

tell me a
story!

story-telling
and
story-making
with groups



a storycircle toolkit

Welcome!

This book is the result of a project run by Hammersmith and Fulham Libraries and storyteller Richard Neville from 2019-2020.

The project brought people together to hold conversations and tell stories. It created a place for people to be both social and creative and brought many benefits. Participants told us that they felt trust and connection to others, increased feelings of optimism, and confidence in expressing themselves.

The good news is that it is quite easy to develop this form of group storytelling. This book contains different suggestions for how to organise and run a storycircle. It also contains stories that were told during our project.

We hope you will be able to use the different ideas in this book to develop storytelling projects of your own. We look forward to continuing our work with storycircles in the coming year.

With many thanks to all the people who helped to make storycircles a reality in 2019.

Especially staff, volunteers and members of:

Askew Road Library Coffee Morning, Chelsea Foundation, Charecroft Estate Champions Project, Gibbs Green Champions Project, Hammersmith Library Creative Writing group, Hestia, H & F Public Health, H&F Volunteer Centre, H&F Youth Council, Masbro Centre Elders Project, HMP Wormwood Scrubs, Mother and Child Welfare Organisation, RCA School of Communication, The Richmond Fellowship, St Mungos, Shepherd's Bush Library ESOL group, Young Hammersmith and Fulham Foundation

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1.How to Begin

'The way we started by playing music made a deep impression on me. I never thought about it before, but it made it much easier once we started telling stories..' (participant at storycircle during an event at the South Bank 2019) .



Don't Start Storytelling Straight Away

Storytelling cannot begin immediately among a group of people. There has to be some preparation before people are willing to tell stories.

Communicative Musicality

One important feature of a successful conversation is that it flows. People synchronise with each other, entering into a shared rhythm of turn taking. This instinctive interconnection makes it possible to talk and listen to each other. This feature of communication has been called 'communicative musicality'. It has been studied extensively in interactions between parents and children, but it applies equally to interactions in a group of adults.

Percussion Jams

One of the most successful ways to develop this rhythmic synchronisation and flow is to begin a storycircle session by playing music together. During our project we used simple percussion instruments and began many sessions with a percussion jam. This created a good humoured feeling of play and interconnection.

The best instruments to use are pieces of small percussion such as shakers and rattles.

If it's going well then set various challenges to the group

Make Some Weather

Create a storm, building from the gentle pattering of rain, rising to bolts of lightening, rolls of thunder, footsteps running for cover, wind whistling etc. Then slowly reduce the storm to silence.

Go On a Sound Journey

Create a sound journey to different places - how would you create the soundscape of a jungle? A snowy waste? A spring morning?

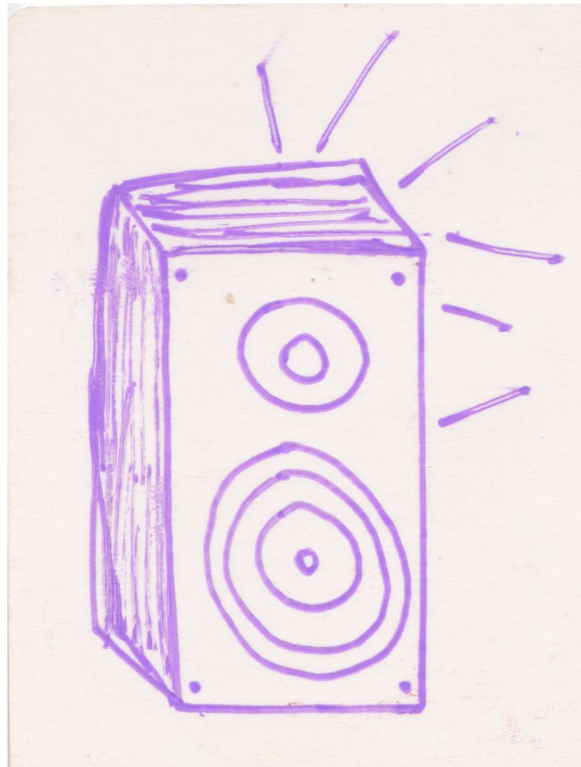
Add Some Words

Ask the members of the storycircle to explain in words what they are intending to evoke with the music they make.

Sometimes it is a good idea to begin to narrate the journey as the participants play.

Eg 'now we're entering the jungle, wait a moment, I can hear an elephant, its pushing through the trees, knocking the trees down...and now a parrot is calling out, and there's a snake, is that a snake, yes, it's winding round and round a branch....'

This can go on for as long as it is being enjoyed by the group. In some storycircles during our project, especially with people who were in crisis, the entire session was taken up with this playful sound and image making.



