

A grayscale background image showing a person's hands writing in a notebook with a pen. The text is overlaid on this image.

In Your Own Words: An Exploration in Personal Narrative

Keeping Our Promise & Nadia Hashimi, MD

Who?

What?

Where?

When?

Why?

How?

Telling Your Story

- **When** should I write?
 - Today and any day you feel moved to add to your story.
- **What** should I write about?
 - Anything that stands out to you.
 - What do you remember most?
- **Where** do I begin?
 - There is no right or wrong moment in time to begin.
 - 30 years ago or 3 months ago
- **Who** do I write about?
 - You
 - People around you, people who matter most

Telling Your Story

- **Why** am I telling my story?
 - Share with family, your children
 - Better understand yourself (before and after)
 - Document your personal history
 - Keep track of your progress on goals and growth
 - Reduce stress
 - *Not for legal or immigration purposes*

A close-up photograph of a person's hands writing in a notebook. The person is wearing a light-colored, textured sweater. The left hand holds a pen with a wooden barrel and a black cap, while the right hand rests on the notebook. The notebook is open, and the person is writing on the right page. The background is softly blurred, showing more of the sweater and the notebook's pages.

How do I tell my story?

Don't worry about...

Spelling

Getting details right

Making mistakes

Time

Language

What people will think

Neuroscience Of Memories



Limbic System

Memory + Emotions

Short term memories are converted to long term memories

Memories then become part of decision making

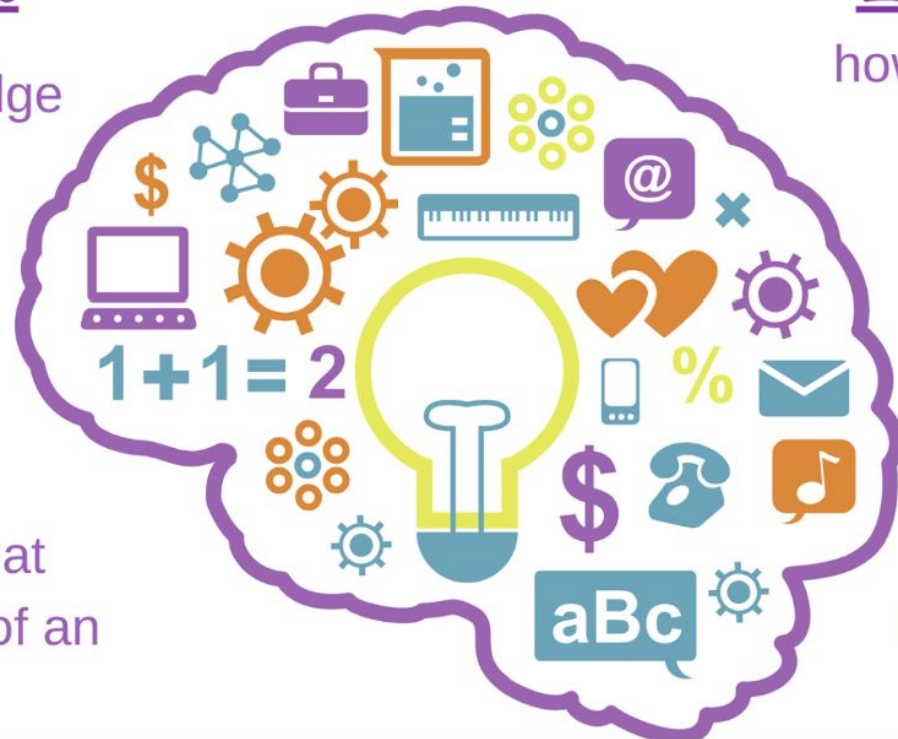
Types Of Memory

Semantic

general knowledge
and facts

Episodic

The Who, what
when & where of an
event



Emotional

how an experience
felt to you

Procedural

how to perform a
common task

The Trouble With Memory

A woman with long, dark hair is shown in profile, looking out of a window. The scene is dimly lit, with light coming from the window, creating a contemplative atmosphere. The background shows a building with multiple windows, suggesting an urban or institutional setting.

