



write

TO BE.

2024 Life Enrichment Program & Services

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“I didn’t realize how much I went through and how fulfilled my life was until I told my story. It helped me get to a sense of completion that I didn’t have before.”

- Anne M., Private Client, 93 years old

Team



Camille Bradbury

Founder, Lead Writer,
Group Facilitator

Camille, an experienced end-of-life specialist, founded Write to Be based on her background in private caregiving, elder care, and hospice services. Over the past five years, Camille has focused on working closely with private clients to publish their life stories.

With a degree in professional writing and a career in technical support for seniors, Camille developed Write to Be services into a program to bring connection, purpose, and meaning to residents in 55+ communities, retirement homes, and assisted-living facilities nationwide.

She holds a bachelor's degree in Professional Writing from the University of Colorado at Denver and a Journalism Certificate from NYU. She also has significant training in trauma-based modalities, counseling, spiritual practices, and victim advocacy.



Jennifer Trezza

Copy Editor

Jennifer has 20 years of experience in copy editing in small organizations to large global corporations. Since 2020, she has dedicated her career to humanitarian aid and social good initiatives.

Jennifer graduated with a bachelor of arts from George Washington University and has a master's degree from The New School, Parsons School of Design focusing on design research and global business innovation.



Overview

Write to Be is a unique life enrichment program developed to bring meaning and purpose to seniors by publishing their life stories.

This collaborative process is organic and based on connection and companionship. The power of the program is more than a keepsake for future generations, Write to Be supports seniors in examining their experiences to draw meaning from a life well-lived.

Based on experience in hospice and private elder care services, we guide and support seniors in remembering their accomplishments and tribulations to inspire personal resilience and self-empowerment.

In addition to working one-on-one to compile their memories, residents also come together to share experiences with their community and family members. Providing a space for this connection, the program has a tremendous ability to ease loneliness, anxiety, and depression.

“Above all else, retired residents, like all of us, want to be seen, heard, and matter. We want to have purpose.”

- Camille Bradbury, Founder, Write to Be

Research

Life enrichment programs make senior living residents happier, healthier, and more connected. That translates to better outcomes at nearly every level of the community. However, when those of us in the industry look at life enrichment activities, none of us are satisfied. We all think it could and should be better, but it's difficult to know what better means.¹

The Necessary Questions for a New Program

- Does it capture the resident's attention?
- Is it something they want to engage in?
- Is it approachable and stress-free?
- Is it accessible?

Too often we can fall into thinking life enrichment is a necessary cost to keep residents busy, entertained, and amused. **Today's residents are looking for meaning.**²



1. Elder Care Alliance, "The Importance of Life Enrichment Programs at a Senior Living Community," December, 10, 2023, <https://eldercarealliance.org/blog/importance-of-life-enrichment/>

2. UC San Diego Today, "Have You Found Meaning in Life? Answer Determines Health and Well-Being," December, 10, 2019, <https://today.ucsd.edu/story/have-you-found-meaning-in-life-answer-determines-health-and-well-being>

Industry Analysis

Below are current activities researched from 20 assisted living and retirement communities in the western region of the United States.

Current Life Enrichment Offerings

- Fitness classes, TaiChi, water aerobics, and yoga
- Painting, art classes, writing workshops
- Meditation
- Flower arranging
- Ice cream socials, happy hours, and dining outings
- Speakers, lectures, webinars

Strengths	Weakness	Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diverse offerings • Activity calendars are busy • Opportunities for residents to socialize • Physical, mental, and spiritual offerings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited opportunities for seniors who prefer one-on-one interactions • Limited opportunities for purpose and meaning • Limited support groups focused on deep and meaningful end-of-life conversations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equity for seniors that prefer solitary interactions • New offering to combat anxiety and depression • Unique offering to attract new residents • Offers technical assistance to connect to family

“One of the big things we struggle with as an organization is engaging with residents who don’t come to programming at all.”

- Nathan Castaneda,
National Director of Resident Engagement, Aspira Living

Program

Each phase represents the milestones of the Write to Be program.

- 
- Phase 1**
Generate Interest
Meet with residents, explain the program, answer questions, determine interest, and listen to needs.
 - Phase 2**
Start Personal Interviews
Facilitate one-on-one interviews to start each client's story.
 - Phase 3**
Roundtable Discussions
Once a week hold roundtable discussions for participants to enjoy the process of sharing memories, personal reflections and challenges.
 - Phase 4**
Connect to the Outside World
Introduce technology assistance to connect clients with external family and friends.

Phase 1: Generate Interest

The success of any life enrichment program is based on the interest of your residents. This phase is where we start so you can confidently move forward with the program.

For the first two weeks, we volunteer to meet personally with residents and hold information sessions, answer questions, and generate interest in the program.

During this phase, we will:

- Build personal relationships with residents
- Host a talk or hold an info session about telling their story
- Identify the challenges we may face with your specific facility

After interest from 5 or more residents, we will send you a proposal to kick off the program.



