

# To Tell or Not to Tell

*Balancing Privacy and Relationships When Writing Real Life Events*

Cindy Lambert

## Our Challenge:

- How do we write of the events in our lives without violating the privacy and trust of others who've played some part in our own life stories?
- Is it possible to find the freedom to tell the truth without destroying relationships, hurting people in our lives, or putting others at risk of public exposure?

## Establish 5 Healthy Boundaries

1. I will identify my *potential* audience
  - A. Is my writing for my eyes and God's eyes only?
    - 1) \_\_\_\_\_
    - 2) \_\_\_\_\_
    - 3) \_\_\_\_\_
    - 4) \_\_\_\_\_
    - 5) \_\_\_\_\_
  - B. Is it for \_\_\_\_\_
    - 1) There is rarely such a thing as \_\_\_\_\_
    - 2) PUBLICATION not only includes books but also \_\_\_\_\_
2. I will prayerfully \_\_\_\_\_
  - A. I will picture \_\_\_\_\_
  - B. I will examine my \_\_\_\_\_  
\_that may be \_\_\_\_\_
    - We may tell ourselves, "I am writing to..."
    - But our hidden motives may be...
  - C. I will ask myself \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_
  - D. I will submit \_\_\_\_\_
  - E. I will be \_\_\_\_\_
3. I will weigh \_\_\_\_\_
  - A. If a person is still alive:
    - 1) How will this affect that person \_\_\_\_\_?
    - 2) How will this affect that person \_\_\_\_\_?
    - 3) How will this affect \_\_\_\_\_? SEP

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B. What if persons X, Y, and Z read this?

1) Consider friends, family, coworkers and \_\_\_\_\_

4. I will weigh my timing \_\_\_\_\_

A. God's timing is perfect. Do not be \_\_\_\_\_

B. Why do you feel called to tell your message \_\_\_\_\_ ?

C. Accept that closed doors and delays may be God's <sup>[ ] [ ]</sup><sub>[SEP]</sub> way of allowing time to pass for \_\_\_\_\_

1) \_\_\_\_\_

2) \_\_\_\_\_

3) \_\_\_\_\_

5. I will be honest, \_\_\_\_\_

A. TERMS TO KNOW: **libel and slander**. Libel and slander are types of defamatory statements. Libel is a written defamatory statement, and slander is a spoken or oral defamatory statement. <http://www.nolo.com/legal-encyclopedia/libel-vs-slander-different-types-defamation.html>)

○ Do my words convey an **unjustly** unfavorable impression?

○ Do my words **without just cause** expose another to public contempt?

○ Do my words make a **false** statement that causes people to have a bad opinion of someone?

## Commit to 5 Guiding Principles

1. I will tell the story \_\_\_\_\_

2. I will tell the story to bring \_\_\_\_\_

A. I will focus on the reader's needs and good, not \_\_\_\_\_

B. I will tell enough for \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_

○ **Every** scene I write will have a **specific purpose** for \_\_\_\_\_

3. I will remember that there are many \_\_\_\_\_

A. Perceptions and reality \_\_\_\_\_

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- 1) Memory is subject to
  - a. \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. \_\_\_\_\_
  - d. \_\_\_\_\_
  - e. \_\_\_\_\_
4. I will take responsibility for my choices, behaviors, and attitudes and \_\_\_\_\_
5. I will be diligent that my words will bring \_\_\_\_\_

## Employ Tested Techniques

1. Use LEGAL STATEMENTS. **SEE BELOW.** A note from Cindy: SEEK LEGAL COUNSEL! I am NOT a lawyer and am not qualified to offer legal advice.
  - A. **DISCLAIMER STATEMENTS.** The difference between \_\_\_\_\_
  - B. **GATHER RELEASE STATEMENTS as much as reasonably possible:**
2. Disguise the person you are writing about
  - A. Change \_\_\_\_\_
  - B. Change \_\_\_\_\_  
Alter \_\_\_\_\_
  - C. Split a "real" \_\_\_\_\_
  - D. Create a composite character \_\_\_\_\_
3. Reduce a particular person to a symbol - instead of using a name the person can become "one who is controlling," or "one who doesn't know boundaries" or "one who betrays a confidence".
  - A. \_\_\_\_\_
  - B. \_\_\_\_\_
4. Understand the reality of dialog technique: what was actually said vs. what truthfully portrays the *meaning* of what was said.
5. Submit your DRAFT to some \_\_\_\_\_
  - A. SELF-editing \_\_\_\_\_
  - B. Second opinion who \_\_\_\_\_
  - C. A LEGAL \_\_\_\_\_

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## **3 EXAMPLES OF POTENTIAL DISCLAIMER STATEMENTS for NONFICTION**

***A note from Cindy: SEEK LEGAL COUNSEL! I am NOT a lawyer and am not qualified to offer legal advice.***

[Note: If publishing through a publishing house, always request their official policy, wording, and placement of disclaimer. Also inquire about the need for a legal read.]

- *(memoir, autobiography, or recent history)* Some names and identifying details have been changed to protect the privacy of individuals.
- *(memoir, autobiography, or recent history)* I have tried to recreate events, locales and conversations from my memories of them. In order to maintain their anonymity in some instances I have changed the names of individuals and places, I may have changed some identifying characteristics and details such as physical properties, occupations and places of residence.
- *(advice, how-to)* Although the author and publisher have made every effort to ensure that the information in this book was correct at press time, the author and publisher do not assume and hereby disclaim any liability to any party for any loss, damage, or disruption caused by errors or omissions, whether such errors or omissions result from negligence, accident, or any other cause.

### EXAMPLE OF A POTENTIAL RELEASE STATEMENT:

***A note from Cindy: SEEK LEGAL COUNSEL! I am NOT a lawyer and am not qualified to offer legal advice.***

[Note: If publishing through a publishing house, always request their official policy and wording. Know the deadline for release statements as it pertains to print date. Also inquire about the need for a legal read.]

[Date]

[Author's Name]

[Author's Address]

Dear [Author's name]:

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**Cindy Lambert**

You have informed me that you are writing or have written a book tentatively titled \_\_\_\_\_ ("the Book"), to be published by [insert name of publishing house]. You have offered me the opportunity to review and approve your content about me. I hereby acknowledge receipt and approval of that material.

I irrevocably consent to the publication and use of my name [or insert pseudonym agreed to], photographs of me [if applicable], and information and quotations from and about me based upon our discussions and any materials provided to you by me, in any and all derivations and editions of the Book, in all media, and in the promotion and advertising thereof.

I understand there may be editorial changes in the material between now and final publication, and that those changes will not substantially change the meaning or content of the material.

I waive any claims that I may have against you, your publisher, and their licensees, successors and assigns, based upon such use, including without limitation any claims with respect to defamation, rights of privacy and publicity and copyright.

Signed, ***[Note that the person whose permission you are seeking, not you, fills in their signature and date.]***

\_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent that I am eighteen (18) years of age or older, and if I am not at least eighteen years of age, I have secured the written consent of a parent or guardian as signified below.

Consent of Parent or Guardian: \_\_\_\_\_