

WORKSHOP 9

HARNESSING THE POWER OF STORY FOR CHANGE

Objectives

Following this workshop, the youth will be able to:

- Understand how stories can be used as a tool for change.
- Develop an understanding of how impactful stories are structured.
- Draft a group mission statement to guide policy change activities.

Overview

Collective storytelling can be a powerful tool for influencing policy change. Understanding the key elements of persuasive messaging is critical to building support for policy change goals and recruiting potential allies.

Total time

2 hours

Facilitator Prep

- Review and summarize AWE evaluation results to share using a modality of your choice.

Welcome

Ask the youth to share the name of their favourite childhood story and briefly explain what makes it special.

Connect & Open

Review AWE survey summary and anonymous compliments from last session.

Look Back

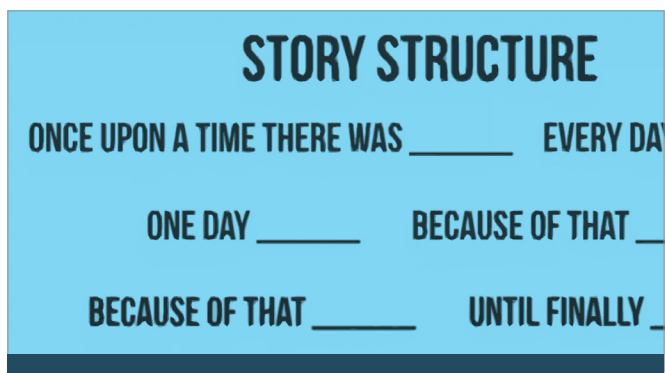
In the last workshop, the group gathered and evaluated evidence about their priority challenge, explored the policy cycle and drafted a policy action plan. Remind them that they have also been building their supports and resources network. Ask the group if they have any additional resources they want to add. Update the group about any resources or potential allies that the facilitation team has identified.

Look Forward

In this workshop, the group will learn about the key elements of a good story. This will support the development of their own messaging for change.

Frame

Play the video [Pixar Storytelling Rules #5: Essence of Structure](#). This video introduces the group to the power of storytelling. It breaks down the essential elements of a story that can engage and inspire an audience to care about an issue.



Activity 1: Introducing the Story Spine (20 minutes)

Aim

This activity introduces the group to the Story Spine, a tool originally developed by playwright, Kenn Adams, and now used by blockbuster movie makers, including Pixar, to guide the development of engaging stories. This process will support the youth in using the principles of good storytelling to inform their messaging for impact.

Steps

1. Review with the group that difficult issues or challenges make for good storytelling material. Share that the goal of a story is to draw an audience in and connect on an emotional level.
2. Divide the group in two. Explain that each group is going to craft a simple story about the priority challenge using the [Story Spine Worksheet](#).
3. If helpful, you could provide an example by sharing a story about the work of a past Agenda Gap group:
 - a. Once upon a time: There was a group of youth working hard to graduate from high school.
 - b. Every day: They experienced a lot of stress from studying full time and worrying about their future. They could not talk about how this affected their mental health because it was a forbidden topic in their families.
 - c. Because of that: The youth formed their own mental health club to share and learn more about what they could do to cope with their stress.
 - d. Because of that: They joined a mental health promotion program that helped them identify what they needed from their families and community to have better mental health. They also found community allies who encouraged and supported them.
 - e. Because of that: The youth hosted a powerful community dialogue that raised awareness about the importance of youth having a voice to define what they need to achieve positive mental health. Afterwards, they were invited to lead and participate in many other opportunities.
 - f. Until finally: The way in which their school and broader community listened to and involved youth in decision making was transformed.

4. As you send them to their groups, ask them to be prepared to share their stories when they return to Circle, and remind them of the key component of a good story:
 - a. Set the stage for the story by using the “Once upon a time...” and “Every day...” prompts. Draw on the experiences that influenced the group to identify the priority challenge.
 - b. Use the priority challenge as inspiration to fill in the “One day...” prompt. Think of this as the “event that changes everything.”
 - c. In your group, take turns identifying the consequences of the “event that changes everything.” Using the first two “because of that...” statements. These should illustrate the impacts of the priority challenge on the mental health of youth in their community.
 - d. Use the third and final “because of that...” statement to describe a solution they think could address these consequences — encouraging “blue sky” thinking.
 - e. Conclude the story using the “until one day...” prompt to present the best possible outcome or “happily ever after” — what life would look like for them and other youth in their community if the priority challenge was addressed.
5. Return to Circle and have each group share their story.

Facilitator Tips

- Crafting a story to reflect a key issue impacting youth can be difficult. Check in on each group to provide support or answer questions.



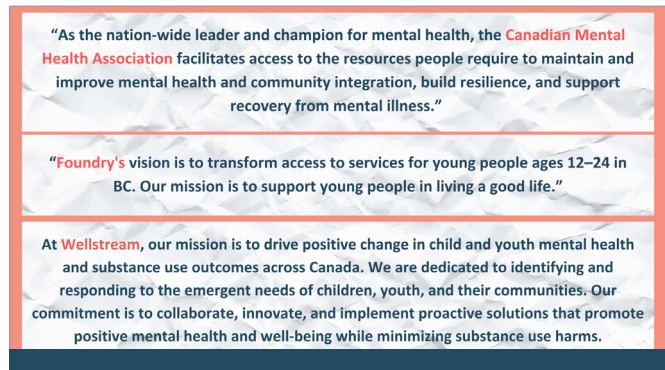
Activity 2: Building a Mission Statement (20 minutes)

Aim

In this activity, the group will write a mission statement summarizing their collective goals. This mission statement will be used in communicating with potential allies and to inform other policy change messaging.