Phase 2: Personal One-on-One Interviews

The purpose of curating stories of memories and experiences is more than a gift for future generations, it is a container for residents to explore their lives and process the end-of-life experience.

In one-on-one interviews, we build a relationship with clients to cultivate trust and companionship to facilitate natural and meaningful conversations. The structure is flexible as every client is unique. We don't follow a set of questions during one-on-one interviews, but is an organic process, a natural conversation built from intergenerational friendship.

As clients tell their stories, we listen with respect and honor serving as a witness to their wisdom. This is the power of the program. In sharing their life story, through humor and sometimes heartbreak, they realize their resilience bringing a sense of peace when looking back on their lives.

Before clients attend roundtable discussions with others, they are grounded in their own stories and experiences with four weeks of personal one-on-one interviews.



Phase 3: Roundtable Discussions



Many seniors understandably struggle to cope with the reality that it's the end of their lives. Receiving emotional and moral support from others who are facing a similar situation through sharing practical advice and coping skills leads to a less isolating experience.

Although many life enrichment programs have social events and activities, there is little opportunity to explore personal existential questions. Embarking on this project provides that focus to discuss deeper questions and beliefs with the support to hear from others to understand how to view their current experience.

In phase three, we introduce weekly roundtable discussions to share what it's like to explore the past. This provides residents with an outlet for processing the feelings that may come up during the process.

Groups are led by an experienced facilitator trained in trauma-based modalities, extensive interpersonal counseling, spiritual training, and victim advocacy. We use material from individual interviews to curate a theme or topic of discussion for each weekly session.

Examples of focus for roundtable discussions are:

- What surprised you about your story?
- What experiences are difficult to remember and why?
- With the knowledge of your story, do you see yourself in a different light?

It is recommended that the roundtable discussions be gender specific, as men and women have different challenges. This is the next level of engagement for residents to have enhanced satisfaction.

Phase 3: Connect to the Outside World

While traditional life enrichment programs may primarily offer creative activities to engage residents, research says technology assistance has become the most requested need.

Technology helps residents to connect with family and external relationships outside the facility. Often seniors struggle with accessibility issues regarding sight, hearing, and/or learning new technology advancements that leave them disconnected from the outside world.

The more disconnection over time, families can struggle to find topics to facilitate good conversations with seniors creating more isolation. The project provides them with a reason to connect. Given the choice of who to reach out to, they might ask for a reminder of a story, a memory, or how they have impacted their children's and grandchildren's lives. In this way, a connection is built between family members and friends.

Experienced in technical solutions for seniors, we meet clients where they are. Do they text? Email? Use a phone? Facebook? With each resident, we'll introduce appropriate technology avenues like social media, FaceTime sessions, email, and other opportunities for clients to connect with family and friends to spark memories and build relationships.



“We can introduce new technology to residents not just giving it to them, but empowering them to utilize it to make their own lives better for themselves.”

Tanya Snow, Director of Operations,
Bria Communities

Measuring Results

The power of this program is in meaningful engagement with other residents and the satisfaction that comes with connecting to others and the rest of their extended family.

Throughout each phase, the goal of the program is to increase engagement and resident satisfaction. Verifying that the program is meeting the needs of your residents is a critical aspect of ensuring the well-being and satisfaction of the people serviced. Satisfaction is measured by gathering direct feedback at the start, during, and end of their participation in the program. Monitoring changes in contentment and overall happiness can provide valuable data for the quality and success of the program.



Residents will begin participating through personal one-on-one interviews and will engage with other internal residents through roundtable discussions. Technology assistance will then connect them with the outside world to promote satisfaction.

We'll use questionnaires during the interview process and post-group sessions to gauge how residents feel about their lives and experiences.

“I felt so honored that my boys wanted to know more about my life. It was the best gift I could have received.”

- Nancy N., Assisted-Living Resident, 84 years old

Pricing

This is the minimum program pricing structure.

Proposed Cost

This is a breakdown of the time it will take for Founder, Camille Bradbury, to come in person to the facility to engage with residents 2-3 times a week. Each phase will depend on how many residents want to sign up.

A minimum of 5 residents is required to start the program.

	Weekly Price	Monthly Group Cost
5 RESIDENTS	\$250/week per resident	\$4500/ mo.
INCLUDES	Personal One-on-One Interviews and Tech Assistance 1hr Weekly Roundtable Discussion	Transcription and published book for each client within 3-6 months



Case Studies

Technology and Connection

Anne B. Merkling

Project: 6 months

Book length: 150 pages

Family members involved: 5 connections

Technology: Alexa Show (speaker phone)

Anne B. Merkling was 93 years old when she embarked on her project with Write to Be. Camille set up weekly virtual sessions with Anne to hear her story. Anne was the wife of General Richard E. Merkling of the U.S. Air Force. The family was always interested in telling his story, but not Anne's. When Richard's story was published she was devastated that the family stories were not included, "it was mostly stories about the war. It didn't include any stories of our life or our family."

