

Story Finding and Storytelling for our *Held In Common* Podcast - and Beyond!

Finding your Story

There are lots of different ways to find a story that you would like to tell. Try:

- Closing your eyes and thinking back over the last week. Imagine yourself walking through each day: what memories, experiences or moments stick out? What made you smile?
- Remembering conversations you've had with friends, family or neighbours, no matter how short. What did you like about the conversation? Did you find out something new? How did it change your mood?
- Closing your eyes and thinking about the sounds, scents, tastes and textures you've experienced over the last day or two. Have you tasted something new? Or noticed different sounds? Our senses can be brilliant starting points for our stories and they can add detail and colour to our stories too.
- Looking for a moment of change in your week. This could be a moment where your mood changed or something changed in your environment. It could be a time where you tried a new skill or activity like a Joe Wick work out or when you found a new route during your daily exercise. Stories are all about change and contrast so this could be a great starting point.
- Looking for a moment in the last few weeks where you felt a strong positive emotion, if only for a moment - this might be pride, happiness, connection, gratitude... Your story could tell us what led to that strong emotion and how it affected you.

Structuring your story

It can feel daunting to try and arrange our personal experiences into a story form. However, we actually do this quite naturally every day when we talk to friends and family or when we share memories.

To strengthen your story structure and get the most out of your story try thinking about your story in three parts: **context, memory and reflection.**

Context:

What happened before the central part of the story? What was the environment like? Who else was around? How long had you been in the situation? Establishing the context of your story is about establishing what is normal - so that the events of your story stand out even more in contrast to the normal!

Example story moment: 'I can hear birdsong on my balcony because the M32 is quiet now'.

Adding some context to this story moment might make it look like this:

'Normally when I stand out on my balcony I can hear the M32. I have a bird feeder where I like to put seed for the birds. It's nice to see the birds but its hard to hear their calls. Now, with the virus happening, the M32 is quiet and I can hear the bird song much more clearly.'

Memory:

This is normally the central part of the story - it is probably the essence of the 'story moment' that you thought of originally. This is the events of the story: the 'what happened'? It's the action! It can be a good place to add details: really paint a picture with your words and try to encourage your listener to step into the memory with you.

Example story moment: 'I can hear birdsong on my balcony because the M32 is quiet now'.

Adding more to the memory of this story moment might make it look like this:

'When I step out onto my balcony in the morning, it's quiet now. The normal buzz of cars from the M32 has gone. I can breathe in the air and sit in stillness on my chair with a comfy cushion. I watch the birds visiting my bird feeder and I can hear their song so much more clearly. I hear the different calls and try to work out which bird is singing which song.'

Reflection:

This is your reflections about what happened in your story: the thoughts or feelings that came up for you as a result of what happened. Sometimes it might include a decision you made, or an idea you had as a result of what happened. It is often a broader thought that came to you about the bigger picture, because of the small thing that happened. It is often where you discover what the story means for you.

Example story moment: 'I can hear birdsong on my balcony because the M32 is quiet now'.

Adding some reflection to this story moment might make it look like this:

'I can hear birdsong on my balcony because the M32 is quiet now. The birdsong reminds me of my childhood when I lived on the outskirts of Bristol. I feel calm listening to the birds. It's made me realise that I rush a lot in normal life. I think I'd like to spend more time sitting quietly on my balcony, just listening.'

*If you develop the **context, memory and reflection** parts of your story, you may find you have more material than you thought - and that the story has greater meaning, for both you and your listener.*

You can also get creative with how you order your context, memory and reflection to create different effects!

Telling your Story

Now that you've found a story you want to tell and given some thought to the structure you'd like to tell it in, there is nothing more to do but tell it! Don't worry about writing it down first - just have a go at telling it to a friend or straight onto WhatsApp voice note.

It might feel strange at first to tell a story without having someone to tell it to, so here are some tips to make it easier:

- Use the suggested 'Starter Statements' which go out on our Story Call Outs, to help get your story started.
- Imagine somebody has just asked you a question which has prompted your story.
- Imagine that your phone is a friend that you're chatting to - and that you're simply telling them about your day.
- Feel free to record and send your story several times and then message us to let us know which version you want us to use!
- Have fun!

Thank you

Thank you for contributing to our *Held In Common* podcast. We hope that your stories will help to connect and uplift Bristol's communities during the Coronavirus outbreak. If you'd like to find out more about how your story will be stored, shared and edited - or how you can withdraw your story - please visit: www.pollytisdall.com or contact Polly on 07545 557001.

These resources have been developed by Polly Tisdall for The Network Bristol and are free for community use.