



ALL FUTURE IS FICTIONAL

TOOLKIT STORYTELLING
AND VULNERABILITY

KEPES ALAPÍTVÁNY; MYTHOS;
THE VILLAGE STORYTELLING; SETTLE STORIES;
AND STORYTELLING CENTRE AMSTERDAM

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Table of contents

Preface	5
Introduction	6
What is Applied Storytelling?	8
Who is this tool kit for?	8
How do we use this tool kit?	9
Glossary of Terms	10
 Part 1	 12
Preparing For The Journey	13
Bringing The Group Together	13
<i>Time/Space/Set-Up</i>	13
<i>Establishing Trust</i>	14
<i>Forming, Storming, Norming - Group Creation Process</i>	14
<i>Partnership and Wraparound Support</i>	16
Creative Outputs	16
Why - The Need For Creative Outputs In Applied Storytelling	16
With Disenfranchised Groups.	
What Kind of Creative Output?	17
Ownership, Consent and Ethics of Public Performance	18
Process vs Product	18
Evaluation	19
Story Types	20
Traditional Tales, Myths and Legends	20
Personal Stories	20
One-Step-Removed – Creating New Fictional Narratives	21
Planning	21
Planning a Workshop	22
<i>Warm-Ups and Rapport Building</i>	22
General Workshop Structure	22
 Part 2	 24
On the Journey, Activities	25
Warm-Up Exercises	25
<i>Freeman, Hardy, Willis</i>	25
<i>Question of the Day</i>	28
Creating a Character - New Narratives	29
<i>Character Beginnings</i>	29
<i>The Spark</i>	29
<i>Good Day and Bad Day</i>	31
<i>Hopes, Dreams and Future</i>	32
The Tree of Life	33
<i>Tree of Life Further Activity - Forest of Trees</i>	35
Story Mountain - teaching the structure of a story	36
The Hero's Journey (The journey as metaphor)	38

<i>Outsider - Witness Procedure</i>	39
Gifting	40
<i>Quality Street</i>	41
<i>Suitcase</i>	42
<i>A sense of closure</i>	43
Part 3	44
Resources	45
Workshop Plans	45
A Story of Rebirth	45
Co-creating a Character with New Fiction - One Step Removed	48
Useful Stories	54
The Legend of Sedna the Sea Goddess	54
<i>The Foolish Rabbit</i>	56
<i>The Cracked Pot</i>	56
<i>The Town Musicians of Bremen</i>	56
<i>The Singing Stone</i>	56
<i>The Partridge and the Turtle</i>	56
<i>The Anger Eating Demon</i>	56
<i>Cinderella</i>	56
<i>The Wings of Lotilko</i>	57
<i>This too shall pass</i>	57
<i>Molly Whuppie</i>	57
<i>The Cailleach, the woman who created Scotland</i>	57
<i>The Hunchback and the Swan</i>	57
<i>The Butterfly Bride</i>	57
<i>The God and the four monks</i>	57
<i>Androcles and the Lion</i>	58
<i>The Myth of Prometheus and the theft of fire</i>	58
<i>The king with the tree in his heart</i>	58
Referenced Links	59
Appendix	60
Appendix 1: Question Cards	60
Appendix 2: Partners	61

Preface

Storytelling brings people together. A simple story can help those who have to cope with difficult circumstances. These were the ideas that encouraged a team from DW-RS productions (Amsterdam, the Netherlands) to think that a European Erasmus+ grant could link people around the topic of applied storytelling and vulnerability. The project was named Digging for Inner Gold, the Aurus Project, and an international team was formed with four organisations that use storytelling and creativity in social work and one academic institution. Our first meetings were online due to the COVID-19 pandemic spreading across borders. We had to adjust ourselves to the new circumstances and meet through Zoom rather than in person. This created opportunities to join hands in a digital way. We had regular online meetings and invented different ways of discussing and creating opportunities to work together. It was only later that we could meet in real life. We also held hybrid meetings where people met online and offline. Thus, we were able to continue working even as COVID-19 continued spreading around the globe and some team members were infected. The Dutch team consisted of Arjen Barel, Hamed Rahmani, Juliette Eggink, Hester Tammes (DW-RS productions), Peer Smets, and Greta Troup (VU University Amsterdam, the Netherlands). The Greek team was made up of Maria Vrachionidou, Anezoula Katsibiri, and Giorgos Evgenikos from the Mythos organisation, Korissia, Greece. The Hungarian team consisted of Anna Racz and Dorka Szucs (Kepes Alapítvány, Budapest, Hungary). Finally, there were two teams from the UK: Helen Mill, Lauren Bianchi, and Shona Cowie (The Village Storytelling Centre, Glasgow, Scotland) and Sita Brand and Charles Tyrer (Settle Stories, Settle, England). All played complementary roles in the Aurus project, but Arjen Barel played a crucial role. He was the foundation of the Aurus project; he brought people together and created opportunities for making the project a success. We also could not have worked without the help of the staffs at DW-RS productions and the connected Storytelling Centre Amsterdam.

Last but not least, we apologise if we have forgotten to mention any of the many people who helped make this great project a success. We look forward to our work nurture storytelling events for people in vulnerable circumstances.

Introduction

Introduction

Gold! Everyone has it inside themselves; it's their mental strength, resilience, and talents. Some people wear their strengths clearly for all to see, as if they are shining around their necks, or their wrists and fingers. With some you have to make some effort, get closer, maybe dig a bit, before you get to see it. There are people for whom the gold is deeply hidden, they were knocked down and were unable to pick themselves up, lost their self-esteem and became socially disenfranchised. Sometimes the gold is buried so deep some people stopped believing they ever had any.

Two years ago we, the partners of the Aurus project, wrote this down as the start of a project that led to delivering the toolkit that is now in front of you. A toolkit that facilitates the discovery of gold in everyone and that can be used by everybody working with people in disadvantaged or vulnerable positions. People that should never be forgotten or overlooked because we believe that these people matter and that everyone's story matters. And we are convinced that sharing stories helps people to realise their inherent tools and know how to use them. That was our drive to design this project and to develop this toolkit.

In this toolkit you'll find activities, work plans and guidelines on how to set up a storytelling workshop or training. We involved activities working with both folktales and personal stories. And we added short descriptions of stories you can use, including links to external resources, for example YouTube videos of these stories.

We sincerely hope our work will inspire you and encourage you to start applying storytelling (even more) in your work. Feel invited to use the activities, to make them your own and even to adjust them if you think this will even improve their strength. Consider this toolkit as a solid and profound foundation, to build your own house of stories on. A house enabling people to live in their stories!

What is Applied Storytelling?

Applied Storytelling is the purposeful application of story as a tool for personal, community or organisational development, learning or information gathering and sharing. The ultimate goal is often to support and platform participants' expression in ways which feel appropriate for them. These processes have the potential to be of benefit to participants' well-being and self-esteem.

Key Elements of Applied Storytelling are:

- The roles of [storyteller](#) and listener are often fluid.
- It requires minimal resources and can potentially take place in any setting.
- It draws from several fields including traditional arts and heritage, theatre, psychology, education and social sciences to name a few.
- Applied storytelling is [person-centred](#) which means the autonomy, needs and voices of the participants are of central importance and drive the direction of the work. It can also be called Strengths Based, a concept which follows a belief that power, expertise and knowledge is innate and exists already in the participants. The concept and origins of Person Centred and Strengths Based practices are detailed further in the [Glossary of Terms](#).
- Applied Storytelling can work in collaboration with other art forms, Applied Storytelling can be those rich affirming conversations which happen when you are immersed in a physical activity.

Who is this tool kit for?

This tool kit is designed for anyone who is interested in the potential and power of storytelling as a tool to improve wellbeing and self-esteem. The exercises and ideas involved have been tested on groups made up of children, young people and adults who could be considered disenfranchised or socially isolated, such as people who are in recovery from alcohol or substance addiction or people who have refugee status or recent experience of migration.

We hope that this tool kit can provide those at the start of their Applied Storytelling practice or those who are interested in beginning to work with marginalised or disenfranchised groups with an accessible route into storytelling. For those who are well-established storytellers, we hope that this toolkit can be a reaffirmation of your practice and can offer inspiration, new tools and ideas. Those who join from a complementary field, such as social care, psychology, or education, should find exercises which can be incorporated into your existing practice and hopefully new perspectives and approaches to working with people's expression and imaginations.

