Working with Stories

Sourcebook

QUESTIONS AND CASES FOR PARTICIPATORY NARRATIVE INQUIRY

Cynthia F. Kurtz

This is a pre-publication manuscript. It has errors in it. Typos, grammatical errors, inconsistencies, imperfect sentences. When (not if) you find these errors, please tell me about them at **cfkurtz@cfkurtz.com**. They like to hide.

The Working with Stories Sourcebook

Questions and Cases

for Participatory Narrative Inquiry

Cynthia F. Kurtz

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Contents

Introduction

This is a book of questions and cases. You can use it to help you plan your Participatory Narrative Inquiry (PNI) projects.

A quick definition of PNI

Participatory Narrative Inquiry is an approach in which groups of people participate in gathering and working with raw stories of personal experience in order to make sense of complex situations for better decision making. PNI focuses on the profound consideration of values, beliefs, feelings, and perspectives through the recounting and interpretation of lived experience.

A PNI project can range from three people talking in a room for an hour to thousands of people talking for a decade. All across this range, PNI is powered by people who gather together through and around their stories.

There are three essential phases in a PNI project.

1. In the collection phase, stories are gathered together.
2. In the sensemaking phase, people work with the stories, comparing them, combining them, talking about them.
3. In the return phase, the stories go back—and the story of the project goes back—into the group, community, or organization.

PNI also has three optional phases, which happen in some but not all projects.

1. In the planning phase, people work out what they will do in the rest of the project. A planning phase may include a nested pilot project.
2. In the catalysis phase, people look for patterns in the stories and other data collected, and they prepare catalytic material to help make sensemaking work even better.
3. In the intervention phase, people work to change the stories they tell.

For more information on PNI and how it works, see the other books in this series.

- *Working with Stories in Your Community or Organization: Participatory Narrative Inquiry* (fourth edition) is the original PNI textbook, whose first edition I published in 2008.
- *Working with Stories Simplified: Participatory Narrative Inquiry in Brief* is a shorter, simpler version of the original textbook.
- *The Working with Stories Miscellany* is a collection of essays and other writings about the theory and practice of PNI.

Who this book is for

It's for people who are using PNI. Whether this is your first PNI project or your hundredth, I hope the questions and cases in this book will help you plan a project that meets your unique needs.

Why I wrote this book

The kinds of questions that work best in PNI projects—questions that invite people to explore their experiences in freedom and safety—are easy to recognize but hard to write. Newcomers to PNI are often frustrated by the difficulty of getting this important task right.

In my coaching practice, I often write "starter" question sets for my clients based on what I know about their project goals and participants. My clients use them as points of departure as they develop their own question sets.

That's what the first part of this book is for. It contains 50 starter question sets you can use in your PNI projects. Probably none of my question sets will work for you exactly as I wrote them, but at least a few of them should get you started in the right direction.

Another task that often frustrates new PNI practitioners is not knowing what to expect as their project unfolds. When I'm coaching people who are getting started with PNI, I often tell stories about projects I have worked on in the past. Hearing what other people have done always seems to help people figure out what they want to do.

So the second part of this book describes fifty real (heavily anonymized) PNI projects that I have worked on in some way (as a researcher, consultant, or coach), plus some stories from other PNI practitioners. Reading these stories will help you see what PNI can do for you. You may also find some ideas you can use and some problems you can avoid.

Image credits

Cover image: Farm laborer being interviewed by FSA home management supervisor for eligibility in the FSA labor program. Utuado, Puerto Rico (vicinity). Photo released April 1941 by Jack Delano (1914–1997).

The question icons (trust, energy, thought) are from the open-source lucide.dev collection.

Part I

Question sets

In PNI projects, facilitators ask three types of questions, in this order:

1. First we ask one or more story-eliciting questions, or as I like to call them, questions whose answers are stories. People respond to these questions by telling stories about their experiences related to the project's topic.

2. After each story has been told, we ask each participant a few to several follow-up questions about the story. The participant responds by reflecting on and interpreting the story. These first two question types usually repeat until each participant has told and interpreted as many stories as they would like to tell.

3. Finally, we ask each participant a few to several questions about themselves. We typically ask about roles, traits, and views as well as basic demographic information.

The first part of this book includes 50 sets of story-eliciting questions, follow-up questions, and questions about participants for a variety of PNI project needs.

If you would like to know why we use these three types of questions in PNI, check out the Story Collection chapter of *Working with Stories* or *Working with Stories Simplified*.

Chapter 2

How to use these question sets

Start by choosing one or two sets of questions that seem the most connected to your project's goals and context. Expand your search to a few more question sets that seem less connected but worth considering. Put together a "dream" set of questions that you would like to ask, then trim it down to what you can *actually* ask given the time, interest, and ability of your project participants. Adapt each question to your project's unique topic, goals, and context. Then test your question set, gather some feedback, and improve it.

By the way, you can find even more ideas for questions to ask in the Collection chapters of *Working with Stories* and *Working with Stories Simplified*.

Using the story-eliciting questions

Some of the story-eliciting questions in this book have icons next to them to indicate conditions in which they work best.

Trust. A question with a handshake icon requires trust. Only ask it if your participants trust you and each other. If they don't, they may see the question as too dangerous to answer.

Energy. A question with a lightning-bolt icon requires participatory energy. Only ask it if your participants are motivated to play a part in the project. If they are apathetic, they might not want to bother answering the question.

Thought. A question with a brain icon is complex and requires concentrated thought. Only ask it if your participants will be willing and able to think deeply about the question. It might be hard for some participants to wrap their heads around it, and they might give up on it.

I added these icons to help you avoid choosing questions that could damage your project. But I don't know anything about your project, so my guesses could be wrong. Don't rely on what I say. Test your questions (see page 11).