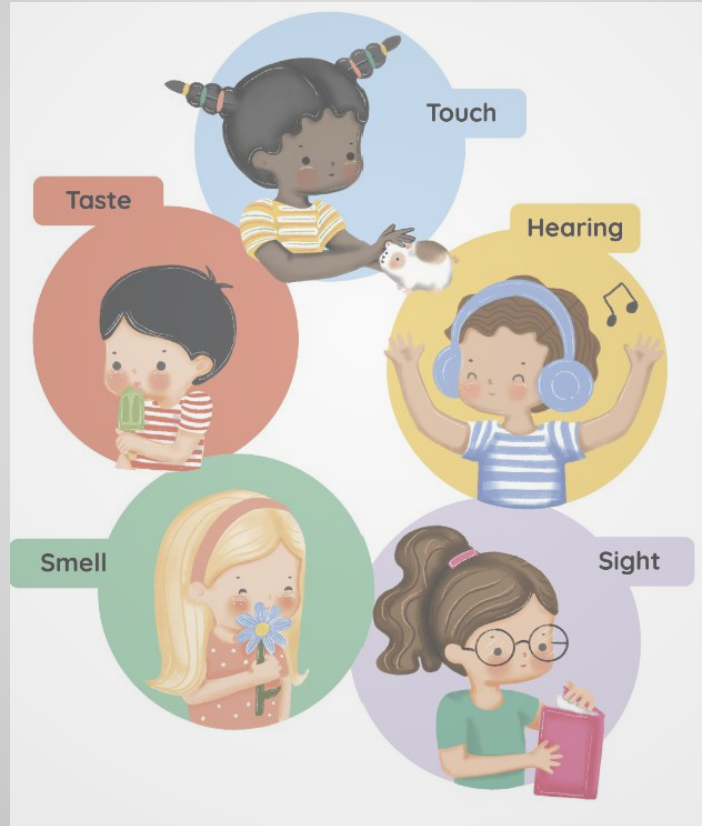
- Memory loss was documented among 21% asylum-seekers.
- It becomes harder to remember details with time.
- New information and feelings can change old memories.



*“I’ve learned that people will
forget what you said, people
will forget what you did,
but people will never forget
how you made them feel.”*

-Dr. Maya Angelou

How do we start to remember?

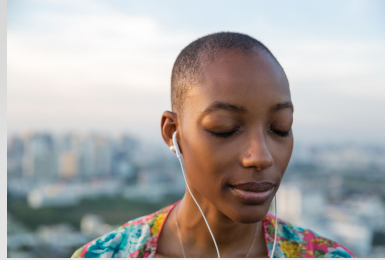


Activate Your Senses

(Episodic Memory)



Photographs
Movies
News articles



Songs
Sounds (train
whistle,
laughter,
engine)



Doors and walls
Objects brought
from home



Foods
Drinks



Smoke
Cooking
Perfumes

Connect with History

(Semantic Memory)

- What do you remember from a time period?
 - You don't have to be accurate.
- What was happening in the world?
 - Major sports events, most popular song or movie, elections, clothing styles



