

STORYTELLING GUIDE: RESOURCE 4

Getting Stories Started: For Educators and Facilitators

In life, storytelling often happens organically with friends and loved ones; other times, facilitators and educators have the chance to create opportunities for storytelling!

As a facilitator, you can help people tell their best stories, where they are able to portray who they are and how they experience the world. Use this guide as a set of reminders for how you can best facilitate storytelling in your classroom or workplace. Note: These suggestions are intended as personal checkpoints rather than used as a formula. Feel free to add steps or skip suggestions that do not work for you or the situation you are in – make it your own!

Set Conditions

- 1) Discuss the value of stories and how they contribute to the group culture. Ask participants why they care about people's stories.
- 2) Set up norms for storytelling, including time length for the speaker and audience behavior.
- 3) Create rituals and routines around when and how stories are told.

Cultivate Capacity

- 1) Help people feel prepared. When possible, give prompts in advance and give time to outline thoughts.
- 2) Create low-stakes activities before anything high-stakes, so that people can practice storytelling.
- 3) Be a sounding board for ideas and coach people through their initial thoughts. Validate and encourage.

Identify Goals

- 1) Some people need to know why they are telling or listening to stories before they can proceed. State what they should focus on.
- 2) Many academic standards involve telling clear and organized stories. Explicitly state academic goals.
- 3) Clarify emotional and relational goals for learning about people.

Determine Prompts

- 1) Give people 2-3 options for story topics. More than 3 will lead people to spend too much time on topic selection and 1 is limiting.
- 2) Keep prompts open-ended and free for interpretation (even only one word or phrase is fine).
- 3) Avoid language that makes it seem there's a right or wrong answer.

Communicate Expectations

- 1) Establish what is "fixed" and what is "flexible" – be clear about how free the storyteller can be.
- 2) State the purpose of the story and what it should accomplish.
- 3) State what the storyteller should expect from the situation (i.e. how many people they will speak to and how long they have to prepare).

Model Connection

- 1) Be genuinely interested in the story and demonstrate that interest with your non-verbal behavior.
- 2) State what resonated with you, and what you will remember.
- 3) Help people feel like their story was worth telling by connecting it to future activities or stating how it will impact future work or learning.

