

The One Memory At a Time©

Presentation Script for the Slideshow

A Note About This Presentation

This presentation has been written so that One Memory at a Time© can be introduced in the spirit and language in which Tony Hebert has presented it many times himself. Although the person delivering these words may not be Tony, the stories, observations, explanations and philosophy behind them are his. The narration draws on Tony's own presentations, writings, experiences, and the language he used to explain how One Memory at a Time came to be.

It is not intended to imitate Tony's voice or ask another presenter to become him. Rather, it provides the words and context Tony would want communicated in his absence if he were standing in the room himself. Presenters are encouraged to speak naturally, pause when appropriate, and allow the slides and stories to do some of the work.

Above all, please remember that this is not a presentation about a workbook, an app or even a methodology. It is about people, memories and the extraordinary things that can happen when one person genuinely takes the time to listen to another.

And that is why the simplest instruction for presenting One Memory at a Time is the same instruction at the heart of the program:

Read. Pause. Listen. Follow.

I think this also quietly reinforces one of the most important messages in my presentation: **"The One Memory at a Time program should never depend on the creator being in the room."**

Slide 1 –Every Memory Begins with a Door

Good morning.

I want to begin with a very simple thought.

Every memory begins with a door.

Sometimes that door is a photograph.

Sometimes it's a song.

Sometimes it's the smell of something cooking.

Sometimes it's a person sitting beside you who simply has the time to listen.

And sometimes, all it takes is finding the right door.

That idea is at the heart of something I've spent the last year building called **One Memory at a Time.**

But strangely enough, I didn't set out to build a seniors' program.

In fact, I didn't even know I was looking for one.

Slide 2 -The Bird Feeder I Didn't Know I Was Building

The idea really began while I was trying to understand something about memory.

Imagine two people who want to see birds.

One spends the afternoon chasing birds around the yard.

The other person puts up a bird feeder.

He chose the right place. He puts out the right seed.

And then he waits. Who do you think sees more birds?

That became one of the most important lessons I learned about memories. **We don't have to chase them.**

We can create the conditions that allow them to come to us.

And that is very different from sitting across from an older person and saying:

"What was your first job?" "What was your school like?" "What did you do when you were young?"

Those aren't bad questions. But I began wondering:

What if, instead of asking people to search for memories, we gave memories somewhere to land?

Slide 3 - What If We Could Put That Bird Feeder in Anyone's Hands?

That question eventually became One Memory at a Time.

At first, the "bird feeder" was a workbook.

It contained stories about experiences many older adults might recognize: childhood, family, school, first responsibilities, work, holidays, community life.

But then another question occurred to me.

What if that bird feeder didn't have to be a physical book?

What if I could put it in someone's hand?

On a phone.

On a tablet.

On a computer.

And what if it could be available anywhere — in a retirement residence, a family home, a seniors' club, a classroom or across the kitchen table?

That changed what I thought this could become.

Slide 4 - Meet the New One Memory at a Time

So what you're looking at here is the next stage.

One Memory at a Time is becoming a digital experience that people can carry with them.

But something was very important to me.

I did not want technology to become the program.

Technology is simply the delivery system.

The real program is still two people.

One person remembering.

One person listening.

And a story somewhere between them.

Whether you're holding the workbook or looking at a phone, the philosophy remains exactly the same:

Read. Pause. Listen. Follow.

Slide 5 - What Is One Memory at a Time?

One Memory at a Time is a free guided storytelling program designed to help older adults reconnect with memories through stories, conversation and listening.

And there are three things I want to make very clear about it.

It is **not a memory test**.

It is **not an interview**.

And it is **not an interrogation**.

There are no right answers.

Nobody is being graded.

Nobody has to remember anything.

We simply create an invitation.

That's why I often describe what we do this way:

We don't ask for memories. We help them arrive.

Slide 6 - How Does It Work?

The process is surprisingly simple.

We begin with a Guided Story.

Not somebody else's biography. Just a short, familiar story designed to create recognition.

Then comes what I call the **Memory Moment**.

A little doorway.

Something that says, perhaps, "Does any of this feel familiar?"

Then there are Core Memory Prompts and what I call **Seeds for the Bird Feeder** — little sensory details, people, places, sounds, feelings or experiences that may help something surface.

And finally: **Your Turn**.

But here's the important part.

You don't have to finish all of it.

You don't have to follow the order.

Because the moment the storyteller begins telling *their* story...

the page has done its job.

Slide 7 - When a Memory Arrives, Stop

This may be one of the most important instructions in the entire program.

When the memory arrives... **stop**. Stop reading.

Put the device down.

Listen.

Because the objective was never to finish the screen.

The objective was to open the door.

If somebody suddenly says:

"My father had a car just like that..."

Don't say, "That's nice. Question number four..."

Follow the car!

Ask about Dad.

Ask where they went.

Or better yet, sometimes don't ask anything.

Just listen.

That is where the real story begins.

Slide 8 - Four Ways to Use One Memory at a Time

One of the things I like most about this program is that there is no single correct way to use it.

An older adult can use it alone.

Two people can use it together.

A group can sit together and discover that one person's story triggers another person's memory.

And when a story becomes important enough, it can be preserved.

Recorded.

Transcribed.

Reviewed.

Approved by the storyteller.

And perhaps passed along to another generation.

But preservation is never the requirement.

The conversation itself can be enough.

Slide 9 - No App Store. No Purchase. No Workbook Required.

I also wanted to remove as many barriers as possible.

There is nothing to buy.

There is no app-store download required.

There is no workbook you must own before you can participate.

A person can simply open the program on a phone, tablet or computer.

When new content is uploaded to the app, your app will automatically update. You never have to download it again.

