

Talking the Talk:

*How to Share Your Lived Recovery Experience
with Anyone, Anytime*



1:30 – 3 p.m. Friday, October 24

Alternatives 2014

Creating the Future. Change, Challenge, Opportunity

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Training Agenda

1. Purpose and Learning Objectives
2. “Groundrules”
3. Your story, our story: The “Client Experience”
4. Stigma: What it is and what it does
5. Recovery: What it is and what it can do
6. Your story is important
7. Pros and Cons of Disclosure
8. Elements of an effective story
9. Creating your *“Recovery Elevator Speech”*
10. Tips for Becoming a Better Speaker
11. Pre-Speech Checklist
12. Feedback Sheet
13. Quality of Experience Worksheet

Purpose and Learning Objectives

The purpose of this training is to assist speakers to thoughtfully create, craft and efficiently deliver their own recovery story to have the most impact on an audience and reduce mental health stigma.

By the end of this training, speakers will:

1. Understand stigma and the importance of sharing one’s story in order to reduce stigma and promote wellness
2. Have developed a story that includes the essential elements of an effective recovery story
3. Be prepared to share their story in a variety of situations

Groundrules

- Confidentiality – “What is said in the room, stays in the room.”
- Everyone’s opinion counts, everyone’s experience is valuable
- We always respect each other.

Why do we need to speak out?

Stigma: What it is and what it does

Stigma is something about certain people –who they are, how they behave, or their reputation -- which is seen as negative. It can cause such people to be classified by others as undesirable, or to be rejected or stereotyped, rather than being accepted as “normal.”

Stigma often includes:

- Confusing what is true with what is not
- Thinking that all people with a certain condition are all alike (dangerous, unstable, always needing help)
- Discrimination (Not giving people a chance, treating people differently than others. Stigma can stop people from socializing or working with, renting to, or employing others.)
- Disempowerment (Making people feel like they are less than others)

Stigma is one of the most common and persistent barriers to good mental health system in our communities.

Self-stigma happens when such negative attitudes are held by the individual who is being stigmatized. Self-stigma has recently been cited as a major public health concern, stopping people from seeking help or support when they are in distress. Fear of discrimination is the key barrier that keeps many people from revealing symptoms and seeking help, services and treatment.

- Self-stigma is the prejudice which people turn against themselves
- Stigma leads to low self-esteem, a sense of being misunderstood, hopelessness, shame and guilt.

Recovery

Recovery is a process that allows people to live, work, learn, and participate fully in their communities. For some, this is the ability to live a fulfilling and productive life despite barriers or challenges.

Recovery is a way of looking at things that encourages people to feel:

- Hope (“Tomorrow can be better than today.”)
- Empowerment and Self-Confidence (“I can do it!”)
- Self-determination (I can make choices for myself.)
- Self-Advocacy (“I can speak for myself.”)
- Supported (“There are others like me who can understand me.”)
- Resiliency (“I can be strong and healthy.”)

Recovery can be achieved in many ways: By tapping into inner strength, spirituality, self-help strategies (self-responsibility and self-determination), family/peer/community supports, and a sense of connection with other people and society.

Recovery teaches that people who have experienced mental health issues can get better, overcome barriers, and make important contributions to our family and communities.

Your story is important

An important way to challenge stigma and promote recovery is for those of us who have the “lived experience” of facing and overcoming a mental health challenge to share our stories with others.

Telling your story can make you feel better about yourself, while helping others to better understand you, their loved ones and neighbors, and even themselves.

Take a moment and think about WHY you want to tell your story. How would you want it to benefit:

You?

Your audience?

Your community?

Talking the Talk

WORKSHEET #1: PROS & CONS OF DISCLOSURE

Audience

Pros

Cons

Friends		
Coworkers		
Family Members		
People in the Community		
Others: _____ _____		

WORKSHEET #2: TELLING YOUR STORY

Elements of an effective story

Telling a good story is not a matter of luck, chance, having interesting experiences or natural talent. It is about preparation, practice, clarity of purpose, craftsmanship, confidence, and engagement and with an audience. It is a true artistic processes.

