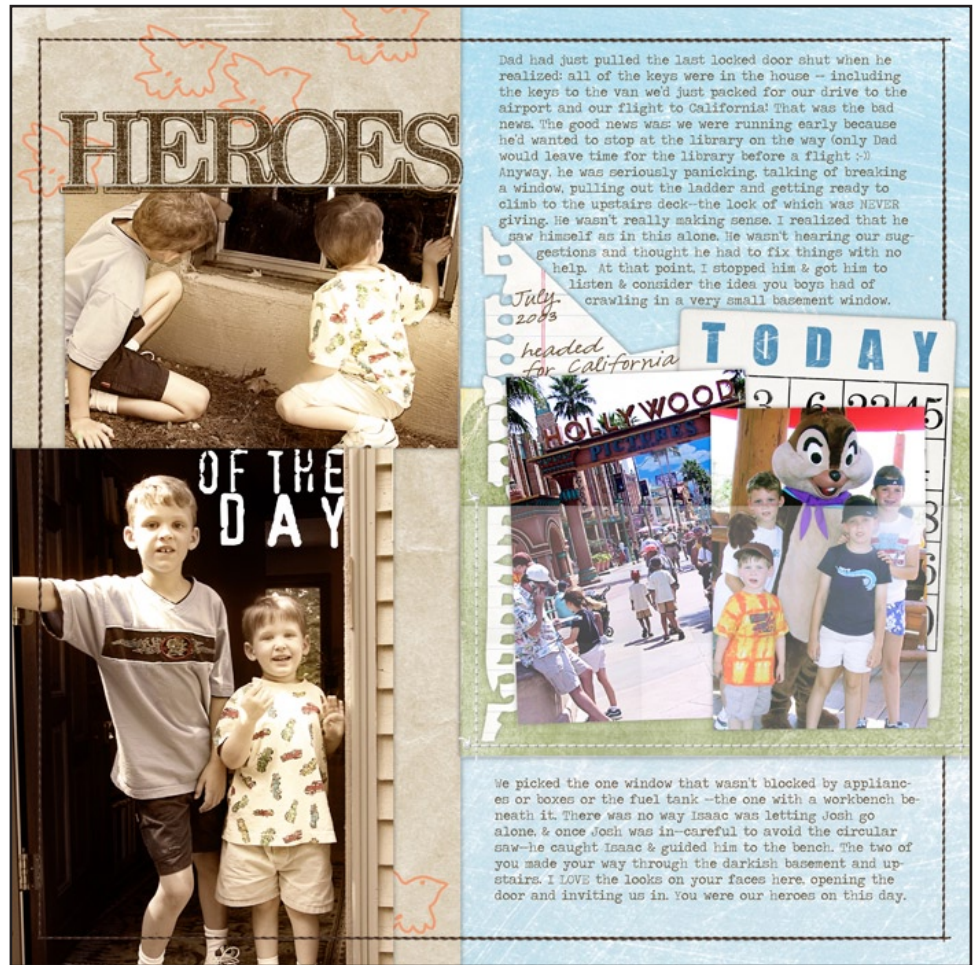
When you’re scrapbooking this kind of story, make your viewer immediately aware:

a) of the problem; and  
b) of the urgency of the problem. Use one or more of: title, opening journaling

lines, photos, design, color, images, and/or motif to make this initial impression.

#### **middle**

As you write the story, be aware of how the personalities of your main characters impact the events you’re recounting. In “Heroes of the Day,” I wrote of my husband’s blindness to the help around him, my frustration with that, and my kids’ pride in how they helped us out. Adding these aspects to the story takes it beyond an action-filled recount to a story that tells a longer-lasting lesson.



**end**

Be sure to tell and/or show how the problem was resolved, and, if it's relevant, any longer-lasting impact of the incident.

How I scrapbooked a "bear-at-the-door" story in "Heroes of the Day:"

- ◇ Journaling. The opening lines tell just what the problem is and why this is so pressing. The story proceeds with character complications and ends with a happy resolution.
- ◇ Photos. Desaturated photos of the boys solving our problem are emphasized. They contrasted with smaller, full-color photos of our later times in California.
- ◇ Design. The left side of the page has a darker look and features the photos of our dilemma. The right side, with blue skies and a pocket of memorabilia has a lighter feel that shows where we were headed with the problem occurred -- and that we did make it there happily.
- ◇ Title. The title indicates the outcome of the situation.