Using the follow-up questions

Open-ended and partially-closed questions

Open-ended (free-text) questions give people the opportunity to speak freely. They are most useful when:

- you want to collect few stories (say 50 or fewer)
- your topic is either very broad (so you can't write answer lists) or very deep (so you want to hear every nuance)
- your participants have a lot to say and have not been heard in the past (so you don't want to place any barriers before them)
- in your sensemaking workshops, your participants will work directly with your stories (so they can read your free-text answers)

Partially closed questions combine fixed choices with opportunities to speak freely by offering non-response answers (like "I don't know") and write-in "other" answers. They are most useful when:

- you want to collect a large number of stories
- your topic is focused on a well-defined topic for which answer lists can easily be written
- your participants have little to say and/or no great need to be heard
- you want to use catalytic material in your sensemaking, so you need answers you can count and graph

Some of the questions in this book are open-ended. Some are partially closed. I have guessed which types of questions will work best in each context. You may need to convert some of my open-ended questions to partially closed ones, or vice versa.

I have also made some guesses as to which non-response answers might work best for each question. But again, you might need to change what I wrote. These are some options.

To express uncertainty	To express reluctance	To express irrelevance
I don't know	I'd rather not say	The question does not apply to this story
I'm not sure	That's private	
I don't understand the question	It's complicated	The question does not make sense in this context
I'm confused	I don't want to tell you	I don't see how this is relevant

Choice and scale questions

When we ask partially closed questions in PNI, to make sure that participation is available, inviting, and respectful to each participant, we frame our questions using two simple question types that we can expect to be comfortable and familiar to every human being.

1. Choice questions: What color was the fish?

2. Scale questions: How big was the fish?

This book contains only choice and scale questions. You can use other types of questions in PNI, but you cannot use questions that come across as strange, intimidating, disqualifying, or constraining (and still call what you are doing PNI).

Choice questions

Fish-color questions offer lists of options, like this:

The fish was:

red

blue

I don't know

Other _____

Or this:

Who do you think most needs to hear this story?

[a list of roles or positions, like "Our congressperson"]

[a list of groups, like "Teachers"]

[a list of people in situations, like "People who are thinking about moving here"]

[a list of people in relationships, like "People who care for people with this disability"]

[a list of people with feelings, like "People who feel angry about this"]

[a list of people with opinions, like "People who think this"]

I don't know

I'd rather not say

Other _____

When you see bracketed list descriptions like these, you will need to fill these in with answers that pertain to the specific context of your project. When there are multiple list types, such as here with roles, groups, and so on, you don't have to use all of the options. Just choose the ones that work for you.

If you expect apathy, list no more than five answers. Otherwise list no more than eight. If the question is a multi-choice one, ask people to choose at most two or three answers.

Scale questions

Fish-size questions set up a range of answers between two extremes, like this:

How big was the fish?

    Tiny ⟵————————⟶ Enormous

    I don't know

Or this:

How much energy do you see in this story, in total, positive and/or negative?

    Barely any ⟵—————⟶ An overwhelming amount

    I don't know

You can ask scale questions in a few different ways.

- Ask people to choose a label: a word or phrase (very bad, bad, neither good nor bad, good, very good) or a number (on a scale from 0 to 10, how good?).
- Ask people to make a mark or move an object (physically or virtually) on a scale between two extremes (any point between very bad and very good).
- Ask people to move their bodies, either their fingers (point somewhere on this line between very good and very bad), their hands (put your hands together for very good; put your hands as far apart as they will go for very bad) or their whole selves (move over here for very good, move over there for very bad).

Write-in options for scale questions. In an interview, you can give people a write-in "other" answer for every scale question you ask. You can show them the scale, and if they say "I can't answer in that way," you can say, "Would you like to answer in a different way?"

In a survey, this is more difficult. You might think you could simply include a write-in "other" box after each scale. In practice, however, that tends to confuse people. I've seen people mix up write-in boxes under scales, for example answering question 4 in the box provided for question 3. Tangles like that can be hard to tease apart.

So what I do is place a non-response checkbox under (and *very* close to) each scale (as above), then ask a single catch-all question at the end of my follow-up questions, like this:

    Is there anything else you [would like, feel a need, have] to [say, tell me or us, explain] about this story, or about your answers to any of these questions?

However, if a particular scale question is very important to your project, you can follow it up with an open-ended box labeled "Or would you like to answer the question in a different way?" Just don't do this on a *series* of scale questions. People will mix them up.

Two follow-up questions that can be asked in multiple ways

You can rephrase all of the questions in this book to suit your needs, of course, but two questions in particular require some attention to context in even their most basic forms.

Value: Was what happened a good or bad thing?

This question helps people express their feelings about the stories they tell. Different people in different contexts respond better to different versions of the question.

If your participants will be	Use this version of the question
Willing and able to talk about their emotions	How do you feel about that story? happy sad angry pleased energized indifferent hopeful hopeless I'm not sure Other _____ Adapt these emotions to suit your project's goals and participants. List no more than eight. Putting emotions in pairs helps people skim them more quickly.
Busy or apathetic	How well would you say the story turned out? Horribly ⟷ Perfectly I'm not sure Another phrasing is, "From your perspective, how well did this story turn out?"
Reluctant to talk about (or disdainful of) emotions	How would you rate the emotional tone of this story? Very negative ⟷ Very positive I'm not sure

Importance: Was what happened important to you?

This question distinguishes sacred (essential) from everyday (trivial) stories. It can be tricky in some contexts. Consider these options.

If people will be telling stories about	Use this version of the question
A non-sensitive topic	How important is this story to [you, your life, your work, your family]? It's trivial ⟵⟶ It is very important to me I'm not sure
A moderately sensitive topic	How long do you think you will remember this story? For a few minutes ⟵⟶ For the rest of my life I don't know
A traumatic topic	Don't ask. It will be insulting. Trauma is always important.

Some extra questions for the exploration of uncertainty

If you collect your stories in interviews, you will sometimes hear a person say "I don't know" in a way that means they would *like* to say more but are not sure if they can (or should). You will feel something hanging in the air, waiting to be said.

