

# How to Know If You Should Write a Self-help Memoir

A 15-Question Readiness Assessment for Women with Transformation Stories



[www.daledarley.com](http://www.daledarley.com)

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Writing a memoir is  
embracing vulnerability and  
allowing  
your truth to shine.



# Welcome



Hi, it's great to meet you. I'm Dale Darley, the Word Alchemist. I help women (mostly) write transformational nonfiction known as hybrid memoir or memoir as self-help, and then design a strategy for turning the book into a business.

I've always believed words have power – not just to communicate, but to transform. I didn't expect how much my life would prove that theory.

Life, of course, decided to play with me. I've had some health challenges, which have taught me that health comes before wealth. If I want cake, I have to make it!!!

Writing saved me. Not polished professional writing, but raw, honest writing that helped me make sense of who I was becoming. Journaling has always been my lifeline. Words are my way home to myself. I have written till I bled on more than one occasion... And cried a lot.

Throughout my life, raw, honest writing has been a lifeline. I began coaching women to write books that blend story with self-help, and I kept hearing the same gap: "I've finished... now what?" That's what we explore.

As a 3/6 emotional projector and INFJ, I see patterns others miss. I sense when someone is ready for transformation, hiding from the truth, or prepared to claim their voice.

My journey taught me our stories – especially the messy middle parts – are often our greatest gifts.

# *Roadmap of the Questions*

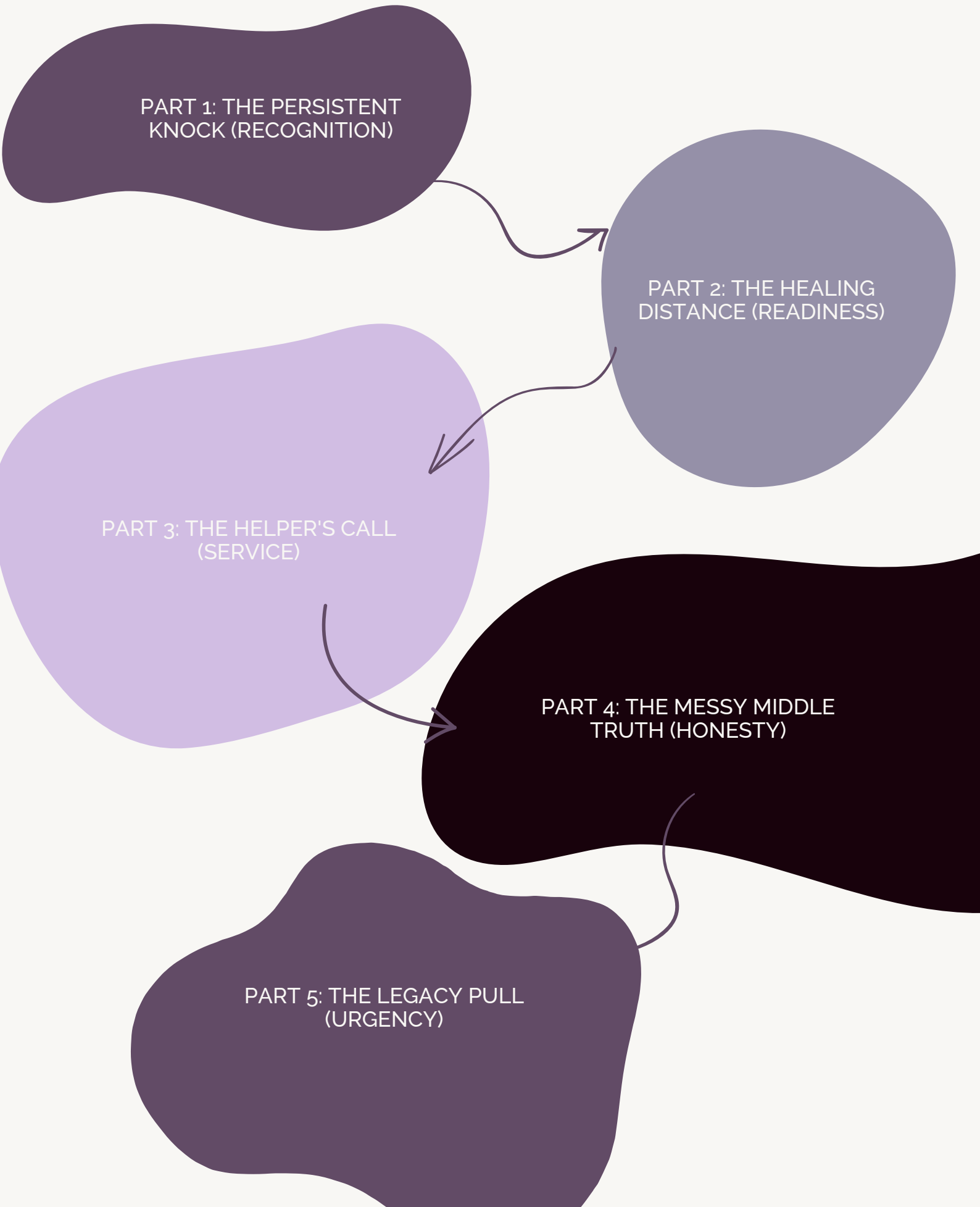
PART 1: THE PERSISTENT  
KNOCK (RECOGNITION)

PART 2: THE HEALING  
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01

**PART 1: THE  
PERSISTENT KNOCK  
(RECOGNITION)**

Does This Story Keep  
Finding You?

## DOES THIS STORY KEEP FINDING YOU?

### The Persistent Knock (Recognition)

1. Is there an experience or transformation you find yourself returning to again and again - in conversations, in your journal, in quiet moments when you're trying to think about something else?

This looks like: You're at dinner with friends discussing something completely unrelated, and somehow you circle back to this experience. Or you're journaling about your day, and this theme keeps appearing. Or you wake up at 3am thinking about it.

