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 ____________________________________________
      o We may tell ourselves, “I am writing to…”
      o 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 ___________________________?
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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 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
      o Do my words convey an unjustly unfavorable impression?
      o Do my words without just cause expose another to public contempt?
      o 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 ________
      o 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.

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[Date]

[Author’s Name]
[Author’s Address]

Dear [Author’s name]:
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: __________________________