ASJA Conference 2019
Memoir Confidential: It's Not About You; It's About the Reader
Lead by Diane O'Connell
diane@writetosellyourbook.com

Charting Out Your Story

There are six key moments in a memoir that chart out your emotional journey, and which form the basis for the plot. Let's take a look at each of these moments.

1. Crisis Point

This is the moment when you are at a turning point, when the road that lies before you will either defeat you, or will force you to make a life-altering decision. (Note: this is not necessarily the biggest crisis point.) This "flash-forward" moment will make the reader ask: How did the author get to this point? How will he or she get out of this jam? What's going to happen next?

Your Crisis Point: _____

_____

_____

2. Previous Reality

This is a scene or series of scenes that establish you and your world before the Crisis Point. We get to know your world and see how you are in your everyday life. This helps your reader identify with you and care about what happens to you.

Your Previous Reality: _____

_____

_____

3. The Shift

This is the disturbance that shakes up your Previous Reality. Like a pebble cast upon a placid stone, this event — or series of events — ripples out.

Your Shift: _____

_____

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4. Moment of Truth

This the biggest turning point in your story, sometimes referred to as "the dark night of the soul." It is the moment at which you are at your lowest, when all hope seems lost. You will either rise above your problem or sink into it. It is at this point that you will make a life-altering decision.

Your Moment of Truth: _____

_____

_____

5. The Way Home

This is the moment where you battle it out with your demons: whether it be an addiction, a toxic relationship, a career altering decision, etc. This is where the moment of truth is put to the test.

Your Way Home: _____

_____

_____

6. Aftermath

As a result of everything leading up to this moment, your world is forever changed. You have gained knowledge, an understanding of yourself and those who have affected your life, and have a new way of being in the world.

Your Aftermath: _____

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