When Richard passed, Anne was becoming increasingly overwhelmed and upset by world events on the news, glued to the television day and night. Anne's youngest daughter sought out Write to Be to preserve the family stories and give her a project to focus on to distract her from the hopelessness that had consumed her.

Camille set up weekly phone calls with Anne. As Anne's hearing got increasingly worse she struggled to operate the telephone. Camille then set up an Alexa Show device to allow her to "drop in" by speakerphone so Anne could clearly hear their conversation and relax in her favorite chair to tell her story.

As Camille and Anne's relationship grew, Anne recalls these conversations were like "talking to an old friend". As she told her story she was amazed at how many adventures their family had, how full her life was, and how what seemed like the most devastating of times with her family had a way of working themselves out. She was always the most concerned about conflict in the family and telling her story brought her peace by remembering how they overcame these challenges.

Camille involved Anne's family and they provided stories they wanted to include for Camille to ask Anne about, and her son-in-law meticulously collected a series of pictures from their time growing up.



Relieving Anxiety and Depression

Nancy K. Nelson

Project: 3 months

Book length: 50 pages

Family members involved: 3 connections

Technology: Email

Nancy's story was captured during in-person interviews with Camille. Nancy had particularly wanted to record her story after her best friend had self-published her book. She was excited to be included in her friend's story. However, Nancy struggled to "get it all down" and needed some help with the compilation of self-publishing her book.

The cost of the project was paid for by her sons but took some convincing as her sons had experienced early childhood trauma with their mother. Although Nancy was sold solely on having a book published about her life, her sons invested in this project for companionship knowing Nancy was struggling with anxiety and depression. They wanted their mother to be involved in a project and have a container to process the end of her life.

Camille and Nancy became "fast friends", as Nancy would often say. Nancy's story had numerous traumas and showed incredible resilience, as most stories hold. Her perspective started with great regret to that of empowerment as we discussed the decisions she made throughout her life. She realized how much it took to save herself from a crippling car accident that put her in a body cast to an abusive relationship that ultimately left her broke with three boys to care for. As she told her story, her family said her perspective shifted and she was able to feel a sense of peace about dying.

When she passed and her sons were able to read her story, it also offered them understanding and healing in knowing more about her reasons for the decisions she made that impacted them.

Her grandson says now that he is older he wishes he had a chance to know her better and feels like he now has that chance because he gets to read her story.



Connection to Family

Richard E. Merkling

Project: 6 months

Book length: 150 pages

Family members involved: 5 connections

Technology: Recorded phone calls

Richard Merkling was 85 years old when he embarked on Write to Be. Richard was a prominent figure in his life as a four-star General in the Air Force, he often told stories of his life to his grandchildren.

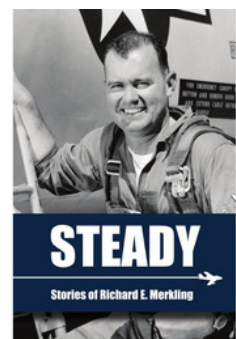
His family was eager to publish his story. We also had the privilege of many grandchildren who wanted to be a part of it. Richard had a different relationship with each grandchild so his stories and memories varied when he spoke to them.

Richard shared critical moments with his eldest grandson from the war. From flying fighter jets against the Russians, building the F-18, and questionable supernatural encounters.

He shared with his younger granddaughter his regrets, why they moved from one place to another, and how he felt about his transition from becoming a general to a retiree.

One of the challenges with this story was collecting the accurate dates of his life events and his adult children became involved to curate the timeline as his memory was fading. Some contributors were illustrators and others were researchers. For those who wanted to be involved, they provided their talents to contribute to his story.

They shared the published book at his 90th birthday party and has been a treasure to his family since he died in 2017. It has become a lifetime treasure for his children and grandchildren for years to come.



FAQs

Common questions about the program.

How long is the program?

At Write to Be, we understand the uncertainty of resident's health that could impact planning and commitments when engaging in a long-term program. That's why the program and cost are structured in 3-6 months intervals to allow for our team to compile a completed book and for residents to engage as long as they are able and interested.

What happens if the client passes away before the book is completed?

Built into the program is time for completing the book. For every one-on-one interview, we include two hours for writing. That way, the manuscript is developed in real-time as the client shares their story. If the resident does not complete the interviews for a finished book, Write to Be will provide as complete as possible novella or novel to the person of the resident's choosing as determined at the start of the project.

What happens if clients drop out of the program?

Our team is dedicated to ensuring that each resident who participates in the program intimately understands how the program works before joining. However, if a resident decides to stop interviews, Write to Be will attempt to recruit another resident to fill their spot. Payment for that member will only be charged for three months.

What if clients don't have any family members to connect with?

Technical assistance for residents is flexible. If residents do not have family or, do not want to engage with them for this project, we have found there is still a great need for seniors to connect to the outside world. We will adjust this service ensuring that it fits each resident's life and desires.

Can clients opt out of the roundtable discussions with other residents and just work one-on-one?

Absolutely! We understand that this project can be personal and private to residents. However, if residents choose not to attend the roundtable discussions in month three, the cost remains the same to participate.



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