In moments like this I tend to ask some additional questions that help people explore the contours of their uncertainty. For example, I might ask:

- Why did you say "I don't know"?
- What does it mean to you that you don't know?
- What would you like to know?
- Do you think you could find out? How?
- If you did know, how would things be different?
- What would you know in an ideal world?
- Is there anyone who *does* know? If so:
    - How and why do they know?
    - How do you think they would answer the question? How do you feel about that?
    - Are there things *you* know that they don't? Why?
- Is there anyone who *thinks* they know, but actually doesn't? How would *they* answer the question? How do you feel about that?

Because these questions are so context-specific, I have not included them in the rest of this book. But you might want to keep them in your pocket.

You might also want to include one of these questions after a question that you think people will be especially likely to answer by saying "I don't know."

Using the questions about participants

In addition to the questions listed here, you will probably want to add some questions that are specific to the context of your project. For example, you can ask about:

- Opinions about the community or organization:
  - How good of a job do you think ___ [is/are] doing with ___?
  - What do you think ___ will be like in [10, 20, 50] years? Why?
  - Do you think ___ [is/are] more like ___, or more like ___?
- Roles and group memberships:
  - What is your position at ___?
  - How often do you visit ___?
  - How long have you ___?
- Demographics:
  - Which of these age ranges do you fall into?
  - Do you rent or own your home?
  - Do you live in a city, suburb, town, or village?

Test your question set

No matter what question set you choose or how you adapt it, you must test it before you can use it to gather stories in earnest.

Test your set on	Like this
Yourself	Try to answer each of your story-eliciting questions without telling a story. If you *can* answer the question without telling a story, improve the question. Then tell a story—yes, to yourself. Then answer your questions about it. If a question feels strange, out of order, rude, or confusing, fix it.
A trusted friend, family member, or colleague	Don't tell them what the questions are for (other than a vague "I'm working on this thing; could you look at it?"). In written or spoken form, put your questions in front of them. Then watch them like a hawk. Look for signs of confusion, irritation, offense, contempt, boredom, interest, curiosity, and gratitude.
A few of your actual project participants	Watch them even more closely than you watched your first test subject.

Chapter 3

Community and Organizational Health

These question sets might be useful for projects focused on how well a community, group, or organization is working for its citizens, members, or employees.

1. To explore unmet needs

Story-eliciting questions

Can you remember a moment [in or during a time period] when you felt that your needs [in general or for a specific thing] were met or unmet? What happened at that moment?

Can you recall a time when you felt [satisfied or frustrated, pleased or disappointed, supported or unsupported] about [the topic]? Could you tell [me/us] what happened at that time?

Looking back over [a time period; your time, work, or life with or in this group, community, or organization; your experiences with the topic], can you recall a moment when a wish came true or a dream was dashed to pieces?

In your [days, weeks, months] of [handling, dealing with, doing] [the topic], did you ever experience (or see) a need that was either met or unmet? What happened that you remember?

When you think about [the topic], can you remember a time when someone needed something, and someone else thought they only wanted it? What happened as a result?

Have you ever had an experience with [the topic] that you wish you could tell [someone, or a specific person or group] but feel you can't because [you might seem, it might be, people might think you are] [weak, pathetic, needy, ungrateful, whiny, immature, irresponsible]? Would you like to tell [me/us] about that experience?

Did you ever think to yourself [about the topic], "If this had happened (or not), things would be a lot worse (or better)"?

Is there any other experience related to [the topic] that you would you like to tell [me/us] about? What happened that mattered to you?

Follow-up questions

How do you feel about that story?

> See page 9 for three ways to ask this question.

How important is this story to you?

> See page 9 for three ways to ask this question.

Choose a person who [wanted or needed] something in the story. Who did you choose?

> [a list of identities, like "a citizen"]
>
> [a list of relationships, like "a neighbor"]
>
> [a list of positions, like "a manager"]
>
> [a list of people with feelings, like "a person who is disappointed"]
>
> [a list of people in situations, like "a person who just got a traffic ticket"]
>
> Other _____

What did that person [want or need] in the story?

> [a list of needs, like help, support, information, to be understood, to understand, freedom, respect, trust]
>
> Other _____

To what extent did they get what they [wanted or needed]?

> They got everything they needed ⟵——————⟶ They got nothing at all
>
> I don't know

Who or what helped them get what they [wanted or needed]?

> their [trait, like "determination"]
>
> their [person in a relationship, like "friend"]
>
> their [group, like "work team"]
>
> their [helper, like "counselor"]
>
> [a list of resources, like "our web site"]
>
> [a list of rules, laws, or policies, like "traffic laws"]
>
> I don't know
>
> Other _____

Who or what stood in their way?

> their [limitation, like "anxiety"]

their [person in a relationship, like "friend"]

their [group, like "work team"]

their [helper, like "counselor"]

[a list of rules, laws, or policies, like "traffic laws"]

I don't know

I'd rather not say

Other _____

What in this story surprised you? What didn't surprise you?

[free text]

Where in the story do you see [hope, gratitude, joy, optimism, confidence]? Where you do see [hopelessness, disappointment, sadness, pain, fear]?

[free text]

If you could go back in time to the start of this story, what would you say or do to help it turn out differently? What would you avoid changing?

[free text]

Is there anything else you [would like, feel a need, have] to [say, tell me or us, explain] about this story, or about your answers to any of these questions?

[free text]

Questions about participants

In general, in [your work, life, family, community], what would you say you [want or need] most?

[the same list as in the follow-up question]

Other _____

To what extent would you say that your needs are met, in general?

Completely ⟵——————————⟶ Not at all

I'm not sure

Who or what helps you most in meeting your needs?

[the same list as in the follow-up question, but with "my" instead of "their"]

I'm not sure

Other _____

Who or what prevents your needs from being met?

[the same list as in the follow-up question, but with "my" instead of "their"]

I'm not sure

I'd rather not say

Other _____

2. To draw out energy for positive change

Story-eliciting questions

If you look back over [a time period], can you think of a time when something happened that you wish would happen more—or less—often in the future?

Did you ever feel a rush (or a loss) of hope with relation to [the topic]? What happened that caused it, and what happened afterwards?

