

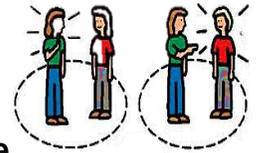


STORY SHARING GAME INSTRUCTIONS





WHAT IS THE STORY SHARING GAME?



The sharing of little personal stories is turned into a game by adding key game components: goal-oriented activity that revolves around developing and using skills; mental stimulation; critical interactions with other players; rules, time limits, and scoring.



“Teaching kids to count is fine, but teaching them what counts is best.”
~ Bob Talbert

STORYTELLING LESSONS

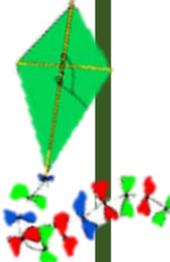
The Story Sharing Game offers short lessons and exercises to help players learn to craft artistic, multi-layered short stories (*a.k.a. memoirs*) out of simple situations in their lives that before they might not have thought important or would have been too shy to reveal.

CONSUMERS vs CREATORS & HISTORIANS

We’ve become such ravenous consumers of professionally produced and written, mind-blowing, heartwarming, or hilarious storytelling -- that we no longer value storytelling about our seemingly ordinary lives. Many of us don't know much about our own family history. That's not going back generations; that's kids and parents now often not knowing *in-detail* the stories of their parents and grandparents' journeys, or even that of their siblings and partners. The Story Sharing Game provides a no-cost playful psychological retreat that family members go on together, while simultaneously undertaking personal journeys of self-discovery. Each time you play, family members have the opportunity to glimpse whimsical and surprising truths about each other. These stories will be preserved in audio recordings that later can be turned into written stories and shared with future generations.

HOW THE GAME CAN BENEFIT PARENTS IN THIS TIME OF COVID

The year 2020 became an unending season of uncertainty, isolation, exhaustion, frustration, grief, boredom, and the loss of routine and tradition. This has been especially true for shut-in children and parents without breaks. How do you bring fresh, hopeful air into a stuffy room you have been sharing for months? The Story Sharing Game is not about the technical of writing; it's about the **passion, authenticity, and intimate sharing nature of vivid storytelling**. Your ability to sell the Game to your kids rest not on the merits of the Game (*which there are many!*); it rests on your ability to engage kids in activity that benefits your own self-development as well as theirs. It's not just – *try something new*; it's – *let's be something new to each other*. Parents often don't realize that kids want to see them grow too; or how much kids love helping their parents.



HOW THE STORY SHARING GAME CAN HELP YOUR KIDS

- Find meaning in their own experiences
- Builds self-esteem
- Builds values system
- Encourages focus, not cleverness
- Happily step beyond comfort zone
- Ease fear of judgment from others
- Foster patience in reaching goals
- No longer see 'failure', instead the opportunity to learn
- Develop problem solving skills
- Grows interest in other people's stories for what can be learned
- Fuels interest in doing research and brainstorming before acting



YOUR ORIENTATION

Yes, But...

THERE ARE A LOT OF INSTRUCTIONS TO GET THROUGH !

Imagine you bought a stationary exercise bike – and it came in a box with lots of parts and pages of instructions. You have to focus and go step by step, including with the detailed instructions on how to set and use the panel that will tell your time/distance/pulse. But once you have the bike set up, the challenge is simply -- ride the bike. After teaching your kids the game's rules and goals, your sessions will simply be about discussing and sharing stories.

THE SAMPLE STORIES YOU USE WITH KIDS WILL BE ON THEIR LEVEL

The Story Sharing Game begins by picking a theme that everyone will use as inspiration to come up with a situation from their own life to shape a short story around. To get the players thinking and seeing possibilities, they will read aloud together a short sample story with that theme. In the lessons on how to play the Game sample stories are used from the www.Catering2Us.nyc site that are appropriate for kids*. Once your family has the hang of playing the Game, together you can choose children's stories that your kids already know as the sample stories to discuss and then inspire your stories.

*NOTE: The Catering2Us site was originally created with adults in mind, so much of the subject matter of the sample stories will go over the heads of younger kids. The sample stories that are appropriate will be indicated.



HOW TO PLAY THE GAME: 1st ASK THE KIDS TO HELP YOU BE BETTER !

“Kids deserve the right to think that they can change the world.” ~ Lois Lowry

Parents, if you want to play the Story Sharing Game with your kids – you must first start by coming up with a really good story to tell them about why you personally want to play the Game, and why you think the qualities they (the kids) bring will help you be a better player. Refer to ‘TEN TIPS TO HELP YOU ENGAGE AN AUDIENCE’ (pgs 7-9), and play the Game with an adult before playing it with kids.