☐ Yes (1 point)

2. When you share pieces of this story with others, do they lean forward? Do they say "You need to write about this" or "I needed to hear that"?

This looks like: People remember what you said weeks later. They reference your story when talking about their own struggles. They tell you it gave them permission to feel or do something they were afraid of.

☐ Yes (1 point)

3. Have you caught yourself thinking "Someone should write about this," only to realise you're the someone?

This looks like: You've searched for books on this topic and felt frustrated that none of them really capture what you experienced. Or you keep thinking "Why isn't anyone talking about this?" while ignoring that you're uniquely positioned to talk about it.

☐ Yes (1 point)

# *Journal Prompt*

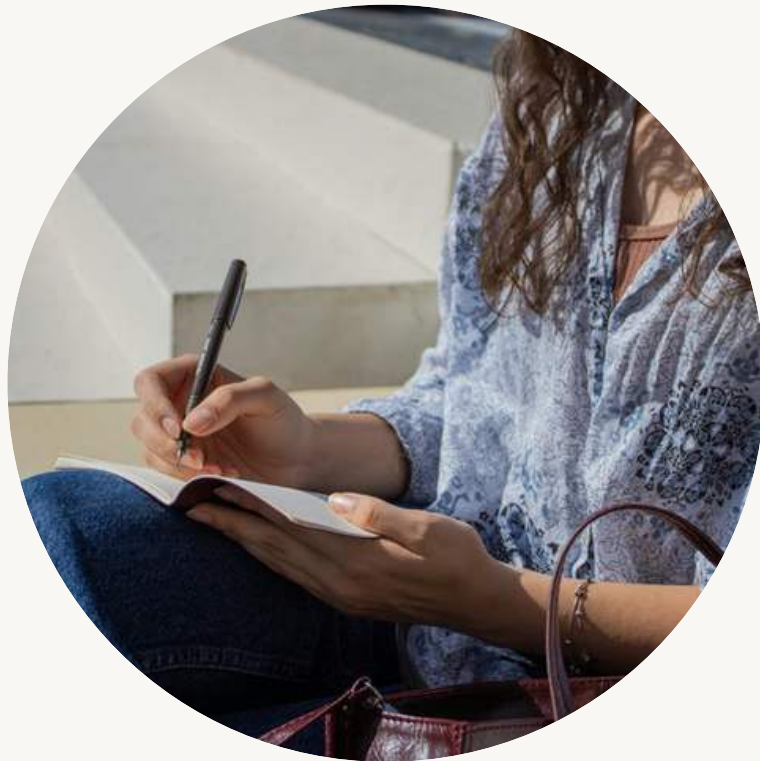
WHAT STORY KEEPS KNOCKING? WRITE FOR 5 MINUTES WITHOUT STOPPING: "THE STORY THAT WON'T LEAVE ME ALONE IS ABOUT..."

# *What This Means*

If you scored 2-3 points, your story is actively trying to get your attention. It's not going away. This persistence isn't your imagination - it's recognition that something wants to be expressed. Listen to that nagging voice.

If you scored 0-1 points, you might have multiple stories competing for attention, or your story might still be forming. That's okay. Keep noticing what surfaces. I recommend a week of observation – just notice what you notice.





Writing reveals the  
invisible threads that  
connect our past, present,  
and future.

02

**PART 2: THE HEALING  
DISTANCE (READINESS)**

Can You Tell It Without  
Falling Apart?

# 02

## Part 2

### CAN YOU TELL IT WITHOUT FALLING APART?

#### The Healing Distance (Readiness)

4. Can you talk about this transformation without falling apart - not because you're numb to it, but because you've processed it enough to share?

This looks like: You can tell the story and feel the emotions without being consumed by them. You might tear up, but you don't dissociate or shut down. You can hold space for both the pain of what happened and the growth that came from it.

This does NOT look like: A perfectly told story with no emotion. Real authority includes appropriate feeling - just not unprocessed trauma.

☐ Yes (1 point)

5. Do you know what you learned from this experience that others need to hear - not what you think you should have learned, but what you actually learned?

This looks like: You can articulate specific insights that surprised you or went against conventional wisdom. You know the difference between the Hallmark card version ("Everything happens for a reason!") and the messy, real truth you discovered.

☐ Yes (1 point)

6. When you imagine writing this story, does your body expand (even if you're scared) rather than contract or shut down?

This looks like: There's fear, yes - but underneath it is aliveness, not deadness. Your chest opens slightly. You feel nervous but also right. This is different from the heavy dread of "I'm not ready" or the frozen feeling of being back in the trauma.

☐ Yes (1 point)

# *Journal Prompt*

WRITE ONE PARAGRAPH ABOUT YOUR TRANSFORMATION RIGHT NOW. THEN NOTICE: DOES THIS FEEL LIKE PROCESSING (WORKING THROUGH IT FOR YOURSELF) OR SHARING (OFFERING IT TO SOMEONE ELSE)? THERE'S NO WRONG ANSWER - JUST DATA ABOUT YOUR READINESS.

# *What This Means*

If you scored 2-3 points, you've walked far enough through the fire to offer guidance. You're not still in the flames. The healing distance is there - not complete closure (that's not required), but enough integration to share with authority.

If you scored 0-1 points, you might be earlier in your process than you realised. This doesn't mean your story isn't valuable - it means it might need more time to metabolise. Consider whether this is a book to write in 6-12 months rather than now.





Through the pages of a  
memoir, we find solace in  
the shared human  
experience.

# 03

## **PART 3: THE HELPER'S CALL (SERVICE)**

Is This About Giving  
Permission?



# Part 3

## IS THIS ABOUT GIVING PERMISSION?

### The Helper's Call (Service)

7. Do you have something you wish someone had told you during your darkest moment - and now you're in a position to say it?

This looks like: You know exactly what you needed to hear and didn't. A permission slip. A truth. A validation. And you can now give that to someone else.

