



GOOD SHEPHERD
MISSION HOSPITAL

Story circles – a tool for digital storytelling

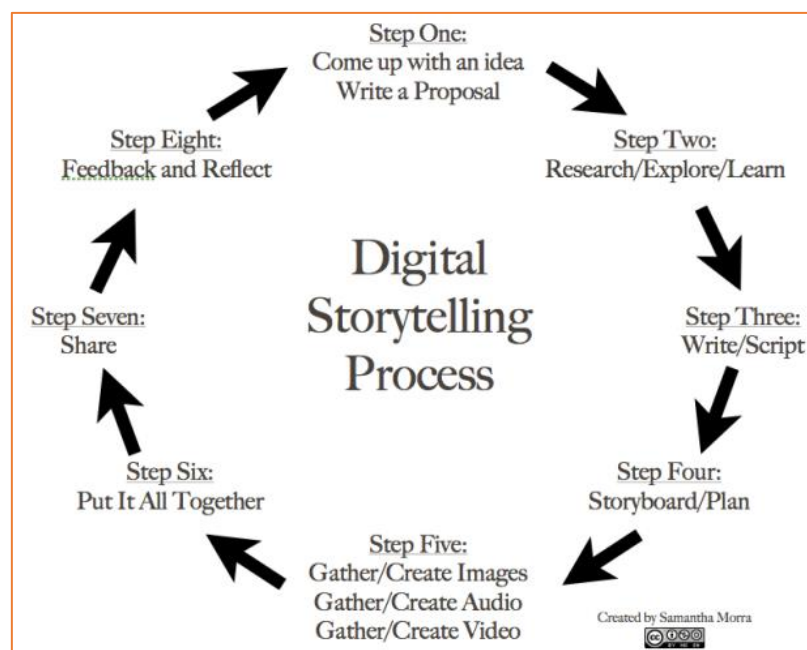
What is a story circle?

A story circle is group activity used to create a non-judgmental environment for individuals to express their most personal stories and create opportunities for people to learn from their peers. In story circles people can learn to listen and learn to empathise with others. Story circles are also places where people can practice or share their stories and receive feedback. **The feedback is as much on how the story is being told as on the content of the story.**

Along the way some practitioners find that in focusing on how the story is being told, the listener is sometimes able to overcome their prejudices towards the content of story and truly begin understanding what the teller is trying to say. The listener will try to connect the story and the experience of the storyteller to themselves and a similar situation they have encountered. This creates a healthy dialogue and gives the storyteller new insights into their story. Story circles help storytellers organize their thoughts and help sort through sometimes uneasy feelings. The ultimate concept of the story circle is: **you can't change what happened, but you can change where you stand in relation to that story.**

When do you use a story circle activity? Who with?

A Story Circle activity is an effective way to help people feel comfortable sharing their **stories before moving onto script writing or making a storyboard**. **Story Circles work best with groups of people** who share something in common e.g. living with an NCD. If you wish to interview patients individually, a story circle may not be your chosen method of creating your digital story, however as they can be a useful educational and therapeutic tool in their own right, you may wish to invite your patients to take part in a story circle activity e.g. during a peer support group.



How to lead a story circle

Before the activity takes place

- 1- Invite patients to take part in the process and explain what they may gain from the experience. Give them time to think about their answer. When you know who is going to take part, confirm their attendance and reassure them that their input is really valuable. If they cannot take part in the story circle, consider offering an individual interview, if this is appropriate.
- 2- Confirm how long each person can attend and ensure that they have enough time to participate fully before their transport leaves.

Preparations (important so that people do not feel rushed or distracted!)

- 1- Make sure you are clear on what you hope to achieve and how long you have for the activity. Prepare any materials you need BEFORE patients arrive for the activity.
- 2- Set up the room BEFORE the activity starts and make sure you have drinks, tissues, paper, anything else people may need to be comfortable.

The story circle (allow AT LEAST 1-2 hours)

- 1- Introduce the activity
 - Begin by asking all participants to sit in a circle facing each other.
 - Explain that we will each take up to 5 minutes to share a personal story on a relevant theme and all other participants will listen before sharing their own relatable story.
 - All participants should consider not only what their story is but *how* they will tell it. Reassure participants that they do not have to be perfect – we are here to learn!
 - Instruct listeners to consider ways to give constructive feedback to the other storytellers (this will be done after everyone has shared their story) e.g. could they add/remove/change some of how they tell their story to improve it in any way?
- 2- Throughout the activity
 - Time people so that they do not take longer than their 5 minutes.
 - Encourage people by simply thanking them for sharing. Do not comment on each individual story during this stage of the story circle as the discussion can happen *after* everyone has spoken.
 - Pay attention to people's reactions and offer people a break if they need it.
- 3- Conclude the activity
 - Thank everyone for their input.
- 4- After the activity
 - Thank everyone again and reassure them how useful it is that we have all shared and learned from each-other.
 - Introduce the script-writing and/or story-board part of the digital story process, ensuring that each person is involved as much as they need.

Resource created by Kelly-Marie Roberts, capacity building volunteer, Good Shepherd Hospital