JOURNALING for "Heroes of the Day:" Dad had just pulled the last locked door shut when he realized: all of the keys were in the house -- including the keys to the van we'd just packed for our drive to the airport and our flight to California! That was the bad news. The good news was: we were running early because he'd wanted to stop at the library on the way (only Dad would leave time for the library before a flight ;-)) Anyway, he was seriously panicking, talking of breaking a window, pulling out the ladder and getting ready to climb to the upstairs deck--the lock of which was NEVER giving. He wasn't really making sense. And I realized, that he saw himself as in this alone. He wasn't hearing our suggestions and thought he had to fix things with no help. At that point, I stopped him & got him to listen & consider the the idea you boys had of crawling in a very small basement window. We didn't think we'd locked the door to the 1st floor. We picked the one window that wasn't blocked by appliances or boxes or the fuel tank --the one with a workbench beneath it. There was no way Isaac was letting Josh go alone, & once Josh was in--careful to avoid the circular saw--he caught Isaac & guided him to the bench. The two of you made your way through the darkish basement and upstairs. I LOVE the looks on your faces here, opening the door and inviting us in. You were our heroes on this day.

## 2. Connect the specific to the general (or vice versa)

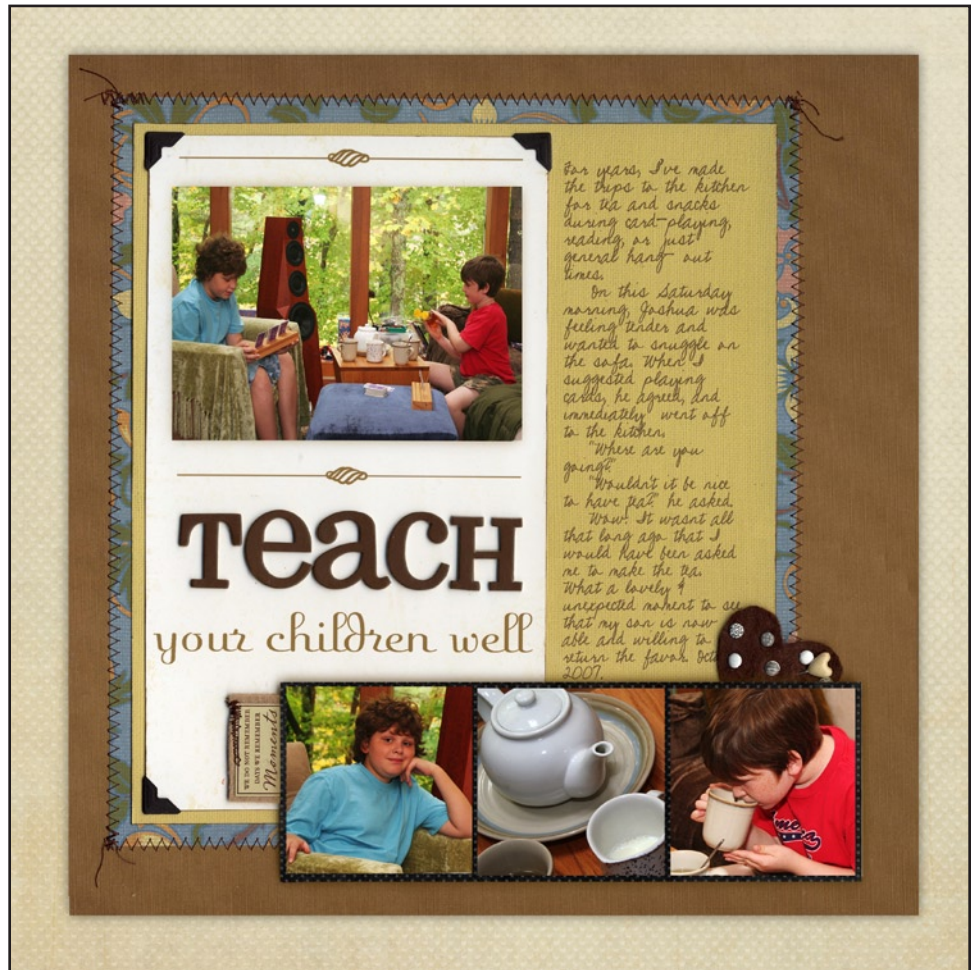
Small exchanges and incidents in our daily lives are often indicative of important character traits, of repeating patterns, and even new trends.