The term 'Applied Storytelling' is relatively underused, however some of the ideas and approaches may already be familiar to you. If you come from a background in performance facilitation you may be very used to structuring creative workshops. If you are experienced in social work, you may understand acutely the sensitivity needed to handle the testimonies of marginalised groups.

In this toolkit, we have, for the first time, brought concepts and activities under one banner - Applied Storytelling.

How do we use this tool kit?

This tool kit is in three parts:

Part 1

Preparing for the Journey, in which we will outline how to safely prepare for and set up an applied storytelling project with a group of people who could be considered marginalised or disenfranchised. We have a focus on safe working practices and person centred approaches.

Part 2

Along The Way, in which we give in-depth descriptions of a number of key Applied Storytelling exercises which can be adapted and adopted to use in various contexts and groups.

Part 3

Resources, a selection of example workshop plans, stories and links to further activities and referenced sources to continue your journey. We have also included information about the case studies which were led with groups around Europe to test the efficacy of these Applied Storytelling approaches.

Glossary of Terms

Workshop	One session working with the group. This is generally around 2 hours, but could range from 1-3 hours depending on the needs of your group.
Project	When we refer to a project, we mean the entire block of workshops, this is generally around 8-10 workshops.
Facilitator	A facilitator is the person who plans, develops and runs the sessions. They will bring material, stories, questions, games and exercises for the group to take part in.
Storyteller	The storyteller is simply the person who shares stories. The facilitator may also be a professional storyteller, who is paid to perform, but in this context both the facilitator and participants will become storytellers at different moments as they express fictional and real life narratives.
Person Centred Practice	<p>Person Centred describes a practice in which the needs, autonomy and wishes of the people participating are of central importance to the process and direct the direction of the work. It is associated with education and psychology. The concept is built from the thinking of therapist Carl Rogers who believed that in order for psychological healing to occur certain conditions had to be present in the relationship between the therapist and the person in therapy, those of empathy, unconditional positive regard, congruence.</p> <p>This work is built from Abraham Maslow's, Hierarchy of Needs which has its roots in the Blackfoot (Siksika) Nation's beliefs.</p>
Strengths Based Practice	The idea of a strengths based approach was forwarded by North American social worker Bertha Reynolds in the 1990's. It promotes a focus on individuals' strengths rather than what they lack. A strengths based practice considers the whole person, their life experience, resilience and abilities as well as their context within social and community networks.
End on Stage	The stage space is on one side of the room and the audience sits on the opposite side.

Part 1

Preparing the Journey

Preparing For The Journey

When bringing a group together to begin a project there are several important factors to consider. In this chapter we will address these factors - it is of the utmost importance that careful consideration is given to the building of the group at the beginning of the project to try to mitigate any difficulties that may arise at this point and later in the project.

Bringing The Group Together

Firstly, we must consider what the project is and who it is for. When we are working with people who are disenfranchised, it is best to be clear exactly who the project is for. The more specific we are about the group whom we intend to work with, the more likely it is we will find people who will truly benefit from the project.

We must also carefully consider what the project proposes to do. Have there been specific objectives or outcomes set by funders? What needs are we proposing to meet with the group? Will there be a creative output? In answering these questions, we will be able to map out the project – perhaps you wish to set the ‘end point’ and work backwards from there, or perhaps you will plan each session in chronological order. Whichever way the project is planned, it is imperative that we keep our aims and objectives in mind when planning each stage of the project. This will not only ensure that the project is meeting the needs of the group, but also it will be meeting the expectations of the funders.

Time/Space/Set-Up

Once you have established how you will attract participants to the project, you need to consider where you will be working and when. What times will suit the group? Do they have caring responsibilities which mean that during school hours suits them? Do they have jobs which mean that evening sessions are better? Also consider your space if you have a choice. Is the location easy to get to on public transport? Is a central location in the town or city best, or do the participants all live within one local area where the project could be held? If the project will take place in the evening, will the venue feel safe to access before, during and after session times?

And for the venue itself, is it accessible? Are there crèche or baby-changing facilities? Will you be offering refreshments and is there a space to do so within the venue? Is there enough space in the room you will be using to move around/use tables and chairs/split into groups?

Particular groups will have particular requirements such as breakout spaces and comfortable seating or low lighting. Consider what your group will need to make this a comfortable and productive process for them.

Establishing Trust

When working with a group of people on a project which asks questions, sets challenges and encourages the group to give something of themselves, a trusting relationship must first be established.

When the group has been established and you are ready to meet for the first session, consideration should be given to ensuring a 'safe space' is set up within the project. A safe space can look different for different groups and individuals but broadly it means that there is an understanding that whatever is shared in the space will stay in the space unless there is a concern for a child or vulnerable adult. This could be in the form of a verbal or written agreement with the group including such points as no mobile phones, being respectful to others, no-one is permitted to sessions under the influence of drugs or alcohol. These rules and boundaries are best developed and agreed by the group and storyteller as there is no 'one size fits all' policy that works for every group.

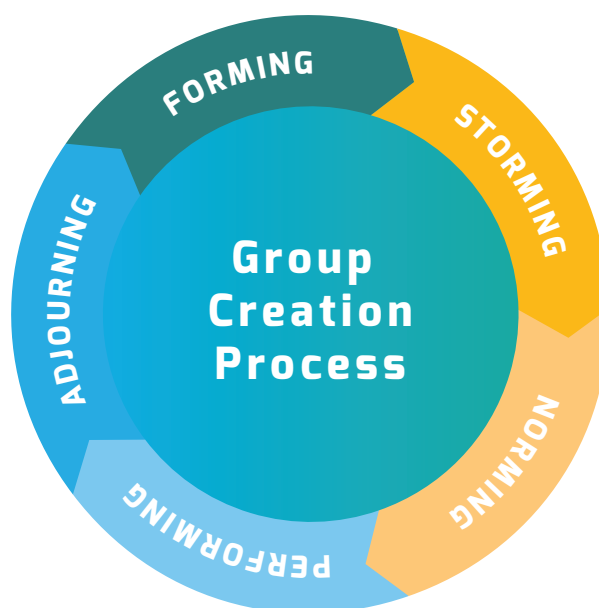
It means that the group can be free to be creative, share stories and take part and enjoy the session knowing there will be no repercussions in their 'real' life for sharing and being creative in this way. For example, while working with men in prison, we ensure to open and close the sessions with games so that the group can remove any 'armour' they find necessary to wear to keep them safe in a prison environment when they enter the session and to replace this 'armour' when they leave the space and re-enter the prison.

As a facilitator it is important to be able to share and to establish what you are comfortable with sharing yourself. You should have a clear boundary in your mind about what you are willing to share and what you are not, so that you are not 'caught out' in the space.

Forming, Storming, Norming - Group Creation Process

In 1965 Bruce Tuckman came up with the phrase "Forming, Storming, Norming and Performing" and later "Adjourning" in his article Developmental Sequence In Small Groups in Psychological Bulletin 63(6) 384-399. These terms describe building a group and the processes they go through as they begin to get together as a team in order to achieve their goal. You can find more information on this [here](#).

This describes the stages the group goes through from getting to know each other all the way to functioning really well together towards the end of the process. There is no set time frame on these stages so it is just a good idea to keep them in the back of your mind.



Forming When the group is just beginning to get to know each other and beginning to bond.

Storming When niggles and annoyances begin to appear within the group. Perhaps you've had a really difficult session where nobody seemed to get on with each other and you felt it was difficult to get through to the group. This is normal! It can be useful to return to lighthearted games or team building exercises and consider ways in which people can share something of themselves, such as a photo they like on their phone, this can work to rehumanise the group to each other.

Norming When the storming stage is over! The group have settled into the project and have got to know each other better and have more time for each other.

Performing Often towards the end of the process, the group knows each other well and begins to support each other, they also know you and are onboard with the project. They understand the activities and what is involved and are willing to give things a try.

Adjourning This additional stage is when the project has come to an end – this can be a difficult stage for group members who have formed a close bond with others and who the project has been very important to. Try to encourage the group to keep in touch with each other and consider the legacy of your project. This is discussed further in the **Partnership and wraparound support** section.

Partnership and Wraparound Support

An essential factor in the success of any group work project with people experiencing marginalisation is partnership with other organisations who can offer more in-depth support for the participants. In practice, this may mean approaching an organisation who already works with your target groups and working collaboratively with them to bring a group together. It may mean you are working in the organisation's space, or it may mean that the organisation provides a member of staff to be part of the project and make themselves available for additional support.