Think back over your experiences with [the topic]. Can you recall a time when you felt [hopeful or hopeless, optimistic or pessimistic, eager or reluctant]? Could you tell [me/us] about that time?

Did you ever wake up and think, "I can't wait—or I don't want—to get started [doing something] today"? What happened that made you feel that way?

Did you ever see somebody do something and think, "If we all did that, things would change a lot"? What did they do, and how did it play out?

Looking forward [a number of] years into the future, what would you like [the topic] to be like? Is there a time in the past that was like that? What happened in that moment?

Is there any other experience related to [the topic] that you would you like to tell [me/us] about? What happened that mattered to you?

Follow-up questions

How do you feel about that story?

   See page 9 for three ways to ask this question.

How important is this story to you?

   See page 9 for three ways to ask this question.

Where do you see energy in this story, positive and/or negative? Could you describe it?

   [free text]

How much energy do you see in the story, in total, positive and/or negative?

   Barely any ⟵————————⟶ An overwhelming amount

   I don't know

Where did the energy come from?

[free text]

How did the energy in the story shape what happened?

[free text]

Where in the story do you see [hope, gratitude, joy, optimism, confidence]? Where you do see [hopelessness, disappointment, sadness, pain, fear]?

[free text]

If the story ended well, which of these things do you think would make it happen more often? If it ended badly, which things do you think would make it happen less often?

[a list of supportive things, like "more money"]

I don't know

Other _____

Did any of these things stand in the way of the story ending better?

[a list of opposing things, like "ignorance"]

I don't know

I'd rather not say

Other _____

Why do you think someone would want to [read, hear] this story?

[a list of reasons, like "to find new hope"]

I don't know

Other _____

Is there anything else you [would like, feel a need, have] to [say, tell me or us, explain] about this story, or about your answers to any of these questions?

[free text]

Questions about participants

In general, which of these things do you think has the greatest potential to turn things around with respect to [the topic]?

[the same list as in the follow-up question "If this story ended well"]

I don't know

Other _____

What do you think stands in the way of things turning around?

> [the same list as in the follow-up question "Did any of these things stand in the way"]
>
> I don't know
>
> Other _____

What do you think should be done about [the topic]?

> [a list of collective actions, like "educate people"]
>
> I don't know
>
> Other _____

What would you yourself be willing to do to make those things happen?

> [a list of individual actions, like "volunteer"]
>
> I don't know
>
> I'd rather not say
>
> Other _____

3. To make sense of an ongoing conflict

Story-eliciting questions

What happened the last time a crisis—or the resolution of a crisis—related to [the topic] came up?

Was there ever a time when you felt like your experience with [the topic] was getting better or worse? What happened that made you feel that way?

Can you recall a time when you came to see [the topic] differently than you had before? What happened that changed your point of view?

When you think of [the topic], can you recall a moment when you saw a dark tunnel ahead—or a light at the end of the tunnel? What happened in that moment?

Did you ever experience a revelation about [the topic], a time when you suddenly saw something you had never seen before? Could you tell [me/us] what happened?

Did you ever realize that you were wrong about [the topic]? How did the realization come about, and what happened afterwards?

Did you ever see something happen and think to yourself, "This is just the sort of thing that fuels this conflict"—or, "This might help us find a way forward"? What happened that made you think that?

Is there any other experience related to [the topic] that you would you like to tell [me/us] about? What happened that mattered to you?

Follow-up questions

How do you feel about that story?

> See page 9 for three ways to ask this question.

How important is this story to you?

> See page 9 for three ways to ask this question.

How long ago did the events of this story take place?

> [some number of weeks, months, or years) ago ⟵——————⟶ Today

> I don't know

Based on your experience, would you say that [the events, the situation, the outcome, the emotions] in this story [is/are] common or rare in [this group, organization, community]?

> This happens to everyone every day ⟵——————⟶ This rarely happens to anyone

> I don't know

What in this story surprised you? What didn't surprise you?

> [free text]

Where in the story do you see [hope, gratitude, joy, optimism, confidence]? Where you do see [hopelessness, disappointment, sadness, pain, fear]?

> [free text]

Who do you think most needs to hear this story?

> [a list of roles or positions, like "Our congressperson"]

> [a list of groups, like "Teachers"]

> [a list of people in situations, like "People who are thinking about moving here"]

> [a list of people in relationships, like "People who care for people with this disability"]

> [a list of people with feelings, like "People who feel angry about this"]

> [a list of people with opinions, like "People who think this"]

> I don't know

> I'd rather not say

> Other _____

How do you think the people who most need to hear the story would [feel about it, describe its emotional tone, say it turned out]?

> [a list of emotions, a scale, or free text—the same way you asked the question about the story]

Why do you think they would answer the question in that way?

   [a list of reasons, like "they don't know what it's like"]

   I don't know

   I'd rather not say

   Other _____

If you told the story to those people, how would you tell it?

   [free text]

How do you think they would respond?

   [free text]

What do you think would happen as a result?

   [free text]

Is there anything else you [would like, feel a need, have] to [say, tell me or us, explain] about this story, or about your answers to any of these questions?

   [free text]

Questions about participants

What is your position on [the topic]?

   I totally support it ⟵——————————⟶ I oppose it completely

   I don't know

Is there anything you would like to add about your position on [the topic]?

   [free text]

Why do you think people disagree about [the topic]?

   [a list of reasons, like "they don't understand each other"]

   I don't know

   I'd rather not say

   Other _____

What do you think would help to resolve the conflict?

   [a list of collective actions, like "bringing people together"]

   I don't know

   I'd rather not say

   Other _____

4. To surface concerns, anxieties, and fears

Story-eliciting questions

Can you remember a time when the intensity of your feelings about [the topic] was especially high or low? What happened in that moment?

What was the high or low point of your experience with [the topic]? Could you tell [me/us] what happened in that moment?

What's something that happened to you related to [the topic] that you think about often? Could you tell [me/us] about it?

When was the last time you felt [hope, excitement, optimism, trust, reassurance] or [hopelessness, indifference, pessimism, a lack of trust, despair] about the future with respect to [the topic]? What happened that made you feel that way?