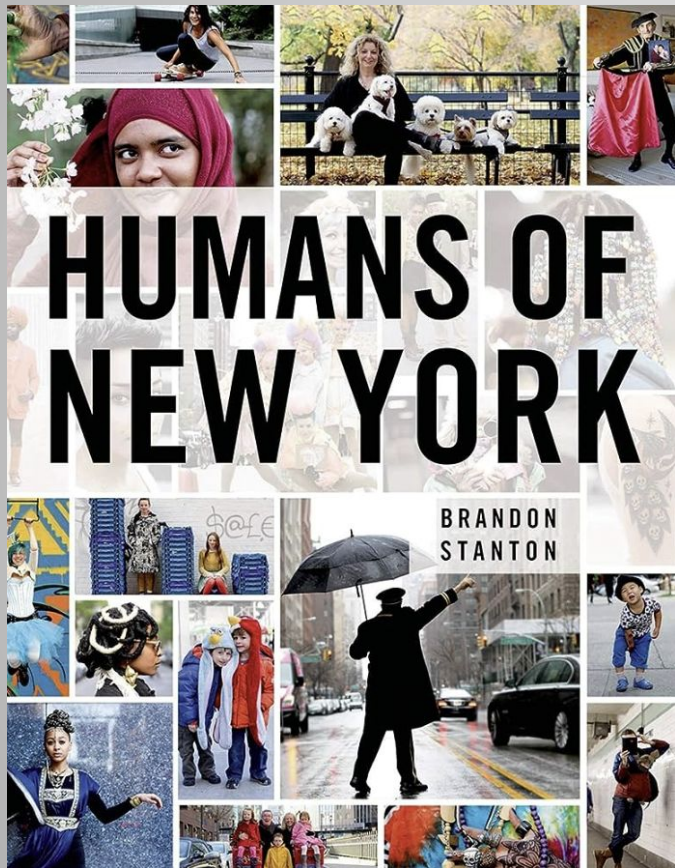
Examine Your Routines

(Procedural Memory)

- Explore your routine actions and behaviors.
- How do you prepare tea?
- Who taught you to tie your shoes?
- Can you write the recipe for a dish you make often for your family?



One Example



(1/54) “We begin in darkness. A siren screams. The invaders come from the desert in a cloud of dust. The king gathers his army at a mountain castle. A single battle decides our fate. The battle burns, the din of drums, the clash of axes, the spark of swords. The dirt turns clay with blood. The sun goes down on a fallen flag. The day is lost. The king is



(3/54) “It’s been forty-three years since I’ve seen my home. All I have left is a jar of soil. It’s good soil. Nahavand is a city of gardens. A guidebook once called it ‘a piece of heaven, fallen to earth.’ The peaks are so high that they’re capped with snow. A



(33/54) “On the day Khomeini’s plane landed the road from the airport was lined with hundreds of thousands of cheering people. I hadn’t completely lost hope. The king was gone. But we still had a government, a parliament, a constitution. The only thing new was this man. Maybe he’d been telling the truth. Maybe he truly did want an open society. Khomeini had surrounded himself with liberal advisors. Maybe he’d allow them to run the country. Maybe he’d go to Qom and study his books. The parliament decided to form a small delegation to meet with him; to find out his plans. Since I’d been such a vocal

شماری اندک امنند و تنها من بودم که سخن می‌گفتم. تمام نگرانی‌هایم را با آنها در میان گذاشتم. اینکه آزادی‌هایی را هم که داشتیم از دستمان می‌گیرند. راستی کاسته و کزی افزوده می‌شود. بیداد، بیداد می‌کند. دیدم همه خاموشند. دریافتم که همه هم‌آواییم. آنچه زیانتشان را بُریده، ترس است. از ترس دم درکشیده بودند. همه رفتند، جز یکی، دوستی که اسب و تفنگی هم داشت. گفت: “در شهر ناکسان در کارند، ناامن است. شب را به خانه‌ی ما بیا، تنها نمان.” نگران من بود. چندان یافتاری کرد تا پذیرفتم. ایران سرزمین آزادگان و جوانمردان است! زیانزد پروازهای هست دربارهی کاروانی از سد بازرگان که از بیابان می‌گشتند. بر تنه‌هاشان بارهای گرانبها می‌بردند. شباهنگام دو دزد بر آنان شبیخون زدند و همعی دارایی‌شان را دزدیدند. در آبادی از آنها پرسیدند: “چگونه پیش آمد؟ شما سد تن بودید و دزدان تنها دو تن.” “بسیخ دادند: “زیرا آن [سو تن یا هم و ما سد تن تنها بودیم



