



The Power of Stories

(Notes from workshop delivered on 13/06/16 by Dougie Mackay of the Village Storytelling Centre, at The Alliance for Health and Social Care, Links event, the Radisson Blu, Glasgow)

Story Prompts

The simplest themes can be used to initiate storytelling in groups or one to one, from informally catching up on weekly news to setting more elaborative challenges such as making a “desert island playlist”.

Some simple ideas for story prompts include:

- The meal you would eat for ever
- The story of an item of clothing
- Best film watched in the last year
- Favourite place
- Unusual hobbies

If working with an individual, it may simply work to arrive with a short personal story of a trip made during the week, meal eaten etc as a way of getting the ball rolling.

The Power of Stories

During Monday’s workshops we identified the following merits of storytelling

Build Connections	Establish and support relationships
Can inspire	Challenge loneliness
Give fuller insights than facts	They are engaging
Offer lived experience	Increase empathy
Can offer coherent narrative to people caught up in momentary drama	Offer points of reflection from which to instigate change
Challenge stereotypes	Give person centred insights into keys to health
Allow participants to proactively engage with their life story or personal narrative	Folk tales and fiction can engage with difficult topics in impersonal/safe way
Can act as basis for engagement in other creative mediums	Give clues to indicators such as ACES (Adverse Childhood Experiences)

Five keys to Successful Story Gathering

- **Active Listening**

What is being said-any info in advance-body language- any sensitive issues- passions and interests- physical needs, breaks etc

- **Building Trust**

Trust is the foundation- be clear and open with purpose where possible- ensure confidentiality as appropriate- focus first contact on simply establishing trust- move at a pace suitable to participant- start with “safe” stories (food, places etc)

- **Facilitator Participation**

Story gathering works best when the facilitator offers something of themselves and is an active participant rather than consumer- Stories are reciprocal- when one is told, it invites another- build trust and relationship through story sharing.

- **Purpose**

Why are the stories being gathered? For the therapy of being listened to- in order to understand the individuals needs better- as part of a greater creative programme?

- **Method**

Is a weekly warm up required? Should stories be used alongside another medium (art, music, photography etc)? Does fiction offer a better avenue to story engagement? Is there a structure that suits the individual group?

Model- Case Study

If initiating story gathering, consider the following model (example in the right column)

Model	Case Study
Group- Who	Group in Recovery from addiction who've experienced Homelessness
Purpose- Why	To build confidence, allow self-reflection, gather insights that can support others in similar situations
Output- What	Create a booklet documenting the life experiences of group members
(Concept- Optional)	Plot the stories of these individuals along the “Hero’s journey” (Character in ordinary reality, journey starts, challenges and travails, dark times- “belly of the beast”, emerge with power/special item, return to community transformed.
Process- How	Meet weekly, simple warm up challenge or problem solving exercise, take turns to tell personal stories and record on phone later to be transcribed, send content and images to designer to create booklet
Timeframe- When	10 weekly sessions and 1 month to collate booklet
Adapt	Leave out role play as not popular, move meetings to mornings to ensure attendance, smoking break after 45 minutes, lead in with personal story example.