When you think about [the topic], is there a particular moment you keep going back to, something you worry will happen again—or will never happen again? What happened in that moment?

With respect to [the topic], when was the last time something happened that made you think, "Oh no, here it comes again." Or, "Yes, good, it's back!" What was "it," and what happened that made you think that?

Is there any other experience related to [the topic] that you would you like to tell [me/us] about? What happened that mattered to you?

Follow-up questions

For a wide-ranging goal such as this one, I would use only free-text questions about the story, to help people feel free to express every emotion they feel. You can cluster the answers into categories by reading the answers.

How do you feel about that story?

> [free text]

Why do you think you chose this particular experience to tell [me/us] about?

> It says a lot to me about [the topic]
>
> It seemed like the right answer to your question
>
> I remember it well
>
> I learned a lot from it
>
> It's a good memory
>
> I thought you would like it
>
> People need to hear it
>
> It's funny
>
> I don't know

I'd rather not say

Other _____

Where in the story do you see [hope, gratitude, joy, optimism, confidence]? Where you do see [hopelessness, disappointment, sadness, pain, fear]?

[free text]

If you could go back in time to the start of this story, what would you say or do to help it turn out differently? What would you avoid changing?

[free text]

Why do you think someone would want to [read, hear] this story?

[a list of reasons, like "to find new hope"]

I don't know

Other _____

What does this story say to you about the future of [the topic]?

[free text]

If every person mentioned in this story told it from their own perspective, as they saw it happen, how do you think they would tell it?

[free text]

Is there anything else you [would like, feel a need, have] to [say, tell me or us, explain] about this story, or about your answers to any of these questions?

[free text]

Looking back over the story you just told, is there a moment within it that you have different (or mixed) feelings about? If so, could you tell [me/us] happened in *that* moment?

[free text]

Repeat the same follow-up questions about the second story. In this way you can draw out negative stories without asking people to tell only negative stories. To use this option, ask half as many follow-up questions per story as you normally would.

Questions about participants

When you think about the future of [the topic], which of these things do you think are most likely to happen?

[a list of possibilities, like "the economy will get better (or worse)"]

I don't know

Why do you think those things are the most likely things to happen?

> [free text]

Are you a worrier, in general? Do people say that about you?

> I worry a lot $\longleftrightarrow$ I never worry
>
> I don't know

When you think about [the topic], what gives you hope?

> [a list of hopeful things, like "we support each other"]
>
> I'm not sure
>
> Other _____

What gives you concern?

> [a list of concerning things, like "ignorance about what [the topic] is like"]
>
> I don't know
>
> Other _____

5. To bring out rumors and things "they say"

Story-eliciting questions

Can you recall an experience you've had with [the topic]—or an experience you've heard about from someone else—that most people would be surprised to hear?

Can you recall an experience you heard about—one that didn't happen to you personally—that had a big impact on your feelings about [the topic]? What happened, and how did hearing about it affect you?

Did you ever hear a rumor about something related to [the topic] that happened that surprised you? What happened, how did you hear about it, and what about it surprised you?

Have you heard about anything that happened related to [the topic] [lately, in the past number of days, weeks, months, years], something that has been [making the rounds, circulating, being passed around, working its way through the grapevine, or some other local description of how rumors circulate]? Could you tell [me/us] about it?

Did you ever hear a rumor about [the topic] that felt [empowering, exciting, transformative, uplifting, hopeful] or [disempowering, draining, disruptive, undermining, hopeless] to you? What did people say about what happened that mattered to you?

Did anyone ever tell you about something that happened to them, and you thought, "Oh, so *that's* what's going on with [the topic]"? What happened to them?

Is there any other experience related to [the topic] that you would you like to tell [me/us] about? What happened that mattered to you?

Follow-up questions

How do you feel about that story?

> See page 9 for three ways to ask this question.

How important is this story to you?

> See page 9 for three ways to ask this question.

Where did this story come from?

> it happened to me
>
> it happened to someone I know
>
> I heard about it
>
> everybody knows it
>
> I'm not sure
>
> I'd rather not say
>
> Other _____

How long ago did the events of this story take place?

> [some number of weeks, months, or years) ago ⟷ Today
>
> I don't know

Based on your experience, would you say that [the events, the situation, the outcome, the emotions] in this story [is/are] common or rare in [this group, organization, community]?

> This happens to everyone every day ⟷ This rarely happens to anyone
>
> I don't know

How factually accurate do you judge this story to be?

> It's a fact ⟷ It's entirely fictional
>
> I don't know

What does this story say to you about [the topic]?

> [a list of messages, like "this is a bigger problem than people think"]
>
> I don't know
>
> I'd rather not say
>
> Other _____

Who do you think most needs to hear this story?

> [a list of roles or positions, like "Our congressperson"]
>
> [a list of groups, like "Teachers"]

[a list of people in situations, like "People who are thinking about moving here"]

[a list of people in relationships, like "People who care for people with this disability"]

[a list of people with feelings, like "People who feel angry about this"]

[a list of people with opinions, like "People who think this"]

I don't know

I'd rather not say

Other _____

If you told the story to those people, how would you tell it?

[free text]

How do you think they would respond??

[free text]

What do you think would happen if this story was widely known?

[a list of outcomes, like "more people would understand"]
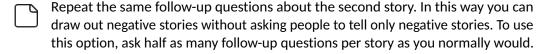
it is already widely known

I'm not sure

Other _____

Is there anything else you [would like, feel a need, have] to [say, tell me or us, explain] about this story, or about your answers to any of these questions?

[free text]

Questions about participants

What is your role in [the community, organization]?

[a list of roles]

How long have you been [in, associated with] [the community, organization]?

[a list of time periods]

How much of a say do you have in [the community, organization]?

None at all $\longleftrightarrow$ As much as I want to have

I'm not sure

How many people do you know in [the community, organization]?

Nobody $\longleftrightarrow$ Everyone

I'm not sure

What is your general feeling about rumors?

