



PAGE A WRITER

FOR EVERY WORD AT STAKE

Creating a Family Museum: Preserving Your Ancestral History

A WordFellow Shop No. 4 *Tulak Sulat*

“Memory is not what we keep. It is what continues to speak when we learn how to listen.”

OBJECTIVE

This workshop guides participants in creating a family museum—not as an institution, but as a living archive built through listening, storytelling, and reflective writing. Participants will learn how memory is shaped through attention, emotion, and narrative reconstruction, and will begin developing at least one written family narrative.

THEMES

- Memory as reconstruction rather than recording
- Listening as an ethical practice
- Family stories as living archives
- Silence, omission, and inherited gaps
- Writing as preservation and relational witnessing



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LISTENING FRAMEWORK

PART I: LISTENING AS PRESENCE

Listening is not passive. It requires attention to both speech and silence—tone shifts, emotional undercurrents, omissions, and what remains unspoken.

1. Reflective Recall

- a. Allow space for reminiscing without interruption. Memory often surfaces as vivid images rather than structured accounts.
- b. Do not assign or impose an audience at the outset; the storyteller should choose who feels safe to receive the story.
- c. Avoid forcing chronological order. Memory often arrives in fragments, and fragmentation is meaningful rather than problematic.
- d. Follow emotional intensity rather than sequence, since memory is often organized through feeling rather than time.

PART II: ASKING PROBING QUESTIONS

Questions should expand memory rather than correct or verify it.

2. Guided Questioning

- a. Use open-ended prompts such as “Can you remember...” or “What was it like when...” instead of yes/no questions.
- b. Avoid steering toward a single “correct” version of events; allow multiple versions of memory to coexist.
- c. When appropriate, anchor recall through sensory cues—place, sound, weather, objects.
- d. Reflect or rephrase what has been said to deepen recall rather than redirect it.

PART III: FREEWRITING AND INITIAL MAPPING

Time: 15–20 minutes

Write continuously without editing. Prioritize honesty over form.



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3. Journal Exercises

- a. Write without concern for structure or correctness in the first draft.
- b. Use timed freewriting (10–15 minutes) to bypass self-censorship.
- c. Revisit the same memory from different emotional distances (child, adult, observer).
- d. Use unfinished sentences as prompts, such as:
 - “What I never said was...”
 - “The thing I remember most clearly is...”

LECTURE 1: THE PSYCHOLOGY OF ACTIVE LISTENING AS PRESENCE

Listening is an active cognitive and emotional process involving attention regulation and interpretive restraint. In family storytelling, roles and expectations shape perception and can distort meaning. Genuine listening requires suspending internal narration and remaining open to unfinished or evolving meaning.

LECTURE 2: MEMORY, EMOTION, AND THE RECONSTRUCTION OF STORY

Memory is not static; it is reconstructed each time it is recalled. Emotion filters memory through shame, pride, grief, and love. Family memory is layered—containing factual, emotional, and silenced dimensions that often diverge from one another.

4. Relationship Mapping

- a. Begin by identifying key individuals, then expand outward to secondary and indirect relationships.
- b. Map relationships not only by structure, but by emotional proximity and lived experience.
- c. Attend to absences as carefully as presences—what is missing may carry significant narrative weight.
- d. Trace how relationships shift over time rather than treating them as fixed roles.



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AFTER-WRITING REFLECTION

Reflect on the type of memory accessed, its emotional truth, and what remains unsaid or incomplete.

AFTER-WRITING DISCUSSION

Engage in reflection on difficulty, care, truth-telling, and relational identity in the act of writing.

RECOMMENDED READING

- Erich Fromm – *The Art of Listening*
- Michael P. Nichols – *The Lost Art of Listening*
- Kate Murphy – *You're Not Listening*
- Marshall B. Rosenberg – *Nonviolent Communication*
- Carl Rogers & Richard Farson – *Active Listening*
- Debra L. Worthington & Graham D. Bodie – *The Sourcebook of Listening Research*
- Robin Ticic, Elise Kushner, Bruce Ecker – *The Listening Book*