When delivering projects such as these, we must always be aware that the creative process may open up difficult doors, feelings and memories for the participants. If we are not therapeutic practitioners ourselves, it is extremely important that we have someone onboard who is, as these feelings can leave participants feeling vulnerable.

If we are able to form the right partnerships with supportive organisations, these relationships may also be beneficial to the legacy of the project. Working in the arts often means applying for funding and being restricted to delivering short to medium term projects with participants – but what happens to the participants when the project ends? This is a question which must be given a good deal of consideration as projects such as these can leave an empty space in the lives of the participants when they end. In partnership projects with other organisations who are able to offer longer term support, you may be able to facilitate a smooth transition between your project and ongoing support. If this is not the case, you may want to consider signposting the participants to similar organisations, or other arts projects they may have expressed an interest in. In this way you will be able to offer your group something more when your project ends.

Creative Outputs

In many creative processes where practitioners work with groups of individuals, there is some sort of creative output. This could be a performance of story, spoken word or music, a theatre production, or an art exhibition, to name a few. While not every process benefits from ending with a creative output, it certainly enhances many projects for the individuals

Why - The Need For Creative Outputs In Applied Storytelling with Disenfranchised Groups.

When working with disenfranchised groups of individuals, it may become apparent that many of the group members have not taken part in such a project before. It also may become apparent that many of the individuals have never taken part in any kind of performative or creative output either. Often individuals who are disenfranchised have had difficult experiences throughout their lives and have not been listened to or necessarily believed. This can be hugely damaging for the sense of self, confidence, creativity and

communication. It can leave someone feeling 'voiceless'. It is in part for this reason that creative outputs can be so important as part of the applied storytelling process – to give the participants a platform to share their voices and their stories in a way they themselves want to tell them and not in the way they feel that professional services want to hear them. A creative output, be it live performance or recorded, visual art or music, allows the participants a safe and supportive space to share something that they have made and something that they feel proud of – something that in many cases, individuals may not have had before. These feelings of pride will hugely benefit the participants as they can have a very profound impact on feelings of self-esteem and self-worth.

What Kind of Creative Output?

The creative output that works best for each group will vary between projects. If the facilitator is able to meet with and consult with the group before the process begins, they can discuss options for creative output with the group. This, however, is not always possible and facilitators sometimes have to decide earlier, or with other factors in mind such as collaboration with other artists, or whether the project will be facilitated by the storyteller alone.

Creative outputs with storytellers and other collaborative artists can be, but are not limited to:

- Storytelling performance
- Spoken word performance
- Story through song
- Visual art galleries or installations
- Film sharing

These types of creative outputs are not only beneficial for the group, but also for their wider circles of family and friends. Family and friends may have never seen the participants in this way before – sharing stories with confidence, speaking out and feeling proud of themselves. This can promote a huge shift in the dynamics of relationships of the participants both with themselves and with their loved ones.

Storytellers may also want to invite influential people to see the creative output. These people can be change makers in services, local decision makers and even members of government. The creative output will allow these change makers to hear the stories of the participants in a new light and can have a lasting impact on policy and change.

When is the group ready for a creative output?

This very much depends on the type of creative output. If the facilitator and the group want to work towards any sort of live event where the group will be per-

forming, it is important to take the time to get to know the group first and assess how long the facilitator feels the group will need to be in the right place to perform. Even with all the time and preparation necessary, participants can and often do choose not to perform, or for whatever reason, don't show up on the day of the sharing. Storytellers should always ensure they consider how to create a performance that has the flexibility to bear this in mind.

Generally a minimum of 8 sessions is useful, but this can vary from group to group depending on their previous experience, willingness to perform and lifestyle factors.

Ownership, Consent and Ethics of Public Performance

Once something is made public, be it a live performance, film or other, it will exist in the world indefinitely. This is an important consideration to think of and have genuine discussions with the group about. If the performance will be available online, consider having an implications discussion with group members. Will they want to be represented in this way in 5 years? What if their circumstances change? Is the output dealing with sensitive issues such as addiction, homelessness, trauma?

If so, there is a possibility that in future individual group members may not want the sharing to be in the public eye anymore, however once the information is out there, there's a real chance the facilitator may not be able to have it removed. This being said, performances and resources which are available online go on to help and influence countless others without geographical boundaries, but it is pertinent to ensure that group members are clear on what they are agreeing to and its permanency by being involved.

Process vs Product

The process vs product debate is one which has been going on in the creative arts world for many years and is likely to continue to polarise artists and groups. Whatever each storyteller and facilitator decides will be the correct decision for them and their group, there is no 'one size fits all' solution. Creative outputs are a very positive and affirming way to promote feelings of self-worth and positivity, however, this should not be at the expense of the process. Truly the best projects are those which deeply value the process and if making a creative output, see it as an ingrained part of the project and not simply an add on at the end.

Evaluation

Ongoing evaluation is an important part of any facilitation practice and group process in order to ensure the quality of your practice as a facilitator, respond to the needs of the group and measure the impact of the work. Success will look different to each project and potentially each participant so take care to consider what you are evaluating, why and how? Using evaluation and reflective tools and questions throughout the process is beneficial to the group to reflect both on the project and their own lives.

Standardised questionnaires can produce useful quantifiable data but if used, take care to consider the questions; are the questions abrupt? Do they ask for sensitive information and could this be triggering? Is there appropriate support available should this happen? Are the questions leading? Could participants respond with what they think they are meant to say? Could a participant's answers appear to be deteriorating when in fact they are gaining personal acceptance and a better understanding of their emotional wellbeing? Have you gained consent from participants before evaluation and recording?

Much evaluation takes place organically through the ongoing conversations, observations and reflections occurring within the sessions. Take care to capture this rich, qualitative information. Can you spend 10 minutes after each session writing notes, record voice notes or film yourself? Consider how to gather reflections from the group. Can you set up an audio recorder somewhere discreet in the space? Can there be sticky notes and boards or a post box for thoughts and opinions? Could participants write poetry, sculpt or move to express their responses to the journey? There are some wonderful creative evaluation techniques available, which can support participants to authentically share their journey in a reflective and imaginative way. We recommend a tool kit created by [Artworks Creative Communities](#) based in Bradford, UK.

Story Types

Having introduced the practical and emotional elements of preparing for a group Applied Storytelling process, it's now time to think about story itself. It may be useful to divide Stories into three main types; Tales and Legends, Personal Stories and a third category which we call One-Step-Removed, these stories are particularly useful in applied contexts. We have introduced these three story types below.

Traditional Tales, Myths and Legends

It is likely that these types of fictional stories are exactly what you imagine when you picture storytelling; myths and legends, fables, fairy and folk tales - stories of wonder and adventure.

These stories share a sense that they are not set in our time or even in our world and it is precisely this element which can make them such powerful Applied Storytelling tools. Their distance from reality can offer participants space to reflect and an opportunity to imaginatively leave their own day-to-day lives for a time, escape established thought patterns and personal narratives which, if handled with care, can be a powerful intervention to combat emotional distress or simply offer a welcome mental break.

Fantastical themes and historic plots may not initially appear relevant to our modern lives, but in fact the content of these stories has been edited by countless people in order to process and express the most difficult, shared, human experiences. Dragons for example, could represent fear of the other, the *unknown* or *unmapped*. Their hoarding of treasure can represent concerns about unwieldy power, greed and wealth inequality, all issues which are deeply resonant today.

Personal Stories

Personal stories can be amplified through microphones on a stage but can also be a conversation shared on the bus.

On a stage or on a bus, having a safe and accepting space in which to share personal stories can be an incredibly powerful applied storytelling process. Participants recognise that they are worthy of being heard and what they have to say is important and interesting, which itself may not be a narrative they are used to. Through the process of sharing, participants often find that stories are not set in stone and their relationship to the story can change through their telling and retelling.

One-Step-Removed – Creating New Fictional Narratives

The stories are collaboratively created or developed by the group, the central characters and the issues and decisions they are facing are built up and discussed progressively through various exercises and techniques. A particular focus is given to identifying solutions and positive futures for the characters, a task which is much easier to do for an invented character than for oneself!

One - Step - Removed can also involve a process in which participants take hold of an existing story's narrative and actively explore and challenge it, reconstructing elements of the narrative, creating new fictional events and outcomes.

The approach offers the distance and objectivity necessary for a group to consider themes and issues which directly affect them while regulating their level of personal disclosure, sharing only as much of their own story as feels comfortable for them.

Planning

With practical elements set up, such as recruiting participants, ensuring relevant support, establishing the working space, time frame, and ethos we can begin to structure our [project](#) and workshops plans.

