

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 _____?

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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>)

○ 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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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: _____