**IF YOU ARE A POOR STORYTELLER
WHAT’R U SELLIN’ TO KIDS ?!**

TELL KIDS WHY YOU BENEFIT FROM PLAYING THE GAME WITH THEM:

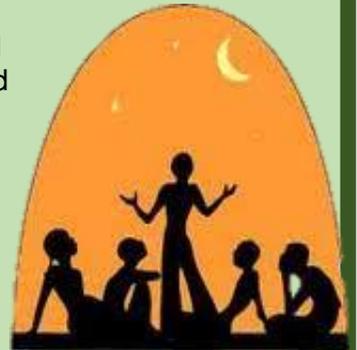
- ✓ You miss how Aunt BB use to preserve and share family stories, so you want to learn to do so with your kids to ensure the chronicling of your family stories into the future.
- ✓ Sometimes you get sad now, so it could help your spirits to tell stories about all the great and strange experiences you’ve had, and hear their stories.
- ✓ Doing something creative can help take your mind off....*fill in a problem or duty your kids know you’re dealing with.*
- ✓ You’ve always been embarrassed when you’ve had to talk in front of other people (*even if you’ve had to learn how to do it*). Now you’d like to learn how to tell stories to entertain people and have fun.
- ✓ You hope their specialness will rub off and help you develop as a storyteller – *fill in your kid’s specialness – spontaneous; prolific storyteller; enthusiastic, etc.*

YOUR ORIENTATION

BE YOUR OWN HERO WHEN TELLING STORIES ABOUT YOUR LIFE

It's important to understand what kids want from a story is not necessarily what adults want. If the story's puny protagonist, running away from bullies, ends up on her own, lost and hanging off a cliff, hungry – a satisfying conclusion for a child doesn't need to be everyone cheering or a prize of a million dollars. A child is happy if the reluctant hero ends up safe, in a comfortable physical environment and loved. A hero is someone who successfully copes with her problems, while gleaming revelations about the people and environment that surround her. The best ending for a child is the world making sense and the protagonist having increased confidence in herself.

At the same time kids crave storytelling that makes their hearts race and laughter loud. Kids revel in stories featuring a main character confronted by anxieties and fears, the very emotions that you as parent try most to minimize your kids' exposure to. And behaviors you seek to dissuade kids from – gigantic dreams, big-big-over-the-top gestures, and making fun of authority figures – they absolutely love! At the same time they have an extremely limited view of the world beyond their daily lives, so little everyday situations matter a lot to them. The Story Sharing Game will help you transform seeming insignificant situations from your own life into exciting, surprising, and meaningful stories.



WHAT MATTERS FOR KIDS

- Growing Up
- Friendship
- Love
- Anger
- Courage / Speaking Out
- Family / Being Part of A Group / Identity
- Bullying / Fear Of Being Unjustly Targeted
- Loss / Grief / Threat of Death
- Economic Security / Poverty
- Jealousy / Feelings of Inferiority (of Self or Community)

HOW YOU BENEFIT

When You Strive To Be Inspirational To Your Kids, You'll Be Inspirational To Yourself

No matter how embarrassing, sad, or hurtful a situation you speak about was, you the storyteller are proof one can successfully live beyond it and gain insight.

Be happy with just your efforts to tell stories, not judging their worth or rightness, because that's how you need to be with your kids' efforts.

Become emotionally closer to your kids as you give yourself a little emotional release that's safe and creative.



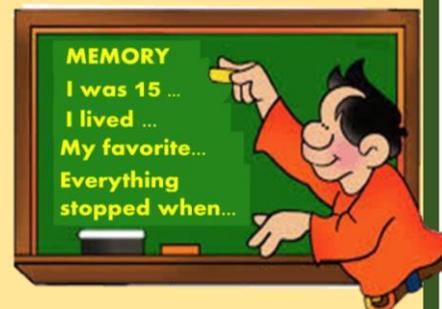
Communicate your value system to your kids through stories, engaging not lecturing.

Plan structured time to be creative and focused on yourself that you will keep to –because it's also time you've structured for the kids to do the same.