Steps

1. Share with the youth that a mission statement can serve to inspire and motivate the group and a broader audience about a cause. It provides a brief yet powerful way to convey why an issue matters, as well as introduce a group's purpose and objectives — what they want to accomplish or contribute. Effective mission statements reflect core values and define the target audience.
2. Share that in this activity, the group will craft a mission statement for their work. A good mission statement is aspirational and describes the desired outcome, while evoking emotion and shared understanding.
3. Share the slide “Visionary Statements: Crafting Your Inspiring Mission,” and review the mission statements of various youth health and mental health organizations:
 - a. “As the nation-wide leader and champion for mental health, the Canadian Mental Health Association facilitates access to the resources people require to maintain and improve mental health and community integration, build resilience, and support recovery from mental illness.”
 - b. “Foundry's vision is to transform access to services for young people ages 12–24 in BC. Our mission is to support young people in living a good life.”
 - c. “At Wellstream, our mission is to drive positive change in child and youth mental health and substance use outcomes across Canada. We are dedicated to identifying and responding to the emergent needs of children, youth, and their communities. Our commitment is to collaborate, innovate, and implement proactive solutions that promote positive mental health and well-being while minimizing substance use harms.”
4. Ask the following questions and capture key words or phrases:
 - a. Who are we? When you describe your Agenda Gap group to others such as friends, family, and teachers, what words or phrases do you use? Why do we meet as a group? What are the issues we talk about/our interest area? What are we aiming to achieve?
 - b. Who do we want to create change for? Who are the people who will benefit from our action?



5. Send the youth into groups. Ask each group to craft a mission statement using the notes from the previous discussion as inspiration. Explain that they do not have to incorporate everything and can add new material. The discussion is intended as an aid as they consider the key elements — the who, what and how of their collective work — to create their mission statement.
6. Return to Circle. Invite the groups to share their mission statements. Ask if they want to adopt one or combine elements from each to create the mission statement for their Agenda Gap cohort.
7. If the group chooses to combine statements, ask them to identify the key elements they want to retain from each.
8. Collectively edit the statement until consensus is reached. Ask the group to share their thoughts on the final mission statement.

Facilitator Tips

- It's important that this mission statement accurately reflects the work and identity of the group. If there are key elements missing suggest these be incorporated.
- Ensure each youth has the opportunity to share their feedback on the statement to ensure the final product is representative of everyone's voices.



Connect & Close (10 minutes)

1. Share that body scans are a useful tool to manage stress and bring awareness and connection to the body. During this body scan practice, encourage the youth to be patient and curious as they focus on their experience. Ask the youth to sit comfortably in their chair or lay on the floor. They may close their eyes if they wish.
2. Encourage them to take slow, deep breaths, and to do their best to maintain focus.
3. Remind them that when thoughts arise, which they will, they can simply acknowledge them and let them pass, returning their focus to the sensations in their body.
4. Instruct them to notice the sensations in each body part as they move their attention from their feet toward their head.
 - a. For example, they may notice sensations of heaviness or lightness, feelings of pulsing or movement, variations in temperature, or there could be parts of the body where there are no obvious sensations.
 - b. You might prompt: "Start by drawing attention to your toes." Pause. "Next, notice your ankles... lower legs... upper legs... palms and fingers... wrists... lower arms... upper arms... shoulders... neck... jaw... ears... forehead... top of head."
5. When the youth have focused on all parts of their body, end the exercise on a positive and affirming note. You might state: "Notice the feeling of being connected to your body."
6. Invite the youth to share their feedback on the activity.
7. Distribute the AWE survey and allow a few minutes for everyone to complete. If any youth doesn't want to do so immediately, ask that they complete it before the next meeting.
8. After the group finishes the survey, thank them for their participation and close the workshop.
9. After the workshop closes send a link to the AWE survey by email for those who did not complete it during the session.

Activity adapted from inspirED Body Scan available from <https://inspiredstudents.org/activity/body-scan/>



Workshop 9: Story Spine Worksheet

Use the following story spine template to craft your priority challenge story as a group. Consider the purpose of each story element (left column) as you fill in the worksheet. In the last step, think about how addressing the priority challenge could create change for you and your community and lead to a “happily ever after” outcome.

STORY ELEMENT	PROMPT
Set the stage for your story by describing your setting and introducing your character. The character should reflect the experiences of young people in your community.	Once upon a time: Every day:
Use your priority challenge as inspiration to create the incident or event that changes the direction of the story.	One day:
Describe the potential consequences of the priority challenge on your group and broader community.	Because of that:
Describe a potential solution to address these consequences.	Because of that:
Describe the best outcome or “happily ever after” for the priority challenge.	Until one day: