1 Getting Started: Steps to Success

So, you are considering starting a memoir-writing group. Before you begin, I suggest that you think through some of the logistics: When and where should you meet? How often? Do you need to charge for the meetings? How much? How can you publicize your group? And maybe the scariest question: Once the group is meeting, how do you help other members to write their stories—even if you are new to lifewriting yourself? This chapter will help you answer those questions, so you can get on with the fun part—actually meeting with other lifewriters and sharing your stories!

Step 1: Is There Enough Interest?

The first step is to determine if there is interest in your community to start a group. Ask your friends; check with the local senior center and retirement centers. Put up posters and send notices to the local paper to encourage people to attend an introductory meeting. (A sample poster and press release can be found in Appendix D.)

One possibility is to plan a series of six to eight initial meetings and then survey members at the end of the last session to see if there is interest in continuing with ongoing meetings. A detailed guide for six initial sessions can be found in Chapter 3.

You should have a commitment from at least six people before you begin the group. You need at least that many to achieve good group dynamics.

The wise man must remember that while he is a descendant of the past, he is a parent of the future.

—Herbert Spencer

Step 2: What should we charge?

There are a couple views on charging members for being part of the group. I prefer that the meetings cost little to nothing in order to make the group accessible to anyone, without regard to their level of income. Seniors, in particular, often have fixed incomes, and they are in the age group which tends to be most interested in memoir