(31/54) “One of Dr. Amoli’s first acts as



(34/54) “The revolution officially ended on February 11th, 1979. The military announced that they would no longer resist, and Khomeini’s forces took control of the weapons. That morning a bullet came through our window and landed in the wall above our bed. The country became like a house in an earthquake. Everything was scattered and there was nowhere to hide. The streets were barricaded with big bags of sand. Behind them were men holding automatic weapons. The executions began on the roof of the same school building where we had met. First the generals were executed. A few days later it was the Prime Minister. Then several

(49/54) “We still take long walks together, even today. There’s a path through the forest near our house. Mitra still can’t stand the silence. She’ll walk off the path so she can hear the dry crunch of the leaves. She still talks the entire time, but these days our conversations don’t reach back as far as they used to. We mainly talk about the things we see. She’ll count her steps, count the houses, count the trees. Mitra’s memory is no longer her friend; it no longer supports her. But she still says ‘hello’ to everyone that she sees. And she’s still a queen, I am always at her service. These days we have become inseparable. If I do not see her for two minutes, I will find what room she’s in. I button her jacket. I tie her shoes. I handle all her medications. I do not grieve the situation.



I feel gratitude that I am able to do these things for her, despite nature. My only grief is for her. Her memory was her greatest gift. It’s where I stored my treasures. I could tell her any verse, even once. And she could remember it forever. Now it will escape her after only a minute. Every day her world gets smaller and smaller. Tighter and tighter. It’s the oldest memories that she remembers most now. Recently she has been fixated on her hand. She keeps holding up her crippled hand, and asking: ‘Why did you ever marry me?’ When we were young in Tehran, her father had a tradition. Every morning he would insist on having the first cup of tea. He said it was the one that tasted best. He called it ‘the flower of the tea.’ So now when I brew our tea every morning, I will wait. Until Mitra is up. Until she’s ready. So that I can serve her the flower of the tea. Then as soon as we’ve finished the kettle, she’ll make me go outside. And pour the remains on the roots of our trees.”

“Writing is easy. All you have to do is sit down at the typewriter, cut open a vein, and bleed.”

-Red Smith, sports writer



Let's get started...

- Did you have a favorite toy as a child? What made that toy special?
- Can you think of a moment when you did something you were very afraid to do? How did you feel after?
- What is an important lesson life has taught you that you want to share with your children?
- Who is one person you miss very much? What made that person important to you?
- What do you think about or feel when you are alone?

Let's get started...

- What is your favorite holiday? What do you like about it?
- What is something most people do not know about you? What would surprise people?
- Life creates unexpected moments and events. Can you think of a moment when life took you by surprise? How did you react? How did it change you?
- What is the most important thing or skill you have learned in the past year?
- Can you think of a time you laughed so hard that you cried?

Don't worry about...

Spelling

Getting details right

Making mistakes

Time

Language

What people will think

Immigration Status



A minimalist desk lamp with a curved neck and a conical shade is positioned on the left side of the frame. It is turned on, casting a warm, yellowish glow onto a light-colored surface in front of it. The background is a soft, out-of-focus grey. The text "Enjoy the process" is written in a black, cursive font in the center of the illuminated area.

Enjoy the process

A grayscale background image showing a person's hands writing in a notebook with a pen. The text is overlaid on this image.

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Since We Last Met

Did you try writing?

If yes, what came easiest? What was hard?

What stopped you from writing? Or from writing more?