Some projects will have a general aim such as to improve wellbeing and self-esteem within the group whereas others will also have a predetermined end of project creative output. set by funding requirements, collaboration with specific art forms or because of your instincts and interests as a creative practitioner. For person centred Applied Storytelling, regardless of the envisaged output, it's crucial that there is flexibility built into the structure, to allow for the participants to drive the direction of the project and have their needs met. We can think of it as the facilitator providing various frames within which participants can be supported to produce content. This may mean that the workshop or project you carefully planned does not happen in the way you first imagined, but this is a good sign that you are responding to the needs of the group and nothing is wasted, you can return to prepared material at a different moment if or when appropriate. [Example workshop plans](#) for the beginning, middle and end of a project can be found in the resource section, Part 3 of this toolkit.

Planning a Workshop

Warm-Ups and Rapport Building

In short, for a workshop to be successful, participants have to feel comfortable and prepared. Warm - ups are essential to support the participants to feel at ease, to have confidence and trust in their relationships to each other and the facilitator. It is the rapport building at the start of the workshop or project which creates the safe space necessary for discussions and creative work of a personal or intimate nature to take place.

General Workshop Structure

There are lots of different ways to approach workshop planning and every practitioner will develop their own techniques. Below, we have outlined a general approach.

Exercise	Detail
Check In	This can be a formal or informal moment of greeting. In which we can start to gauge energy levels, state of mind and instil a sense of warmth and welcome. (See workshop plan 2 - check in)
Building Energy / Breaking the Ice	This can be a playful game through discussion or physical activity. These are bonding and energising moments, and help the group transition from their status quo outside of the project and into the workshop space and the work which is about to happen. We are tapping into participants' sense of acceptance, openness and creating an environment where vulnerability is ok. (See Question of the Day and Workshop Plan 1 , links to further exercises can be found in the Resource Section)
Focusing Energy	After a moment of high energy it can be useful to have a quieter exercise, which focuses the energy towards the work we are about to do and the intent with which we hope to do it. Focusing exercises ground participants in their minds and bodies, in the present moment, with each other and the project. (See See workshop plan 2 , Mindfulness Exercise , Resource Section)
Story	After the group are settled it can be a good moment to share a short story introducing the themes you hope to explore that day and an atmosphere of listening and sharing. Examples of stories , and links to more can be found in Part 3 the resource section.

Main Exercise introductory Task	This is a discussion or gentle exercise to introduce the themes and prepare participants for the main exercise which is about to come. It can be the moment when the skills needed to complete the main task are introduced. It will also prepare the group as the main task could be a moment when they share personal information and risk feeling vulnerable. Examples can be seen in Story Mountain or The Spark .
Main Exercise	This is the 'meat' of the workshop and what each previous step has built up to. It usually takes the most time, depending on where the workshop is in the overall project and while the facilitator sets up the frame they will have now handed over most of the talking and creation to the participants.
Reflection	<p>In the reflection the group could share the work they have made during the sessions and their thoughts about the process. To be seen, heard, and accepted when sharing a part of your inner self can be a transformative experience and time should be carefully made to allow this to happen.</p> <p>It is also an important moment for the facilitator to gauge what might be the appropriate next steps in the proceeding workshops. Examples can be seen in Quality Street and Workshop Plan 1 - Sharing.</p>
Check-Out	Echoing the check in, this is a moment to warmly show appreciation for the group's involvement, affirm their bravery/creativity/honesty/playfulness and receive feedback. Allowing each person to share how they feel after and if this is different from when we started. This can be part of the ongoing evaluation.
Wrap-Up Activity	To finish the session it can be useful to play a quick lively game to end with. Come back together as a group and to help the participants transition out of the session and return to their normal lives.

Part 2

On the journey:
Activities

On the journey: Activities

In this chapter we have created in depth description of 5 key applied storytelling activities which we have called - **Warm-Up Exercises, Question of the Day, Creating a Character - New Narratives, The Tree of Life, Story Mountain and Gifting**. These activities have been specifically chosen as they are suitable for use with a large variety of groups and can be safely led by people with a range of experiences. These activities can each be the main activity of a workshop but could be adapted and expanded to be the main activity across a whole project. Start with checking in and getting to know people.

Warm-Up Exercises

Freeman, Hardy, Willis



Purpose: A warm-up/cool-down game to facilitate the group's storytelling and start getting them to think creatively.



When to use it: Warm-up exercise, side exercise



Types of groups: All ages



Outcomes:

- Bonds the participants together.
- Gets participants to start thinking creatively.



Instructions:

1. Everyone sits in a circle and every *seat* represents a name or a number. In order, they should be: Freeman, Hardy, Willis, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, ..., Tea Boy/Girl. You have as many numbers as required to fill up the number of people, but the last spot is always the Tea Boy/Girl.
2. You set up a four-beat rhythm that everyone has to follow involving clapping or clicking fingers (eg. clap, clap, click, click). Freeman always starts and says their name followed by someone else's name/number, but they must be said on the two clicks (the 3rd and 4th beats).

3. This passes the turn onto the named person who has to continue in the same way. If a player makes a mistake (wrong name or timing), the round ends, they stand up and move to the bottom seat with everyone below them moving up one seat to fill the space.
4. The objective is to try and get to the top spot (Freeman).

10 in a circle



Purpose: Teaching the group to speak intuitively and give each other space to speak and listen.



When to use it: Warm-up exercise, side exercise.



Types of groups: All ages.



Resources: N/A



Outcomes:

- Team-building.
- Allowing participants to judge when to speak and when to let others speak.



Instructions:

The group sits and finds a moment of silence, then without a leader or an order, they try to count to 10 as a group, one person speaking at a time. If two people speak at once then the count goes back to one and the groups start again to try and count to 10.

Question of the Day



Purpose: To enable participants to share autobiographical stories in a safe space.



When to use it: Icebreaker, Main exercise.



Type of groups: All ages.



Resources: Pen and paper to record thoughts (optional), written Question cards of the day, a container, a small ball.



Outcomes:

Participants will:

- Feel comfortable
- Build trust and relationships with each other and the facilitator
- Develop their storytelling skills (especially in the formation of a narrative over time)
- Lay the groundwork for the rest of the session (if this is an icebreaker activity)
- Experience storytelling first hand.



Instructions:

1. Gather the participants together.
2. Begin the session with Question of the Day (QOTD), allowing the participants to share as much as they are comfortable sharing.
3. Some questions you can ask may include:
 - a. What are three words your best friends would use to describe you?
 - b. If you could be anywhere in the world right now, where would you be?
 - c. What takes and what gives you energy?
4. Feel free to adapt questions for your individual group.
5. Only the person with the ball may speak to avoid interruption and encourage a sharing environment.

Creating a Character - New Narratives

In order to embark on the 'one step removed' process, a character needs to be created. There are many different ways to do this. In this toolkit, we will provide an example of one of the many ways we can create characters.

Character Beginnings

The Spark



Purpose: To teach the group how to create compelling characters.



When to use it: Main exercise



Types of groups: All ages



Resources: A bag, personal items to fill the bag with (ideally that correspond with the chosen bag, so a gym bag would have items belonging to an athletic character), a pen and paper for the facilitator to take notes or a Role on the Wall.



Outcomes:

- Explore the joy of creating stories.
- Give them the experience of bringing a story to life together.
- Makes the participants think about positive future scenarios through the stories they've created.



Instructions:

1. Gather the participants.
2. Place a bag in the middle of the group or in a place where everyone can see the bag.
3. Encourage the participants to discuss the bag (without looking inside). Here are some questions you may ask:
 - a. Who would have a bag like this?
 - b. Is it old or new?

- c. What kind of condition is it in?
 - d. Is it modified in any way?
4. The facilitator should take notes of the participants' responses so that key character details don't get lost or forgotten. You can also use a "Role on the wall" to keep track of character details.
5. After a sufficient amount of character details have been gathered, feel free to move onto step two of the character building process. Allow the participants to look inside the bag examining objects you might have placed in there - i.e. a journal, a map, headphones, sweet wrappers, etc. (As part of the One-Step-Removed approach, the character should have similar traits to the participants, so try and think of items that might reflect the group you're working with).
6. As before, encourage the group to discuss the items with some questions:
 - a. Where are they from?
 - b. Where are they going?
 - c. Why are they travelling?
7. You can also give the character specific identifiers at this point such as a name and age.

Good Day and Bad Day



Purpose: To allow participants to bring a more conscious awareness to their emotions through the safe space of a fictional character.