Making those connections explicit on your page lets your viewers in closer and gives them a deeper understanding of and appreciation for the lives you're recording. What's more, writing through these things often reveals them to you as you write.

You can go two ways with this kind of page. You can

a) begin with a specific incident and use it as support for a general statement (i.e., in "Teach Your Children Well," I record a specific morning of tea and cards and then extend the events of that morning to the more general idea of my children growing up to take care of the things I'd always done previously); or

b) begin writing about a general understanding or feeling you have and then look through your photos to find specific instances in support of that idea.



How I illustrated a general idea based upon a specific incident in "Teach Your Children Well:"

- ◇ Photos. One particular morning of tea and cards is shown in the photos.
- ◇ Journaling. The journaling begins with an introduction to the general idea of me taking care of my children in small ways. It then transitions to a scene showing what was happening at the time these photos were taken. The scene is followed by an explicit telling of what I came to realize and appreciate about where my son is at now as a result of the scene.

Basically: the specific scene is sandwiched between an introduction of the general idea and a summing up of the general idea.

- ◇ Title. The title, with it's connection to a song and it's explicit meaning, is a cue that there is more going on here than tea and cards. If it were just about a love morning of tea and cards, it would have a more simple label-type title, something like: "Tea and Cards."

JOURNALING for "Teach Your Children Well:"  
For years, I've made the trips to the kitchen for tea and snacks during card-playing, reading, or just general hang-out times.

On this Saturday morning, Joshua was feeling tender and wanted to snuggle on the sofa. When I suggested playing cards, he agreed, and immediately went off to the kitchen. "Where are you going?"

"Wouldn't it be nice to have tea?" he asked.

Wow. It wasn't all that long ago that I would have been asked to make the tea. What a lovely and unexpected moment to see that my son is now able and willing to return the favor. Oct 2007.

### 3) Scrapbook a journey--small or large, figurative or real.

The "journey" is the oldest story form known. It's in the bible, children's storybooks, and Greek myths. It's a story in which your subject leaves home on a "journey" and returns transformed. The journey can be a true trip or a more figurative journey of the spirit. Examples of real life incidents that are "journey" stories include pursuing a weight-loss program, getting through a year with an intimidating boss, and doing something new that's out of your comfort zone. In journey stories, there are often unexpected meetings and events along the way that all contribute to the effect of the journey.



Holding this idea of the journey story in your mind, look through the photos you want to scrapbook and see if any of them are, in actuality, journeys. Let the idea of a journey story help you shape your telling of this event. By comprehending that something was a journey, you'll be open to understanding the ramifications of it.

When writing a “journey” story, begin by conveying how the journey came about. Tell of the events along the way, and, by then end, be sure you’ve told about the impact of the journey on your subject.

How I used the idea of a “journey” story to scrapbook a first experience of my son’s in “Anime:”

- ◇ Journaling. This was a literal journey of 50 miles to a convention center. The more meaningful journey was of seeking out others with a shared interest and gathering up the nerve and resources to meet them. The journaling tells this story.
- ◇ Design/Photos. The design is journaling-heavy with one focal-point photo of my journeyer and smaller photos of the general event.

**JOURNALING for “Anime:”** Joshua, When I asked you what you really wanted to do this summer, you said you wanted to go to an Anime convention (Isaac wanted to go to a baseball game). You found one online that was to be in Boston, and while the date and location kept getting changed, you kept your eye on it and kept insisting that we were going. None of your friends had any interest in this, and poked kind fun at you for your passion about it. I didn’t really “get” what this was and tried to dissuade you, offering up other ideas, but you were insistent.