☐ Yes (1 point)

8. When you imagine NOT sharing this story, does something in you protest? Does it feel like withholding something important?

This looks like: There's a subtle ache or frustration when you think about keeping this to yourself. Not guilt (that's different), but a sense that this story has outgrown being just yours. It wants to be useful.

☐ Yes (1 point)

9. Can you name specific people (real or imagined) who need the permission only your story can give?

This looks like: You can picture her. Maybe she's you five years ago. Maybe she's your sister, your friend, or the woman you met once who shared something that made you think "She needs to know she's not alone in this."

☐ Yes (1 point)

# *Journal Prompt*

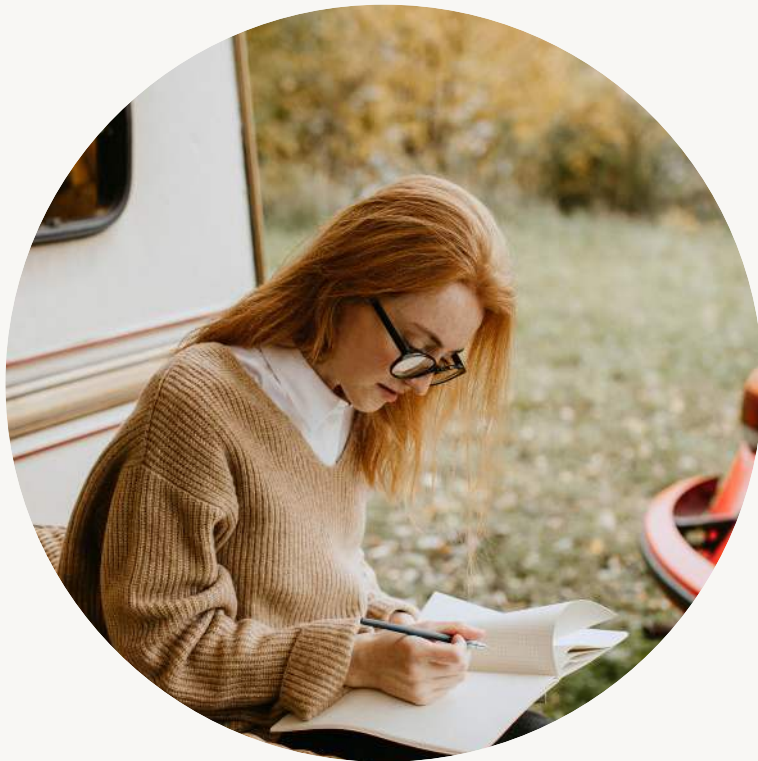
COMPLETE THIS SENTENCE AND KEEP WRITING: "THE  
WOMAN WHO NEEDS MY STORY IS THE ONE WHO  
BELIEVES \_\_\_\_\_ BUT NEEDS TO KNOW \_\_\_\_\_."

# *What This Means*

If you scored 2-3 points, you're not writing to process - you're writing to serve. Your story has transmuted from personal experience into medicine for others. This is the shift from "my story" to "a story that happens to have happened to me but now belongs to anyone who needs it."

If you scored 0-1 points, your story might still be primarily yours to process and integrate. That's not a failure - it's just where you are. You can still write, but it might be journaling rather than a book for others. Yet.





Writing a memoir is an act  
of liberation, freeing  
oneself from the shackles of  
untold stories.

# 04

## **PART 4: THE MESSY MIDDLE TRUTH (HONESTY)**

Are You Willing to Write  
What's Real?

**ARE YOU WILLING TO  
WRITE WHAT'S REAL?****The Messy Middle Truth (Honesty)**

10. Can you write about this without prettifying the pain, forcing gratitude, or performing "I am healed"?

This looks like: You can acknowledge that something was genuinely hard without rushing to the lesson. You can say "this part still hurts" or "I haven't figured this out yet" without feeling like a failure. You understand that real transformation includes darkness, not just dawn.

☐ Yes (1 point)

11. Is there rage, grief, or unresolved complexity in your story that you're willing to include honestly?

This looks like: You're not afraid of being messy on the page. You know that the parts that aren't neatly resolved are often the most powerful parts - they're what make you trustworthy.

☐ Yes (1 point)

12. Are you ready to write from your messy middle - still figuring things out, healing, and becoming - without pretending you've arrived at the pinnacle or destination?

This looks like: You can embrace the paradox of being both guide and fellow traveller. You're comfortable with "Here's what I've learned so far" rather than needing to present as the expert with all answers.

☐ Yes (1 point)

# *Journal Prompt*

WHAT PART OF YOUR STORY ARE YOU MOST AFRAID TO TELL HONESTLY? WHAT WOULD IT COST YOU TO INCLUDE IT? WHAT WOULD IT COST YOU NOT TO INCLUDE IT? (THAT TENSION IS PROBABLY WHERE YOUR POWER LIVES.)

# *What This Means*

If you scored 2-3 points, you understand that a hybrid memoir requires truth over performance. You're willing to be seen in your unfinished becoming, which is what gives you authority. Your messy middle isn't something to overcome before writing - it's your qualification TO write.

If you scored 0-1 points, you might be approaching this as "I'll write when I'm fully healed" or "I need to have all the answers first." That's understandable, but it's also what keeps books unwritten. Consider: What if your incompleteness, the messy middle, makes you the right person to write this?





*A memoir is a love letter  
to the self, celebrating the  
beauty of a life well-lived.*

05

**PART 5: THE LEGACY  
PULL (URGENCY)**

Does This Story Feel  
Urgent?

**DOES THIS STORY FEEL  
URGENT?****The Legacy Pull (Urgency)**

13. If you could leave behind one piece of wisdom that might change how someone sees themselves, would it come from this transformation?

This looks like: When you imagine your legacy - what you'll be remembered for or what you want to contribute - this story is central to it. Not necessarily the only thing, but definitely in the top three.

☐ Yes (1 point)

14. Do you feel like your unique combination of experience and perspective makes you the only person who can tell this story in this particular way?