YOUR ORIENTATION

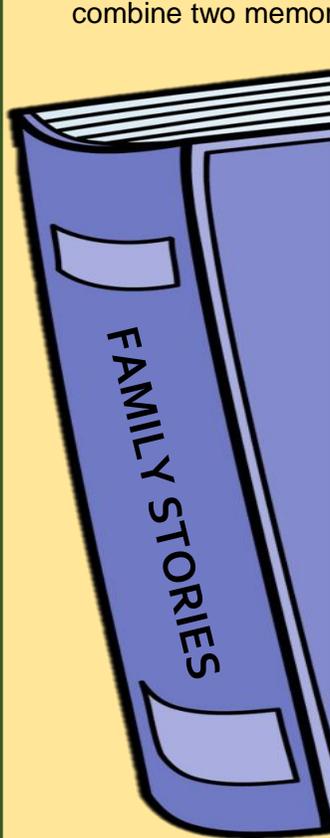
SHAPING YOUR MEMOIRS FOR KIDS

When looking for a situation to shape a story about, don't start with ones weighed with massive feelings or challenges that you're still processing. Instead allow yourself to free associate and think back on *things* – not emotions. Think of a favorite piece of wardrobe or a possession; a street you lived on; or a person who had a lot of influence on you. Search your memory for little challenges or surprises (*which at the time could have seemed to loom large*).



MEMOIRS ARE NOT AUTOBIOGRAPHIES – FREE YOUR IMAGINATION

When you write an 'autobiography' of your life the focus is on dates, facts, and a timeline. When you craft a 'memoir' your focus is on describing *your sense of reality* about a situation that happened to you, and *how you believe* it impacted your life. **Review the '(11) Tips For Shaping Your Story To Engage An Audience' in the Lesson #3 Handout.** You can use fantasy, humor, exaggerations, and dialogue to transport the other players into an experience of what it felt like to be you. You can take liberties and combine memories that didn't happen right next to each other, yet seem to fit together as an honest expression of your mood at the time, such as how I combine two memories in this memoir:



SAMPLE

'ALONE IS OK IF YOU ARE THERE'

"I was nine and very 'forlorn' (*I had just learned the word – it was the worst kind of lonely*) and wanted to disappear. But there I was sitting on the curb in open view because there was no place to hide in Alameda's Navy housing. California didn't seem to have alleys, laundry rooms, or lines of cars like 1039 E. 80th Street in Chicago, where my family moved from five months before. Here each two-story, blank beige building was fortified by vast stretches of scratchy dried-out yellow grass, no tall tenements (or trees) to cast shade. My best and only friend had moved away.....All I could see was Louisa flipping her straight red hair and how her freckles emerged when she shouted, "You, nigger! My mom says you're uh nigger! You stay away from me!"..... Ugh! This slimy slug was inching toward my flip flop. I was about to snatch my foot back -- but then I became kind of interested in the slug because it made me realize I wasn't alone. I decided the slug was the spirit of Louisa, crawling back to me, saying "I'm here". The slug stopped moving. I sat watching. For the first time in twelve and a half days, I was maybe okay..... Suddenly something gritty was raining down ! My tingling hand jerked back as my head winched around. 'No-Heart' towered over me! My lanky brother -- with his dark-eyed-cat-ate-the-care-bear-grin -- wielding his saltshaker in triumph. I gasped as I stared at the wet spot and white grains scattered on the pavement where my once-friend had been channeled. I HATE MY BROTHER! I jumped up. But he was already pumping his skinny legs, disappearing into our open apartment door and slamming it. I was so angry!!!! I started pounding my fist into my open hand. Harder! AND HARDER! SMACK!!! I liked the sound. Then I decided; I was tough. Even if I lost a fight -- or a friend -- no one was going to take me out! No one was ever going to pour salt on me and make me disappear."

IMAGINE LONG TERM GOALS FOR THE GAME

Kids are inspired when they have bigger goals to dream about (*not seeing the possible problems and hard work required!*). Set a larger goal you can imagine accomplishing that involves turning the short stories you create into other art projects. Like making a story booklet or a comic with illustrations. Turn a story into a short script and shoot your own film. More on bigger goals next in 'Facilitating The Game'.

FACILITATING THE GAME

We each have three minutes to answer!



GAME MINDSET
Imagine you're on a TV game show and given seconds to come up with an answer! Approach it not as a writing task, but as a spontaneous speed-thinking game, where you perform your answers to entertain others.

LEARN THE GAME TOGETHER

You will lead your kids / players through (3) one-hour introductory lessons, each with its own handout that you will read aloud together. In the third session you'll compose, orally tell, and score your first short stories (a.k.a. memoirs).

SESSION #1

- Share your story of why you want to play the Story Sharing Game
- Get started on creating the Game Props (*i.e. talking stick, chips, crown*)*
- Take turns reading aloud Lesson #1: Story Sharing Game Orientation

**You will start the art projects during the 1st lesson, but if you and the kids are really creative with what you make it will take longer than an hour, especially since you are going through the first handout at the same time. It's up to you how you handle completing the props. You can continue working on them after you finish going through the handout; you can plan a separate session to complete them; or each player can complete their props on their own time.*



SESSION #2

- What kind of storytelling do you like? What is a story's theme?
- Read sample story: 'Princess Diana's Gowns'
- Use '(11) Storytelling Tips For Shaping A Story To Engage An Audience' to analyze the sample story

SESSION #3

- Picking a theme together
- Silent group time to develop your story
- Sharing your stories, scoring, and the crowning ceremony

And then they all....!