> They are dangerous
>
> Some of them are mildly interesting
>
> They are essential to understanding what is really going on
>
> I don't know
>
> I'd rather not say
>
> Other _____

6. To give voice to the voiceless

Story-eliciting questions

If [a group, person, or role] could step into your shoes and see what your experiences have been like, what day would you choose to show them? What happened on that day?

What's something that happened to you that [a group, person, or role, or just "most people"] don't know about? Could you tell [me/us] about it?

Looking back over your experiences with [the topic], when have you felt the most heard or unheard? What happened that made you feel that way?

Did anything ever happen to you that [a group, person, or role, or just "most people"] would be surprised to hear about? What was it that happened?

What is something people think they know about you—or people like you, in some way—that is wrong? Can you remember an experience that proves how wrong people are to think that? What happened in that experience?

Think about [a group, person, or role]. Think about what they know and don't know about you. Now think of an experience that they would never ask you about but that you would like them to know about. What happened to you during that experience?

Is there any other experience related to [the topic] that you would you like to tell [me/us] about? What happened that mattered to you?

Follow-up questions

How do you feel about that story?

> See page 9 for three ways to ask this question.

How important is this story to you?

> See page 9 for three ways to ask this question.

Based on your experience, would you say that [the events, the situation, the outcome, the emotions] in this story [is/are] common or rare in [this group, organization, community]?

> This happens to everyone every day ⟵————————⟶ This rarely happens to anyone

I don't know

If you could go back in time to the start of this story, what would you say or do to help it turn out differently? What would you avoid changing?

[free text]

Who do you wish could hear this story?

[a list of roles or positions, like "Our congressperson"]

[a list of groups, like "Teachers"]

[a list of people in situations, like "People who are thinking about moving here"]

[a list of people in relationships, like "People who care for people with this disability"]

[a list of people with feelings, like "People who feel angry about this"]

[a list of people with opinions, like "People who think this"]

I don't know

I'd rather not say

Other _____

If you told the story to those people, how would you tell it?

[free text]

How do you think they would respond?

[free text]

What do you think would surprise them about the story?

[free text]

What do you think would change after they heard the story?

[a list of possibilities, like "people would stop thinking this"]

Nothing would change

I don't know

I'd rather not say

Other _____

Where in the story do you see [hope, gratitude, joy, optimism, confidence]? Where you do see [hopelessness, disappointment, sadness, pain, fear]?

[free text]

Is there anything else you [would like, feel a need, have] to [say, tell me or us, explain] about this story, or about your answers to any of these questions?

[free text]

Questions about participants

To what extent do you feel heard in your life?

Not at all ⟵——————⟶ As much as I want to be

I'm not sure

Who or what helps you feel heard?

my own [list of qualities, like "perseverance"]

my [list of relationships, like "parents"]

my [list of groups, like "friends"]

[a list of roles or positions, like "the fact that I am a business owner"]

[a list of qualifications, like "my degree"]

[a list of behaviors, like "caring"]

[a list of assumptions, like "everyone thinks I know what I'm doing"]

I don't know

Other _____

Who or what causes you to feel unheard?

my own [list of issues, like "fear"]

my [list of relationships, like "parents"]

my [list of groups, like "friends"]

[a list of lacking roles or positions, like "the fact that I'm not in the council"]

[a list of lacking qualifications, like "my lack of a degree"]

[a list of behaviors, like "greed"]

[a list of assumptions, like "nobody thinks I know what I'm doing"]

I don't know

Other _____

Is there a particular time or context in which you have often felt heard or unheard?

[free text]

What do you think would help you to be better heard?

[free text]

7. To bring a community or organization together

Story-eliciting questions

Were you ever surprised to find out that you had something in common—or not in common—with someone in [the community or organization]? What was it, how did you find out about it, and what happened as a result?

When you look back over your time [in, at] [the community or organization], can you remember a time when you felt especially at home—or not at home [here/there]? What happened that made you feel that way?

What was the best or worst interaction you ever had with anyone in [the community or organization]? Could you tell [me/us] what happened in the interaction?

Has anything ever happened to you in [the community or organization] that made you feel [drawn in, included, welcomed, a part of things, supported] or [pushed out, excluded, unwelcome, on the outside, abandoned]? Could you tell [me/us] about that experience?

Did anything ever happen to you in [the community or organization] that made you think, "We are all in this together"? Or did anything ever happen that made you feel alone [here/there]? Either way, what happened?

Is there any other experience related to [the topic] that you would you like to tell [me/us] about? What happened that mattered to you?

Follow-up questions

How do you feel about that story?

> See page 9 for three ways to ask this question.

How important is this story to you?

> See page 9 for three ways to ask this question.

Based on your experience, would you say that [the events, the situation, the outcome, the emotions] in this story [is/are] common or rare in [this group, organization, community]?

> This happens to everyone every day ⟵——————⟶ This rarely happens to anyone
>
> I don't know

If this story was told to the children of our community, would you tell it more as a good example of how to live together, or as a cautionary tale? Or maybe as a mixture of both?

> Cautionary tale ⟵——————⟶ Good example
>
> I don't know

Does this story tell you more about [this/our] [community's or organization's] past or future?

   It tells me about the past I miss

   It tells me about the past I'm glad is gone

   It tells me about the future I hope to see

   It tells me about the future I dread will come

   It's not about the past or the future, it's just the way things are right now

   I don't know

   Other _____

What do you wish had happened in the story?

   [a list of events, like "I got the help I needed"]

   [a list of changes, like "This stopped happening"]

   [a list of reactions, like "They finally saw what I needed"]

   [a list of outcomes, like "We found a solution that worked for everyone"]

   It happened just as I would wish

   I don't know

   I'd rather not say

   Other _____

If what you wish had happened, how would that change [the community or organization]? How would it be different?

   [free text]

Which of these community assets—present or lacking—were important in the story? (Note: You can include existing assets as well as assets the community or organization does not presently have but could.)