It wasn’t until we were almost there—on the last Saturday of August—that I found out you were nervous. I actually said that I was a little nervous.

“You’re nervous?” you said, and proceeded to tell me that didn’t help your own nervousness. You were dressed in the Gintoki costume we’d made for Halloween along with a treasured bokken you’d tracked down online. It was surreal parking in the structure for the convention center and seeing others walking by in outfits with wings, odd headdresses, weapons, hoods, and so much more. That’s the point where I think my 12-year-old self would have lost nerve and gone home. But you collected yourself and we made that walk across the structure, too. In the lobby we saw that the participants’ ages ranged from 11ish to early 20s. We saw that people were into this. There were parents dropping off teenagers and then some other moms like myself with younger kids—sticking out in our khakis and summer Ts.

You wanted me close for the early hours of the event and you did a lot of watching from the sidelines, but finally you were able to go off a bit and enter into the activities while I stayed on the edge with my laptop. Activities included a dancing lesson, skit improvs, a vendor area with lots of Japanese and anime-related stuff, board games, a large video game area, and a life-sized chess game with the pieces being people behaving like their characters and using their particular anime skills to remove other pieces.

For you, it was a rming to see and meet so many others with this interest. You found cool stuff at the shopping area. You enjoyed being recognized as GinToki and asked where you’d purchased your bokken. You were happy to come in 2nd in a video game competition and totally found irony in a college kid wearing one of those school-boy-uniform costumes winning while playing as Peach. It was definitely interesting and different and you had a really fine time—you’d found a group of people who shared your interests and enjoyed their company for the day.

#### 4. Tell the story of when a stranger came to town.

If the journey story is the oldest story form in existence, the “visitation” story is the next oldest. This is the story of an unexpected visitor –or demand or event—showing up at your door and the subsequent detour from everyday life as you know it. The detour you take because of the “stranger in town” may be brief or long-lasting, but it is caused by the intruding event. Understand that this is a classic story shape and use that to inform pages about new people (or demands or events) in your life. Your visitor could be new neighbors, an influential teacher, even a new family member.

When writing journaling for a visitation story, begin with the introduction of your visitor. Proceed to make clear what disruption to life as you’ve known it the visitor makes. Continue the story to an ending that shows and/or tells of the changes that have come of the disruption this visitor has brought.

**CAMPAGNING with Victoria**

July 2007. The boys and I start going to Dover to the Clinton campaign office to make phone calls. We go on Tuesdays after music lessons. Sept 2007. We meet Victoria at UNI's Durham Day - she spots my button and corals me in to talk though I'm already a supporter. I go find Neil and we convince him to let Hillary speak to his classes about volunteering.

Nov 2007. House party for Hillary. Co-hosted with Sara.

Dec 2007. I canvas Durham with Victoria regularly. on Mast Road, Newmarket Road, Packers Falls Road, Worthen, Griffith, Surrey, Carriage, Little Hale, Wednesday Hill, Hampshire, Fitz Farm, Mill, Mill Pond, Faculty, Valentine Hill, Burnham, Church Hill, Chesley, Garden, Smith, Thompson, Oyster River, Madbury, Emerson, Edgewood . . . the street names just keep going through my mind.

Jan 4-9, 2008. Get out the vote efforts. Durham office opens. I canvas daily. Hang door hangers on Tuesday morning then canvas more and then man the polls til closing time.

Jan 10, 2008. Meet Victoria at the Durham office where -- she's totally packed and leaving town.

Jan 11, 2008. Help clean up at the Dover office. Say goodbye to Jonathan and Iliana and clear road signs.

When this primary campaign began, I had no idea how much time I would spend with Victoria, nor how fond of and impressed with this 17-year-old I would become. Through hours of canvassing the streets of Durham, we learned about each other -- personally and politically. It was amazing how much in which we were with our political beliefs. It wasn't just that we had a lot of agreement -- it was in the things that others said of the candidates or the election that both of us just didn't get! It was especially hard the morning after the victorious primary to come hug her goodbye and watch her drive off to Dartmouth. Poof! Like that! Six months of hard and frequent work together done!