YOU ARE THE COOK

We're giving you a Game recipe – but only you know what ingredients you have to work with (*i.e. how many kids, their ages, etc.*), so you might need to adjust the instructions. Be a good cook and think those adjustments through before you start cooking with the kids.

*"A recipe has no soul. You as the cook must bring soul to the recipe."
- Thomas Keller*



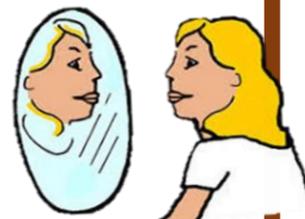
FACILITATING THE GAME

“People will forget what you said. People will forget what you did. But people will never forget how you made them feel.” – Maya Angelou

BEING AWARE OF YOUR OWN BEHAVIOR

GOOD: As you go through the lesson handouts with the kids, pepper in references to situations, details, objects, and favorites from your kids life as well as your own – especially parts of your life your kids don't know about. Kids crave mystery, discovery, and freshness – and you can give them that simply by revealing little aspects of yourself that they know nothing about.

GREAT: As you facilitate the sessions – add silly jokes; let your body bob with excitement and surprise; and lots of wows and ohs! Playful behavior can be especially effective if this is not normally how you physically express yourself to kids – and by 'kids', use this method with teens as well. Key to this method of disarming your children's defenses and inhibitions is that it be clear – *you are greatly enjoying your own expression*; that you are authentic.



BE PROCESS – NOT RESULT – ORIENTED: Build up excitement about the process / activities that help players develop their stories, rather than on the end goal of a completed story . **(BE IN THE MOMENT !)** The Game's lessons focus on 'prewriting' -- the important brainstorming, research, and organizing of ideas that happens *before* you write a well-crafted story.

YOU KNOW YOUR KIDS – AS PARENT TO CHILD. IF YOU HAVE MORE THAN ONE, EACH IS AN INDIVIDUAL, AND YOU PROBABLY UNDERSTAND ONE KID BETTER THAN THE OTHER ONE. QUIET OR BUBBLY? A QUICK LEARNER, OR HAS TROUBLE FOCUSING? OBEDIENT AND HELPFUL, OR MOODY AND READY TO BLOW? A SHARER OR PICKY AND PRONE TO BULLYING? OR SOMETIMES THIS, AND SOMETIMES THAT? DO THEY SHOW YOU ALL THAT THEY ARE?
AND WHO ARE YOU? TO THEM?

HOW TO NOT CONTROL THE GAME

To ensure as facilitator you don't unknowingly take too much control of the game from the kids / other players, as facilitator you can only speak during another player's assigned time by asking questions. No statements! Only questions.

“It is not the answer that enlightens, but the question.” – Eugene Ionesco
What does this mean? [Read this article](#) on the importance of knowing how to ask a question.

GIVE KIDS WHAT THEY LIKE

Kids (and adults) like characters they can identify with who act to solve their own problems

Shape Stories Around Memories You Can Infuse With These Aspects:

1. Speak as "I" about a situation that made you feel inadequate, emotional, threatened, or challenged beyond your knowledge or resources
2. Poke fun at yourself or at authority figures
3. Describe how you had to gain new skills or knowledge or seek help to manage the situation
4. Share something you learned about yourself and / or other people



FACILITATING THE GAME

In the Story Sharing Game players are limited to sharing (1) comment (or idea) at a time during open discussion rounds. In the timed story sharing rounds each player has the same exact time to speak.

Limiting comments and timing rounds is key to building the communications and trust aspects of the Game.

Family and friends normally don't operate like this, giving each other the same amount of time to speak, and forbidding all members from interrupting someone else's time. To agree to abide by these rules is to put everyone into new territory, where a player's impulse to speak before they think is slowed down, and the ability to listen is emphasized as much as the ability to speak.



RECOMMENDED TIME PER SESSION: (1) HOUR w/ (1) OPEN DISCUSSION ROUND + (1) TIMED TALKING ROUND

TIMES ARE SUGGESTED: Tailor to your situation. How many players (*counting yourself*) are there? When doing the Game's (3) introductory lessons, you can allocate more time for a session, or break up the lesson into two sessions. But decide on time before starting a session. Treat each session as a game show with a timeline you announce in advance. It's a good thing if a player is concerned about their time running out! It can distract them from emotional things that sometimes keep them from talking honestly, helping them to be more spontaneous. The game bell rings when the time is up and the session is over! (*Use a real bell – game props and noise make it more fun*)

The goal is to get players thinking. Not to have them say everything on their mind at the time!