When to use it: Extension exercise, main exercise



Types of groups: All ages



Resources: N/A



Outcomes:

- To further the development of a fictional character.
- To encourage participants to think about how they might let their emotions define situations they are in and how they can control their reactions to situations outside of their control.



Instructions:

As a group or in pairs, invite participants to think about and discuss what a good day and a bad day might look like for their character. Try and encourage participants to take examples from their real life. For example, a good day might include getting a job promotion or watching your favourite movie, whereas a bad day might include getting stuck in traffic or being scolded by your boss.

Hopes, Dreams and Future



Purpose: Extension of The Spark used to allow the group to envision their own positive futures.



When to use it: Extension exercise



Types of groups: All ages



Resources: Pen and paper (optional)



Instructions:

1. As an extension of The Spark activity, you can encourage the group to draw inspiration from thinking about a fictional character to thinking about their own futures.
2. Encourage the group to invent a future for themselves that is entirely fictional (e.g. they become Queen, they live on the moon, etc.)
3. Then, guide the group to think about a more grounded, aspirational future for themselves.
4. The facilitator can once again aid the discussion by asking questions and saving adequate time for reflection on the answers the participants give.

Saying Goodbye

The character created by the group may have begun to feel particularly real and special to the participants - that's why it's important to have a considered approach to closing the process and saying goodbye to the character. Please see the Suitcase section of [Gifting](#).

The Tree of Life



Purpose: The Tree of Life allows participants to structure their life (past, present and future) through the visual metaphor of a tree. This gives the participants some control over their own narratives. With the Dulwich Centre in Adelaide, Zimbabwean child psychologist Ncazelo Ncube developed the 'Tree of Life' method around 2006 in order to support the children and young people she met whose parents and loved ones had died of AIDS related illnesses.



When to use it: Main exercise, over one session or several



Types of groups: All ages



Resources: Pen and paper for participants to draw a tree or copies of a simple outline of a tree, colourful pens/pencils



Outcomes:

- To experience their creative capacities in imagining and creating stories.
- To create and share a story that is related to their 'core', that has significance in their life.
- To practise creating consciously a story that is engaging.



Instructions:

1. The facilitator is advised to try this exercise beforehand as the material that comes out can be quite personal and intense, therefore it is good to have coping mechanisms in place, a safe space prepared or ways to pause the exercise should it become too overwhelming. (see [Preparing for the Journey](#) section in this tool kit.)
2. Make it clear that the trees will need:
 - a. **Roots**, in which the participants will write down where, what and who they come from. For example, members of their family, extended family and people that feel like family, where they were born, where they lived, treasured childhood places, activities they enjoyed and people and events from their childhood that shaped them. It is not possible to capture *everything*, write down the elements that feel important or simply the thoughts that come first.
 - b. **The ground in which the tree grows**. Here they write down what they occupy themselves with in everyday life now. Their work, hobbies and other activities they like to or have to spend time on, where do they live, who do they see?

- c. **The trunk** represents values, character, skills and abilities. Ask them to think about the things they have been told about themselves - focus on compliments. What are they good at? What do they most enjoy?
 - d. **The branches** are your wishes and dreams for the future. What do you want to achieve? Think about big branches and small branches, the long term as well as the short term.
 - e. On **the leaves** they write the names of significant people in their lives, those who have helped them get where they are today and those who can help them fulfil their wishes and dreams in the future. These names could refer to people with whom they have had supportive or difficult relationships.
 - f. **The fruits** represent what they want to leave behind. What do they hope their legacy will be? What will be their gift to mankind?
 - g. You may also want to add **Falling Leaves**; these are things the participants may wish to let go of, becoming a part of the ground they grew from, not of their future.
3. After participants have completed their tree, ask questions designed to help them consider their tree, its meaning and how it might shape their life going forward. Some questions to consider include:
 - a. What species of tree did you draw?
 - b. Which part of your tree takes up the most space?
 - c. Which part takes up the least space?
 - d. Which parts were easy to do?
 - e. Which parts got least attention?
 - f. Did anything surprise you?
 - g. Could you share your tree with someone supportive?
 - h. Could they add something positive you may have missed?
 4. Participants can share these answers and their tree with the rest of the group if this feels appropriate to them.
 - a. Whether you choose to run this activity over one or multiple sessions, it is important to give a sense of closure to the participants so they do not carry their vulnerabilities back out into the world. You may do this through group reflection or individual silent contemplation.

Tree of Life Further Activity - Forest of Trees



Purpose: Allows the participants to identify support networks and helps they can rely on, as well as reflecting on who they are, where they come from and the struggles they've faced.



When to use it: Extension exercise



Types of groups: All ages



Resources: A bare wall or other space to hang the trees from



Outcomes:

- Allows the participants to recognise there are people who support them.
- Helps bolster self-esteem.
- They have solid experience of their creative capabilities through imagining and creating stories.



Instructions:

1. If participants feel open to sharing their trees, then invite them to hang the trees next to each other to create a 'forest.'
2. Invite participants to consider other people's trees and ask them to write messages of encouragement and support on other people's trees. These words can be written directly on the trees or printed on or attached via sticky notes.
3. Afterwards, give the participants time to absorb what has been written on their own Tree of Life, either on their own or as part of the group.
4. You can learn more about this process here: dulwichcentre.com.au/the-tree-of-life/

Story Mountain - teaching the structure of a story



Purpose: Story or Plot Mountain is a useful, visual tool to help breakdown and communicate the fundamental elements of a story in simple terms



When to use it: Main exercise, warm-up exercise



Types of groups: All ages



Resources: Pen and paper to plot map, graph paper, access to the internet (phone, laptop or desktop)



Outcomes:

- A way for participants to talk more about themselves.
- Story mountain helps with self-awareness.
- Participants can continue to imagine a positive future for themselves.



Instructions:

1. On a piece of paper, have the participants draw a mountain (should be single hump with an even beginning and end - see picture for reference)
2. Plot **7 Points** on the map. These points are **Exposition, Rising Action, the Helpers, the Climax, Falling Action** and **Resolution**.
3. Exposition is plotted first, Climax should be placed at the top of the mountain and Resolution should come last.
 - a. **Exposition** - an introduction to the location, characters and their current situation. In the exposition stage, we become invested in the characters and their situation, we begin to relate to them, build empathy and so care about what happens next in the story.
 - b. **Rising Action** - This is when something changes, a conflict occurs, a call to adventure appears or the situation reaches a point where action must be taken.
 - c. **The Helpers** - During the rising action the character often learns lessons or gathers resources, sometimes someone or something appears to offer help.
 - d. **The Climax** - The rising action eventually arrives at the top of the story mountain and the plot's climax. Emotionally and dramatically this will be the most intense moment of the story. It is a point of change in the situation and a transformation occurs for the characters.
 - e. **Falling action** - The new status quo is established and the characters must come to terms with the changes which have occurred.

- f. **Resolution** - The end can be called the Resolution when the issues and questions which rose at the start have been answered.
4. Option 1 - Non-personal stories
 - a. Share a true story of an inspirational individual, someone who achieved success in older age or built a new life after great loss. They may look someone up on the internet if they need to. This can be done as a large group, in pairs or in small groups depending on the group's needs.
 5. Option 2 - Personal stories
 - a. Before they begin plotting their mountain, ask participants to close their eyes, breathe deeply and imagine a mountain. You may ask them to describe what it looks like (e.g. snowy, rocky, etc.) Then, ask them about a time they overcame a great struggle or felt proud of an accomplishment. This can be used as the basis for their map if the participants wish.
 - b. Participants can then plot their own story on the mountain using the above mentioned Points.
 6. You can use this alongside the [Hero's Journey](#), as the two are closely related.



The Hero's Journey (The journey as metaphor)

An alternative to using the Story Mountain is to use The Hero's Journey. The Hero's Journey, or the monomyth, was coined by Joseph Campbell in 1949 and refers to a common structure found in stories worldwide, wherein a character ventures into the unknown to retrieve something they need or discover something about themselves. Originally conceived of 12 steps, it has been reduced to 5 steps here, also known as *the journey as metaphor*.



Purpose: A narrative arc map to guide people who are discovering storytelling.



When to use it: Side exercise, main exercise, evaluation tool.



Types of groups: All ages



Resources: Pen and paper, access to the internet



Outcomes:

- To draw out logical connections in stories and how these connections can be applied to the participant's own life.



