The background is a gradient from dark purple at the top to dark blue at the bottom. It features several abstract circular elements: a large scale on the left with numbers from 140 to 260, and several smaller circles with arrows indicating clockwise or counter-clockwise rotation. The text is centered in the right half of the image.

HEALING, SHARING, AND ADVOCATING THROUGH MEMOIR

BY EMILY SHEERA CUTLER

BENEFITS OF MEMOIR WRITING

- Can be a powerful tool in shaping the way people think about different issues
- Can raise awareness and increase understanding of issues that are not talked about
- Can provide connection to others with similar stories and experiences
- Can provide validation

ELEMENTS OF MEMOIR

- Theme
- Characters
- Setting
- Plot
- Tone

THEME

- Important for advocacy
- What do you want to say?
- What is the “take-home message” from your story?
- How do you want people to change as a result of reading your story?

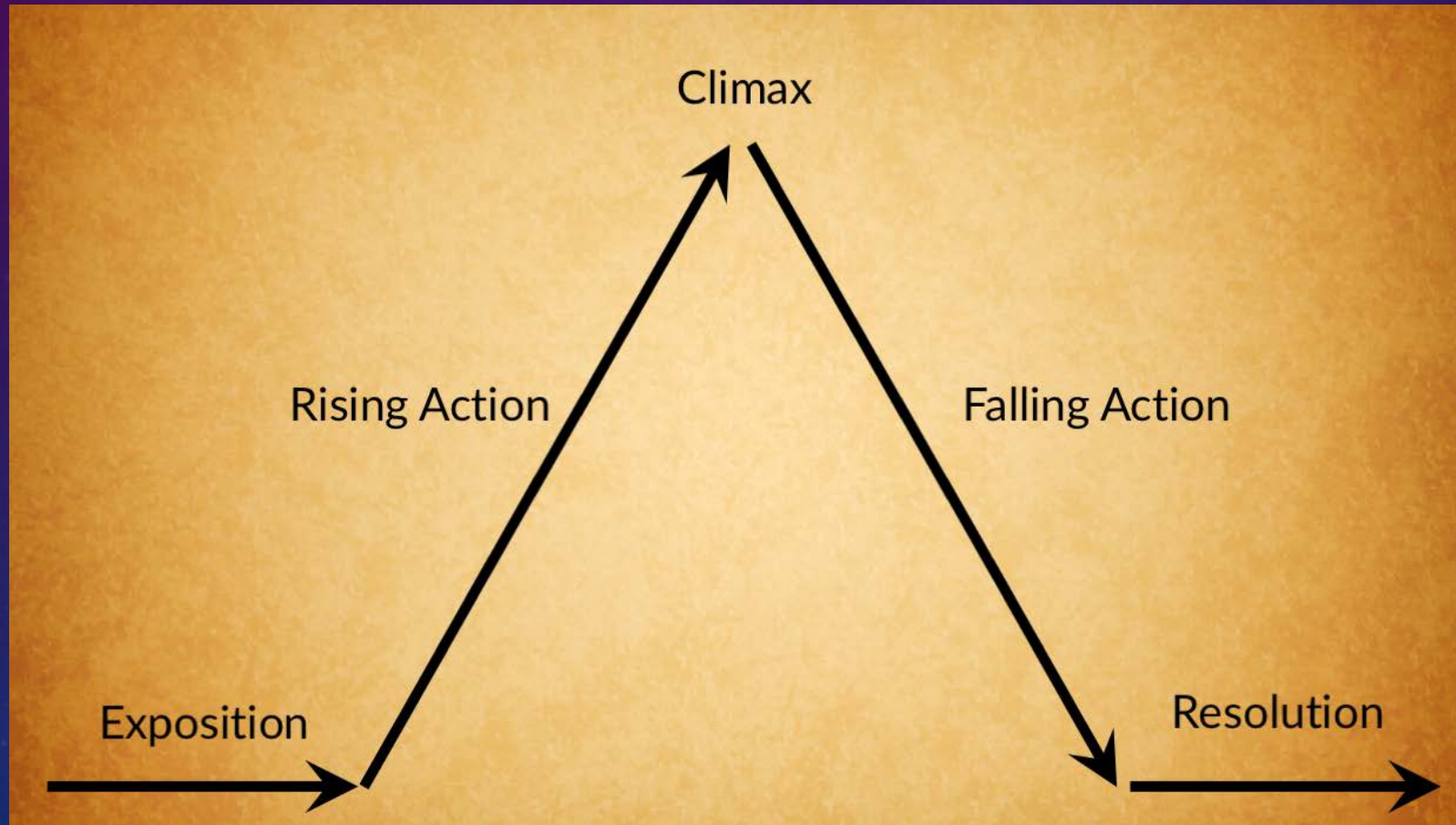
CHARACTERS

- Who are the central characters in your story?
- What is their role in your story?
- Are there characters you wish to combine?
- Are there characters you wish to leave out?

SETTING

- Where does your story take place?
- What is the role of the setting in your story?
- How would you describe the setting?

PLOT



PLOT (CONTINUED)

- What details do you want to include within each part of the plot structure?
- What details can you include to keep readers engaged and get your message across?
- What plot points within your story might you want to pause and reflect upon?

TONE

- What overall tone do you want to use to tell your story?
- Funny and sarcastic? Reflective and emotive? Matter-of-fact and objective?
- What tone will best serve your story's message?
- What tone will most resonate with your intended audience?

TIPS & TRICKS

- Begin with a powerful hook – e.g. in the middle of a scene, a surprising/attention-grabbing statement
- “Show, don’t tell” – allow the reader to experience the story through action, words, thoughts, senses, and feelings rather than through the author’s exposition or summarization
- Be specific – describe particular sensory details
- Keep your story structured – go in chronological order and/or use subheadings to make it easy for your reader to follow along

MAD IN AMERICA

- A critical psychiatry web magazine that publishes pieces including personal stories that speak to the need for change in the mental health system
- Stories should be between 1500 and 2500 words
- Stories should be clearly told and have a narrative arc
- For more information, visit www.madinamerica.com
- You can submit your story to personalstories@madinamerica.com