IMPORTANT: As the official game time wraps up – it's OK, even good that talk and questions continue among participants; it just becomes part of unregulated normal life, not the Game.



READING LESSON ALOUD: Establish how to share the reading – such as a player reads one paragraph or question and then the next player reads the next one. To have this go quicker, you do not have to pass a Talking Stick as you read. Players can help a reader pronounce or define a word.

USE TALKING STICK FOR DISCUSSION & TIMED ROUNDS:

The person talking holds the stick and then passes it to the next person who will talk.

RESEARCH THE PATH TO BIGGER DREAMS

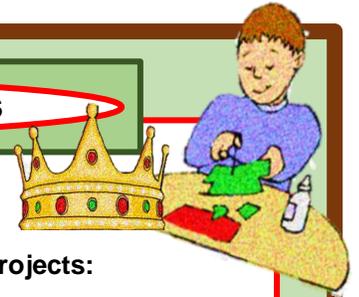
When introducing the Game present other art projects the stories can be turned into:

- 1) Plan to produce a comic or storybook to give as gifts! There are free online [articles](#) and [videos](#) on how to bind books at home. A player who reluctantly shares a story might light up with physical art projects, like binding a book or creating illustrations for its cover and stories.
- 2) Plant the idea of eventually using one of the short stories you share in the Game as the basis for writing a script. Then together doing all the roles of cast and crew and shooting your own film (*you can [use a cellphone](#)*). Check out our free lessons on how to [write short scripts](#). There are many online videos for beginning (*adult*) filmmakers. [D4Darious](#) has an outstanding, fun series. Here's a [video teaching kids](#) camera shots. Maybe a reluctant player will love doing one of the many jobs in film like [wardrobe](#), props or set, or acting. A story can be told so many ways!



INTRODUCE THE GAME BY CREATING GAME PROPS

With kids the more physical and tactile a game, including strange rituals, the better !

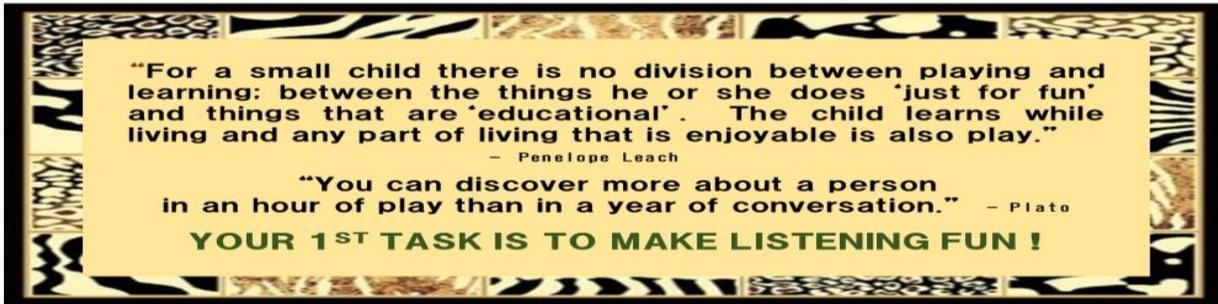


Before the first introductory session prepare materials for (3) art projects:
1) Talking Stick 2) Scoring Chips 3) Crown

Having kids do a fun physical and visual task – while casually planting suggestions for new behavior – can be a form of therapeutic hypnosis!

Open Lesson #1 with your own short memoir of why you want to play the Story Sharing Game (refer back to pg. 3). Then start the kids on making the Game props (*starting with the Talking Sticks*). Ask them if they can think of additional materials to use to personalize their Sticks.

Pass out the Lesson #1 handout as kids work on their Sticks. Let them know the handout is theirs and they can write/doodle on it. You'll start by reading the first page to them, stopping regularly to ask if they had any questions. After the first page, invite them to take turns with you reading aloud the rest of the instructions. It's OK if they choose to continue working on their art projects as you go through the lesson.. Sometimes it's good for kids to have two things to deal with at once – especially if they're fidgety kids who aren't initially excited about playing the Game.