   [a list of physical assets, like "fertile farmland"]

   [a list of intellectual assets, like "wise council members"]

   [a list of behavioral norms, like "helping each other through hard times"]

   [a list of official rules or agreements, like "a strong town charter"]

   [a list of cultural institutions, like "a good library"]

   I don't know

   I'd rather not say

   Other _____

How long ago did the events of this story take place?

[some number of weeks, months, or years) ago ←——————→ Today

I don't know

Is there anything else you [would like, feel a need, have] to [say, tell me or us, explain] about this story, or about your answers to any of these questions?

[free text]

Questions about participants

What is your role in this community?

[a list of roles, like "citizen"]

I'd rather not say

Other _____

Which of these groups do you belong to within the community?

[a list of groups, like "my grandparents were born here"]

I'd rather not say

Other _____

How long have you been a part of this community?

My whole life ←——————→ Just a few months

I'm not sure

How involved would you say you are in this community?

Barely ←——————→ Completely

I'm not sure

8. To respect all voices

Story-eliciting questions

Have you ever had a "you don't know me" experience, one that contradicted an assumption someone made about [people like you]? Could you tell [me/us] about it?

Did anyone ever underestimate you in any way—or overestimate you? What happened when they did?

When you look back on your experiences with [the topic] and think about the word "respect," what experience comes to mind? Could you tell [me/us] what happened in that experience?

Did you ever see something happen to someone and think to yourself, "If that happened to *me*, I would finally get the respect I deserve"? Or, did you ever think, "If that happened to *me*, I would lose the respect I cherish"? What did you see happen?

What's something that has happened to you that you wish you could tell more people about—but feel you can't, for any reason? Could you tell [me/us] what happened?

Have you ever realized that your assumption about another person was wrong? What did you assume, how did you find out you were wrong, and what happened as a result?

Is there any other experience related to [the topic] that you would you like to tell [me/us] about? What happened that mattered to you?

Follow-up questions

How do you feel about that story?

> See page 9 for three ways to ask this question.

How important is this story to you?

> See page 9 for three ways to ask this question.

What do you wish had happened in the story?

> [a list of events, like "I got the help I needed"]
>
> [a list of changes, like "This stopped happening"]
>
> [a list of reactions, like "They finally saw what I needed"]
>
> [a list of outcomes, like "We found a solution that worked for everyone"]
>
> It happened just as I would wish
>
> I don't know
>
> I'd rather not say
>
> Other _____

How do you think [a person, role, or group] would feel about this story?

> [a list of reactions, like "they would be happy to hear it"]
>
> I don't know
>
> I'd rather not say
>
> Other _____

If the roles in the story had been reversed (whatever that means to you), what do you think would have happened?

> [free text]

How do you think you would feel about that second story, the one with the reversed roles?

> [a list of emotions, a scale, or free text—the same way you asked the question about the story]

I don't know

I'd rather not say

Other _____

How do you think [the same person, role, or group as above] would feel about the second story?

[a list of reactions, like "they would be happy to hear it"]

I don't know

I'd rather not say

Other _____

Is there anything else you [would like, feel a need, have] to [say, tell me or us, explain] about this story, or about your answers to any of these questions?

[free text]

Questions about participants

Which of these groups do you belong to within the community?

[a list of groups, like "seniors"]

I'd rather not say

Other _____

How respected do you feel in this community?

Perfectly ⟵—————————⟶ Not at all

I don't know

Is there anything you would like to say about how respected you feel?

[free text]

Is there anyone you know (who isn't you) who seems to feel perfectly respected [here, in this community or organization]?

[a list of roles, like "managers"]

[a list of relationships, like "my mother"]

[a list of groups, like "homeowners"]

I don't know

I'd rather not say

Other _____

Why do you think those people feel respected?

[a list of reasons, like "they have money"]

I don't know

I'd rather not say

Other _____

9. To help people understand the experiences of other people

Story-eliciting questions

When was the last time you felt truly seen—or completely invisible—with respect to [the topic]? What happened that made you feel that way?

What's something that happened to you related to [the topic] that would surprise most people?

When you think about what [the topic] is really like, what experience springs to mind for you? Could you tell [me/us] what happened in that experience?

Have you ever had an experience related to [the topic] that you wanted to tell [someone, people in this community, a particular person, role, or group] about but didn't, because you didn't feel like you [should, could, would be heard, were allowed to]? Could you tell [me/us] about that experience?

Think of an experience you've had related to [the topic] that is both important [to you] and unknown [to your group, team, family, community, organization]. What happened in that experience, and why do you think people don't know about it?

What one moment from the past is so important to understanding [the topic] in [your life, our group, community] that anyone who can truly say they understand [the topic] in [your life, our group, community] already knows about it? What happened in that moment?

With a motivated group you could use these two questions together:

1. If there was a documentary that showed *what truly matters* about [the topic] in [your life, our group, community], what day would that documentary be about? What happened on that day?

2. If there was a documentary that showed *what people usually think matters* about [the topic] in [your life, our group, community], what day would that documentary be about? What happened on that day?

Is there any other experience related to [the topic] that you would you like to tell [me/us] about? What happened that mattered to you?

Follow-up questions

How do you feel about that story?

How important is this story to you?

> See page 9 for three ways to ask this question.

Why do you think you chose this particular experience to tell [me/us] about?

> It says a lot to me about [the topic]
>
> It seemed like the right answer to your question
>
> I remember it well
>
> I learned a lot from it
>
> It's a good memory
>
> I thought you would like it
>
> People need to hear it
>
> It's funny
>
> I don't know
>
> I'd rather not say
>
> Other _____

What does the story say to you about what [the topic] in [your life, our group, community] is really like?

> [free text]

If you could go back in time to the start of this story, what would you say or do to help it turn out differently? What would you avoid changing?

> [free text]

Who do you wish could hear this story?

> [a list of roles or positions, like "Our congressperson"]
>
> [a list of groups, like "Teachers"]
>
> [a list of people in situations, like "People who are thinking about moving here"]
>
> [a list of people in relationships, like "People who care for people with this disability"]
>
> [a list of people with feelings, like "People who feel angry about this"]
>
> [a list of people with opinions, like "People who think this"]
>
> I don't know
>
> I'd rather not say
>
> Other _____

Why haven't they heard stories like it before?