It is useful to think of your story having three main parts: A beginning, a middle, and an end.

The beginning is your *introduction*.

Share a little about yourself!

- a) Your name
- b) Personal Interests/Occupation
- c) Age/Cultural Background
- d) State your topic (Tell audience what you are going to talk about)

(It's important to start off by sharing a little about yourself, and use humor if you feel comfortable. Breaking the ice and getting comfortable with your audience is essential when talking about something very personal).

Take a moment and write a sample introduction:-

The middle part of your story is the longest part, and should include these elements:

- a) What type of *challenges* did you face? What did they look and feel like? How did they affect your life and the people around you? Did they create barriers for you? Did you experience stigma or discrimination because of this?

Take a moment and write a sample “Challenges” segment:-

- b) After sharing your “Challenges” story, it is essential to move forward with a story of hope, resilience, and recovery. Speakers can discuss how they have realized their hopes/goals/dreams in the face of adversity; how they managed their symptoms. This is a good place to talk about community support—how others provided support and hope.

Some topics you may choose to cover could include: What did it take for people to accept your diagnosis or experience? What type of support or treatment did you receive? What type of support are you currently receiving from others? What does recovery mean to you?

Speakers can also talk about other types of wellness supports, such as exercise, yoga, meditation, spirituality, etc.

Take a moment and write a sample “Recovery” segment:-

- c) The final part of the middle section of your story should include a message of “empowerment,” if possible: “Despite these problems, I have achieved several accomplishments.” List some of the things that you have accomplished in terms of your work, relationships, education and other personal goals; how you may have helped others, including by sharing your story. Empowerment also can simply mean that you feel hopeful and empowered by overcoming your struggles and combating stigma.

Take a moment and write a sample “Empowerment” segment:-

The *conclusion* brings your story to an end. What do you want your audience to do? You could conclude with a direct statement, such as:

“I, like all people with challenges, live, work, and play just like you. So, please treat me the same. Do not view me based on any unfair stereotypes.”

But you may want to go further to keep the audience engaged and lay the framework for further dialogue and action (Change their opinions, volunteer, speak out, promote seeking support or treatment. You can even give specific examples of what audience members can do to combat stigma and ways that they can get involved. And always remember to thank the audience for listening!

Take a moment and write a sample “Conclusion:”-

WORKSHEET #2: YOUR “RECOVERY ELEVATOR STORY”

Now that you have mastered the elements of an effective and full “Recovery Story,” let’s try adapting these crucial elements to more common situations.

In everyday life, situations can arise in which it would be useful to tell your story, but:

- Time will be limited. You and the people you share with may be “on the clock,” with many things to do.
- The reasons for sharing will be related to your relationship to your “audience” and you need to be mindful of *what you want your story to accomplish in terms of impact*.
- Depending on your desired impact, the emphasis of your story will change. In some situations, for example, you may want to rely less on the “challenges” and “Recovery” segments, and more on the “empowerment” segment, in which you talk about your accomplishments, skills and contributions.

Keeping this in mind, you can develop several versions of your story in an “elevator speech” format, saying what you need to say to be impactful --- in about two to three minutes.

In this exercise, you will choose an audience and create a “Recovery Elevator Speech” appropriate for that situation.

Recovery Elevator Story

Audience: _____

Situation: _____

Purpose for sharing Lived Experience.

Introduction:

Challenges:

Recovery:

Empowerment (Roles, skills, accomplishments):

Conclusion:

Tips for becoming a better speaker

Before you speak:

- Write out your story/presentation
- Practice reading aloud the entire story to yourself and/or friends/peers
- Create a clear introduction (beginning), middle (with specific examples of stigma and real-life experiences), and conclusion (a natural end point)
- Write key points onto index cards as prompts (especially if you are new to giving presentations)
- Tailor your presentation the audience you will be speaking to (For example, if you're talking to landlords, include examples of how stigma and/or mental health conditions affected your housing situation). How should you talk to them? What do you want them to learn? What do you want them to do?
- Change can be difficult and sharing your story can be difficult. Ask yourself: Will I have to learn new skills and leave my comfort zone?

