

Graduations. Births. Weddings. Holidays. Vacations. They're all memorable times with good stories to go with them. You probably have stories about more ordinary days, too, such as the time your dog snatched the still-warm muffins from the kitchen counter. Every time you tell one of those tales, there's more to the communication than your words. Stories are interactive. You tell the stories; your friends live the event in their minds, joining you by visualizing what you're describing. Through your stories, you and your friends grow better connected.

When you tell a story, you join a centuries-old tradition. Even before he had a spoken language, Early Man used charcoal to etch images on caves, telling a story. Hieroglyphics were placed in ancient Egyptian tombs to illustrate the lives of people who ruled 5,000 years ago. Some Africans and American Indians have found storytelling to be such a rich experience that they never developed a written language. Instead, from generation to generation, they still pass down stories about the

**“Through the act of creating a photo album, parents communicate so much love and affirmation to their kids.” — Sandra Magsamen**



most important of life's experiences: family history, values, feelings, pride of ancestry and devotion to country.

Today's television, music and movies have joined the vibrant and varied patchwork of the storytelling quilt. Storytelling is also recognized as an important and effective educational tool. And most of us know instinctively that the best stories are those that touch our hearts.

## YOUR MEMOIR

No matter what form your story takes, it's always the story of your life—moments you share that help others understand what's important to you. While many people are happy to chat their way through an



anecdote, others express their stories in a nonverbal way. They may paint, sculpt or keep a journal. They may put up a Web page or write a blog. Many tell their stories and connect with others through the simple act of placing their photos into a lovingly prepared scrapbook only they could compile.

Sandra Magsamen, author of the new book *Living Artfully*, believes words sometimes fail us at the most important times, so it's crucial to learn to communicate in alternate ways. “If we're not able to communicate, we can become isolated, withdrawn and unhappy,” she says. “The more we can identify our own way to communicate, the more happiness and the greater sense of well-being we'll have.”

In Sandra's 15th book, she explains that putting together memories in a meaningful way, such as in a scrapbook, is one of the ways we can live artfully. “Scrapbooks aren't just a pastime or hobby,” she explains. “They're valuable legacies of a life well lived. The scrapbook or photo album you create is a visual representation of who you are. Scrapbooks can tell the story of individuals, families, what happened and what mattered to them. Putting things together in an organized way tells the people in your life that you love them enough to want to document what happens to them.”