January 2008

Hillary for President

How I scrapped my time with the stranger who came to our town last year in "Campaigning with Victoria:"

- ◇ Photos. The photos feature Victoria and myself, but they also reveal who a supporting character in this story is--Hillary Clinton and her primary campaign in New Hampshire.
- ◇ Title. The title makes clear that the main subject of my page is Victoria and not Hillary Clinton, even though it is Clinton who brings us together.
- ◇ Journaling. The journaling begins with a statement from me about Victoria that indicates how important she became in my daily life. The middle elaborates on the time we spent together. The end tells of her exit from town (which coincides with the exit of the Clinton campaign) and my feelings about that as well as all that I gained from her presence and this experience.
- ◇ Design. Patterned papers and colors support the political theme that is key to this story.

**JOURNALING for "Campaigning With Victoria:"**

When this primary campaign began, I had no idea how much time I would spend with Victoria, nor how fond of & impressed with this 19-year-old I would become. I'd always planned to work at the office, on the phones--I didn't think I had the time or the nerve to go out knocking on people's doors. Victoria was persistent, though, totally believing in Hillary Clinton, and single-handedly rallying the volunteers in Durham-- on the campus and in the community. And so I joined her on the streets and then eventually I went out on my own (and with Elaine and Julia) to the backroads. Through hours of canvassing alongside Victoria, I learned a lot about her -- personally and political-ly. It was amazing how much in synch we were with our political beliefs. It wasn't just that we agreed on the same things--it was also that there were things that others said of the candidates or the election that just didn't or couldn't "get."

It was especially hard the morning after the unexpected (to me) victory to come hug her goodbye and watch her drive off to Dartmouth. Poof! Like that! Six months of hard and frequent work--done! But because of Victoria's pushing, I'd been a part of an historic election, I'd gotten the confidence to go out and talk to 100s of citizens about the candidates which was fascinating and so very affirming of how much people cared, and I made a wonderful new friend



## 5) Encapsulate a story

This new era of texting in which we're currently living brings with it an appreciation for brevity. Supposedly Ernest Hemmingway was asked to do this and wrote the following: "For sale: baby shoes, never worn." Last year, the online magazine *Smith* asked its readers to write the story of their own lives in a single six-word sentence and ended up with a collection of memoirs that are sometimes sad, sometimes funny, and always concise. You can see several of these memoirs accompanied by photos and art at this National Public Radio webpage.

Challenge yourself to do this kind of encapsulation with a life or an incident. While I've never met Paula Gilarde's Auntie Rie, this page is a powerful statement that gives fabulous insight into who she must be. The pairing of a vibrant photo with these six words: "Destined for Convent. Left. Thank God." tells us so much about the arc of this woman's life since childhood.



scrapbook page by Paula Gilarde.

How Paula scrapbooked a six-word biography in "Rie:"

- ◇ Journaling. Just six words. And they convey so much. And the last two: "Thank God" are a brilliant and fun play on the words that come before.
- ◇ Photo. This photo of a smiling, almost mischievous-looking woman working in the kitchen hints at a large and happy personality. It convinces the viewer of the accuracy of the accompanying six-word biography.
- ◇ Design. Vibrant colors, distressed edges, tilted photo, and ruffled ribbon all evoke a cozy and joyful mood that support the relief revealed in the last two words of the biography: "Thank God."

**TRIGGERS: identifying journeys**

For yourself and any of the people that you scrapbook regularly, answer the following questions.

Where have you gone literally in the last year? \_\_\_\_\_

Why did you go? \_\_\_\_\_

Who did you meet? \_\_\_\_\_

What happened that was unplanned/unexpected? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Did you do or look at things differently upon your return? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\*\*\*

What new thing have you tried in the last year? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Did you/would you repeat this experience? Why or why not? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Have you incorporated anything new into your daily life as a result of this new thing that you tried? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## Lesson #6: Expressing the Inexpressible

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- Introduction
- Getting “hard-to-explain” feelings onto the page
  1. Explore fuzzy notions
  2. Tell it slant
  3. Accept complexity
  4. Springboard from the ordinary
  5. Use a central metaphor
- Triggers

*“If I loved you less, I might be able to talk about it more.”*

*-- Jane Austen from Emma*

### **INTRODUCTION**

This is about getting those feelings that are hard to articulate in words onto the scrapbook page. Do you ever have a moment when you stop -- when you almost understand something or you have a fleeting idea but it's gone in a second? You have a feeling it's meaningful--but you need to pursue it farther to know. How do you stop and figure out and express thoughts that you can barely grab on to let alone explain in a clear cut way? Read on and try the following ideas.