Instructions:

1. On a piece of paper, either draw a circle (with the following points plotted in ascending order around the circle) or make a list with 5 key points.
2. On your circle of list, ask participants to plot their story (or the story of a fictional character) using the categories below:
 - a. The beginning: An introduction to characters, their relationships and the current status quo.
 - b. The call: A call to action/adventure that sets the protagonist off on their journey.
 - c. The helpers and the help: Friends, allies and other characters they meet along the way that may be of service to them.
 - d. The opponents and the setbacks: Challenges they face and antagonists and the characters encounter.
 - e. The arrival: The protagonist emerges on the other side, whether victorious or not. The characters must adjust to the new status quo.
3. The participants can then reflect on what they've written with the facilitator.

Outsider - Witness Procedure



Purpose: To bring forth detailed personal links to the participants' lifestyle and to thicken the under-noticed narratives of their lives. This is inspired by the work of Barbara Myerhoff in her work with older Jewish people in California.



When to use it: Main exercise



Types of groups: Older groups



Resources: None required



Instructions:

1. Make groups of four participants (three is also possible). If you work with a group with a diversity in cultural backgrounds, try to make a good mix.
2. Ask everybody to look for a heritage object or use they feel connected with. Take care that this request is open enough for the participants to choose whatever they consider heritage. Every object or use will be accepted.
3. Invite one of the participants to introduce the object or use they choose, while the other participants listen (called listeners). What is it? Why did they choose this specific use or object? What is the meaning of the object or use to the participant?
4. Then invite the other participants to react. Use the following structure for it:
 - a. Select something the participant has said that was particularly meaningful to the listener (Identifying the Expression)
 - b. Say something about the image this phrase or expression evoked for the listener of what was important to the participant (Identifying the Image);
 - c. Make connections between the listener's own values or experiences and that of the participant (Embodying Responses)
 - d. Reflect on how they have been influenced by the participant's story and what contribution it makes to their own story (Acknowledging Transport)
5. Repeat this with the objects or uses of the other participants.

Gifting



Purpose: The participants learn to care for themselves and others by speaking positively about other people.



When to use it: Side exercise, icebreaker, main exercise



Types of groups: All ages



Resources: None required



Outcomes:

- Participants feel better about themselves.
- A safe space is established.
- Participants begin to think creatively.



Instructions:

1. In pairs, participants are encouraged to 'gift' each other something. These are not physical gifts rather the idea or thought of a gift captured in some creative way.
2. The process can be done in different ways, here are two examples.
 - a. Positivity shower - participants are 'showered' with verbal compliments.
 - b. Sending positive postcards - send a postcard to another person highlighting their positive attributes.

Quality Street



Purpose: This exercise provides space for the group to reflect on themselves, each other and their relationships with others in the group and should promote positive feelings and relationships.



When to use it: Main exercise



Types of groups: All ages



Resources: Small pieces of paper and pens



Outcomes:

- Provides space for the group to reflect on themselves, each other and their relationships with others in the group and should promote positive feelings and relationships.



Instructions:

1. Give each group member 3 small pieces of paper.
2. On the first piece, they should write a good quality about themselves
3. On the second piece they should write a good quality about someone else in the group.
4. On the third piece they should write a good quality that they think someone else in the group thinks about them.
5. These can all be anonymous or participants can write names on pieces 1 and 2.
6. Pieces of paper should be then folded and put in a bowl/hat/receptacle.
7. Facilitator can decide how best to share them with the group. There are some ideas below.
8. Either group members pick one at a time and read them aloud to the rest of the group or the facilitator takes them away and orders them and reads them aloud to the group in the next session.

Suitcase



Purpose: To finish a project and say goodbye to the character the group have created by sending them off on their way and thus allowing the group to also move on emotionally from the process.



When to use it: Closing exercise



Types of groups: All ages



Resources: A bag, paper and pens



Outcomes:

- A good way to finish a project and say goodbye to the character the group has created by sending them off on their way and thus allowing the group to also move on emotionally from the process.



Instructions:

1. The facilitator brings back the bag they used in the Spark. This bag is for the character that has been created through earlier exercises.
2. Participants are each given a piece of paper and a pen and instructed to draw a gift they would like to give a character before they leave. Examples could include a train ticket, guitar, warm coat or something that is an attribute or a skill such as heightened self-worth or the ability to speak French. The facilitator should also draw a gift.
3. The participants will then fill the bag with their gifts, one by one, taking time to read out or show their gift to the rest of the group. The facilitator should place their gift in the bag last.

A sense of closure



Purpose: To close off the session, giving participants a sense of accomplishment and allow them to put their “armour” back on.



When to use it: Final exercise



Types of groups: All ages



Resources:

A space to host a group and their friends/family (e.g. a room in a community theatre or other arts space)



Outcomes:

- To give the participants a sense of accomplishment.



Instructions:

In order to give the participants a sense of closure (and accomplishment) it is good to finish the project with some kind of celebration. This may involve some kind of exhibit or performance (if the participants are willing and feel comfortable doing so) or this could be as simple as a meal together, bringing food and drink as a way to celebrate the end of the project and say goodbye.

Part 3

Resources

Resources

In the final section of this tool kit we have brought together examples of three workshop plans for the beginning, middle and end of an Applied Storytelling project, a number of stories as well as links to further activities and information.

Workshop Plans

Workshop Plan 1, Sedna – Goddess of the Sea

A Story of Rebirth

Below is an example workshop plan focussed around the Inuit story of Sedna, Goddess of the sea. This is a workshop which has been delivered successfully in its current form with groups of women who were survivors of abuse. Upon reading the plan, facilitators can edit and change sections using the knowledge of the group you are working with to ensure it is appropriate for the participants.

Workshop Key

Who	Adults. This was initially designed for women who were survivors of domestic violence and forced marriage.
How many participants	Up to 8
How long (hours)?	2-2.5 hours
How long (weeks)?	Part of 10 week block
Where in project?	Beginning or middle of project
Resources needed	Story of Sedna, paper and pens for group members to use if they wish.

Time	Task	Detail/Objective
15 mins	Introduction/Check In	Storyteller should introduce the project and discuss themes, expectations and anything the group needs to know at this stage. The storyteller should leave a space for questions or thoughts here.

15 mins	Two truths and one lie	The group (including facilitator) will share three stories about themselves. Two of these stories must be true and one of them must be false. The whole group will then discuss these stories and try to decide which story was false. The facilitator should share their stories first to set the tone for the rest of the group. This exercise is an icebreaker and a chance to both hear the voices of each individual group member, to help get to know the group and the group each other, and to encourage the group to think creatively about the story.
15-20 mins	Story	Sedna – at this point the storyteller will share the story of Sedna. You will find the story in the story section of the resources . However, there are many versions of this story available online and in anthologies, so we recommend you look at a few versions and find the one you are most comfortable telling.
20 mins	BREAK	
20 mins	Exploring the story themes: A time when I was	<p>A time when I was...</p> <p>...loved/stubborn/deceived/afraid/powerful/feared/placated</p> <p>During the story, Sedna is featured in a variety of states and emotions. Broadly, the above states sum up her journey throughout the trajectory of the story. The facilitator will split the group into pairs and each individual will be instructed to choose one of the above states that they can remember feeling and are happy to share with their partner. Each individual will tell their partner about the time when they were... loved/stubborn/deceived/afraid/powerful/feared/placated.</p> <p>When one partner is finished sharing their story, the other partner will share their story. These will then be shared to the rest of the group.</p>

15 mins	Sharing	Each person will share the fragment of the story of their partner's life to the rest of the group
10 mins	Cool down	Freeman Hardy Willis/10 in a circle. Group cooldown activities, both of these can be found in the below. Cooldown activities are an important part of any session to allow the group to refocus their mind. They are even more important in contexts where the group are vulnerable, or if they have shared personal stories in the sessions and need to re-protect themselves before leaving the safe space you have created
5-10 mins	Debrief/reflection	1 thing you liked, 1 thing you'd change. A chance for the group to reflect on the session for evaluation. In a circle, beginning with the facilitator, each person shares something they liked about the session and something they would change. This allows the group to debrief and decompress and allows the facilitator to collect feedback for evaluation, but also to influence future sessions.

Co-creating a Character with New Fiction

The workshop below outlines a series of exercises introducing the *One-Step-Removed* approach in which a group of individuals create a character together which feels 'real' and expresses some of the group's own challenges, experiences or situations. Through the character the group can explore relevant themes, issues and solutions in a safe though profound way. This workshop can take place online or in person.