THE GAME'S COMMUNICATION PROPS

The Story Sharing Game's goal is to structure a play situation that neutralizes the assumptions and assumed patterns of behavior between players, regardless of their relationships or ages, while giving them something fun to talk about playing for:

TALKING STICK

Watch this [\(2\) minute video](#) to help you think about how to introduce the concept of the Native American Talking Stick to your kids. Everyone should make one. Take a walk with the kids before the session to find sticks to decorate with ribbon, beads, feathers, jewelry, small toys, etc., using twine and glue to bind it to the Stick. Put bells on the Sticks so players can shake them and make sounds when passing. Here's a [lesson on how to make](#) a Talking Stick. Each game you can use a different player's Stick.

"When you hold the Talking Stick everyone has to listen to you."



CHIPS

Make your own chips!* You need (10) per player. You can decide on one kind of chip for everyone – or each player can come up with their own unique (10) chips. Be creative – like use plastic spoons that you individually paint with decorations and give faces and names! Then when scoring, players can call it 'spooning' when they give out a chip! Create your own terminology and have a special container to store the Game's chips. (*You can also use ordinary poker chips.)

CROWN

Everyone makes their a crown for the end of the Game's supreme StoryTeller. ([Example of how to make crown](#)). Each game you can rotate which crown is used. Brainstorm to come up with a special title to use for the crowned StoryTeller.



SUPPLEMENTS TO THE LESSONS

“The truth about stories is that is all we are.”

- Thomas King



Sure, we all like a good *story that entertains us.*

But often we avoid acknowledging that the stories we tell ourselves – silently (*sometimes unknowingly*), day in and day out and nights – *Are The Stories That Define Us*

As human beings our mental state is made up of these stories: *I’m good / I’m bad; I can do it / I can’t do it; I deserve / I don’t deserve; I have a right to be angry when wronged / what did I do wrong?; I’m blessed with abilities and potential / I’ll never be as good as them; the life I’ve lived has value / my life has no value; and on and on.....*

We are raised and socialized with stories – by parents, teachers, peers, clergy, bosses, whoever we interact with, as well as by society, ads, and media. In the course of everyday life we are told and tell countless ‘mini-bite’ stories – to explain, to heal, to warn against, to spark. A story that hooks us is interactive – we start free associating *from the story being told to the stories we tell ourselves.* Stories can inspire us to shoot the basket (*or at least have fun trying*) or stories can bury us in fear and confusion.

Yet, amazingly, at the very same time we can be totally unaware of how a story being told to us is having a major impact on us and the stories we tell ourselves.

**THE STORY SHARING GAME EMPOWERS YOU
TO DECODE THE ACT OF STORYTELLING ITSELF**

WRITER’S ANALYSIS OF SAMPLE STORIES

I share in **Lesson #2: ‘Introduction To Storytelling’**, a short memoir, **‘Princess Diana’s Gowns’**, as the sample story for players to study.

First you’ll read the memoir. Next you’ll read through the **‘(11) Storytelling Tips To Engage Your Audience’**. Then, tip by tip, you’ll analyze whether or not you see the tip at play in ‘Princess Diana’s Gowns’.



After each player gives their response, the facilitator will have players read aloud how I, the writer, see the tip manifesting in the story. In **Lesson #3: ‘Play The Game’**, I share the short memoir, **‘Alone Is OK If You Are There’**, followed by questions for the players to answer. After players respond to a question, share my response.

My Writer’s Responses Are Next On Pages 11-13. - Trayce

SUPPLEMENTS TO THE LESSONS

How the (11) Storytelling Tips Play Out In ‘Princess Diana’s Gowns’



My analysis of the short memoirs I wrote is just that – my analysis; me looking back and trying to understand. Players can agree or not agree, or have different ideas. For you to eat a cake I bake is a different experience than you listening to me explain how I made the cake and what I think it tastes like.

- Trayce

1) NARROW YOUR FOCUS When the pandemic shut down work and I was isolating alone (*with two cat friends*), as a buoy I decided to write about my twenty-five years of experiences working in the NYC catering industry. Catering (*as a waiter and kitchen helper*) has exposed me to so many new worlds and diverse people and professions, while its income and flexible scheduling has given me the independence to pursue my own teaching and writing projects. But I got stuck on how to start telling a story. So rather than choosing a specific experience, I started by creating three categories for the experiences I had in catering:

- **What Makes Us Special:** *the jobs, skills, and spirit of the workers*
- **Shoutouts:** *co-workers and company leaders who made it a joy and haven to be part of a team*
- **Amazing Moments:** *exceptional situations I experienced working in catering*

After thinking up the categories, I happened to read publicity that Netflix’s fourth season of its series ‘The Crown’ would have a feature storyline about Princess Diana. BAM! I was going to write about ‘Princess Diana’s Gowns’!

