

LIFE STORIES
IN SIX WORDS

Ever thought of writing your memoirs? Try doing it with only six words, reports ERIN WHITE

To be or not to be." That's Shakespeare – you might know him. "Britney Spears goes off the rails." That's on the cover of tabloids.

"I love you" holds such power.

A few words can distill lifetimes.

We're proving that to you here. This story's in six-word phrases.

And a new book proves that: *Not Quite What I Was Planning*. It's a collection of six-word memoirs. They have meaning, and some surprises.

"Stole wife, lost friends, now happy." That's a short, but telling, tale.

"Girlfriend is pregnant, my husband said." That makes you wonder, doesn't it?

Larry Smith, writer, wondered a lot.

"Everybody has a story," he says.

So he founded an online magazine; he decided to call it "SMITH". (You can find it at www.smithmag.net)

It's for people who love writing. Not just professionals; anyone can contribute.

That's where the book came from. The site solicited memoirs from readers.

There was one rule to follow: Write them in exactly six words.

This memoir thing started with Hemingway. Someone asked for a six-word story. He wrote a very sad one.

"For sale: baby shoes, never worn."

Hemingway's on to something, Smith thought.

"Six words isn't scary," Smith explained. Not like a whole blank page.

People dived right into the idea. More than 30,000, to be exact. Famous people got in on it.

Joyce Carol Oates seemed pretty mad: "Revenge is living well without you."

Then there was singer-songwriter Aimee Mann: "Couldn't cope so I wrote songs."

Some of them were really funny.

"Macular degeneration. Didn't see that coming." That's what Ian Gold sent in.

But others make your heart weep.

"Was father, boys died, still sad."

The book's full of universal sentiment.

Eric Jordan spoke for everyone with: "I was born, some assembly required."

Beth Greivel struck a generational chord: "Discovered moral code via Judy Blume."

The best ones keep it simple. "Not Quite What I Was Planning ..."

Six words can even be elegant.

Paul Thornton's reads almost like poetry. "Alabama boy said Hallelujah, wrote memoirs."

Writers like brevity; readers more so. Makes you think harder, choose better.

The book is encouraging more memoirists. It even inspired me to try.

"People lie. Keep trying to believe."

Or if that's too cheesy try: "White trash, tempered by wit, charm." My mother didn't like that one.

Others ran with the six-word idea.

Teachers challenged students to be creative. Preachers challenged Christians to write prayers.

Six-word memoirs are on YouTube, too. People video their own six-word sentence. Some keep count on their fingers.

The regular ones keep coming, too. *SMITH* magazine features 10 more daily.

Already two more books are planned.

One from teenagers, another about love.

How come people can't get enough?

David Sandall, TCU anthropology professor, says: "(They) reveal experiences of common trials."

Life stories, all in six words.



passion for life

DEBORAH STORER says curiosity is the key to having a passion for life

What is the difference between those who are enthusiastic about life and those who struggle?

Why is it that some people are absolutely certain about what they are passionate about whereas others are in a fog of confusion? The answer: It all depends on whether you are curious.

When we lose curiosity for learning we fall into mediocrity – going through the motions and settling for second best. It is those with curiosity who have a burning desire for life.

Henry Ford was always curious about doing something that was deemed "impossible" – even by his engineers.

Erin Brockovich was a great example of curiosity. She was a file clerk in a law firm who stumbled across a box of files and found a pro-bono case. She was curious about it.

Anyone else would have filed it away, whereas Erin decided to explore it further. As a result of her curiosity, she found many people in a town called Hinkley, USA diagnosed with life-threatening illnesses. With a hunger to find the answers, Erin discovered the town's water was infecting the people.

Sure enough, people tried to persuade her to drop the case, told her it wasn't worth pursuing, yet with curiosity and determination, she won the largest direct action lawsuit of its kind – paying more than \$333 million in damages to more than 600 Hinkley residents.

Curiosity is what keeps you motivated, committed and edging on for more.

Curiosity is what gets you out of bed in the morning. Curiosity is what ignites that flame of passion within you and releases your power to create and

contribute great things.

Curiosity is what separates those who are ordinary from those who are extraordinary. Without curiosity, nothing can be achieved.

Walt Disney said: "When you are curious, you find lots of interesting things to do."

If you want to discover your passion for life and live it; get curious.

Here's how to develop, increase and keep curiosity:

1. Let go of expectations. Those who put too many expectations on things before they even start squash curiosity and passion immediately. Great author Ray Bradbury said: "Don't think. Thinking is the enemy of creativity. It's self-conscious, and anything self-conscious is lousy. You

can't try to do things. You simply must do things." Therefore notice what you are drawn to, what captivates your attention and what intrigues you – then grab hold of it and run with it.

2. Break free from limiting beliefs. If Henry Ford agreed with his engineers that making a V8 engine was impossible, he would never have succeeded. Those who believe succeed.

Curiosity is a result of turning the impossible into the possible. Any time you catch yourself saying it can't be done or you don't know how, find a way! Use your mind and you will see a way appear right before your eyes.

Donald Trump said: "We all get presented with opportunities every single day; it's just a matter of whether you


choose to see them or not."

3. Create space to follow things up. If your life is busy busy busy, especially with things that do not fulfil you; there will never be room for curiosity to develop. Create time in your life to explore, play and experience new things. How? Start with saying no to the things that do not benefit you so you can say yes to the things that engage you.

Declutter your diary, your house and your mind so you can allow the new to enter your life.

4. Ask questions. Albert Einstein said: "The significant problems we face cannot be solved at the same level of thinking we were at when we created them." Therefore in order to expand your thinking you must expand the list of

questions you ask yourself. Questions allow you to find the ideas, solutions and answers you need. The most powerful tool in this known universe is your mind. Use it by asking questions and you will come alive with passion.

5. Never give up. That's what Winston Churchill said. Once you have found a path that intrigues you and lights you up with joy, keep at it until you achieve it. Some give up when the path comes to an end. Others carve out a path and keep going until they have succeeded. Instead of waiting for things to happen, make it happen. If you can't find it, create it. 

■ **Deborah Storer is a motivational speaker, author and coach. Check out www.deborahstorer.com.au**