And importantly, **One Memory at a Time remains free.**

I don't want someone's ability to participate to depend on whether their family, their residence, their seniors' organization or they themselves can afford it. Memory should never be a transaction!

If a conversation can restore a little dignity, connection or purpose, I want the door open as wide as possible.

Slide 10 - Everything You Need in One Place

As the program grew, I realized something else.

Giving someone stories wasn't enough.

They needed support.

So the digital experience now brings the pieces together.

The stories.

Instructions.

Training.

The Library.

Tools for preserving a story.

Resources for families and volunteers.

And even a simple Memory Game — although it's not really a memory test at all. It's another way of creating those little doorways.

The goal is that somebody encountering One Memory at a Time for the first time shouldn't have to wonder:

"What do I do now?"

The answer should always be close at hand.

Slide 11- Real People. Real Impact.

And this is where the project stopped being an idea for me.

Because real people began using it.

I watched conversations change.

I watched people discover things about one another that they had never known.

A resident who had been known primarily by their room number suddenly became the young person who once had a first job, rode a bicycle, fell in love, got into trouble or dreamed about what their life might become.

And something else happened.

The listener changed too.

That became one of my strongest observations:

Every story changed two lives.

The storyteller gives a memory.

The listener receives a piece of a life.

Both can leave the conversation seeing the other differently.

Slide 12 - What People Are Saying

Some of the most encouraging comments I've heard have not been complicated.

People tell me that memories came back that they hadn't thought about in years.

They tell me conversations happened that hadn't happened before.

They tell me the stories created connections.

And perhaps my favourite reaction is when someone begins telling a story before we've even finished reading the Guided Story.

Because that means the bird has already landed.

At that point, we don't need the feeder anymore.

We listen.

Slide 13 - A Growing Movement Across Canada

What began as an experiment in guided storytelling has now reached people and organizations in communities across Canada.

Retirement residences.

Seniors' organizations.

Schools.

Community groups.

Families.

And I think the reason is very simple.

The need isn't confined to one province.

Loneliness doesn't stop at a provincial border.

Neither does the need for dignity.

Neither does the desire to be heard.

And neither do stories.

Slide 14 - What's Next? You Can Make a Difference.

This is where I want to turn the presentation over to you.

Because One Memory at a Time doesn't require you to become an expert.

You can explore it.

You can share it.

You can get involved.

Or you can simply sit beside somebody you care about and listen.

You don't need special equipment.

You don't need a degree.

You don't need to become a historian.

You need curiosity.

Patience.

Presence.

And perhaps the willingness to say:

"Tell me more."

Slide 15 - Prefer Paper? It's Still There.

And I want to emphasize something about all this technology.

The workbook isn't disappearing.

Some people love paper.

They want the physical book sitting on the table.

Wonderful.

Use it. A printable copy is in the app for downloading.

Others will use a tablet.

Others a phone.

Others a computer.

The delivery system doesn't matter.

The conversation does.

Different doors.

Same destination.

Slide 16 - The Library — More Than the Workbook

This is one of the parts I'm most excited about.

The Library means One Memory at a Time can become more than eight stories.

Someone who has just discovered the program can begin with a five-minute introduction.

They can read the Bird Feeder Story.

They can explore the Memory Game.

Someone who wants to go deeper can read the workbook or *How Stories Want to Be Found*.

Someone who wants to become a Memory Companion can access the training, the Quick Guide and the tools for preserving a story.

And somebody in another community who wants to introduce the program can eventually have the presentation and the speaker material right there.

The Library isn't simply a collection of files.

It is a way of making the program transferable.

Slide 17 - Built to Continue

And that brings me to perhaps the most important design decision I've made.

From the beginning, I realized that if this program depended on me travelling everywhere to explain it...

it would never reach its potential.

So I made a decision:

The One Memory at a Time program should never depend on the creator being in the room.

I want someone in Newfoundland to be able to use it without me.

Someone in British Columbia.

A daughter sitting with her mother. A recreation director. A student.

A volunteer. A seniors' organization.

If the methodology is understandable, the training is available and the resources are there, then the program can travel farther than I ever could.

That's the point. Not to build something around its creator.

To build something that can continue without him.

Slide 18 - From One Workbook to Thousands of Doors

This may be the biggest change of all.

The first version was a workbook.

One physical object.

Useful — but limited by where that book could go.

Now imagine that same idea available on a phone, a tablet or a computer.

Suddenly one workbook becomes thousands of doors.

A person can discover it at home.

A volunteer can carry it into a residence.

A family can open it during a visit.

A recreation director can share it with an entire community.

The technology doesn't scale the *technology*.

It scales the invitation.

And that is what excites me.

Slide 19 - Open the Door. Try It Now.

So instead of simply telling you about One Memory at a Time, I'd like you to see it.

Take out your phone. Scan the QR code on this slide.

Open it. Explore it.

You don't need to study anything first.

You don't need to register for a course.

Just open a door.

Try a story. Try a Memory Moment.

And perhaps think about somebody in your own life who might enjoy having someone sit beside them and listen.

Because ultimately, that's who this was built for.

Closing — One Memory Is Enough

I began this journey thinking stories needed to be collected.

I've changed my mind.

I think stories first need to be **welcomed**.

They need somewhere safe to arrive.

They need time.

They need patience.

And most of all, they need another person who genuinely wants to listen.

We don't need every memory.

We don't need someone's complete life story.

We don't even need to preserve every conversation.

Sometimes... **one memory is enough**.

One memory can change a conversation.

One conversation can change a relationship.

One relationship can change the way somebody feels about themselves.

And enough of those relationships can begin to change a community.

So perhaps the most important thing I've learned through all of this is also the simplest:

Don't chase the birds. Build the feeder.

And then...**Read. Pause. Listen. Follow.**