TALES FROM THE STORYCIRCLES
STORY 1

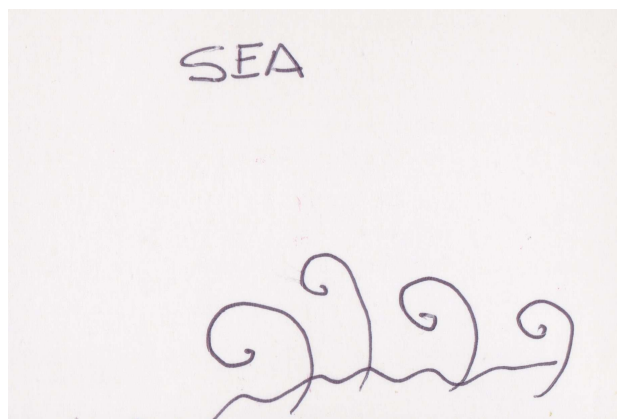
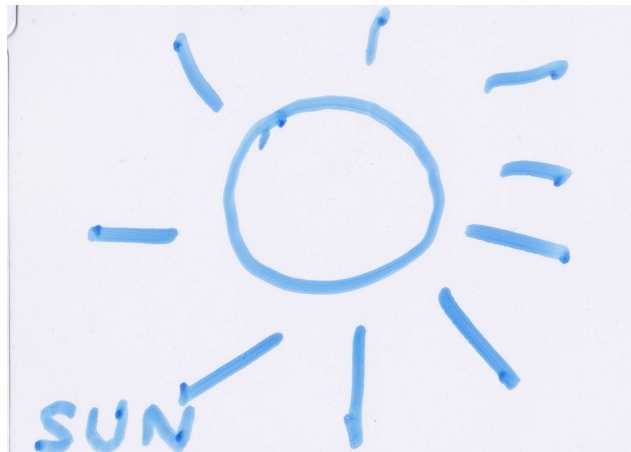
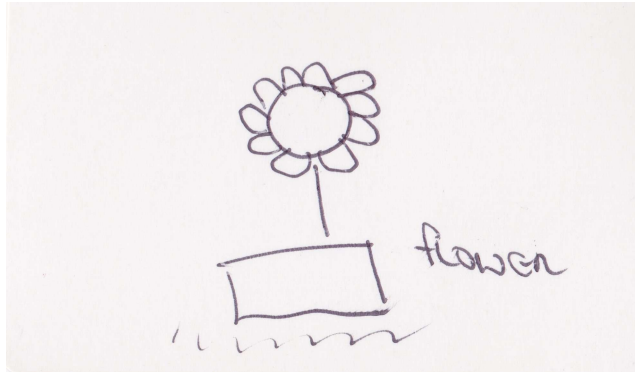
The mysterious stranger

'This happened when we were in Zambia in the 1960s. We used to get in our car and go for picnics. One day we found a spot near to a river and we put out the blanket and got out the tea things. Before we ate I went for a stroll. The river was hidden by some trees. When I got passed the trees, there was a bit of a bend and some sand. A log had fallen on to the sand. Someone was sitting on the log. She was a young woman, with long hair and a very sad face. She just gazed at me. There was something about her that I can't explain. Then she beckoned to me. I walked down onto the sand and walked towards her. But when I got to the log, she had vanished. There was literally nowhere for her to have gone. She just vanished. But there were marks in the sand where her heels had been and the log was warm where she'd been sitting. She was so sad then she was joyous, and she beckoned to me. That's what I remember the most. It's stayed with me for over fifty years. She was sitting there and looking at me and she was so sad but her expression changed and became happy. Who was it? I just don't know. But I've never forgotten.'

2. Introduce the idea of storytelling

'I'll give you an idea of what I mean by a story. I heard this story from someone only last week...'

(introduction to storycircles during the project)



It's All About the Stories

It is always a good idea to emphasise that the focus of a storycircle is the telling of stories. This means that everything that is said can be interpreted as telling a story, implying a story, suggesting a story.

If the facilitator is skilled in storytelling themselves, they can give a demonstration of storytelling to begin with.

However remember -

Keep It Short

Tell a very short folktale, or an account of a story you have heard from someone else. It is good to use stories that have come to you through previous conversations.

Keep It Light and Entertaining

Make sure the story is simple to understand and respond to. Here is an example of a story that was told by one of the storycircle participants. It became a useful story to tell during this introductory phase of a session.

'The three cups of tea'

Once there was a girl who went to her mum and said 'mum, I've got a confession to make'. 'Whatt is it?' 'Mum, I've got three boyfriends!!'

The mum says 'well, you have to marry one of them. But you must choose wisely. Here is what you should do. Invite them round one at a time. Give each one a cup of tea, but make sure that the tea goes right up to the top of the cup. Then tell me what they do...'

The daughter does this. When the first boyfriend comes round, he takes the cup of tea, opens a window, and pours some of it away, so that he can sip the rest. The daughter tells her mum what he did and she replies - 'he's wasteful, that's not the one for you...'

When the second boyfriend comes round, the daughter gives him a cup of tea which is also brimming full. She watches. He bends down low to the cup, and slurps it up, making a disgusting sucking sound. When the daughter tells her mum, she says 'no! He's rude. He'll drive you crazy. He's not the one for you.'

Finally, the third boyfriend comes round and receives the same brimming cup of tea. He holds it carefully for a moment, then says 'do you have another cup?' The daughter gives him another cup and very carefully, he pours some of the tea from his cup into hers. Then he offers her the other cup and says 'half for me, and half for you...' When the daughter tells her mum about this last boyfriend, she is delighted. She says 'there, now that is the one for you...'

Ask a General Question

Once the idea of storytelling has been introduced, it is always good to ask each person in turn to explain what connection they have with storytelling. This can sometimes lead to fascinating descriptions of storytelling occasions or memories.

Be Careful!

However it is best to keep this question quite vague. It is possible to ask whether the participants have memories of being told stories when they were children. This can often lead to very powerful recollections which are very positive for the participants and for those listening. However be careful. These memories can be a mixture of bitterness and sweetness.

To illustrate, here is a memory shared during the project *'When I was a child in Bangladesh, we used to sit with my grandmother in the evening. There was no electricity, only a lamp in the middle of the table...what do you call them...storm lamps. We were all sewing together, and my grandmother told us stories. I can't remember what she talked about now, they were stories about fairies and princesses, that sort of thing. It was such a wonderful memory but now I will never see my grandmother again. She was the one who brought me up. I can remember her voice so clearly...'*

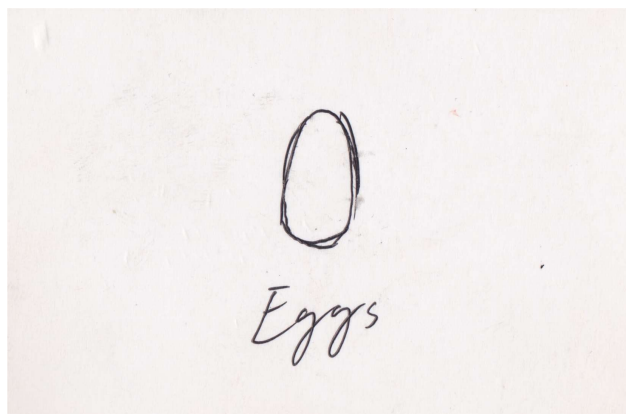
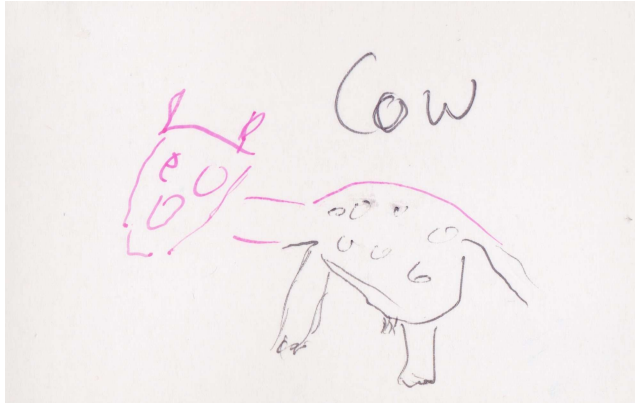
This is an example of the bitter sweet quality of early memories of storytelling.