2) INCLUDE MORE THAN JUST YOUR STORY For ‘Princess Diana’s Gowns’ this was easy because my experience involved an international figure at an elaborate public event. But what if your story is inspired by a situation that happened with a neighbor or friend, a janitor or a doctor? Then list all the details you can remember (*or do research on*) – from clothing to speech habits to weather to what were the big happenings at the time in the news or in your family or peer group.

Recognize how your story happened within a larger network of stories.

3) PUT THE AUDIENCE IN YOUR SHOES How do I tell readers they are in my shoes?: *“I served; I cried; I now understood; I was given instructions; I wasn’t prepared; I could see and feel it; I gasped for air; I knew I had the right....”*

SUPPLEMENTS TO THE LESSONS

How the (11) Storytelling Tips Play Out In 'Princess Diana's Gowns' (cont.)

4) MAKE YOUR STORY CINEMATIC I described behavior I could imagine as a scene on the screen: *"At the Christie's cocktail party I was given explicit instructions that with each tray of hors d'oeuvres I carried I was to get close to Princess Diana to offer it to her. (I was very good at arm spiking the tray straight up in the air and zipping gracefully through a crowd to get to the target.) It wasn't that our event planner thought Princess Diana was famished and would really eat. It was that her client was keeping pace with the Princess and wanted to see trays!"*

5) EMPLOY ELEMENTS OF FICTION WRITING TO BRING YOUR STORY TO LIFE

Non-fiction is about facts. While my story is based on a true situation, I share deeply subjective and interior thoughts about my personal feelings and opinions.

6) TELL THE TRUTH ABOUT WHAT WAS GOING ON WITH YOU I admitted that I assumed Prince Diane was only a celebrity because of her position – and then when I actually met her I was not prepared for the very deep impact she had on me as a human being.

7) CREATE AN EMOTIONAL JOURNEY

I went from not caring at all for Princess Diana to crying when I heard she had died.

8) SHOWCASE YOUR PERSONAL GROWTH My interaction with Princess Diana was a breakthrough moment for me as a working person, who prior to working in high-end catering knew nothing about -- had no contact with -- the world of the wealthy. Initially I had been intimidated. Did not feel fully myself (*or want to be myself*) in their presence. They had stuff / knowledge / connectedness I didn't / couldn't have. That moment of attention from Princess Diana shattered this crippling illusion of 'otherness'. I realized – *in my heart, not just the head* -- that everyone was just people, born into different circumstances – and some handle it well and remember our human connectedness, and some don't. I started to have the power to 'see' the people who I served.

9) GIVE YOUR STORY A BEGINNING, MIDDLE, & END **Beginning** – I know little and care nothing about Princess Diana / **Middle** – I actually meet her and am touched by how she treats me / **End** – I learn of her tragic death and cry, experiencing a sense of loss

Once you are clear on the order of how things happened, you can mix up the timeline to make the story more exciting or mysterious. My story goes from the ending to the beginning

10) GIVE YOUR STORY AN EXCITING OPENING I use a '**scene-setting**' opening -- the most important society event in NYC in (1997)! With a chess game you need an opening that has a strategy. The same is true for a story. Check out these (7) strong openings: <https://io9.gizmodo.com/the-7-types-of-short-story-opening-and-how-to-decide-w-5814687>

11) GIVE YOUR STORY A TITLE I titled the story 'Princess Diana's Gowns' to set the reader up to think it's a story about wealth and possessions. But it's really a story about humanness that transcends wealth and roles.

SUPPLEMENTS TO THE LESSONS

'Alone Is OK If You Are There'

Writer's Responses To (6) Questions About The Story

1) WHAT IS THE PHYSICAL SETTING OF THE STORY? “... *there I was sitting on the curb in open view because there was no place to hide in Alameda's Navy housing. Alameda's Navy housing. California didn't seem to have alleys, laundry rooms, or lines of cars like 1039 E. 80th Street in Chicago, where my family moved from five months before. Here each two-story, blank beige building was fortified by vast stretches of scratchy dried-out yellow grass, no tall tenements (or trees) to cast shade.*”

I include not only a description of my current location but also contrast it with the location my family had recently moved from. From this the reader can guess at my sense of disorientation and feelings of being both trapped and exposed. It's significant that all I (or let's call me the 'character') knows about California is the barren Navy housing; it speaks to the family's lifestyle. We know it's the summertime by the dried-out grass and the character's flip-flops.

2) DESCRIBE THE CHARACTERS The main character (or protagonist) is nine, lonely, depressed (“*I...wanted to disappear*”), lacking self-confidence, and Black, (probably) living as a minority among White people. The brother – the villain (or antagonist) who makes an appearance in the scene – is a lanky, quick-moving teen bully with skinny legs and a dark-eyed-cat-ate-the-care-bear-grin. The third character, Louisa, dominates the protagonist's thoughts but is not seen. We know she has red hair and freckles; was the protagonist's best and only friend; and that she has been pushed to accept the prejudices of her mother.

