

Reflection:

What's been **your experience** writing legacy letters? How has legacy writing changed your perspective, your confidence, your sense of purpose, your communication? What have you **observed** as the result of your writing ... how has it influenced those you've written to? How have legacy letters (spiritual-ethical wills) **made a difference** in your life and the lives of those you love? Our topic this month is to explore these questions and to clarify the **benefits of documenting our legacies**.

This month we'll write what I call "**process notes**" or "process reflections." I invite you to reflect and write about the specific ways legacy writing has

"a wonderful gift
to leave to your family at the end
of your life, but I think its main
importance is what it can
give you in the midst of life."

– Andrew Weil, MD

*Woman** (available as a pdf download <<http://www.life-legacies.com/book/workbook.html>>) know my belief that **rational** process notes balance the heartfelt, **intuitive** writing, allowing us to think about and **learn** from our legacy writing. Some potential benefits of legacy writing include a way to:

- document your family history and stories to connect past, present, and future generations,
- understand your values & share your ideals with future generations,
- communicate your love, a priceless message to those you love,
- make a positive difference in the lives of those you love,
- invite family conversation about important life issues,
- heal family wounds, resolve old family issues,
- accept your aging, its limitations and opportunities,
- accept mortality and create a way to be remembered after you're gone,
- evoke a sense of worthiness, completion, purpose, and accomplishment,
- provide peace of mind, knowing the most important things have been communicated,
- give your material valuables in a personal way,
- express gratitude for the blessings of your life and celebrate life.

This is just a **dry list**, one we can all nod our heads to, and put off our writing until some unknown day in the future when we have time. What motivates this writing are two **real stories** of the experience and results:

A legacy writer wrote a letter to her oldest **granddaughter**, a teen struggling with drugs and alcohol. The letter told the family generational **secrets** of alcoholism, including her own, and concluded with an invitation of unconditional **support** and understanding. Afraid to send the letter, unsure of the consequences within the family, she kept the letter in her desk for almost a year. Finally she mailed it. Within 24 hours the phone rang: granddaughter asking grandma to take her to lunch. The legacy letter was the beginning of

a healing and intimate intergenerational relationship. This grandmother's courageous writing made a **real difference** in her granddaughter's life, and deepened purpose and meaning in the grandmother's life and relationships.

Another legacy letter: an **apology** to the writer's father. She explained that she thought she'd made a mistake -- why? She explained her father had passed away. I assured her that relationships don't end with death, and that **healing** is possible no matter the circumstances. She was relieved, then confided she couldn't have written the letter while her father was alive. Her new **peace of mind** was palpable.

Practice:

1. Reflect on the legacy writing you have done and shared. Focus on your experience of the writing and the results of your sharing.
2. Write to tell your story of the letter and its impact on your life and relationships.
3. Because we all need the encouragement these stories can provide, I'd appreciate you emailing me your story in your own words. I'll contact you for your permission to use it if I think it can motivate future legacy writers.
4. Celebrate your benefits by writing another legacy letter this month, perhaps appreciating motherhood, since Mothers' Day is May 10.

May your reflection deepen your
understanding of who you are and what
you value, and may the results of your
writing continue to add joy to your life
and other legacy writers.

Rachael Freed

Rachael@Life-Legacies.com