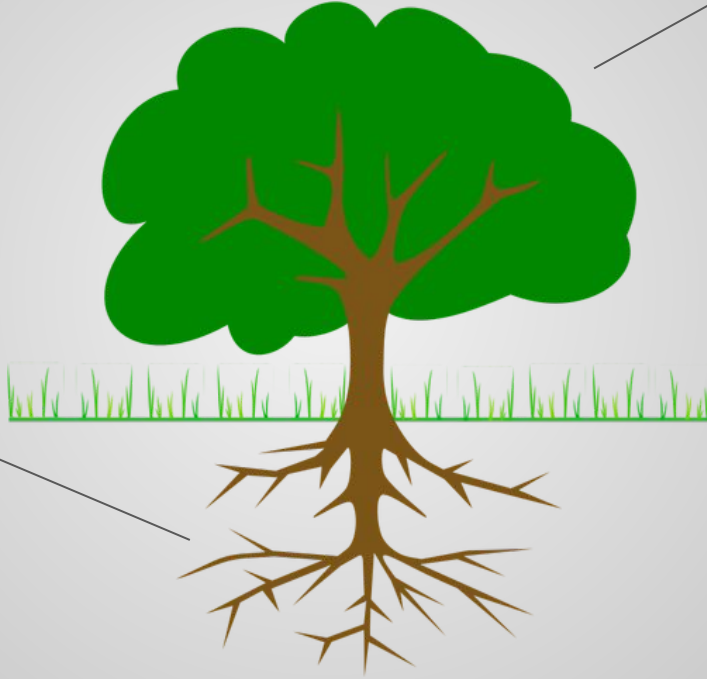
Did you share your writing with anyone?

Parts of a Story

Characters

Setting

Plot



Theme /
Meaning

On Writing

“Writing is like driving at night in the fog. You can only see as far as your headlights, but you can make the whole trip that way.”

-E.L. Doctorow



Center Yourself

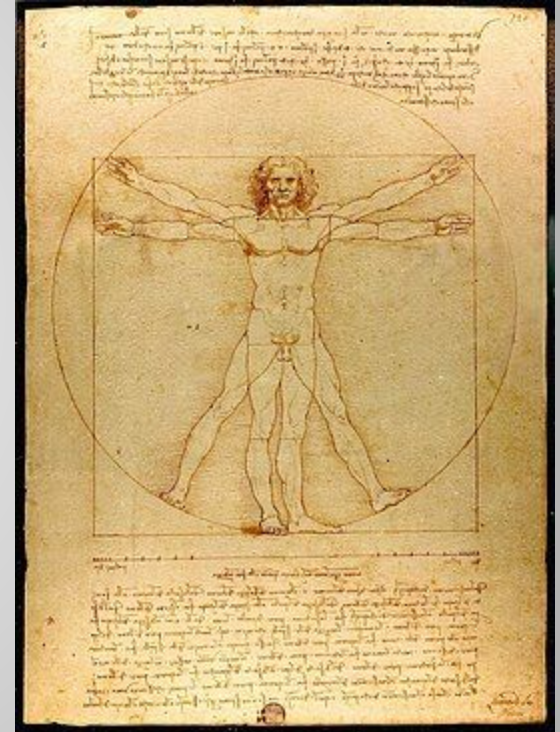
How did the event affect you?

Where were you when it happened?

How did the actions of others impact you?

What were you thinking about when it happened?

What did you do when you noticed the event?



What they carried varied by mission.

When a mission took them to the mountains, they carried mosquito netting, machetes, canvas tarps, and extra bug juice.

If a mission seemed especially hazardous, or if it involved a place they knew to be bad, they carried everything they could. In certain heavily mined AOs, where the land was dense with Toe Poppers and Bouncing Betties, they took turns humping a 28-pound mine detector. With its headphones and big sensing plate, the equipment was a stress on the lower back and shoulders, awkward to handle, often useless because of the shrapnel in the earth, but they carried it anyway, partly for safety, partly for the illusion of safety.

On ambush, or other night missions, they carried peculiar little odds and ends. Kiowa always took along his New Testament and a pair of moccasins for silence. Dave Jensen carried night-sight vitamins high in caro-

tene. Lee Strunk carried his slingshot; ammo, he claimed, would never be a problem. Rat Kiley carried brandy and M&M's candy. Until he was shot, Ted Lavender carried the starlight scope, which weighed 6.3 pounds with its aluminum carrying case. Henry Dobbins carried his girlfriend's pantyhose wrapped around his neck as a comforter. They all carried ghosts. When dark came, they would move out single file across the meadows and paddies to their ambush coordinates, where they would quietly set up the Claymores and lie down and spend the night waiting.