This looks like: Not that no one else has had similar experiences, but that your specific intersection of factors - your background, your lens, your voice, your particular insights - creates something no one else can replicate.

☐ Yes (1 point)

15. When you imagine yourself at 80, would you regret not writing this? Does the thought of dying with this story untold feel like a betrayal - of yourself and of who needs it?

This looks like: There's a visceral NO that rises up when you think about not writing this. It's a quiet knowing, and you can feel it in your body. You know this is something you need to do, even if you're terrified.

☐ Yes (1 point)

# *Journal Prompt*

FAST FORWARD TO YOUR 80TH BIRTHDAY. WHAT WOULD THE WOMAN YOU'VE BECOME WANT YOU TO KNOW ABOUT THIS BOOK YOU'RE CONSIDERING? WHAT WOULD SHE SAY ABOUT THE DECISION YOU'RE MAKING RIGHT NOW?

# *What This Means*

If you scored 2-3 points, this isn't just your story anymore. It belongs to the people who need it, even if you haven't met them yet. The urgency you feel isn't ego - it's recognition of a debt you owe: to yourself for walking through this, and to others for illuminating a path they're on.

If you scored 0-1 points, this might be a "someday" book rather than a "now" book. That's legitimate. Not every story needs to be written immediately. But be honest: Is it not urgent because it's not ready, or because you're scared? Those are different things requiring different responses.





The power of a memoir lies  
not in its perfection but in  
its authenticity.

06

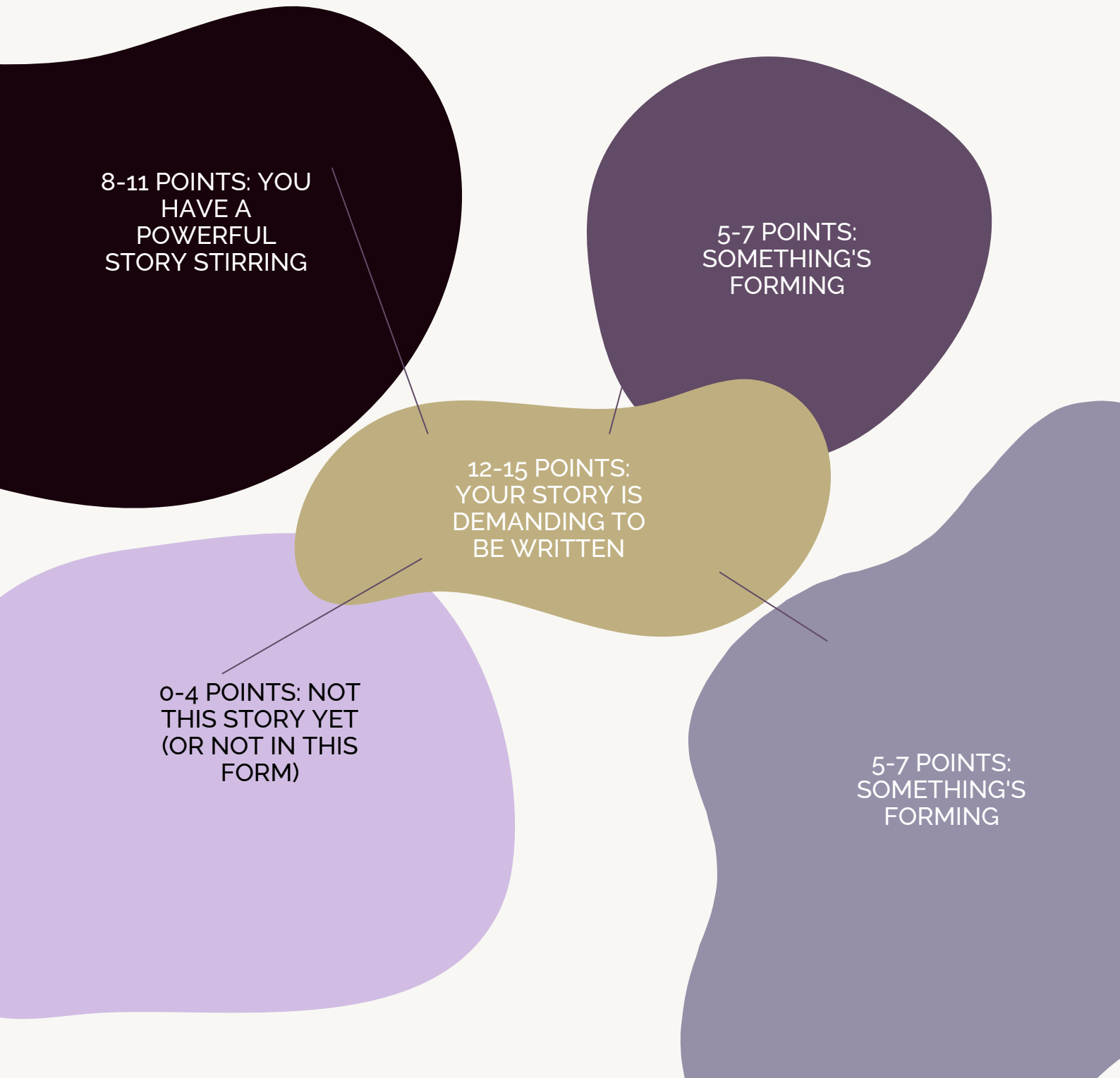
## **YOUR RESULTS**

What Your Score Reveals

# *Your Results*

Now let's look at what your score means - but more importantly, let's look at WHERE you scored highest and lowest. That pattern matters more than the total number.