## GETTING HARD-TO-EXPLAIN FEELINGS ONTO THE PAGE

### 1. Explore fuzzy notions.

When you have one of those “gasps” -- one of those moments in which you feel you’re understanding something new or maybe only almost understanding it, follow that impulse with pen and paper. You probably won’t be able to write through it at that moment, but make a note to yourself of what was going on and what your “fuzzy notion” is. You may not even realize you have a fuzzy notion you want to pursue until it’s tapped at your consciousness a couple of times. That’s what happened to me when I had the original seed for “Seeing Me With You.” I would see attractive mothers with their children -- looking like ideal, pretty, competent, lovely mothers. Then I would think: *Oh my goodness! Imagine how I must look!* And then I thought: *How do I look?* And, what’s more, I thought: *How am I doing as a mom?* And finally: *Why haven’t I made this more important? What am I missing out on?*



When you do have time to write -- just start writing. Don't censor yourself. Don't worry about where it's going. When

you get thought after thought after thought onto the page, you can get to bigger understandings in a way that's not so easy to accomplish in your mind. You've got a written trail to follow.

### How I explored a fuzzy notion in "Seeing Me With You:"

- ◇ Journaling. The initial writing I did around these thoughts was messy and much longer. Most of the time, I write on the computer because it's faster for me and I can easily pick out the parts I want to save for the final journaling. You should choose the best method for yourself--perhaps pen and paper. Understand that you'll revise after you've followed what might be a long path to your final comprehension.
- ◇ Photos. I used the photo browser on my computer to look through photos and pull up a few (spanning several years) of myself with my boys. I wanted to show and see in print the thing I'd been writing about: how do I look in my role of mother.
- ◇ Design. I used patterned paper with images of childhood to support my theme.

JOURNALING for "Seeing Me With You:" When I see myself in these photos with you boys, it's always a bit of a surprise. It's a moment when I say: oh, yeah! I \*am\* a mom. And the three of us look pretty happy. And, oh, sheesh! am I doing a good job? Have I been taking things seriously enough?

What I mean is that while I've thought of myself as the diaper changer, the caretaker, the facilitator of all that has to happen to get us where we're going minute by minute, I don't consciously think: I am the mother and this a great honor and responsibility and this is how I'm going to do my mothering. In fact, tucked in around my daily mother-work, are thoughts of my own activities, a desire to sneak off to my office and create for a while.

It seems that while I'm daily being a mother, I haven't actually taken "mother" on as an identity the way I have many of my other pursuits and occupations. Is that because I never expected to be a stay-at-home mom? Whatever the reason, these photos make me realize that I am indeed a mom and I want to be daily more conscious of that and embrace that as my identity. Right now. Before I miss another day of thinking of myself this way. journaling: 03/08

## 2. Tell it slant.

Pay attention to the first two lines and last two lines of Emily Dickinson's poem "Tell all the Truth but tell it slant" shown here. Think about how you can apply this to telling your truths on the scrapbook page. Consider coming at one of your inexpressible feelings from an angle other than straight on. Consider the impact on the reader/viewer when they comprehend your intent from a gathering of images and words that are not obvious representations of your message.

*Tell all the Truth but tell it slant---  
Success in Circuit lies  
Too bright for our infirm Delight  
The Truth's superb surprise  
As Lightening to the Children eased  
With explanation kind  
The Truth must dazzle gradually  
Or every man be blind---*

*Emily Dickinson*

When you're "telling it slant" think about all you have at your disposal for creating a page including images, photos, colors, words, and design.

