




MARIA BRYAN
creative



TRAUMA-INFORMED STORYTELLING

A photograph of a butterfly perched on a daisy flower, with a blue overlay and the text "What if your story followed you?".

What if your story followed you?

A small butterfly with orange and black spots is perched on a white daisy flower. The background is a field of similar daisies, all of which are overlaid with a semi-transparent blue filter. The text is centered in the lower half of the image.

Telling a story isn't a moment. It's a legacy.
We must treat it with care.

HI! I'M MARIA BRYAN



Trauma-Informed Storytelling Trainer



15+ years in communications and marketing in the public sector



Journalism BA and Master of Public Admin



Certification in Trauma & Resilience, Trauma-Informed Space Holding, Trauma-Informed Coaching, and Somatic Embodiment & Regulation



My core belief: Storytellers play an incredible role in making the world a healthier, safer, cleaner, and happier place. ***Stories are meaningful.***

TRAUMA-INFORMED STORYTELLING TOOLKIT

- Story Gathering and Distribution Guidelines
- Media Consent Form
- Story Gathering Workflow
- Trauma-Informed Interview Guidelines
- Body Scan Meditation for Storyteller Wellness



SCAN ME



WHAT WE'LL COVER TODAY

- Understanding Trauma and Its Impact
- Why Trauma-Informed Storytelling Matters
- Crafting Stories That Resist Harm and Promote Safety



UNDERSTANDING TRAUMA AND ITS IMPACT

WHAT IS TRAUMA?



Trauma is a **human response** to an event or experience that disrupts, threatens, or harms the safety, security, and stability of an individual, group, or culture.

WHAT ARE THE NERVOUS SYSTEM RESPONSES TO TRAUMA?



NERVOUS SYSTEM RESPONSES TO TRAUMA



FIGHT

confront threat



FLIGHT

run away from threat



FREEZE

shutdown to
block out threat



FAWN

appease the threat

TYPES OF TRAUMA



INDIVIDUAL



COMMUNITY



COLLECTIVE



GENERATIONAL



RETRAUMATIZATION



VICARIOUS

HOW PERVASIVE IS TRAUMA?

At least five of the top ten leading causes of death are associated with A.C.E.s., including:



heart disease



cancer



respiratory
diseases



diabetes



suicide

Other health conditions associated with A.C.E.s include:



asthma



obesity



depressive
disorder



substance
misuse

ANY GOOD NEWS

SCIENTIFIC EVIDENCE NOW
SHOWS THAT THE BRAIN IS
PLASTIC OR CHANGEABLE.
NEUROPLASTICITY GIVES US
HOPE FOR HEALING FROM
TRAUMA.



At all stages of life,
we can ***help the brain heal.***

A vertical decorative strip on the left side of the slide, featuring a close-up of white daisy flowers with yellow centers against a soft, out-of-focus background.

WHY TRAUMA-INFORMED STORYTELLING MATTERS

TRAUMA INFORMED STORYTELLIN G



A storytelling practice that recognizes the prevalence of trauma and strives to promote safety and resist harm during the storytelling process.

A small butterfly with orange and black spots is perched on a daisy flower. The background is a soft-focus field of many similar daisy flowers. The entire image is overlaid with a semi-transparent blue filter.

“Imagine how it would feel if the work you loved compelled you to repeatedly go to your darkest place of pain.”

—Damion Cooper, Project Pneuma Founder

FOLKS IMPACTED BY STORY



Story Owners who bravely share their lived experiences.



Storytellers who bear witness and share stories to a broader audience.



Story Receivers who read, listen, or view our stories.



WHY IT MATTERS

*Trauma-informed storytelling allows for protocols that **promote safety and minimize harm** when a story owner is willing to share their painful lived experiences.*



WHY IT MATTERS

*Trauma-informed storytelling protects us from vicarious trauma so that we can **continue to create space for impactful storytelling.***



WHY IT MATTERS

*Trauma-informed storytelling
**strives to protect our
audiences,** who may have the
same lived experiences as the
painful stories we tell.*



CRAFTING STORIES THAT RESIST HARM



The key to trauma-informed care
is providing **safety** and **agency**.

STORY GATHERING

1

Slow down the story gathering process.

2

Get your team/organization on the same page by developing **Storytelling Guidelines.**

3

Get program staff involved who directly work with clients by creating a **Story Gathering Protocol and Workflow.**

HOW TO KNOW STORY OWNER IS READY

You won't! But partner with program staff and supports to identify:



- **Goals and Outcomes:** Why does the Story Owner want to tell their story, and what do they hope will come of it?
- **Emotional stability:** They are in a stable place emotionally and mentally rather than still actively processing trauma. Time and distance from events is helpful.
- **Support system:** They have a support system to help them through any difficult emotions that may arise.