## WHERE ARE YOU?



8-11 POINTS: YOU  
HAVE A  
POWERFUL  
STORY STIRRING

5-7 POINTS:  
SOMETHING'S  
FORMING

12-15 POINTS:  
YOUR STORY IS  
DEMANDING TO  
BE WRITTEN

0-4 POINTS: NOT  
THIS STORY YET  
(OR NOT IN THIS  
FORM)

5-7 POINTS:  
SOMETHING'S  
FORMING

## Total Your Score Across All Five Parts

Your Total: \_\_\_ / 15 points

### Overall Interpretation:

*12-15 points: Your Story Is Demanding to Be Written*

This score says your story is ready, and you might be too. The insistence you feel isn't your imagination - it's genuine recognition that something wants to be expressed and is ready to be shared.

If you scored high across the board, you're in the sweet spot. You have recognition, readiness, service orientation, honesty, and urgency. The only real question is: When will you start?

If you scored high everywhere except Part 2 (Readiness): Your story is calling loudly, but you might need a bit more processing time or support before writing for others. Consider whether working with a coach or doing deeper journaling first would help you get to that healing distance.

*In writing a memoir, we  
preserve fragments of our  
past and gift them to  
future generations.*

# 06

## *8-11 points: You Have a Powerful Story Stirring*

Something is definitely here. Your task now is to explore whether you're ready to write it or still processing it - and to identify what's holding you back.

Look at where you scored highest:

- High in Part 1 but low in Part 2? Your story wants out, but you need more processing time first
- High in Part 2 but low in Part 3? You're ready personally, but haven't connected to who needs this yet.
- High in Parts 1-3 but low in Part 4? You're afraid of being honest or vulnerable - which is human, but might keep your book from landing.
- High in everything except Part 5? You're doubting the importance of your story or your right to tell it.

## *5-7 points: Something's Forming*

You have material, but it might need more time to develop. This isn't a rejection - it's information about timing.

Keep journaling. Notice what keeps surfacing. Pay attention to:

- · Which questions got yes answers (those are your entry points)
- · Which questions made you uncomfortable (that discomfort is data)
- · Whether you're scoring low because you're genuinely not ready or because you're afraid

# 06

*0-4 points: Not This Story Yet (Or Not in This Form)*

Either your transformation story isn't clear yet, or you need to look in different directions. This is completely fine and not a failure.

Consider:

- You might have a different story that's more ready than this one
- You might need to live with this transformation longer before writing about it
- You might be someone who processes through other mediums (speaking, art, coaching) rather than writing
- You might be carrying expectations about what your story "should" be that are getting in the way of what it actually is

Not every experience becomes a book. And not every book happens now.

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Not every experience becomes a book. And not every book happens now.



Writing a memoir is an act  
of courage, allowing scars to  
become the ink that tells  
our stories.

07

**BEYOND THE NUMBERS**

Your Unique Pattern



# Part 7

## THE SCORE MATTERS LESS THAN THE PATTERN

### Beyond the Numbers: Your Unique Pattern

*If You Scored High in Parts 1, 3, and 5 (Recognition, Service, Urgency) but Low in Parts 2 and 4 (Readiness and Honesty):*

Your story is calling you powerfully, and you know people need it - but you're either still too raw to share it, or you're not ready to be honest about the messy parts.

This doesn't mean don't write. It means write for yourself first. Journal extensively. Work with a therapist or coach. Get to the healing distance before trying to package this for others.

Timeline: 6-12 months of processing, then reassess.

*If You Scored High in Parts 2, 4, and 5 (Readiness, Honesty, Urgency) but Low in Parts 1 and 3 (Recognition and Service):*

You're ready to write something honest and important, but you haven't fully connected to what that something is or who needs it.

This doesn't mean you don't have a story. It means you need to clarify your transformation and identify your reader more specifically.

## *What to do*

Spend time mapping your before-and-after. What specifically changed for you? Who were you before this transformation, and who are you now?

Once you can articulate that clearly, the recognition and service will follow.



*If You Scored High in Parts 1, 2, and 3 (Recognition, Readiness, Service) but Low in Parts 4 and 5 (Honesty and Urgency):*

You have a clear story and are ready to share it, but something is holding you back from full honesty or claiming its importance.

This is often about fear: Fear of judgment, hurting people, and being "too much."

## *What to do*

Write the truth first, worry about publishing later. Give yourself permission to write the messy, real, complicated version.

You can always edit for kindness or discretion later - but you can't edit what you were too scared to write in the first place.



Memoirs are the  
footprints we leave behind,  
guiding others along the  
path we've walked.

08

**THE REAL OBSTACLES**

And the Truth About  
Them

## THE TRUTH ABOUT YOUR OBSTACLES

### Looking At The Real Obstacles

**"Nothing dramatic happened to me."**

The lie beneath this: That transformation only counts if it involved crisis, tragedy, or drama.

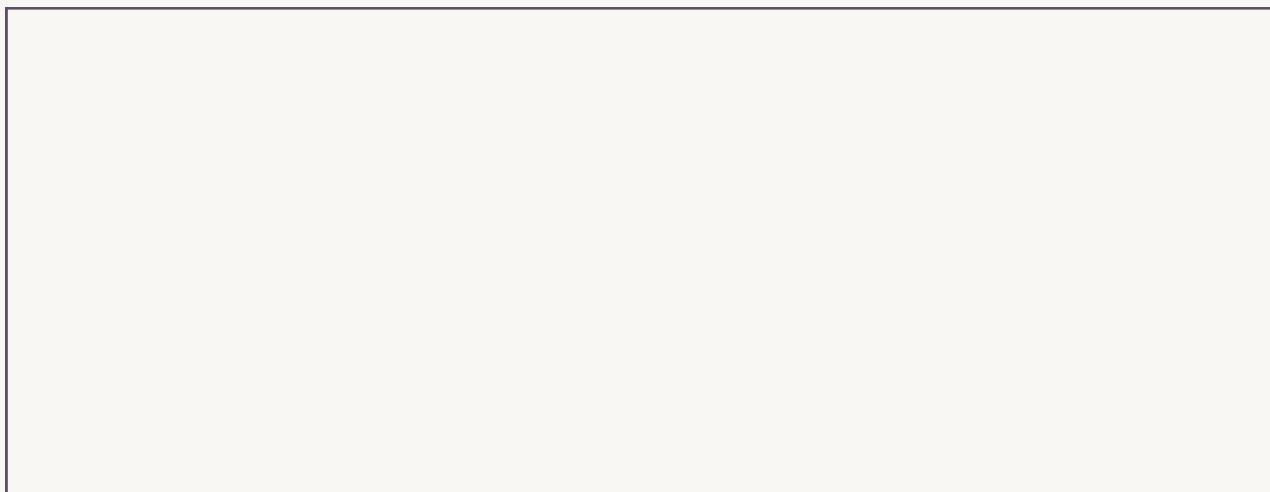
The truth: A hybrid memoir is about your real transformation, not drama Olympics. Quiet awakenings matter as much as crisis moments.