TALES FROM THE STORYCIRCLES
STORY 2

Many things happened after that
During the 1980s in Somalia I trained to be an air traffic controller. I was living in Mogadishu and working at the airport. When the government stopped, we knew it was just a matter of time before the fighting started but we continued to work. Then one day we heard firing. So we just left. I went to a village for a time, but the aircraft still needed to land so I came back. One day one of the militias came to us and said that they were going to occupy the airport. They were waiting for someone to land, it was a politician who they wanted to kidnap. I was listening to the airspace and I heard the plane's pilot asking for permission to land - but then I realised that he had diverted to another airport. What could I do? I told him he was clear to land. When the militia found that the plane had landed somewhere else, they accused us of tricking them. They started firing at the windows and we had to run and jump to get away. We got someone to be a mediator for us and convinced the militia that it was not our fault. They still needed the airport to function, so we came back again. Many things happened after that...it was a long time ago.

3. Storytelling games and exercises

'when you used the cards, it seemed that everybody had something to say, it was great to see' Community Champions Manager



Now It's Time to Move into Storytelling

A first general question about storytelling serves to introduce the idea of the storycircle. Now it is possible to move on to some storytelling exercises and games.

There are two games that have proved to be very successful on our storycircle project - Objects in Your World and Make Me a Map.

Objects in Your World

Take these card, and draw objects that are in your world. Draw whatever is in your life - however small or unimportant. If you wear glasses, you could draw a pair of glasses, if you like books then draw a book. Draw what is in your house, what you take with you when you go out. Draw five or six objects. By object, I mean a thing or a person.

It is very interesting to see what each participant will draw. Taken together, the participants create portraits of themselves through the objects that surround them.

Now ask each participant to present their drawings and talk about them. This almost always leads to storytelling.

For instance, here is a story told by a participant, who came from Eritrea.

'This is the sort of huts that people lived in when I was a child in Eritreia. In the morning, I remember so well, everybody used to gather together to have breakfast. The children were going to school, the farm workers were going to the fields, everybody had somewhere to do. But every morning, without fail, we gathered together. Looking back, I realise how important that is...'

Make Me a Map

Draw me a map of your world. Show me the physical places that you go to. Use drawings and words to show the places that are important to you in your day to day life.

People draw maps in a variety of different ways. Some draw a kind of flow diagram, showing how they move between places. Other draw a territorial diagram, showing the different geographical areas where they play different roles. All the maps are interesting starting points for storytelling.

For instance, here is a story told by one participant about his map.

'This shows where I go, I go to the hospital, I spend a lot of time there, and I go to the football place, that's where I'm a coach.. They're related as well.. The thing is that I used to play football, but when I was about seven years old, I had an injury and I hurt my knee. Now it keeps dislocating, and it's very painful. I can't play football any more, so that's why I'm a coach. And the hospital is there because I have to go there a lot, but now I want to be a surgeon...'

There is also a third possible storytelling exercise

The Personal Myth

How did you become the person you are now? What are the influences that shaped you into your current self? A myth is an explanation of how things came to be. How is it that you came to be who you are now?