**Journaling for "10 Years Past:"** Joshua, Here you are with John who is 2 years old and you are 12 years old. I see this photo and remember when we moved here and all the hours we spent--as John and his mom do now--at this neighborhood spot. He is where you were and you are where he is going and, yet, you are both in the same place. May 2008



How I “told it slant” in “10 Years Past:”

- ◇ Embellishments. The embellishments on this page include images of growth and change: a measure, trees, the words “grow and learn,” and an image on patterned paper of an adult man with a boy that echoes the older and younger boys in my photos.
- ◇ Photo. Tree stickers are placed right on the photo as if they were a part of the woods.
- ◇ Journaling. It’s not long or necessarily clear, but it makes sense to me and triggers the feeling I’m after.
- ◇ Title. The title, which not a clear descriptor but rather a phrase open to interpretation, sits at yet another angle to the journaling and images on the page.



### 3. Accept complexity.

When you're scrapbooking and journaling feelings you're not able to clearly express, it will not be all clean and clear and tidy. This is not like writing an essay in which you lay out your arguments and then sum them up in an easy way. Everyone doesn't have to "get" everything all the time. Think about the song lyrics that fans contemplate and try to interpret. When asked about the meaning of the lyrics in "American Pie," Don McLean said, "You will find many 'interpretations' of my lyrics but none of them by me... sorry to leave you all on your own like this but long ago I realized that songwriters should make their statements and move on, maintaining a dignified silence."

If you like the page and it "means" to you, then accept it as a record of what it is to be you.

#### How I accepted complexity in "Been There:"

- ◇ Journaling. This journaling is written as if to my nieces, yet there's no formal greeting or closing to the letter. I'm not sure it's even really to them -- but rather the feeling I was trying to express had to do with what I might tell them.



The journaling rambles in an almost stream-of-consciousness style, moving from my childhood quickly through to today and how the land was a part of me on either end of that life so far.

Basically, it's not tidy.

- ◇ Title. Because the journaling and my message are a little muddy, I used a more straightforward title that tells you how I feel about the subject.
- ◇ Photos. I used the photo of my nieces that was the trigger for these thoughts alongside photos of the land that's at the core of this page's meaning.

**JOURNALING for "Been There:"** The sight of you three takes me straight back to my days of sunning next to hayfields on this farm in upstate NY. Oh, the indulgence of sunning oneself as others labored nearby -- the bravura involved in attempting a sun-tan in a place that has as many overcast days a year as it does sunny. I'm quite sure my brothers (one of them your dad) and my own dad thought I was a little addled and that I certainly didn't "get" their lives. And I didn't. I planned to go to college for international business and get a job making lots of money so that I could hire someone to watch my children and do my housework. Oh--and I would be living in a city.

Yep. I'm pretty sure I had (and voiced) those plans. And I did go to college. And I did go off to Washington DC. And I had some international relationships and I worked a lot and commuted and ate at nice restaurants and travelled on business so much I was doing my laundry at hotels. And it was good for a while.

But you guys know where I ended up. In fact, the life I live now is the life you've always known me living. I live in the country in a small college town in New Hampshire and I'm a stay-at-home mom to your cousins and I do all the dishes and I don't make a lot of money,

AND . . . I love to come visit you and I love to see my boys playing with you and I love seeing all of you BE on this land as I once WAS on this land

**4. Springboard from the ordinary.**

I have said this in almost every one of the lessons for this class, but I'll do it one more time. When you begin with the ordinary, concrete details surrounding the experience you're trying to express, you are on your way to understanding more.

The short story writer Alice Munro is known for her ability to "say the unsayable" in her stories, and in "Lives of Girls and Women," her character Del is a writer and says of her writing, "What I wanted was every last thing, every layer of speech and thought, stroke of light on bark or walls, every smell, pothole, pain, crack, delusion, held still and held together—radiant, everlasting."

I love that idea of "radiant and everlasting."



How I used ordinary details in "Fortunate:"

- ◇ Photos and journaling. I collected photos of my husband and son together from three different times and I wrote the ordinary details of each of those times.

These three instances are my evidence that let me add that final journaling that sits at bottom right on a tag. This is where I sum up my understanding of the fuzzy notion I began with.