Workshop Key

Who	Unpaid carers for people who live with dementia.
How many participants	Up to 10
How long (hours)?	1.5 - hours
How long (weeks)?	Part of 8 week block
Where in project?	Beginning or middle of project
Resources needed	A2 size paper, marker pens,

Time	Task	Detail/Objective
10mins	Check-in	<p>Warmly welcome all to the session. Informally check-in with each person, gauging energy levels, mood and ensuring their primary needs are met at that moment.</p> <p>When all participants have gathered and are ready to begin, the facilitator can lead a discussion recapping the overall project goals, the collectively established group rules, the activities of the previous week's session and anything else the group needs to know or ask at this point.</p>

15 mins	Question of the day	<p>Questions are pre-written by the facilitator or written by the group in the moment and added to a pot. A participant can volunteer to pick out a question and read it to the group.</p> <p>The group are then invited to share their answers to this question of the day if they would like to.</p> <p>Example questions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What was your favourite story or character growing up? • What is your favourite dessert? • Can you tell us a piece of advice or a lesson an older person taught you which you will never forget? • What is the story of your name? • What inspires you? • What do you do to relax? • Tell the story of an item of clothing you are wearing. • Describe your dream holiday? <p>If the group is enjoying it and/or you would like to spend more time bonding through sharing, continue pulling out questions.</p>
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5 mins	Physical and mindful warm Up	<p>As you demonstrate, Invite the participants to warm up their bodies a little;</p> <p>Place both feet on the floor and sit up straight.</p> <p>Lift shoulders up to ears, then let them drop all the way down whilst sighing, this is a great release of tension.</p> <p>Invite the participants to join you in gently rolling their heads from side to side, up and down, rolling their shoulders forwards and backwards, bending the elbows and drawing big circles in the air, and rolling the wrists one way, then the other. Moving onto making circles with the knees and the ankles.</p> <p>Let the participants know they can stop at any time, especially if this causes pain.</p> <p>Now, taking a moment to breathe deeply and relax, ask participants to close their eyes, if they are comfortable to do so and listen to your voice.</p> <p><i>What can you hear in the room around you?</i></p> <p><i>What can you hear outside the room?</i></p> <p><i>Perhaps engaging your imagination, what could you hear, in the neighbourhood?</i></p> <p><i>What can you hear from far away?</i></p> <p><i>From your own body?</i></p> <p>Finally remind the participants to bring their attention to their feet firmly planted on the ground, if nothing else is stable in your life you can always rely on the ground being there. Lead a big stretch or yawn, like you are just waking up - ready to begin!</p>
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5 - 10 mins	The Spark	<p>Introduce an object to the group such as a set of keys. Ask the group, what could the story behind these keys be? Invite them to invent small stories and characters, ask questions and use the story spine to expand and deepen their responses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>What are they the keys to?</i> • <i>Are they used often?</i> • <i>Who usually uses them?</i> • <i>What happened to them?</i> <p>After a few playful ideas. Inform the participants that these keys belong to a character we are going to create together. All you can tell them is that the character, like the members of the group, is an unpaid carer for someone who lives with dementia.</p>
10 - 15 mins	Building the Character	<p>Draw a large outline of a person and gently support the group to fill it in with details about this new character and their life. It's important to pose open questions. The answers come from the group, where possible, encourage everyone to contribute and assure the group that there is no right or wrong.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Begin with a name, age, gender and their link to the keys and the place they live.</i> • <i>Use the same Question of The Day, the group has already answered to bring the character to life and build empathy with them.</i> • <i>Move on to their family and friends, who are they and how do they get on, who are they an unpaid carer for? How has life changed for them since they became a carer?</i> <p>Continue asking questions until a full picture of this character has been built, and recap this back to the group.</p>

5 mins	Social Circles	<p>On a fresh sheet of paper draw a series of concentric circles - like a dart board. Within the innermost circle write the name of the character, on the next circle write people they see every day, the 3rd those the character sees once a week, for the 4th circle write who they see every month, the 5th every year, 6th once a decade.</p> <p>This will build up a picture of the character's social networks and encourage participants to imagine more about the character's relationships to these people.</p>
15 - 20 mins	Timelines of a day	<p>As a group, draw a line across a fresh sheet of paper, and share with the group that this is a timeline, on the left is the moment the character wakes up and on the right is the last moment of the day.</p> <p>Together invent a 'normal' day for this character, finding out more about their routine and situation.</p> <p>Break into groups of 3 or 4, some groups will now create a timeline for a 'good day' in the life of this character and the other a 'bad day' give the groups 5 or 6 minutes to do this and then ask them to share back their timelines. It is nice to finish on a 'good day' if you are coming to the end of the session.</p>
5 - 10 mins	Priorities	<p>Have a discussion and note down the key points, about the main issues the character is facing in their life. Once you have a list of issues, consider what opportunities there may be to address these.</p>
8 mins	5 years' time	<p>Explain that in 5 years' time this character is in a good place. What does that look like and what steps have happened to get them there?</p> <p>This discussion could happen in smaller groups and then shared back to the group.</p>
8	Saying goodbye	<p>By this point the group will hopefully feel connected to the character. A good send-off might be to offer participants a piece of advice or wish them well.</p>

15	Reflections	1 thing you liked, 1 thing you'd change. A chance for the group to reflect on the session for evaluation. In a circle, beginning with the facilitator, each person shares something they liked about the session and something they would change. This allows the group to debrief and decompress and allows the facilitator to collect feedback for evaluation, but also to influence future sessions.
5	Game	Quick game of the group's choice to close.

Useful Stories

The Legend of Sedna the Sea Goddess

Origin: Native Inuit, Arctic

Length: 5 - 10 mins

Audience: 8+, particularly appropriate for adult women

The legend of how Sedna became a sea goddess is told throughout the Arctic. The story varies from one region to the next. However, in all versions, a young woman becomes the mother of all sea creatures. As the sea goddess, Sedna has dominion over her creatures and controls the availability of seal, walrus, fish, whale, and other sea animals to Inuit hunters. This version is a compilation of many Sedna stories.

Once there was a young woman named Sedna. She lived in the Arctic with her mother and father. She loved her mother and father very much and was very content. Her father was a skilled hunter, so he provided very well for his family. Sedna had plenty of food and warm furs to wear. She liked the comfort of her parent's home and refused to marry. Many Inuit men desired Sedna for a wife and asked her parents for permission to marry her. But Sedna refused them all. Even when her parents insisted it was time for her to marry she refused to follow tradition and obey them.

This continued for quite some time, until one particular Inuk came to visit Sedna. This man promised Sedna that he would provide her with plenty of food to eat and furs for clothes and blankets. Sedna agreed to marry him. After they were man and wife, he took her away to his island. When they were alone on the island, he revealed to her that he was not a man at all, but a Fulmar bird who had transformed into a man! Sedna was furious, but she was trapped and had to make the best of it. He, of course, was not a good hunter and could not provide her with meat and furs. All the birdman could catch was fish. Sedna got very tired of eating fish every day.

They lived together on the island for a time, until Sedna's father decided to come and visit. Upon seeing that his daughter was so unhappy and that her husband had lied to her, he killed the birdman. Sedna and her father got into his kayak and set off for home. The birdman's friends discovered what they had done and wanted to avenge the birdman's death. They flew above the kayak and flapped their wings very hard. The flapping of their wings resulted in a huge storm. The waves crashed over the small kayak making it almost impossible to keep the boat upright.

Sedna's father was so frightened that the storm would fill his kayak with water and that he would drown in the icy waters that he threw Sedna overboard. He thought that this would get the birds to stop flapping their wings, but it did not. Sedna did not want to be left in the water, so she held tightly to the edge of her father's boat and would not let go. Fearing that she would tip him over, the father cut her fingers off, and Sedna sank to the bottom of

the ocean. From each of her fingers different sea creatures were born. They became fish, seals, walruses, and whales.

Another strange thing happened to Sedna too. As she sank down and down into the ocean, she realised that she was not drowning and could breathe underwater. When she reached the bottom of the ocean, she became a powerful spirit. Her home is now on the ocean floor. If you have seen her, you know she has the head and torso of a woman and the tail of a fish.

Sedna now controls all of the animals of the sea. The Inuit who rely on these animals want to maintain a good relationship with Sedna, so that she will continue to allow her animals to make themselves available to the hunters. Inuit have certain taboos that they must follow to keep Sedna happy. One of these says that when a seal is killed it must be given a drink of fresh water, not salt water.