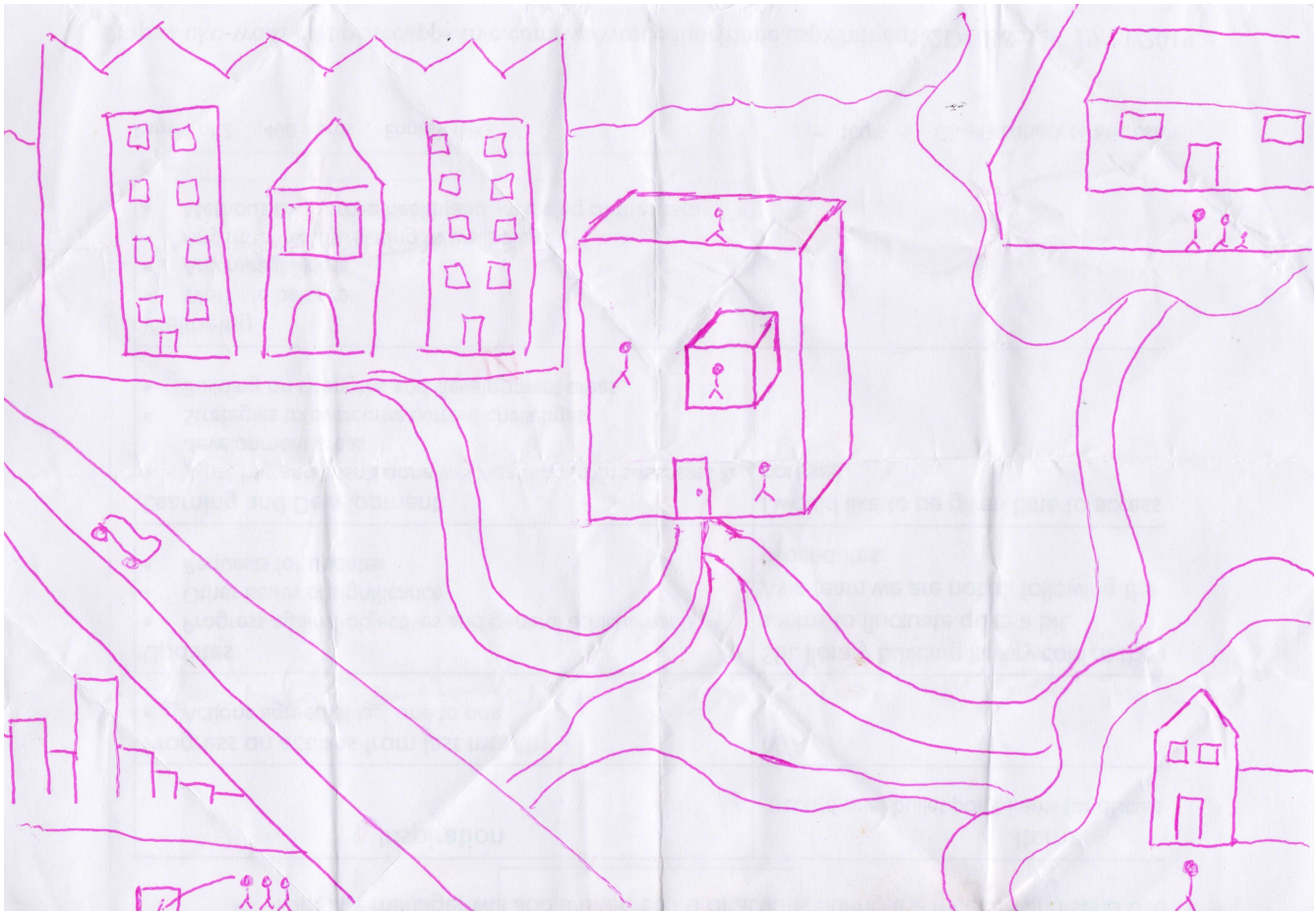
This exercise assumes that there is such a thing as a 'current self' and that this self was formed by influences from the past. All this can of course be questioned. This is only a story exercise for people who have a shared role. It enables participants to describe the different paths that they took to arrive at their current role. For instance, it is interesting to do this exercise with care workers, or with artists, or with librarians!

Here is a personal myth told by an artist in a group session with other artists.

'I used to be fascinated by paper, even when I was a child. I used to love wrapping paper. One day I was in a shop and I saw some sweets in beautiful wrapping. I took the sweet and removed the paper, then I put the sweet back. I thought that would be alright. My uncle was with me, and he told me that this was not alright! But I loved the patterns on the paper. That's why I became a designer.'

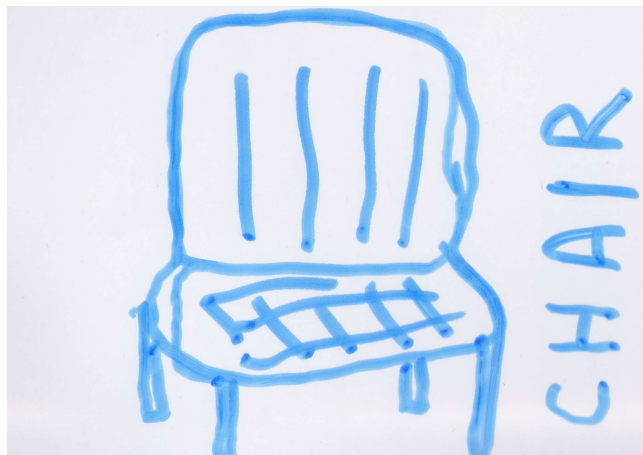
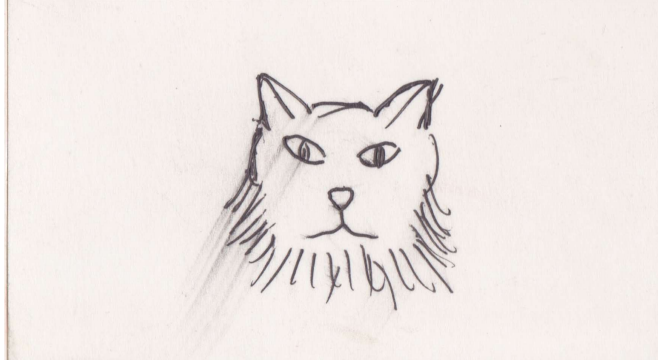
Emphasise that a personal myth is positive, that it takes the best things about you and finds an explanation for them in previous influences and experiences.

There is much evidence that it is very beneficial for emotional well being to be able to tell stories that explain how positive qualities emerged from past experience, even if these experiences were difficult or painful. The emphasis in this exercise is the comparison between the different paths people have taken to arrive at the same role.



4. Recapping and Retelling

'I like hearing the stories. It's how we used to learn at school. The stories are very good' (member of storycircle ESOL group)



Take It Further - Increase the Storytelling Heat

Once the storytelling starts, it's time to increase the storytelling heat under the session!

The facilitator has an important role to play as more stories are told. Sometimes participants tell skeletal stories or fragments of stories or stories that are not clear to the others. The facilitator can take these and briefly expand on them, retell them or recap them. This demonstrates to the participants that everything is a story. It shows how storytelling adds something to an account of experience - it becomes entertaining and valuable to others. It also encourages others to storify in the same way.

For instance someone in one of our storycircles said 'I used to be a cleaner, one of my jobs was cleaning a betting shop. I got up at 4 in the morning and I was done by 12, then I went home to sleep. I remember the floor was covered in betting slips'.

This story could be expanded-

'Here's someone who got up so early it was still dark. Not even the birds had got up when she got up. She went through the empty streets and reached a shop. Once she got inside she surveyed the scene. Wherever she looked, the floor was covered in paper. She swept it all up and left it clean for the start of the day. Why was there so much paper on the floor? It was... A Betting Shop!'