The woman who slowly realised she'd lost herself in marriage and found her way back? That's a book. The woman who healed her relationship with food after decades of dieting? That's a book. The woman who learned to set boundaries with her family after 40 years of people-pleasing? That's a book.

Your story needs to be honest, specific and useful.

### *What to do*

Stop comparing your story to others. Instead, ask: What did I learn that someone else needs to know?

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for the reader to write their response to the prompt above.

# 08

## **"Who am I to tell this story?"**

The lie beneath this: That you need credentials, perfection, or complete healing before you're qualified.

The truth: You're the person who lived it and walked far enough through it to offer guidance. That's the only qualification that matters. Your readers don't need you to be the expert - they need you to be someone who remembers what it's like to be where they are and can offer what helped.

Authority doesn't come from having all the answers. It comes from honestly sharing what you learned while you were finding your way.

## *What to do*

Replace "Who am I to tell this story?" with "Who am I  
NOT to tell this story? Who loses if I don't?"

# 08

## **"What if I'm not healed enough?"**

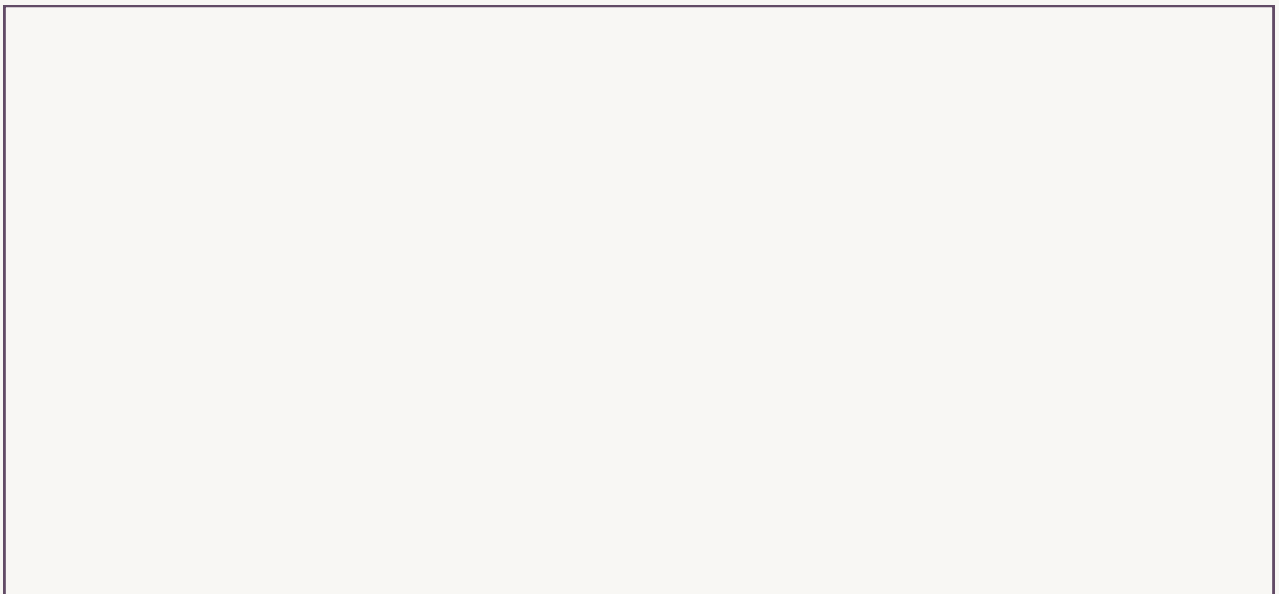
The lie beneath this: That you need to be completely finished with your transformation before writing about it.

The truth: If you can talk about it without breaking down, and you know what you learned, you're ready. Your messy middle IS your authority. The fact that you're still figuring things out makes you trustworthy, not unqualified.

Women don't want to read about your perfect arrival at enlightenment. They want to see someone navigating the middle of the journey - because that's where they are, too.

## *What to do*

Embrace writing from "Here's what I've learned so far"  
rather than waiting for "Here's what I figured out  
completely."