If the hunters do not catch anything for a long time, the Shaman will transform himself into a fish. In this new form, he or she will swim down to the bottom of the ocean to appease Sedna, the Sea Goddess. The Shaman will comb the tangles out of Sedna's hair and put it into braids. This makes her happy and soothes her anger. Perhaps it is because Sedna lost her fingers that she likes to have her hair combed and braided by someone else. When she is happy, she allows her animals to make themselves available to the hunters. Animals do not mind giving themselves up to provide food, clothes, and shelter for the Inuit.

Summary: Inuit Sea Goddess Sedna becomes the mother of all sea life by making a heart-breaking sacrifice.

The Foolish Rabbit

Summary: A young, fearful rabbit blows unfortunate events out of proportion, believing the worst case scenario is happening. When he falls out of a tree, he believes the sky is falling, creating more mayhem in his attempt to flee.

Link: <https://www.bedtimeshortstories.com/the-foolish-rabbit>

The Cracked Pot

Summary: A cracked pot that can only carry half the water of its fellow pot, apologises to a water-bearer for not being able to do what it was designed to do. However, the pot has overlooked its own special ability.

Link: <http://www.rebmarko.com/blog/a-year-of-stories-10-the-cracked-pot>

The Town Musicians of Bremen

Summary: A group of mistreated animals run away to form a band in the town of Bremen.

Link: <https://www.storynory.com/the-town-musicians-of-bremen/>

The Singing Stone

Summary: A young boy dreams of the words “singing stone” and - when no one in his village knows what they mean - sets out on a quest to discover what the words mean.

Link: http://www.fletcherprentice.com/resources_stories_singing_stone.htm

The Partridge and the Turtle

Summary: One day, on an island where only turtles have ever lived, a partridge lands. Despite their differences, the turtles and partridge become friends.

Link: <https://www.beehomeacademy.com/stories/the-partridge-and-the-turtles/>

The Anger Eating Demon

Summary: An anger-eating demon turns his sights from the human world to the realm of the Gods to get his food supply with unexpected consequences.

Link: <https://www.buddhistdoor.net/features/the-anger-eating-demon/>

Cinderella

Summary: The classic story follows Cinderella, a young woman abused and degraded by her wicked stepmother and step-sisters who forbid her from attending the ball thrown by a local prince. She is assisted by her fairy Godmother, who uses magic to conjure up a dress, but only until midnight.

Link: <https://storiesogrowby.org/story/cinderella-fairy-tale-english-story-for-kids/>

The Wings of Lotilko

Summary: Lotilko, the flying man is robbed; his wings are taken away from him. He keeps searching for help to get back his wings until he realises that he is capable of solving his own issues.

Link: <https://soundcloud.com/user-876224086/lotilkos-wings-read-by-tibor-wallinger>

This too shall pass

Summary: King Solomon once searched for a cure against depression and he eventually found it due to a ring.

Link: <https://simplicable.com/new/this-too-shall-pass>

Molly Whuppie

Summary: When three young girls are left to starve in the woods, they search for help but encounter the home of a giant. The young sister, Molly Whuppie, devises a plan to survive an evil giant.

Link: <https://www.sacred-texts.com/neu/eng/eft/eft23.htm>

The Cailleach, the woman who created Scotland

Summary: Stories of the giant woman, the Cailleach, who created Scotland by manipulating the environment.

Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=faX4qZ4lpbk>

The Hunchback and the Swan

Summary: A hunchback, shunned by his village, finds comfort in animals. When he goes missing, it's up to his animal friends to find him.

Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DYBleUuPnTw>

The Butterfly Bride

Summary: A Spanish story (traditionally told at weddings) about the boldness of nature. The story centres around a beautiful butterfly who lived in a walled garden, longing for more from life.

Link: <https://soundcloud.com/villagestories/the-butterfly-bride>

The God and the four monks

Summary: A monk, separated from his brothers, is held behind helping other people. Despite this, he is happy to do so, even if it delays his pilgrimage.

Link: <https://www.lecturesbureau.gr/1/let-me-tell-you-a-story-1369/?lang=en>

Androcles and the Lion

Summary: A fable about a slave, Androcles, and how he befriends a once fearsome lion through a kind act which ultimately ends up saving his life.

Link: <https://sites.pitt.edu/~dash/type0156.html#jacobs>

The Myth of Prometheus and the theft of fire

Summary: The Titan Prometheus steals fire for the benefit of mankind and is grievously punished by the Gods for this act.

Link: <https://www.greekmyths-greekmythology.com/prometheus-fire-myth/>

The king with the tree in his heart

Summary: After a king passes away, a princess must guard his treasure and keep it a secret from her immature brother.

Link: <https://www.settlestories.org.uk/the-king-with-a-tree-in-his-heart-folk-tale-from-hepirus-greece/>

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Appendix

Appendix 1: Question Cards

A FEEDBACK GIVEN TO
YOU THAT YOU FELT
VERY GOOD ABOUT

WHAT ARE THE 3
WORDS YOUR BEST
FRIENDS WOULD SAY
ABOUT YOU?

IF YOU COULD BE
ANYWHERE RIGHT NOW,
WHERE WOULD YOU BE?

WHAT IS THE STORY OF
YOUR NAME?

WHAT TAKES AND WHAT
GIVES YOU ENERGY?

WHAT DO YOU
APPRECIATE THE MOST
IN OTHER PEOPLE?

IF YOU COULD CHANGE
ANYTHING IN YOU, WHAT
WOULD IT BE?

ONE THING YOU WOULD
REALLY LIKE TO TRY

Appendix 2: Partners

[DW-RS Producties, Amsterdam, The Netherlands](#) - DW-RS Foundation believes in the power of art and creativity and in the inclusion of all people in society, no matter their cultural and/or social background. Activation, participation and empowerment are the key concepts of our work. DW-RS contributes to the creative development of neighbourhoods, their inhabitants and other communities in the Netherlands and abroad to strengthen their social skills and to promote diversity. The foundation aims to achieve this by initiating, implementing and supporting activities in the field of the arts and by facilitating research into the power of creativity within social environments.

[Kepes Alapítvány, Budapest, Hungary](#) - The mission of Képes Alapítvány is to help different target groups to develop their social emotional learning (SEL) competences. We explore, adapt/develop, evaluate and promote SEL programs and initiatives. We find this field important as SEL competencies are shown to increase academic and work achievement and they help better adjustment in everyday life. These skills can be taught and developed and can help disadvantaged people to “beat the odds” - with increased self-efficacy and motivation to learn, with more flexibility, realistic goal setting and good problem solving skills they can achieve more than their peers from the same disadvantaged background. We set up programs for those who lack these skills the most and who have little chance to have access to such training. We also target those professionals who work with these target groups (e.g. social workers, youth workers).

[Mythos, Korissia, Greece](#) - The Centre for the Study and Dissemination of Myths and Folktales aims at the dissemination and study of myths and folktales from various perspectives and of all art forms. Its goal is the preservation and dissemination of myths, legends and folktales, as well as the promotion of the Greek cultural tradition and heritage. Furthermore, the Centre intends to strengthen the humanistic interest in Greek cultural tradition.

[Settle Stories, Settle, England](#) - Our mission is to collaborate with exceptional artists to create transformative experiences for people and communities. Stories are the most powerful way to engage, inspire and move people to action. We teach the art of storytelling so you can make a difference. We share stories from diverse cultures across the globe, explore traditional myths and folktales and reveal current stories of today. We present stories through year round events and the largest free online storytelling festival globally, Yorkshire Festival of Story. Settle Stories' most recent venture has been our online learning platform dedicated to teaching the art of storytelling, Storyversity.

[The Village Storytelling Centre, Glasgow, Scotland](#) - The Village has been built on the belief that stories change lives. Our vision is a world where people and communities are inspired, connected and heard, underpinned by a mission to improve and enrich lives across Scotland through the power of story. Scotland's leading applied storytelling organisation, we provide a range of programmes which aim to increase access to storytelling, provide a platform for people to share their voices and to develop and promote the artform of contemporary oral storytelling. We do this through the provision of an extensive community based programme, collaborative projects with a diverse range of partners across Scotland, schools projects and an events programme, including our Village Storytelling Festival.

[Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam, The Netherlands](#) - Academic research and education at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam is characterised by a high level of ambition, and encourages free and open communications and ideas. Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam comprises 9 faculties, ranging from biomedical and sciences to humanities disciplines. Research is divided into four themes, reflecting a strong level of involvement in current societal issues: Human Health and Life Sciences, Science for Sustainability, Connected World, and Governance for Society. The total research output to 2018 translated to over 7400 scientific publications, and 430 doctoral theses.