3) IS THE SLUG A CHARACTER? The slug is part of the setting but *becomes a character to the protagonist* when the protagonist projects human qualities on it. The slug serves the key function of being a target for the protagonist to release feelings towards. When the slug is killed, it becomes a symbol of everything the protagonist has lost and her feelings of helplessness.

4) WHAT IS THE MAIN CHARACTER'S PROBLEM(S)? HOW LONG HAS SHE HAD A PROBLEM(S)? The move five months before to a totally foreign environment with seemingly no help in adjusting has left the protagonist grasping for someone / something to help her feel like she belongs. She has an older brother overshadowing her (probably) since birth.

5) HOW DOES SHE DEAL WITH HER PROBLEM(S)? First she mopes, wanting to disappear. The slug takes her out of that moment by making her curious. Then she becomes angry and wants to fight someone – but that surge of physical energy becomes internalized and she ends up committing to herself that she will fight for her own right to exist.

6) WHAT DOES THE TITLE MEAN? (*'Alone Is OK If You Are There'*) Even if to the world you appear to be alone, if you like yourself you are not alone. ***You Are With Yourself !***

SUPPLEMENTS TO THE LESSONS

SAMPLE STORIES TO INSPIRE FUTURE GAME SESSIONS

“Memory is a complicated thing, a relative to truth, but not it’s twin.”

– Barbara Kingsolver

When I wrote ‘**Alone Is OK If You Are There**’ I was thinking back on a difficult time period in my childhood. I don’t have a photographic memory, not close. I have sketchy impressions of that time, splinters of memories not dated by year. Add to this, a family who won’t talk about a difficult past. **So should I not write about that time period?** Well, I’m definitely not going to try to write an *autobiography*, ‘cause I couldn’t fact-check anything!

But for me writing a memoir is about calling out the artist and the humanist in myself. Reading a memoir can be like sipping tasty wine or eating delicious ice cream; appealing to one’s senses and tasting slightly different on each person’s unique palate. Writing a memoir is getting something out of you that needs / wants to be expressed; making a painting using words instead of colors. To come up with my story I actually combined splintered memories of two situations that **could have** both happened to me in that general time period. All this is to say, when choosing sample stories to inspire players, the number of real-life details in a story (*though great to have*) is not what’s most important.

What’s Most Important Is The Sample Memoir Leaves The Reader:

- 1) **Wanting to hear more of the writer’s thoughts or**
- 2) **Distracted by their own bubbling thoughts the story inspires**

CHOOSING SAMPLE STORIES

Players start each Story Sharing Game session by reading aloud a sample story to get them connected to each other’s thinking processes, and to warm up their critical and expressive abilities before they develop their own mini-bite stories.

OUR WEBSITE’S SAMPLE STORIES

The host site for the Story Sharing Game is www.catering2us.nyc. The site was initially created to host short memoirs by adults before the concept evolved into creating the Story Sharing Game. Check out the featured handful of sample memoirs. Here’s one well-suited for kids: ‘[When We Marched In The Mud](#)’. Each memoir has a short companion essay that discusses the times or topics in the memoir. Instead of a memoir, you can read an essay together and discuss all the topics / themes it makes you think about, then come up with ideas for personal mini-bite stories.

OTHER ONLINE SAMPLE MEMOIRS

If you put ‘sample short memoirs’ in the search bar numerous sites will come up. Below are two such sites to explore for stories. Some memoirs are longer, essay length, combining memories of numerous of situations to paint a broader picture of a time. You can choose to read aloud just one vivid situation from a longer memoir and use that to launch discussion.

<https://www.teenink.com/nonfiction/memoir> (Teen written memoirs)
<https://bookriot.com/short-memoirs/> (Adults writing about growing up)

USE YOUR OWN STORIES

A player’s oral story that is shared in a Game session can be used as a sample story in a future Game session. For this to work, the writer must actually write the story down so it can be copied, then the other players can read it aloud together. The writer can either use the session to inspire their own re-write of the story to improve it, or write an entirely new story inspired by the discussion.

WELL-KNOWN CHILDREN’S STORIES

If the players all love a short, well-known kid’s illustrated book, you can use it as your sample story if together you are able to brainstorm an outline of the story without the book. To do this I recommend you answer the story questions at the bottom of page (3) in **Lesson #3: ‘Play The Game’**. Allocate (15) minutes to come up with the story’s outline. Then discuss what you think the story’s theme is, and use that to launch your ideas for your own personal mini-bite stories.