
Write Your Creative Aging Story: The Art of the Personal Essay

OSHER 180-001

Dates: Tuesdays: January 12 – February 16

Time: 1:00 - 3:00 pm

Location: Online via Zoom

Instructor: Debbie Leaman

Course Description:

Do you have a story to tell? Write your personal essay on aging, be it quirky or serious, funny or poignant. By telling our stories we connect with others, recognize our common humanity and realize we are not alone on this journey. This course is designed to help you craft a compelling story. To that end, we will discuss the elements of a successful essay, including what to write about, where to start, voice, the importance of details, and the revision process. Writing exercises will generate ideas; readings, discussions, and gentle group feedback will help improve your story. The goal is to have a completed essay. Publishing options will also be discussed.

Course Overview:

- Week 1: The Elements of a Compelling Personal Essay
- Class introductions
 - What exactly is a personal essay?
 - The elements of a good essay
 - Writing Prompts to generate essay ideas (in-class writing)
 - First drafts – keep your hand moving
- Week 2: More on First Drafts and Essay Elements
- The structure of an essay
 - Outline or no outline?
 - Voice, angle, tone
 - The “hook” and conclusion
 - Show Don’t Tell
 - Writing Exercises (in-class writing)

- Week 3: Dig Deeper
- “In the specific you reach the universal”
 - There are no “new” stories . . .
 - The importance of details
 - How to write about others with respect
 - Writing Exercises (in-class writing)
- Week 4: Essay Critiques
- How to Critique
 - Critique participant essays
 - The Importance of revision
 - Avoid Clichés
- Week 5: Essay Critiques
- Critique participant essays
 - Strong Verbs
- Week 6: Essay Critiques and Wrap-Up
- Critique participant essays
 - The importance of a writing group – a tribe of writers
 - List of writing resources
 - Publishing options
 - Wrap-up