



Storytelling as Strategy For Engaging Men

What stories and traditions do our students carry?

What stories about “what it means to be a man” do we or our students receive from our families?

WHEN TO USE STORYTELLING FOR ENGAGING MEN?

Every day! Storytelling is an overarching approach and skill to be integrated as best practice for engaging men.



As specific tool for meetings, programming, & events.

WHY STORYTELLING FOR ENGAGING MEN?

1 STORYTELLING SERVES AS A BRIDGE BETWEEN GENERATIONS

Storytelling is an ancient and persistent traditional practice among many cultures that has and continues to serve many purposes. Storytelling is a powerful and rich mode of human expression and a sophisticated way to make meaning of singular and collective experiences. **Diverse cultures rely on stories as a vehicle to transmit values and to engage and socialize children.** As such, storytelling also serves as a bridge wherein moments, rituals, and traditions get passed on to new generations.



2 STORYTELLING CONNECTS, BUILDS EMPATHY, & DE-STIGMATIZES

“There is no greater agony than bearing an untold story inside you.”

- Maya Angelou

Storytelling has incredible therapeutic and healing properties for storytellers and the witnesses present. **For storytellers, the very act of speaking allows them to claim space and it gifts them the opportunity to reclaim moments.** In Spanish the word for vent is “desahogar” which directly translates to “undrown” in English. The word in and of itself proclaims that to speak, to voice one’s story, sanctions breath and life. Many gifts also exist for the witnesses of these stories. **Often someone else’s story mirrors one that we have lived through, too.** To hear the analogous shared experiences lets witnesses feel seen and encourages them to begin the journey of sharing and healing.

Amongst men, there are myriad pressures to hold in, drown, and bear their stories alone: Stories of success; Stories of pain; Stories of love. To bear these stories alone is necessary to be accepted and avoid punishment from friends, family, and society. As bell hooks shares in “The Will to Change: Men, Masculinity, and Love”:

Learning to wear a mask (that word already embedded in the term “masculinity”) is the first lesson in patriarchal masculinity that a boy learns. He learns that his core feelings cannot be expressed if they do not conform to the acceptable behaviors sexism defines as male.

For men to share stories is to break a cycle of learning and conformity to harmful ideals of manhood. Since storytelling is powerful, freeing, and practical; it is a critical approach and as a tool to motivate and mobilize men for cultural change.

What untold stories exist amongst men in your family or community?

What stories, if told, would help men on your campus feel more connected or engaged?



The chart below details a number of campus scenarios where storytelling will be applicable:

| SETTING | PURPOSE | STORYTELLING PROMPTS |
|--|---|--|
| <p>COORDINATED COMMUNITY RESPONSE TEAMS</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To motivate people to join your CCRTs • To identify needs and gaps your team is witnessing with men on campus • To bond with one another and to stay invested • To practice the open, healthy, & vulnerable communication that we encourage students to practice | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “What family story brings you to this work and to this team?” • “What kind of Engaging Men efforts on campuses do you wish men in your life (uncle, father, or son) had had? Why?” • “What person in your life motivates you to change any of the harmful ideals of what it means to be a man?” |
| <p>TRAININGS (BYSTANDER INTERVENTION, STUDENT CONDUCT, LAW ENFORCEMENT)</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To connect personal experiences to larger narratives of manhood and gender expectations • To build empathy and care in service of trauma-informed practices • To motivate people who are interested in serving as bystanders | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “What is a personal story that motivated you to attend this training (or pursue this line of work)?” • “In your perfect world, what is a story you’d like to see of how men are leading positive change on campus?” • “What is a time that you didn’t like a comment or felt uncomfortable around other men, but didn’t say something? Why?” |



| SETTING | PURPOSE | STORYTELLING PROMPTS |
|--------------------------------------|---|--|
| <p>LISTENING SESSIONS</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To identify gaps or needs based on stories that men have heard or survived • To connect men to one another • To identify key men on campus | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “What stories do you think would motivate men on campus to do more to stop sexual harassment?” • “Which men set the culture of what’s acceptable or not in their groups? Can you share an example?” • “Do you have any examples with men on campus where you felt dissuaded from speaking up about topics like sexual harassment or assault? ” |
| <p>EVALUATION/ ASSESSMENT</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To tell the story behind the survey number when advocating for more administrative support • To recount how the programming has been or hasn’t been useful | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Can you recall a moment that made you feel seen and heard during programming?” • “Can you share a situation with peers that campus training or programming helped you navigate?” |