When you speak:

- Use everyday language that everyone can understand
- Keep it human: Make eye contact as you speak
- Use a conversational tone; don't "preach"
- Give examples, use your "lived experience"
- Tell your story in the first person, using "I statements." You can't speak for other people.
- Use emotion in a positive way – Showing emotion can help an audience connect with your story.
- Don't be afraid to use details – But choose them carefully.
- Speak clearly and vary the emotional tone of your voice, as well as your facial expression.

After you speak:

- Learn to “debrief” with others.

Ask yourself,

- How did it feel to tell your story?
- What are some of the things you liked about how you told your story?
- What parts of it might have been hard to tell?
- What parts might you have said differently?

Ongoing:

- Listen to, learn from others
- Recognize that your story is humble. You are not trying to bring down all stereotypes in a short presentation. Your goal is to provide listeners with a brief glimpse into the life of a person who has faced certain challenges, but who does not act in the manner that stereotypes suggest.
- Remember the importance of enthusiasm and energy; they are infectious and make an audience carefully hang on the words of your story. Enthusiasm shows the audience that you believe your message to be important and interesting. Enthusiasm is communicated through your energy.
- Look at it as a learning experience every time.
- Keep preparing, telling your story, and listening for feedback.

Remember: Your story can enrich the lives of others. Vividly sharing your challenges and achievements can show that change is possible can give hope to others.

Pre-Speech checklist

Date of Event: ___/___/___

Time of Event: _____

Address: _____

About how many people? _____

Length of my speech _____

Who is my audience? _____

What is the set-up of the room? _____

How am I getting there? _____

A. What is my central message?

B. What things do I know about this type of audience that will help shape my speech?

C. What might this group need to know/hear?

D. What do I want the audience to do?

E. Is there anything I feel uncomfortable disclosing to this group?

Preparation

Prepared an outline? Yes/No

Practice at least 5 times: 1 2 3 4 5

Prepare with What I'm wearing and my physical appearance? Yes/No

Do I feel comfortable disclosing this story with audience. Yes/No

Other Concerns/Comments

Feedback Sheet

Date of presentation: ___/ ___/ ___

Presentation length: _____

Speaker Name: _____

Number in attendance: _____

Setting of Presentation: _____

Circle the number representing your feedback (1 Needs Improvement - Excellent 5)

Speaking Skills

Did the speaker use good eye contact with the audience? 1 2 3 4 5

The speaker used the right words to connect with the audience> 1 2 3 4 5

Did the speaker using their tone and volume of voice effectively? 1 2 3 4 5

Storytelling & Messaging

The speaker used too many space fillers (“like,” “umm,” etc.) 1 2 3 4 5

Did the presentation have a clear beginning, middle and end? 1 2 3 4 5

What was the central theme? _____

Did the presentation support hope, recovery & wellness? 1 2 3 4 5

Did the way the story was told fit the audience & feel comfortable? 1 2 3 4 5

Preparation

Did the speaker seem prepared & well practiced? 1 2 3 4 5

Was the speaker dressed appropriately? 1 2 3 4 5

What did this speaker do really well?

Is there anything this speaker needs to work on?

Quality of Experience Worksheet

Use the following 7-point scales to rate the quality of your experience telling your story about mental illness. If there were other feelings that you experienced while telling your story, please write them in at the bottom of the page. Don't discount any feelings you had, even if you think others may think they are silly; these are important in developing your strategy for disclosure.

How empowered do you feel after telling your story?

not at all empowered			moderately empowered			very empowered
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Was it therapeutic to tell your story?

not at all therapeutic			moderately therapeutic			very therapeutic
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

How anxious did you feel while telling your story?

not at all anxious			moderately anxious			very anxious
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

How positive was your experience telling your story?

not at all positive			moderately positive			very positive
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Please note anything else not already discussed about the quality of your experience telling your story.