

ACTIVITY: 6 Word Memoir

Purpose

- This activity is for anyone who wants to define meaning in their life.
- The purpose of the activity is to tell a story of your life in just 6 words.

ESTIMATED TIME

15 minutes

MATERIALS Required:

- A. Paper
- B. Pen

Background

What does it mean to leave a legacy? It could mean transferring knowledge, passing on values and life lessons, or simply leaving a lasting impression for stories to be told and memories to be shared about you.

There are various types of legacies, such as legacies that laid innovative groundwork in entertainment and helped define our experiences with popular culture, legacies that left a message or a change in thinking, and legacies that solved problems.

What legacy will you leave at work, or in life?

You could write your memoir. A memoir is a collection of memories that you write about moments or events, public or private, that took place in your life. This could be a very time consuming process. Or, you could write a 6 word memoir. Once asked to write a full story in six words, legend has it that novelist Ernest Hemingway responded: "For Sale: baby shoes, never worn."

Below are some other examples of 6 word memoirs from famous people:

"Life is one big editorial meeting" - *Activist Gloria Steinem*

"The miserable childhood leads to royalties" - *Author Frank McCourt*

"Acting is not all I am" - *Actress Molly Ringwald*

Let's see if you can tell a story of your life in 6 words! Whether it's humorous, or profound, or somewhere in between, this exercise will give you an idea of events or memories or emotions that have some type of meaning in your life.



Activity

1) Create a “you” list – fill the page:

List as many words as you can about yourself – things you like, feelings you have. Don't cross out, change, or rewrite anything. Don't worry about spelling – just write. You are going for quantity, so write as much as you can until I say stop. (3 minutes). *Note: If you run out of things to write, look around and write words of what you see. The object is to keep writing for the full 3 minutes.*

2) Circle 3 items that inspire you to say more:

Pick words from your list that, if heard aloud, would make you think about something that happened in your life, a story or an idea, or something that was important to you.

3) From those items you circled, select one:

“Free write” about it for at least 2 minutes. “Free write” means you just start writing about that idea, object, role or event. The only rule is: don't stop writing for at least two minutes. Whatever comes to mind is fair game. (2 minutes or fill the page)

4) Synthesize:

Develop a 6-word phrase that captures the essence of what your topic means to you.

Discussion Questions

- Ask participants to share their 6 Word Memoir and the brief story of the meaning behind it.
- Discuss the following questions: What do you want to be remembered for at work? In life?
- If there is time, see if they can come up with another 6 word memoir to describe what they want to be remembered for.