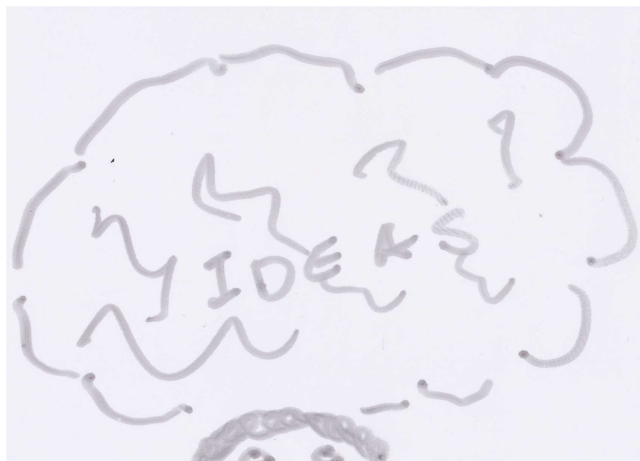
Participants don't mind if their stories are played with in this way. They have the pleasure of being the original creator. The message is clear: *Everything is a story and storytelling is a form of play*

Apply a Storytelling Aesthetic to Everything

Sometimes, it's good to make remarks after someone has told a story. Eg 'that's a brilliant story' or 'that's a beautiful story' or 'you told that story very well...' This establishes that the point of the group is to tell stories, and that each thing that is said has value because it can be heard as a story. This creates a distancing effect. People don't feel they are sharing personal experience but instead they are contributing stories.

5. Themes and variations

'that was much better than my usual presentation. We could talk about the issues in a way they all understood'
(health practitioner during health themed storycircle)



What does that story mean?

Often a storytelling conversation organises itself into a series of themes and variations.

This can be encouraged by the facilitator. Once someone tells a story, the facilitator can extract a theme from it. This theme could be very simple such as 'these stories are all about coincidences' or more abstract such as 'these stories are all about growing up'. The theme suggested by the facilitator may not have been intended by the original tellers, but it is fascinating to see how this approach leads to a journey of association as participants take up the theme in their own stories. Sometimes these journeys lead to magical moments of group discovery.

An example of this was a series of stories told about lions during one of our storycircles involving people recovering from addictions.

In explaining the nature of storytelling, I began with a short fable about a lion. This led onto to a number of memories of lions among the group, including this one:

'I used to live in Africa. There was a charity where I used to work sometimes. They had this old lion that was completely tame. One day I was driving down the road towards the charity office. There was a lion lying in the road. I assumed it was the old lion, so I got out of the car, went up to it and pushed it out of the way. Then I drove past it to the charity buildings. But when I got there, who did I see outside but the tame lion!! Then I realised that I'd pushed a completely wild lion out of the road..'

As the stories about lions went on, the conversation began to turn to a deeper theme that might lie behind all these lion stories. One person said

'the theme of all these stories is that you have to let go of your anger...'

The participants all agreed about this. The act of storytelling had enabled an important truth for them to be expressed, without any need for too much personal revelation.

Don't Introduce a Theme Too Soon

It's easy to try to control a conversation by introducing a theme. Whatever themes emerge, they must come naturally in the course of the conversation. There is nothing worse than announcing at the start of a storycircle that the stories will address a particular theme!

Some themes that recurred during storycircle sessions were - Stories of coincidence and chance...Stories of mystical encounters...Stories of money...Stories about trips to the dentist...Stories about growing up...

One theme that was always popular in our storycircles was the theme of...

Folklore

It is always good to ask if anybody has any items of folklore that they know. Folklore can be seen as any shared behaviour that is created by people in face to face contact. An example of folklore is a rhyme or a riddle or a superstition. Folklore could also encompass knowledge of stories from different genres such as ghost stories, jokes or urban legends. It could also include rhymes used during childhood games or the phrases used for different numbers during a game of bingo! All these pieces of folklore are often recounted with laughter, because they recreate the playful or humorous context in which they were first heard.

For instance one participant in one of our storycircles told the following joke that she had heard from her grandfather -

There was a man with a small fierce dog who went into a betting shop. He took his dog with him inside. The man in the shop asked him why he didn;t tie it up outside. He replied 'there's a couple of rotweilers tied up outside'. The man in the shop laughs and says 'I suppose your dog couldn't handle em?' 'No', comes the reply 'he could handle 'em all right, except he'd have to take his jacket of first...'

TALES FROM THE STORYCIRCLES
STORY 3

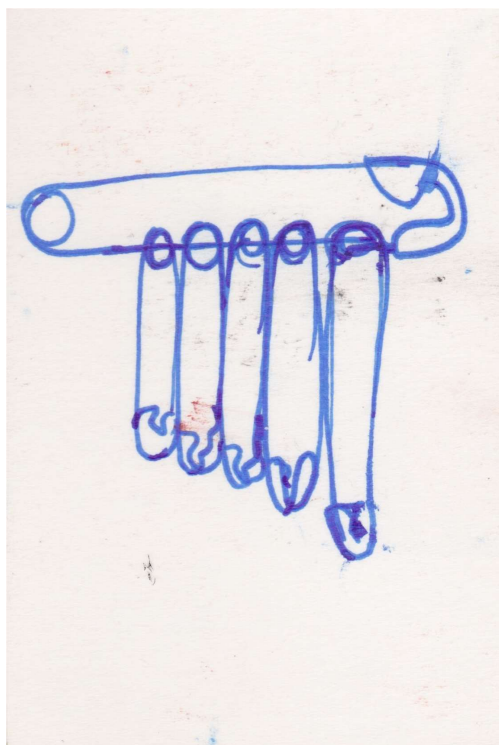
Ali and the Horse

Once there was a young boy called Ali. His mother died and his father remarried. His new mother did not like him. Fortunately, Ali had a friend which was his horse. The horse could speak. One day it said to Ali 'your father is going to throw you out of the house because his wife is speaking bad things about you. Come with me...' Ali and his horse went through the desert and finally came to a big city where everybody was very sad. When Ali asked, he was told that the Queen and the King had both turned blind. There was a secret ingredient that could restore their sight - the milk of a mare that had just given birth. Ali asked his horse to help him. They went far away, found the milk and returned. Ali told the guards of the palace that he could cure the King and Queen. They took him to the Queen's bedside and he gave her a small drop of the milk. She got the sight back in one eye and she grasped out at Ali and got hold of his robe. He had to cut the robe with a knife to get away from her. The Queen was left with a scrap of material in her hand. She said that she would give a fortune to anyone who had a robe that fitted the scrap she had. The guards of the palace searched all over the city. Finally they came to Ali. They laughed at him because he was so poor. But when they tried the material, it fitted his robe perfectly. Now Ali gave the milk to the King and Queen. They got their sight back and they made him rich.

