

Micro Story Framework

How to Write Something Meaningful in Five Minutes or Less
From the Writing at the Red House Podcast with Kathi Lipp & Tenneil Register

Magnet
Draw them in



Moment
Show the snapshot



Meaning
Name what's true



Move
Give direction

Most of your writing life doesn't need a big, huge story. It needs a clear moment with direction. You don't need to be brilliant — you need to be clear.

1. The Magnet

What draws people in?

The first thing your reader sees. It stops the scroll through **recognition** (they see themselves) or **emotion** (they feel something). If your hook could belong to anyone, it belongs to no one.

Contradiction — “Easter Sunday is the most romantic day of the year for me.”

Observation — A unique take on something everyone’s noticing right now.

Tension — “If you met me in real life, you probably wouldn’t like me.”

Direct Promise — “I can teach you to clean your bedroom in five minutes or less.”

2. The Moment

What’s the snapshot?

One specific, sensory scene — not a summary, not a sermon. You should be able to see it like a photograph. Use real details: time of day, what you were holding, where you were standing. Two to three sentences max.

EXAMPLE

Tenneil jumped out of her car at a stop sign to photograph a trunk full of stacked picnic baskets — and the woman in the car behind her just laughed and waved. That single image became a post with 20,000 views and 400 comments.

3. The Meaning

What’s the deeper truth?

One sentence that names what’s really going on beneath the moment. This is where your reader feels seen. Meaning sounds like a phrase you’d say to a friend at the kitchen table — natural, warm, honest. One sentence is plenty.

Signal phrases — “Here’s the thing...” / “Here’s what I know...”

Kitchen table test — How would you say this to your niece or granddaughter?

4. The Move

What direction are you giving?

Without the move, it’s a nice story that gets scrolled past. The move causes your reader to stop and consider whether this piece is for them. Go with your natural default, then experiment.

Reflective — Looking back on an experience with new eyes.

Practical — “Here are the two steps I take every morning.”

Reframing — “You think you’re lazy, but you’re actually overwhelmed.”

Invitation / Permission — “I invite you to consider...” / “This is okay.”

Remember

You don’t need all four pieces at the same moment. Sometimes you start with the meaning and find the moment later. Sometimes the magnet comes last. Capture first — connect later. The Holy Spirit is working overtime to make those connections for you.

Map Your Micro Story

Pick one recent frustration and write one line for each element.

Story 1 — start here

MY FRUSTRATION /
MOMENT:

Magnet

What stops the
scroll?

Moment

What's the
snapshot?

Meaning

One sentence of
truth.

Move

What should they
do / feel /
consider? -----

Story 2 — try a different magnet type

MY FRUSTRATION /
MOMENT:

Magnet

What stops the
scroll?

Moment

What's the
snapshot?

Meaning

One sentence of
truth.

Move

What should they
do / feel /
consider? -----

Story 3 — experiment with a new move type

MY FRUSTRATION /
MOMENT:

Magnet

What stops the
scroll?

Moment

What's the
snapshot?

Meaning

One sentence of
truth.

Move

What should they
do / feel /
consider? -----

Your Challenge

This week, notice five tiny moments that almost become stories — the ones you usually dismiss. Grab a photo. Jot a line. You don't need the meaning yet. Capture first, connect later. Your big messages are built from small, honest moments.