- ◇ Title. There is summation and judgment in this title. You are cued from the beginning that this is a happy story.
- ◇ Design. The colors and motifs here all add to the sense of good fortune and happiness.

JOURNALING for "Fortunate:" Durham Day. September 2007. Neil had been working the grill and speaking and generally busy with town stuff. Toward the end, we all came together as a family at the event. When Joshua saw Neil, he moved naturally to him and hugged him hard -- a big old boy hugging his Dad in the middle of a festival.

August 2008. This was the end of the first day back at school for the boys--the first day of 7th grade for Joshua. The neighborhood parents had a little party ready for the kids as they got off the bus. Neil waited on taking a bike ride until both boys were home and then stayed to chat with the neighbors and kids. The younger ones were running around eating sweets and talking about their day. Joshua was tired, maybe a little stressed, and he leaned very comfortably and peacefully on Neil.

New Year's Day 2009. Museum of Science in Boston. We'd gone to see the special Mythic Creatures Exhibit and this was at the end of the day as we were taking in a few of the older stuff exhibits that we often take for granted. Joshua spent a lot of time looking at models of ships and then engines. I took this photo from a distance and have no idea what they're talking about but LOVE their faces.

Neil, what does Joshua's generous, uninhibited way of loving do for us? What does it do for you? Sometimes when I see you two together, I think: wouldn't it be nice if this sweet love now could heal early hurts and fill up any of your glasses that are still half-empty. XO, Debbie

## 5. Use a central metaphor.

Photograph (or find an image of) the trigger for your moment of insight. Put it on the page, and use it as a metaphor for a key part of your story. It was a neighbor's-shed-turned-hunting-blind that triggered the thoughts I journaled on "Unexpected Destination."

**JOURNALING for "Unexpected Destination:"** Who knew? I was out with Dad on a tractor and we drove past this partial shed. "You recognize that?" he asked. "No," I said. "That's part of Floyd's old garage. Gets used as a hunting blind now."

Go figure. I'm not sure people who knew of me 20+ years ago would recognize me or what I'm good for nowadays either. I sure didn't predict I'd be a stay-at-home mom & wife dabbling in writing fiction and scrapbooking for pay back when I set out to make my mark on the world--and certainly not even when I was 30 and getting an MBA. Some of it has come at me unbidden, others parts I've sought out, but none of how it is now was what I'd anticipated. Like Floyd's shed, I'm at an unexpected destination. And it's not a bad one at that.



How I used an item in a photo as a metaphor for the feeling I was trying to express in "Unexpected Destination:"

- ◇ Photos. I am using a shed's unexpected final destination as a metaphor for my own landing spot in life at this point. I included a photo of the shed alongside photos that show me and represent the important parts of my life right now: family, housework, writing, my book.
- ◇ Journaling. I begin with the story of the shed and then clearly connect that to my thoughts of how my life might relate to that of the shed.
- ◇ Title. The title is the metaphor that I'm working with on the page--and it comes from one of the last lines of the journaling.

**TRIGGER for exploring fuzzy thoughts**

For the next week or several days:

- Carry a pencil and bit of paper or pad OR a small recording device with you. Make it a point to jot down notes whenever you have a thought--something that pricks at your feelings but that you don't totally understand--that you'd like to pursue. (If you like doing this, you can continue it indefinitely).
- Every night, put the thoughts on individual slips of paper and put them in a jar or bowl.
- Pay attention to your days and figure out when would be a good time to work in a daily 10 minutes of writing.

After several days, set aside 10 minutes per day to free-write from these slips:

- Use a journal that you can keep all of these writings in.
- Draw out a slip of paper.
- Copy what you wrote on the slip of paper at the top of your page and then for ten minutes:
  - ◇ don't stop writing;
  - ◇ don't censor yourself;
  - ◇ don't plan;
  - ◇ don't worry about grammar or punctuation.
- Use these writings to spur scrapbook or art journal pages. How you do this will depend upon you. You might find you want to scrap or journal a subject immediately. You might find you want to leave your writings unread for several days or longer. However you use these writings, know that if you do them, you'll have an unending source of satisfying personal subjects to scrapbook.

*be* **real**

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