6. Making it up - group story making

'I've always found it hard to make up stories, I've gone to some classes and you get given complex ideas about stories. But this makes it so easy, there's no pressure, it just seemed to happen by itself...'

(storycircle participant)



On many occasions people do not want to recount memories or talk about themselves. This is particularly true for storycircles involving people who are nervous about joining a group. In these situations, it was always better during our project for the storycircle to make stories up together.

All the above methods can be used to inspire the creation of stories.

Objects in Your World - Storymaking Version

Take some blank cards and draw simple objects on them. Everybody make four or five cards. Draw something that is part of your world, either a thing or a person. Draw the most obvious and everyday things. Now take all the cards and shuffle them together. Take a card at random and begin the story. Now offer the cards to the next person, who takes one at random and uses the card to continue the story. It doesn't matter where the story goes. Creating a story is like playing a sport - you don't have to be the person who scores the goal, you can be the person who just passes the ball to the next person. Both roles are just as useful.

It is important to emphasise that there is no need to cudgel your brains to think of a clever continuation. If you take a card with an umbrella, then say 'then it started to rain' or 'then he took out his umbrella', this can be just as useful for the story as a more complex contribution.

Of course you should not prevent people from going off on flights of fancy the moment they look at their card. This is just as useful for storytelling purposes.

This very open ended way of making a story was enjoyed enormously by participants in our storycircles, especially by those who remembered storymaking from their childhood or school days.

The Story So Far...

The same skills of recapping and retelling are useful in this situation as well. From time to time the facilitator should recap the story so far, before offering a card to the next person. This keeps the story rolling along nicely!

7. Storymaking - Freeform

'They really liked that session. There's questions of trust in groups, and usually they each do their own thing, but the way you told the story at the end, I could see how proud they were of what they'd created together'
(reading co-ordinator at storycircle event in a prison)



If the mood is right, make up a story one paragraph at a time

Once the storytelling spirit is truly alive in a group, it is possible to make up stories without any structures at all. Sometimes participants even prefer the freedom of making up whatever they like without the influence of cards or themes.

Someone say the first line of a story. Now the next person will add a bit, then the next person. We're going to keep going round and round until we get to the end of the story.

As the story is being told it is likely that it will become a bit ragged round the edges. Different character might appear, it might not be entirely clear what the story is about or who is the central figure in the story.

Keep a clear idea of who is the Protagonist and what is their Goal

Ask yourself - who is the protagonist and what do they want?

It is useful for stories to have a central protagonist/hero/livewire and for there to be a clear purpose that takes the protagonist through the story. This might not be true for more complex stories but stories told in a group by spoken words need to be very clear and simple for everyone to follow them.

Once Again - Recap and Tell the Story So Far

If the story seems to be losing its way, the facilitator can always recap the story so far. In doing so, they can prune the various elements and keep the story on track with a clear protagonist and issue to be resolved.

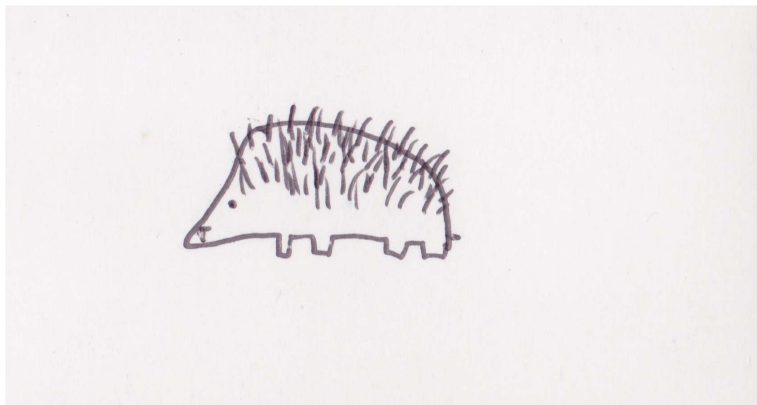
If one of the participants gets stuck, then invite others to suggest something. Or ask them a direct question eg 'what happened when the ball flew through the window?', 'where did the dog go next?' etc.

Don't Oblige Participants to Contribute!

It is important however not to demand involvement from the participants. They aren't contractually obliged to contribute to the story. They may enjoy simply sitting with

others and being part of the story atmosphere. Do not pressure someone into coming up with an idea if they are obviously reluctant to do so. On the other hand, if the mood is playful, interpret whatever they say as something of value for the developing story.

For instance a storycircle that we ran in a prison involved one participant who was self conscious about group storymaking. Whenever it came to his turn he always replied 'I don't know'. Eventually this became a running line that could be made to fit whatever was happening in the story. When it came to his turn the other participants prepared for him by saying eg 'then she said...' and waited for him to add 'I don't know'. He began to enjoy the game and relish the moment when he could add his line. During a later session this same person began to talk about the stories he had known as a child.



