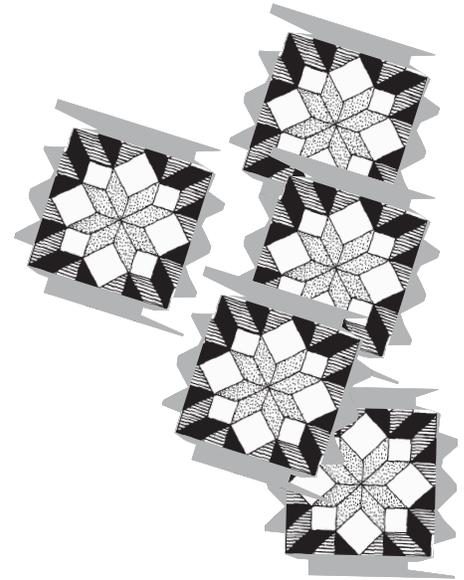


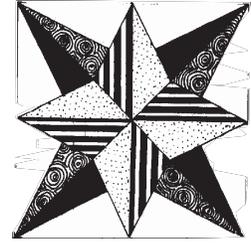
Older Women's Legacy Circle
Memoirs:
Piecing Together
The Patterns of Our Lives

Facilitator's Manual



The OWL-Circle Memoir Workshops
are a project of
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Session One: You and the People Who Shaped You



Preliminaries (30 minutes)

For your first task as an OWL-Circle facilitator, review the "Workshop Materials Checklist" and "Setting Up" sections at the beginning of this manual. These will help you gather workshop materials and arrange the site most effectively.

Begin by introducing participants to the Story Circle Network and the OWL-Circle Project. Distribute and read aloud the OWL-Circle Agreement (see Appendix).

Next, you need to do introductions. If you have a preferred way of handling them, use that. If not, you can simply ask each participant to give her name and tell the others what she would like them to know about her.

Ask the group to decide whether they want to include food and drink as part of their sessions. If so, decide how to coordinate refreshments—letting women bring them whenever they choose or asking participants to make a simple schedule listing the women who will provide food and drink for each session. You have the option of providing these yourself, but do not feel obligated to do so. You can mention that refreshments are located apart from the writing area in order to minimize distraction.

If you haven't already collected complete contact information for each participant, now is the time to do so. Ask each participant to confirm the accuracy of this information. (A sample registration form is included in the Appendix.) Be sure to review the forms before the end of the session to make sure you can read them. If the women in your group want to share this information among themselves, you should photocopy the sign-in/attendance page and give one copy to each participant at the second session.

If you plan to create a OWL-Circle Memoir Book at the end of the workshop (we hope you will do this), you should explain the procedures. At this time, announce that you will collect their writing at the end of each session for photocopying and return it at the next session. Many of your participants will have access to computers and may volunteer to type up their stories for you.

Finally, point out the bibliography on women's life writing at the back of the workbook. Many participants will want to read more on the topic soon after they begin writing themselves.

Creating Your Legacy About the Workshop

An Overview of the Workshop (15 minutes)

Many of your participants will already know why they've come and what they're going to do in the workshop. The page "Creating Your Legacy" will help participants see that their stories can be a legacy. "About the Workshop" gives them more specifics about the writing and sharing activities during the five OWL-Circle sessions. "An Overview of the Workshop" presents the topics about which participants will write.

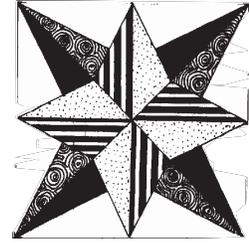
*A woman writing
thinks back through
her mother.
—Virginia Woolf*

*And so our mothers and
grandmothers have,
more often than not
anonymously, handed on
the creative spark, the
seed of the flower they
themselves never hoped
to see—or like a sealed
letter they could not
plainly read.
—Alice Walker*

*My father was often
angry when I was most
like him.
—Lillian Hellman*

*It doesn't matter who my
father was; it matters
who I remember he was.
—Anne Sexton*

Should you read instructions and explanations in the Workbook out loud or let participants read silently to themselves? You can make this choice, but OWL-Circle facilitators have found that participants grasp the Workbook content more deeply if you read it to the group while the participants follow along with their own text. You can also ask participants their preferences and be guided by them. You will be the best judge of this.



Who Are You? (30-40 minutes)

This segment was chosen to open the workshop because it encourages women to focus on aspects of themselves that have been defined within various family contexts, either family of origin or families they have helped to create. Some participants in your group will have strong ties to these families and some may have loosened or severed these ties and defined themselves in the world. But whether the bonds are historically or currently tight or loose, we are all shaped in some measure by the contexts within we grew and developed, both as children and as adults.

The first part of this session focuses on the self and asks each participant to explore who she is or has been.

Begin the exercise with a timed exercise. Give the participants 5 minutes to complete the "I am" list, then split the remaining time for this segment into writing and sharing. Leave a little more time for sharing than for writing. And remember that sharing involves reading out loud of stories that participants have written--it's not intended as open discussion. Some women will want to paraphrase their stories, but since the workshops are aimed to encourage and honor writing, it is better to urge them to share what they have written.

Break (15 minutes)

What Legacies Did You Inherit From Your Family? (30-40 minutes)

Our personal stories begin in our families, and this exercise is designed to help participants visualize their family members more vividly than they might by using the more traditional family tree diagram. You can briefly discuss the value of understanding something of our family histories. Then give your group members about 20-25 minutes to complete the graphic organizer and write their family story. Use the rest of the time in the segment to read stories.

Winding Up (15 minutes)

Before ending the session, point out the "More Story Ideas" exercise and encourage participants to complete it and bring it with them to the next session. Read through the exercise with the group, just as you do for in-session exercises.

Now that they've completed their first session, participants may have questions. Take a few minutes to answer these.

If you are creating a Memoir Book, collect the stories participants wrote during the session. You do not need to collect the graphic organizers.

Remind participants to bring a small keepsake--a card, a letter, a photograph, a piece of jewelry, or other meaningful item from the past--to the next session.

Nurturant work is not only for mothers, not only for parents even; it is the birthright of every man, woman, and child.

Without it, we never grow to our full stature.

—Carol Flinders

It is not the quality of the love, or even the quantity of the love; it is the consistency of the loving that makes the difference.

—Peg Armstrong

Mama exhorted her children at every opportunity to "jump at de sun." We might not land on the sun, but at least we would get off the ground.

—Zora Neale Hurston