TRAUMA-INFORMED INTERVIEWS



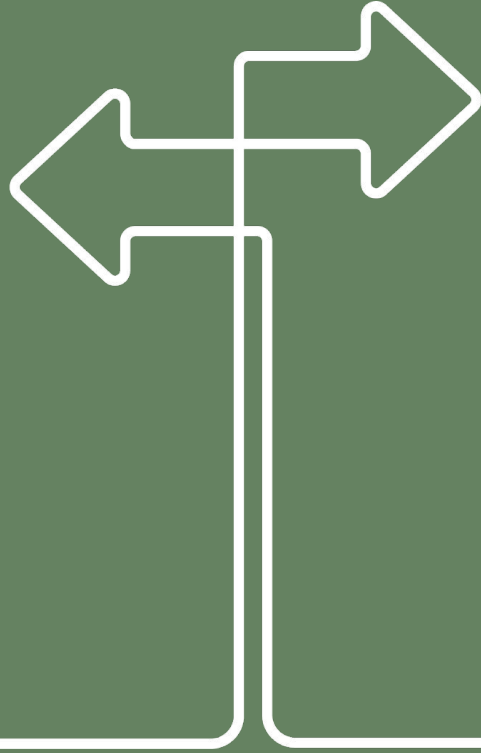
Provide Control & Choice

- **Allow the story owner to choose** the interviewer, location, and who is present.
- Remind them **they can refrain from answering any questions**. Respect those boundaries.
- **Be aware of real and perceived power differentials** and seek to address and balance them.



Intentional Interview Questions

- **Share interview questions** ahead of time for review. Ask **what else they may want to share** with you.
- Begin and end with **positive, casual grounding questions**.
- **When ending an interview, be clear and gentle**. Let them know you're nearing the end, share how much time is left.

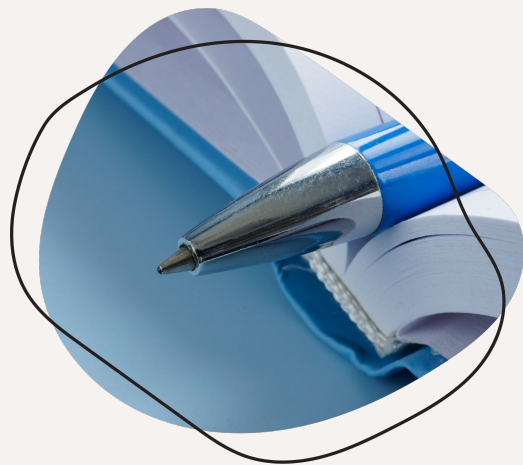


YOU CHOOSE HOW YOU TELL STORIES.

The language, images, audio, and music
you choose *matter*.

You can focus on pain and suffering OR
**acknowledge the pain and focus on
transformation, awe, and hope.**

WRITING ABOUT TRAUMA



Center Compassion and Accuracy

Ask yourself: *Would this feel fair if it were my own story?* If the answer is *no*—even slightly—rework your story.

Honor the Voice of the Story Owner

Use their exact words when quoting, with as little editing as possible—even if it's grammatically incorrect.

Stick to the Facts, Not Sensationalism

Traumatic stories don't need embellishment. Clear, factual storytelling is enough. Handle every detail with care and sensitivity.

Double-Check Everything

Inaccuracies can cause deep distress, even small ones. Always verify correct pronunciation and spelling of names, gender identity, pronouns, quotes, times, and locations.

PROTECTING HIGHLY VULNERABLE STORY OWNERS

Leave out any and all identifying information.

Consider telling composite stories.

Use images that do not show identity: such as hands, silhouettes, or of people facing away from the camera.

Consider using illustrations.



EMERGE LANKA

**Partnering with teens who
are overcoming trauma in
their journey to heal, thrive,
and transform our world.**



Emerge's Model



Programmes for Children in Institutionalised Care

Programmes that support healing and self-sufficiency for children who have experienced trauma, including sexual abuse, and are living in state care



The Emerge Centre for Reintegration

Experiential education and comprehensive reintegration support for survivors aging out of institutional care



Alumni Supports

Scholarships, seed capital, on-call mental health support, reunions, and emergency support for Emerge alumni



Awareness, Advocacy, and Systems Change

Providing training in trauma informed care to government and frontline providers, educating the public, and transforming systems to centre children's well-being

BRAID MISSION: TEAM-BASED MENTORING FOR FOSTER YOUTH



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REMINDERS FOR YOUR JOURNEY



This is a journey,
not a destination.



You are human, and
harm will likely occur
during the storytelling
process. Embrace
grace for yourself.



You may be further
along on this journey
than others. Practice
grace for others.

Q&A