TALES FROM THE STORYCIRCLES
STORY 4

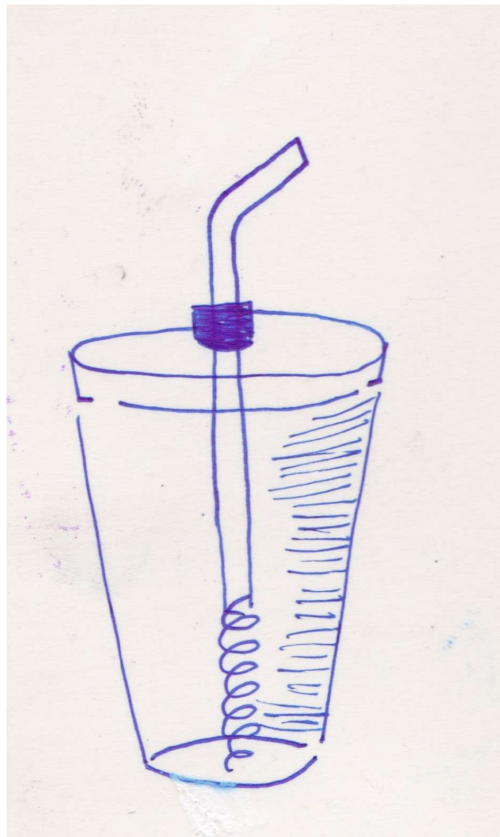
The High Heeled Shoes

I remember when I was thirteen years old, I was desperate to have my first pair of high heeled shoes. I thought they were so grown up and I went to my mother and begged her to buy them for me. When I got them, I couldn't wear them. I felt like I was about to fall over. My uncle had a stick which he leant to me. Then I could walk around, hobbling in my high heeled shoes supporting myself with a stick. Very stylish...!!

8. Bringing the session to a conclusion

'That was such a good session. I've seen them in a good place and I've seen them in a bad place and believe me, today they were in a good place'

Organiser of an Elders' Group.



If they like it, keep going, if it's time to finish, then end it.

There is no need to decide how long the session is going to last. All that counts is that the participants have had a satisfying time. It is better to finish earlier rather than to force the session to continue.

However...Just Because It's Come to an End Doesn't Mean It Has to Stop.

Once the storycircle has finished that does not necessarily mean the end of the session. The bond between the facilitator and the group and between the different members cannot be broken so rapidly.

Once the storytelling has finished it's often a natural moment for some other social activity. Just as it is a good idea to start the session with some shared music making, it is a good idea to end the session with a shared meal or with a cup of tea.

Make Sure Everyone Has Their Time to Talk

The aftermath of the storycircle is also the time when individuals can be acknowledged. It is easy sometimes for some people to dominate a storycircle and others to be quiet. This is not always by agreement. Notice who has not spoken as much as they would like to speak. Use the period after the end of the storycircle to talk to them individually. Listen to them so that they feel that they had a chance to speak and will not go home feeling frustrated by the session. Often conversations during the final cup of tea enable participants to talk in smaller groups and to say the things they thought of saying but did not voice in the larger session.

Saying thank you and goodbye

There are many ways of formally ending a storycircle session. One way is to tell a final story to round off the experience. This story can be chosen from the large stock of stories that comment on the significance of storytelling.

Here is one story that I have told many times. It always brings a session to an end in a positive way, emphasising that everything is a story, big or small.

The Tailor and the Jacket

Once there was a tailor who found a beautiful roll of cloth and used it to make a jacket. He was so proud of this jacket that he wore it everyday, showed it to everyone, did not take it off...until it was so dirty, he had to throw it away. But just before he chucked it in the bin, he noticed that there was a small patch of the jacket that was still beautiful. He cut this patch out and made a tie.

It was a beautiful tie. The tailor wore it, showed it off, wore it out. Just before he was about to throw it away, he saw that there was a small patch on the tie that was still beautiful. So he cut it out and he made a handkerchief.

It was a beautiful handkerchief. He wore it, showed it off, used it...wore it out. Just before he was about to chuck it away, the tailor saw that there was a tiny patch on the handkerchief that was still beautiful. He used this patch to make a button.

It was a beautiful button. He put the button on his shirt. He showed the button, wore it...wore it out. The button was so dirty, so grubby, there was nothing to do but to throw it away. But just before he threw it away, the tailor realised that there was something he could make with this button. What was it?....He made a story.
It was a beautiful story. It's the story I've just told you.

TALES FROM THE STORYCIRCLES
STORY 5

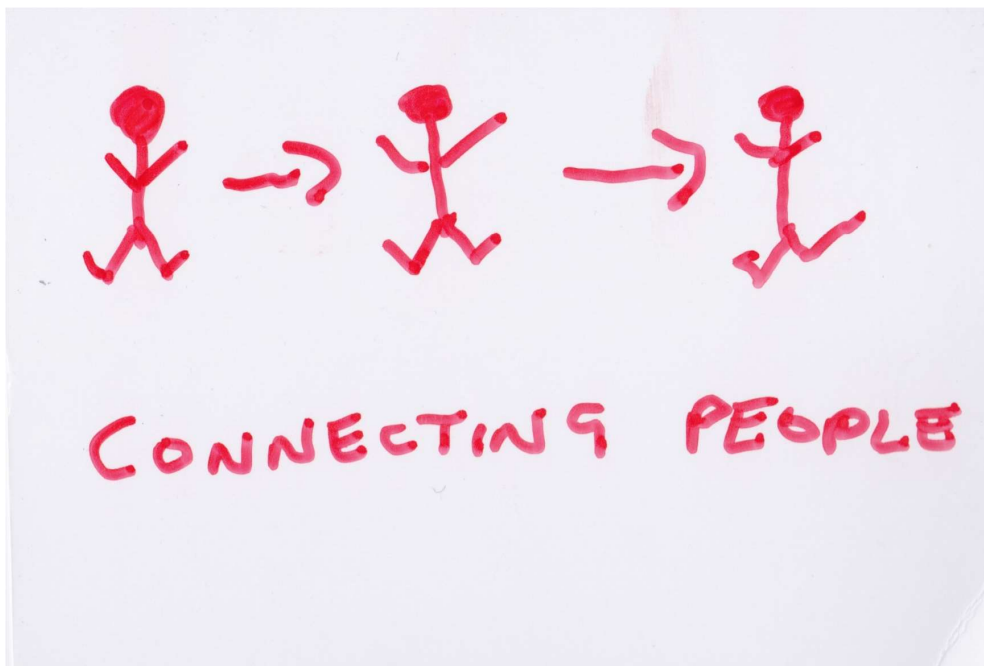
The Mince in the Road

I left school when I was fifteen. The headmaster called my mother in and told her there was no helping me and I had to go. The next day I got my first job as a butcher's boy. One of my duties was cycling around with deliveries. One day I was taking a pile of mince to a school. It was raining and in those days there were trams with their lines running down the road. My bike slipped on the lines and I went over. The mince got flung out into the road. I didn't know what to do. So I scooped it up and put it back in the paper wrapper. I took it to the school. There was a bit of grit in it but they were none the wiser.

