

KEEP A 3 WORD JOURNAL

You have had hundreds and perhaps thousands of experiences over the years that have taught you valuable lessons. If you are like most, however, very few of these incidents are recorded anywhere but in the distant recesses of your memory. I can show you how to recall most of the priceless experiences from your past even though they have not been written down. And I can show you how to retrieve and record one of those valuable experiences from the past in about *ten seconds* – the time you spend waiting at a stop light. In fact, if it was a long light you could record several.

Anything really significant from your past is not lost. You may have temporarily forgotten the experience or the lessons learned, but it is still recorded in your mind. The human mind is a remarkable piece of machinery. Some have compared it to a computer. That being the case, you just need the right “search words” to find your forgotten experiences in the “hard drive” of your mind.

Later on in this book you will find hundreds of memory cues to help recall important incidents from the past. Using the cues provided, you will simply concentrate on specific topics until memories under those topic categories come flooding back. Think of it as the equivalent of a *Google* search of your brain. Only the trivial things have been deleted and cannot be recovered. If an experience had an impact on you and taught you a lesson, then it has been saved. Using memory cues will bring these memories back to your consciousness.

3 Word Summary

The following exercise will change your life: Think of a time when you were very embarrassed. Take as much time as you need until something comes to mind. When you remember an embarrassing experience from your past, simply summarize it into three words. Here are a few hints about the three words you choose:

- The words need not make up a phrase or sentence.
- If possible, always include a person, place or thing in your three word summary
- Choose three words that refer uniquely to that particular experience.

Here is one embarrassing moment from my past that I have labeled:

Roger Fire Eraser

When I was in the 10th grade, a new church was constructed near my home in southeast Texas. Several of my friends and I spent time volunteering on the work crew, since it was to be our church. The members of our congregation were extremely proud of the beautiful brick building that replaced an old run-down wooden structure that no longer met our needs.

When the building was completed, we began holding our weekly youth activities there every Wednesday night. One evening Roger and I went in to check out the new kitchen. For some reason which makes sense only to adolescent boys, Roger switched on one of the electric stove burners, and before long it was glowing bright red. The next logical step for the adolescent boy was to see if something would burn – in this case a rubber school eraser. Almost immediately the room was engulfed with the sickening smell of burning rubber. The eraser quickly melted and a small cloud of black smoke rose from the burner. We had no idea that new building had smoke detectors, since we didn't even know such a thing existed. Within a short time, fire alarms sounded. Roger quickly turned off the burner and we rushed out of the kitchen.

I heard one of our adult leaders yelling for everyone to get outside because the building was on fire. I stood outside in the growing darkness along with the other teenagers but didn't say a word about how the smoke alarm had been triggered. Far from finding humor in the situation, I was mortified to see adults frantically running through the building trying to find the source of the fire. They soon discovered the problem and came back outside, determined to pin the blame on someone about my age. I kept my mouth shut and tried to blend into the crowd during the inquisition.

For his part, Roger had vanished. Then, as we all mingled around outside, an ugly old two-seat Rambler with its lights off cruised through the parking lot and headed for the exit. As it passed under the parking lot lights, there appeared to be no one behind the wheel. But I knew immediately that it was Roger, hunkered down low in the driver's seat. As the car entered the street from the parking lot, Roger did a strange thing. Instead of turning left away from the church toward his home, he turned right and passed in front of the assembled crowd.

All heads followed as the Rambler drove down the highway toward a gas station a couple of blocks away. None of us spoke as the little car then made a U-turn and headed back in our direction as Roger tried to head home. He was pushing the

gas pedal all the way to the floor, but the little Rambler was struggling to build up speed. As he passed us again, we could still see no driver, but the adults had a fairly good idea who put the eraser on the stove. I never came forward with the fact that I was an accomplice to the mischief.

Sometimes we're a lot like Roger. We don't think things through before we act and somehow think that no one will ever know about our mistakes if we just "lay low." That is seldom the case.

I could have summarized this memory as "Incident With Fire," but that would have been an attempt to make a comprehensible phrase out of it, which is not the point of a 3 word summary. The first two words are wasted; the third is the only one that would trigger the memory. But if I had multiple experiences with fire, which I have, that memory trigger would be too general.

Roger Fire Eraser is a good three word summary. I have only been well acquainted with three Rogers in my life. The second word eliminates every other experience in my life that does not involve fire. The third word narrows all the fire experiences to only one possible incident.

Think of three words that would bring to mind your own embarrassing moment, and write them down. In about 10 seconds you have put on paper the first entry for your *3 Word Journal*. The entire experience doesn't need to be written out yet, because the simple three word summary will bring memories flooding back when you have time to write.

Let me demonstrate how this very simple process works to bring to mind all of the important encounters I have had with fire. I spent ten minutes doing a search of my hard drive (brain) to see if I could find a match (no pun intended). I focused only on the word "fire" to see how many experiences from my past came to mind, while chronologically traveling down Memory Lane from childhood to present. I tried to narrow my search to experiences involving fire that taught important lessons.

In doing this exercise I came up with 16 incidents in my life that involved fire. Then I quickly summarized each of them into three words and recorded those summaries in a small notebook:

The 3 Word Journal

Roger Fire Eraser
Jack Fire Show
Vidor Home Fire
Packard House Fire
Otis Wexford Fire
Dennis Hospital Alarm
Sammy Field Fire
Wright's Fire Turkeys

Woody Burned Funeral
Blaine Janet Matches
Bon Fire Land
Natalie Rendy Burn
Troy Family Reunion
Sonny Yells Fire
Wright's Pit Breaks
Charlie Car Fire

As soon as I finished my ten minute experiment an additional incident popped into my mind. Perhaps you too have a memory of the fire that I thought of. I will summarize it with the words: TWIN TOWERS 9/11. What memory do you have of the day that the World Trade Center in New York City was struck by terrorists and burst into flames? Do you remember where you were when you heard the news? What were you doing? How did you feel? What other things do you remember about that day? You see, you haven't really forgotten any events that impacted your life. It just takes the right memory cue to bring them back.

If your three word title includes the right words (names, places, things), you will have the experience at your fingertips whenever you need to recall the details of the actual incident. You experienced it. You know exactly what happened. It is deeply imbedded in your mind. However, if you want to share your experiences in any format that makes them useful to you or others – an essay, a letter, a lecture, a book, a journal – you need to write them in more detail. I'll cover that process later. But so far you have expended only a few minutes to reap enormous benefits. In 10 minutes I recalled 16 experiences with fire and summarized each with three words. With a little more thought, I could relate a lesson learned from each one, and then my journal begins to fulfill its purpose – to help me understand where I came from, who I am, and what I can accomplish from the platform of my unique experiences.

Use the Memory Cue pages to tap your own memory for experiences under a variety of topic headings. The Example Experiences section also includes more examples of my stories and some from my friends and acquaintances — all stories that were expanded from simple 3 word summaries.