

Guided Autobiography

*The value of leaving
your legacy*

Cheryl Svensson, Ph.D.



It all started with James E. Birren, Ph.D.

- Wrote The Psychology of Aging in 1963
- Attended the first Gerontological Society of America meeting 1949
- Founding Dean first graduate school of Gerontology at USC 1975



James Birren (1918-2016)

Lives are enriched through looking back at one's personal past

- 1970s Sabbatical U. of Hawaii
- Birren and USC grad students researched and wrote a syllabus for GAB.
- Changed the course of his career: 3 Books
- You can re-story your life



Research Tells Us That...

- Birren's Research shows:
- Appreciate their life as lived
- Increases self-esteem
- Bonding-Others more like self
- Less anxiety
- Increases self-confidence
- Renewed vigor
- *Stories That Bind Us*, NY Times 2013, Bruce Feiler
- Marshall Duke and Robyn Fivush , Emory University Study "Do You Know? Scale
- More resilient, less anxiety, better adjustment, higher rates of academic success.

Why Write Your Life Story

- There's never been another You.
- No one knows your story as you do.
- What if your brother/sister wrote your story?
 - Understand your life as lived.
 - Jigsaw Puzzle
 - Challenge yourself to learn new things

How to Write Your Life Story

Alone
or in
a
Group

In a
class or
on
your
own.

Books
as
guides

- Use a Personal Historian
- Ghost Writer
- Guided Autobiography

*Guided
Autobiography
GAB*

Guided Autobiography is NOT

Life Review

Reminiscence

Genealogy

Therapy

CONTENT

Guided Autobiography GAB



Composed of Life 9
themes



Sequential



Prompting
Questions



2 written pages on
each theme

PROCESS
Guided
Autobiography
GAB

SHOW UP – WRITE-
SHARE

WRITING TIPS,
EXERCISES IN THE
LARGE GROUP

5 – 10 SESSIONS

SHARING-SUPPORTING
IN SMALL GROUP

BENEFITS

- Power of being Heard
- Others become more like yourself
- Prevents social isolation
- New connections and friendships

Renewed optimism

Develop empathy

Increases self-confidence

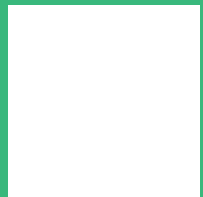
Use it or lose it

Become a better writer

FINAL THOUGHTS



Do you have
questions?



www.guidedautobiography.com



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Books

Just released

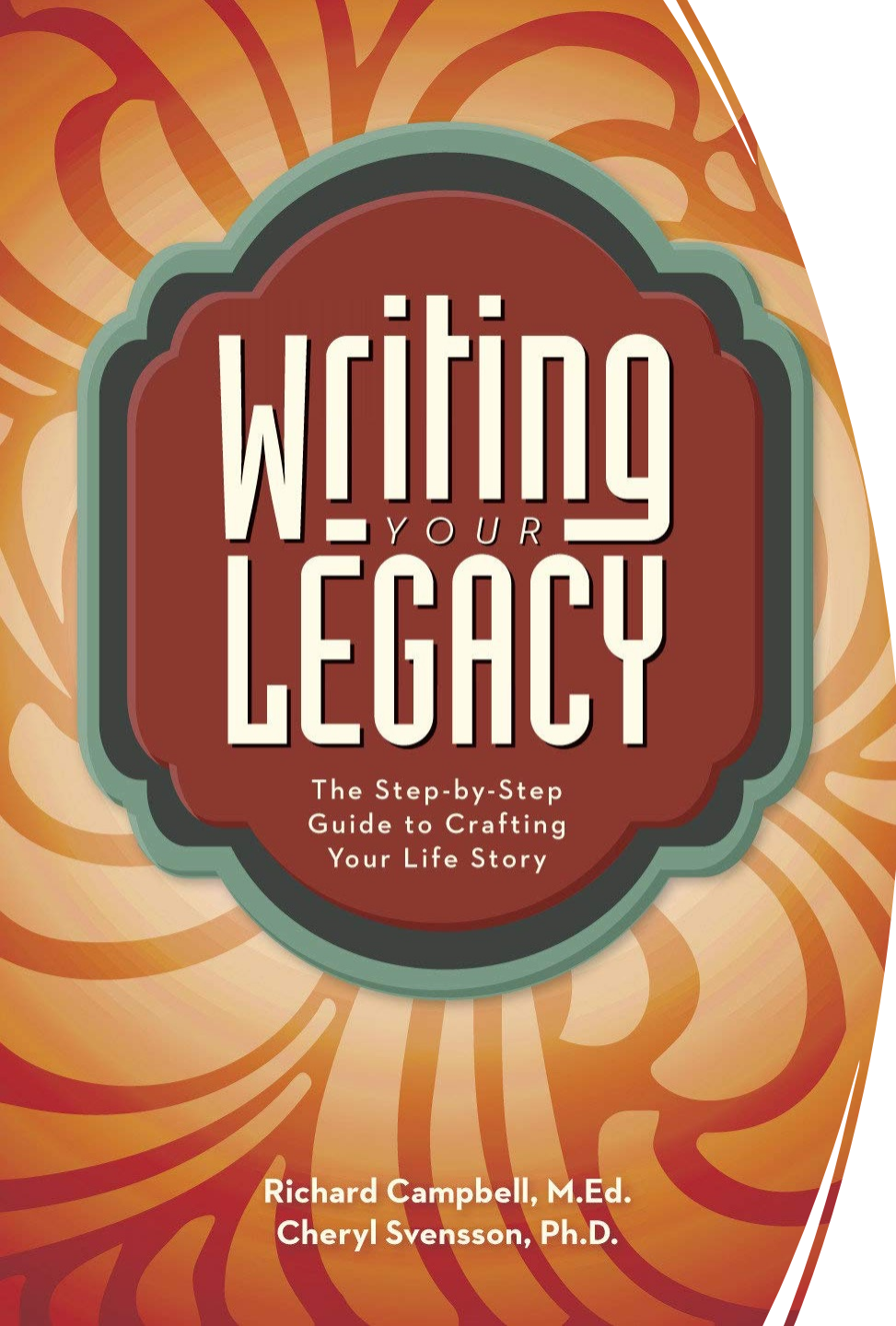
www.amazon.com



Uncovering treasures that matter

A Therapist's Guide to
Asking the Right Questions

Bonnie Bernell, EdD
Cheryl Svensson, PhD



Writing
YOUR
LEGACY

The Step-by-Step
Guide to Crafting
Your Life Story

Richard Campbell, M.Ed.
Cheryl Svensson, Ph.D.

Books

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Our youngest grandson

Arlo Svensson

1 year old March 14, 2023

Bucketty, NSW
Australia