10. What storycircles are and what storycircles are not

'I didn't know what to expect with storytelling, but I suppose what it does is that it distracts you for a while, you don't have to think about your issues, and you can forget them. Then when you go back to them, you feel better'

(storycircle participant)



It's Meant to be Enjoyable

The main purpose of storycircles is to create a playful and satisfying experience of storytelling for the participants. Storycircles are not therapy!!! They are not there to invite people to share painful memories or to offer people the opportunity to disclose unspoken experiences.

In all the storycircles that we ran during our project, despite working with groups whose participants were in difficult life situations, there was always a positive humorous atmosphere which was highly valued.

A storycircle creates a place where people can discover themselves as playful, creative and capable. It affirms them as individuals who can shape experience into something that has meaning and value for others. Storycircles ultimately exist to create bonds between people and to enlarge the circle of sympathy and trust.

I hope you can use some of the ideas in this booklet to run storycircles of your own. Please contact me if you have any questions.

Richard Neville

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TALES FROM THE STORYCIRCLES
STORY 6

The Money in the Fire

Once there was a father who had three lazy sons. They didn't want to get out of bed, they didn't want to do anything. So one day he told them that if they cleared out the yard he would reward them. They got out of bed. They started to work and didn't stop until the job was done. Then they went to their father to ask for their reward. He was sitting by the fireside waiting for them. He got out his wallet and counted out some paper money. Then he held up the money and dropped it all into the fire. His sons watched in amazement. He said to them - 'today you worked hard without stopping. Now you know that you can do whatever you want if you apply yourself. If you do that for the rest of your life you will have all the rewards you want. That is my lesson to you, it is worth more than money. Now you will never forget' .

TALES FROM THE STORYCIRCLES
STORY 7

The Unrosy Past

Sometimes you get reminiscence that gives a rosy view of the past. But you've got to remember there was a lot of poverty in the past.

The houses we lived in when I was a child were pretty unsanitary. There wasn't a sink in the toilet you had to wash your hands in the kitchen. Often there was no bathroom at all.

I grew up near the Thames and we couldn't afford coal so I went looking for driftwood to burn in the fire instead. We didn't have a fridge and the meat was put in the safe, there were fly papers everywhere with flies stuck to them, it was disgusting.

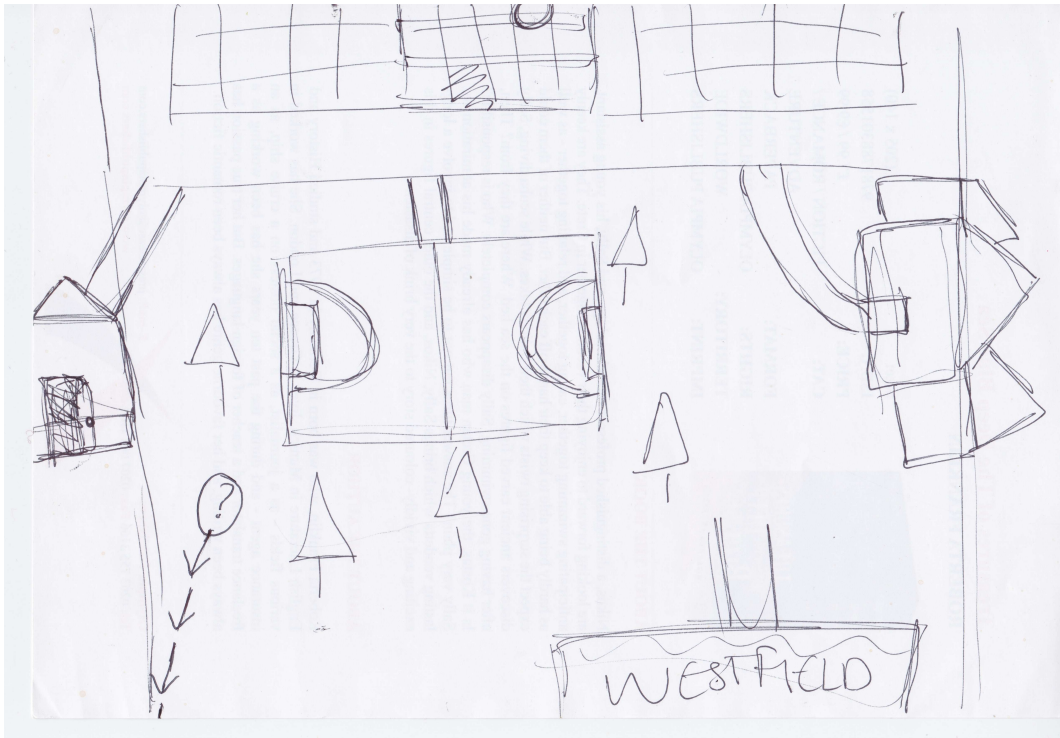
That was reality for a lot of people in the past.

TALES FROM THE STORYCIRCLES
STORY 8

The Head Outside the Door

When I was a teenager I used to love going to parties. My father did not approve and he always told me I had to come back home early. One night I went out to a party and I enjoyed myself so much I forgot about the time. When I came home I saw that my father was sitting outside the door, waiting for me. I could see his head in the darkness over the top of the hedge.

I was very worried so I went to see my uncle who lived nearby. I asked him to come back with me and explain to my father that I had not realised how late it was. My uncle went to the front door to talk to my father. Then he started to laugh and called me to come. When I got to the front door I saw that there was a goat standing outside. In my anxiety I had thought it was my father!



**Listening, Connecting, Entertaining
storycircles project in Hammersmith & Fulham
2019-2020**

