

## **Story telling circle**

**Downloadable guidance notes for group facilitators of activists or campaigners**

To be used in conjunction with *“inspiring action – a guide for practitioners”* created by the everyone foundation with Oxfam and the WI

## **Title: Story telling circle**

### **Purpose**

Stories have a powerful impact, and can resonate and create connections where facts and figures don't.

### **Context**

Bringing people together in groups can create real value in terms of shared learning and building a sense of achievement and support.

Sharing stories that you have experienced as well as heard can be a useful way of practicing your advocacy and engagement skills.

We understand that stories can be a more effective means of communication than facts and figures.

This exercise is designed for a group and is designed to create shared experiences, and prepare people to share their stories.

### **Objectives**

- To practice telling stories
- To build up peoples ability to speak authentically and movingly when they are telling stories
- To enable people to find and refine the stories they want to tell – both about their lives and those of others.

### **Instructions**

- It is important that a safe and relaxed atmosphere is created, and that people are ready to be attentive and considerate. When people listen with attention, even the most reticent person can find their voice.
- There are two types of story telling circle outlined here – an opening one for ice breaking and a more advanced one to practice our stories for the outside world.

#### **Ice Breaker**

1. Ask people to sit in a circle
2. Wait for people to settle and let silence fall on the group
3. Share a topic that everyone will speak about – a topic such as;
  - a. What brought me here
  - b. Who inspires me and why
  - c. What this project means to me
  - d. What I hope to achieve
  - e. Why I am interested in this topic

4. Ask someone to start, and use an encouraging and gentle tone to move from person to person.
5. Maintain strong eye contact with the speaker, and encourage stillness from the rest of the group
6. Allow people to tell funny, sad, detailed or brief stories.
7. Once everyone has spoken, debrief by asking questions like
  - a. How did it feel to tell your story?
  - b. How did it feel to be listened to by everyone else
  - c. What surprised you about your story?
  - d. What thoughts would you like to share about this experience?

### **Advanced story telling**

1. Tell people that they will be telling stories, and ask them to prepare.
2. Select a story that
  - a. Is personal, heartfelt and demonstrates your commitment and passion for this topic
  - b. Has inspired you to do more in some way
  - c. Shines a light on the topic in a moving and powerful way
3. Once people have prepared their stories (and this might take some time) ask people to sit in a circle
4. Wait for people to settle and let silence fall on the group
5. Ask someone to start, and use an encouraging and gentle tone to move from person to person.
6. Maintain strong eye contact with the speaker, and encourage stillness from the rest of the group
7. Allow people to tell funny, sad, detailed or brief stories.
8. Once everyone has spoken, debrief by asking questions like
  - a. How did it feel to tell your story?
  - b. How did it feel to be listened to by everyone else
  - c. What surprised you about your story?
  - d. What thoughts would you like to share about this experience?
9. Encourage the group to make these stories a key part of their campaigning and advocacy going forwards
10. There are many story telling resources and guides available in bookshops and online if you are interested in developing your ability to tell stories.
11. Review the other tools and resources that are available on the [everyonefoundation.org](http://everyonefoundation.org) website, including the 'connectedness' workshop and 'facilitation skills to create deeper connections' workshops or speak to the team about what the next steps might be in this conversation by calling 0207 836 8142