# 08

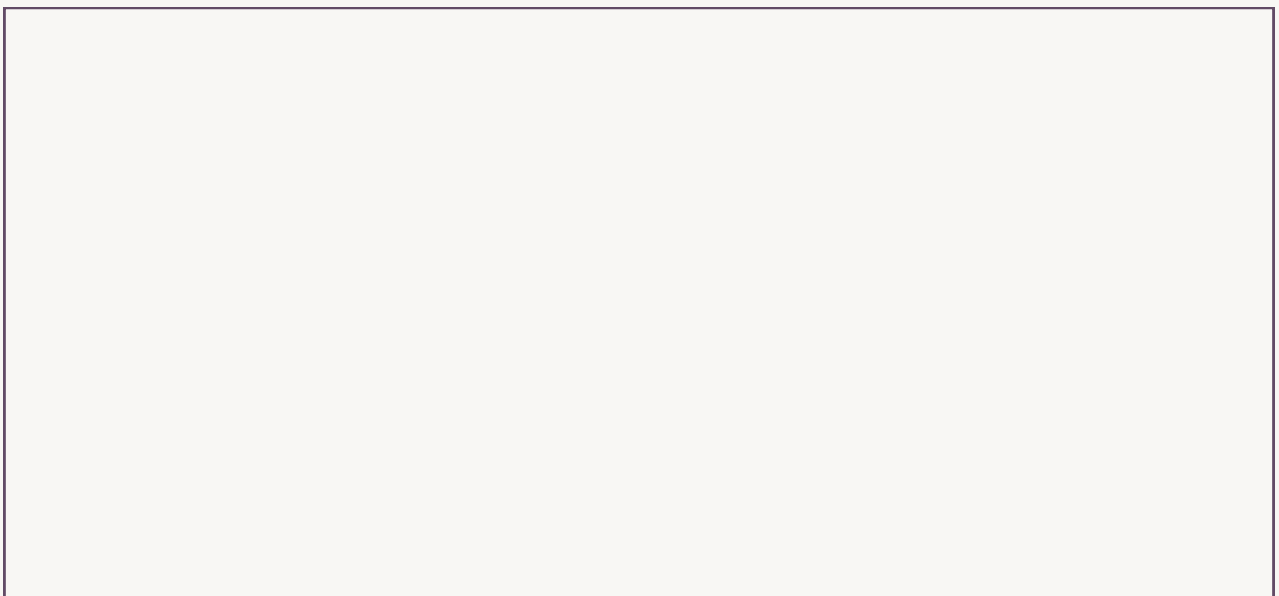
## **"I can't write about this without hurting people."**

The lie beneath this: That telling your truth is an act of aggression or betrayal. The truth: You can tell your truth while also being kind. You can write about your experience without making someone else the villain. You can protect people's privacy while still being honest about your own journey.

This is often where a skilled editor or coach helps - they can help you navigate the line between honesty and kindness, between protecting yourself and protecting others

## *What to do*

Write the whole truth first in private. Then, with support, figure out what needs to be included for your story to land and what can be omitted or anonymised for kindness.



# 08

## **"What if people judge me?"**

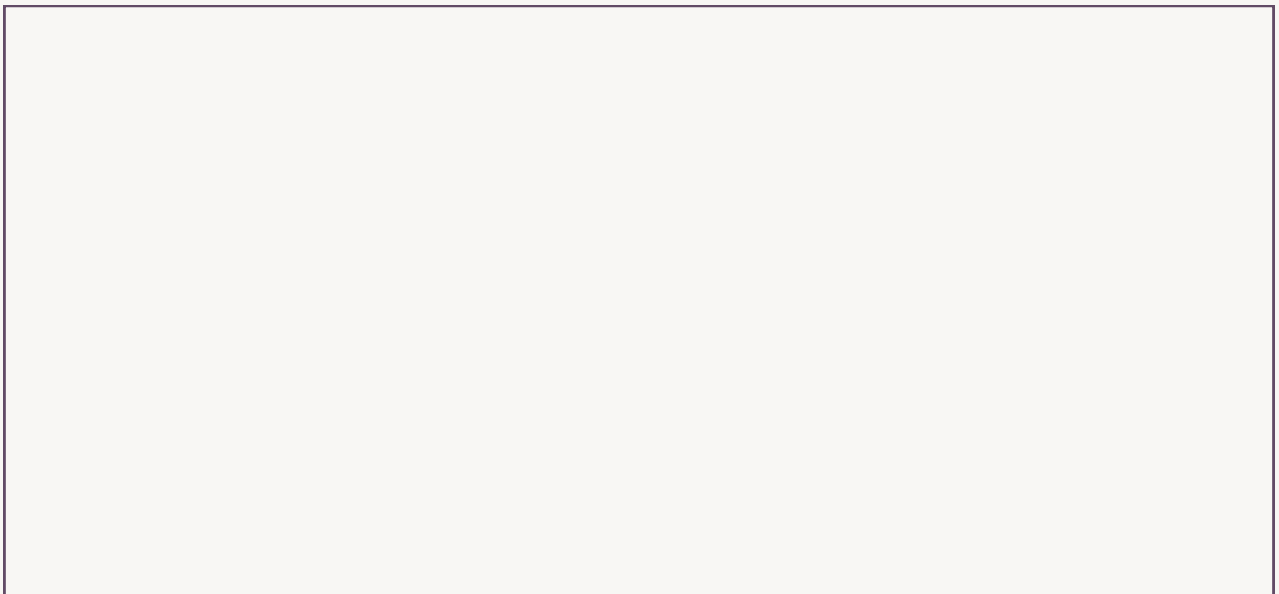
The lie beneath this: That everyone's opinion matters equally and that judgment is something you can't survive.

The truth: The women who need your story will thank you. The ones who judge weren't your people anyway. You'll survive their judgment. What you might not survive is the regret of staying silent.

Yes, some people will judge. They'll think you're oversharing, being dramatic, or airing dirty laundry. Let them. They're not who you're writing for.

## *What to do*

Write for one specific woman who needs this - your younger self, your daughter, your best friend, the woman you were five years ago. Write to her. Let everyone else be background noise.

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin purple border, intended for the user to write their response to the prompt.

