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# THE HEALING POWER OF STORIES

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Online & IRL

How We Listen

Healing Value of Stories

How to Tell a Story

If You're Writing Stories



## ONLINE AND IRL: A STORY IS A STORY

Written stories via email

Spoken stories via Skype or other platforms

Face-to-face in person

Stories over the phone

It's all in how we listen/read.



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## HOW WE LISTEN DETERMINES DEPTH OF THE STORY & TRUST OF THE TELLER

How do we listen in person?

How do we listen over the phone?

How do we listen using Skype?

How do we listen when we are reading an email?



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## LISTENING = WITNESS

Posture

Soft eyes

Open body language

Allowing for silence

Quiet our own internal talk

“I really appreciate how you express that . . . ”



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## THAT HAPPENED TO ME ONCE . . .

Self-disclosure, sometimes mistaken for mirroring, is not listening. It is substitution one's own for the other's experiences.

Creates a feeling of abandonment.

Listening is attending to someone else.



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## THE HEALING VALUE OF TELLING STORIES

- We bear witness to our own experiences when we make them into stories.
- We discover more of our personalities when we make stories.
- Trauma dwells beyond linear organization. In making story, we put it into narrative form.
- We don't have to always tell our sad stories.
- Creative imagination is medicine for chronic pain.



## THE HEALING POWER OF LISTENING TO STORIES

When a person is telling, they are:

Offering you a larger picture of who they are.

They are establishing trust: if you listen they will trust.

They are constructing a narrative.

They are revealing more than data.

They are relying on you.

They are building their identity in relation to you.

They are trying their best to tell.



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## HOW TO TELL A STORY

An excellent way to learn how to appreciate the act of listening is to tell a story.

Recall an event you wish to tell about. (or a folktale you want to re-tell if you don't feel like telling about yourself)



Get your first and last sentences.

Examples of first sentences: "It was the last run of the day." "My grandparents were having a yard sale."

Examples of last sentences: "And that violin is waiting for the next member of our family to play it." "I figured they'd had enough excitement for one day."

## CREATE IT

- Fill in the middle. You don't have to write anything down.
- Meditate on it, let it move around in your head, feel the tension between the thing that happened and the order of a story.
- allow the emotions to come up if any do, including joy, including sadness.



## FIVE SENSES

- If there's a door, what color and kind of wood is it? Does it have a fancy doorknob? If your story takes place at the beach, what color is the sand? Is there seaweed washed up in the tide? If there's another person in your story, how do they dress, stand, smell, smile?
- This is the lovely part of storytelling. It can feel challenging, but it gets to be really fun. Remember what might be obvious to you may not be obvious to someone else, and we all like being shown things.



**TELL!**

Tell your story to someone. Then, tell it to someone else.  
Each time it will change, and enjoy those changes.



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## IF YOU'RE WRITING STORIES

Use short sentences. (Long sentences can get very tumbly and confused.)

## **ACTION!**

Use action words as much as you can.



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## ALLOW FOR CHAOS

Allow the drafting process to be a bit chaotic. (Memory will take over and tell you what it wants to say sometimes.)



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## CREATIVE IMAGINATION/TECHNICAL IMAGINATION

For the first draft, just be creative. Be technical in the second and third and fourth drafts.



**SHHHHHHHHHH**

Hush the critic voice inside your head.

## FLOW

Let the creative process consume you. At first it will feel forced or nerve-wracking, but it does begin to flow.

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Cup of Tea



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## YOUR TURN

Begin a storytelling exchange with a friend.

Start a storytelling circle.

Connect with National Storytelling Network and International Storytelling Center—and other storytelling communities.

Be a storyteller.

Thank you

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