# 08

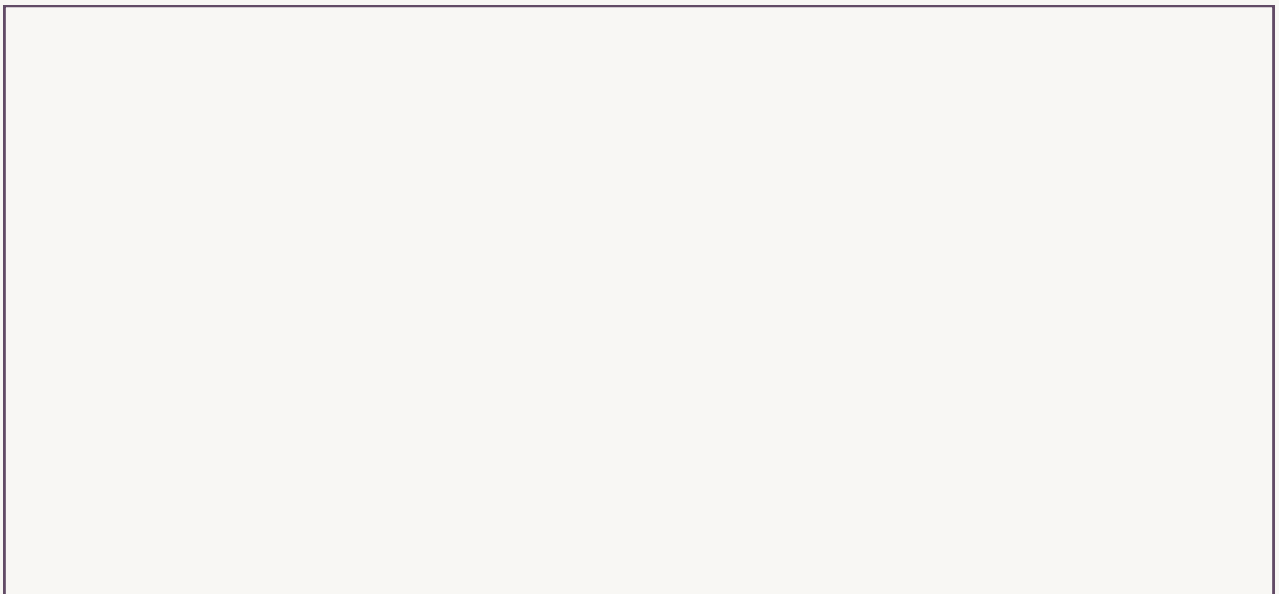
## **"I don't have time."**

The lie beneath this: That you need huge blocks of time or ideal circumstances to write.

The truth: You don't need time - you need prioritisation and a sustainable process. Hybrid memoirs are often written in 15-30 minute increments over months. You don't need a writing retreat or a cabin in the woods. You need commitment and a method.

## *What to do*

Stop waiting for the perfect time (it doesn't exist). Start with 15 minutes three times a week. Small, consistent practice creates books - not sporadic bursts of inspiration.





In the pages of a memoir,  
ordinary moments become  
extraordinary, where your  
stories find their voice.

09

**YOUR PATH FORWARD**

What Happens Next



# *Part 9*

## WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

### Your Path Forward

If this assessment stirred something - if you recognised the story that won't shut up - here's how to honour what got activated:

#### **Immediate (Next 24 Hours):**

Write one page about the transformation that scored highest across all five parts. Not perfectly, not for publication - just to capture what's alive in you right now after taking this assessment.

Name why this story matters in one sentence. Complete this: "This story matters because \_\_\_\_\_."

Identify one woman who needs this. Picture her. Give her a name if you want. Who is she? What does she believe is holding her back? What permission does your story give her?

This isn't just your ideal reader - she's your north star for writing. Every time you doubt yourself, come back to her.

#### **This Week:**

Start a dedicated journal or document for this story. Give it a working title, even if it's clunky. Having a specific place for this story to live helps you start relating to it as a real project, not just a vague someday idea.

Notice when this story surfaces in conversations. Pay attention to when you find yourself telling pieces of it, what reactions you get, and which parts people lean into. This is research.

Pay attention to your body's response when you think about writing it. Notice: Is there expansion or contraction? Excitement or dread? Aliveness or numbness? Your body knows things your mind is still figuring out.



## **This Month:**

Make a decision. Not about writing the whole book (that's too big right now), but about whether you're ready to honour this call by taking it seriously.

If yes: Take one concrete next step. That might be:

- Starting to write regularly, even if it's messy
- Reading hybrid memoirs in your genre to understand the form better
- Finding an accountability partner or coach
- **Enrol in The Memoir Foundation Programme to map your transformation and create your outline**
- **Book a discovery call to talk through whether you're ready**

**If not yet:** That's okay too. Honour where you are. Keep journaling. Give yourself permission to say "not now" without saying "never." Sometimes the most important thing is acknowledging what's true rather than forcing yourself forward before you're ready.

**But if you scored 8 or higher:** Please don't let another year pass with this story still inside you. The women who need it can't wait forever. Neither can you.



## **A Final Word: On Recognising the Call**

You took this assessment for a reason. Something in the title or description made you think: Maybe this is about me. Maybe I do have a story ready to be written.

That recognition - that tiny flicker of "maybe" - matters more than you know.

Most people never get to this point. They have transformations and never recognise them as stories worth sharing. Or they recognise them but talk themselves out of it before they even explore the possibility.

You're here. You did the work of answering honestly. You let yourself wonder if your story might matter to someone else.

That's not nothing. That's the beginning.

Your story has been patient. It's been waiting for you to recognise its power, honour its truth, and trust that someone needs what you've learned.

The question isn't whether you have a story worth telling. You do. The question is whether you're finally ready to write the one that refuses to stay quiet.

And if you are - or if you're nearly ready - I'd be delighted to help you.

*Memoirs are whispered  
confessions, echoing the stories we  
dared to tell.*

# *Reflect On The Results*

Now that you have been through the process - reflect

# *What Next?*

Ready to Write From Your Messy Middle?

The Memoir Foundation Programme gives you 8 weeks to map your transformation, create your outline, and quite possibly generate some beautiful, honest writing. It's for women who know they have a story and are ready to structure it so it can actually become a book.

[Learn more about The Memoir Foundation Programme →](#)

Not sure if you're ready? Let's talk. Book a 30-minute discovery call and we'll explore your story together - what it is, why it matters, and whether now is your time.

[Book your discovery call →](#)

PS: If you're still reading this, that tells me something. You're not just curious - you're serious. That matters. Don't ignore that.



**Dale Darley**  
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Mentor*



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