> [a list of reasons, like "people stay in their bubbles"]

They have heard stories like it before

I don't know

Other _____

If they did hear it, what would you want them to learn from it?

[a list of things, like "that this is harder than they thought"]

I don't know

Other _____

What in this story surprised you? What didn't surprise you?

[free text]

Is there anything else you [would like, feel a need, have] to [say, tell me or us, explain] about this story, or about your answers to any of these questions?

[free text]

Questions about participants

To what extent do you feel understood in [this group, community]?

Nobody understands anything about me ⟷ Everyone understands me completely

I don't know

How much do you wish you were better understood?

Not at all ⟷ Immensely

I don't know

To what extent do you feel like you understand [the other people in this group, community]?

I don't understand any of them at all ⟷ I understand all of them completely

I don't know

How much do you wish you understood [these other people] better?

Not at all ⟷ Immensely

I don't know

If you said "I don't know" to any of four previous questions, *why* do you think you don't know? What do you think it means? What would you like to do about it?

[free text]

10. To get along better in general

Story-eliciting questions

What was the last eye-opening experience you had, or saw somebody else have, in relation to [the topic]?

Can you recall a moment when you felt suddenly closer to—or farther away from—someone in [our community]? Could you tell [me/us] what happened in that moment?

When you think about [conflict, cooperation, compromise, listening, finding common ground] in relation to [the topic] in [our community], is there a particular experience that stands out to you?

When you think about the saying [Trust takes years to build but can be broken in a heartbeat, Time heals all wounds, other sayings about trust, cooperation, negotiation, etc] does it bring any experiences to mind for you? Could you tell [me/us] about one of those experiences?

Did you ever change your mind about [the topic] because somebody helped you see it from a new perspective? Or did anyone else change their mind about [the topic] because of something you said or did? What happened?

Is there any other experience related to [the topic] that you would you like to tell [me/us] about? What happened that mattered to you?

Follow-up questions

How do you feel about that story?

> See page 9 for three ways to ask this question.

How important is this story to you?

> See page 9 for three ways to ask this question.

Where in the story do you see [hope, gratitude, joy, optimism, confidence]? Where you do see [hopelessness, disappointment, sadness, pain, fear]?

> [free text]

What do you wish had happened in the story?

> [a list of events, like "I got the help I needed"]
>
> [a list of changes, like "This stopped happening"]
>
> [a list of reactions, like "They finally saw what I needed"]
>
> [a list of outcomes, like "We found a solution that worked for everyone"]
>
> It happened just as I would wish
>
> I don't know
>
> I'd rather not say

Other _____

If there was a single ground rule—something everyone would have to abide by—that would make your wish come true, what would it be?

[free text]

Who do you think would be surprised by this story?

[a list of roles or positions, like "Our congressperson"]

[a list of groups, like "Teachers"]

[a list of people in situations, like "People who are thinking about moving here"]

[a list of people in relationships, like "People who care for people with this disability"]

[a list of people with feelings, like "People who feel angry about this"]

[a list of people with opinions, like "People who think this"]

I don't know

I'd rather not say

Other _____

Why would they be surprised?

[free text]

Who would *not* be surprised by the story?

[a list of roles or positions, like "Our congressperson"]

[a list of groups, like "Teachers"]

[a list of people in situations, like "People who are thinking about moving here"]

[a list of people in relationships, like "People who care for people with this disability"]

[a list of people with feelings, like "People who feel angry about this"]

[a list of people with opinions, like "People who think this"]

I don't know

I'd rather not say

Other _____

Why would they not be surprised?

[free text]

If you told the story to those people, how would you tell it?

[free text]

How do you think they would respond?

[free text]

What do you think would happen after they heard it?

[free text]

Is there anything else you [would like, feel a need, have] to [say, tell me or us, explain] about this story, or about your answers to any of these questions?

[free text]

Questions about participants

What do you like most about [our group, community, organization]?

[a list of good things, like "we help each other when the going gets tough']

I don't know

Other _____

What do you like least about [our group, community, organization]?

[a list of bad things, like "we don't listen to each other']

I don't know

Other _____

Which of these ideas for getting along better do you think has the most promise?

[a list of actions, like "hold monthly town hall meetings']

[a list of changes, like "change how we make plans']

I don't know

Other _____

11. To become a more effective team

Story-eliciting questions

Looking back over the past [month, year] in [the team], can you remember a moment when [the team] worked together especially well—or especially poorly? What happened in that moment?

Synergy is a powerful concept, but it's hard to put into practice. Can you recall a time when synergy in [the team] was exceptionally high or low?

Can you recall a moment when [the team] worked together like a well-oiled machine or a raging forest fire [or some other opposing metaphors]?

Looking back over your experiences in [the team], when did you feel the most "in" or "out of" [the team]? Could you tell [me/us] about one of those times?

When you think about productive (useful) versus unproductive (not useful) conflict in [the team], does any particular incident come to mind?

Trust is an important part of teamwork. When you think about trust—abundant or absent—does any particular moment come to mind? What happened in that moment?

Can you remember a time when you couldn't wait to see—or didn't want to see—the other members of [the team]? What happened that made you feel that way?

Did you ever see something happen in [your team] and think to yourself, "That's why this team works so well"? Or, did you see something happen and think, "That's why this team doesn't work as well as it could"? What happened?

Is there any other experience related to [the topic] that you would you like to tell [me/us] about? What happened that mattered to you?

Follow-up questions

If things like this happened in [the team] over and over, many times, how effective of a team would it be?

    It would be a disaster ⟵——————⟶ It would be a miracle of collaboration

    I don't know

How important is this story to you?

    See page for three ways to ask this question.

From your perspective, how did what happened in the story make [the team] more or less effective?

    It increased our trust

    It depleted our trust

    It gave us new ways to collaborate

    It damaged the ways we had to collaborate

    We learned valuable things from it

    We learned nothing of any value from it

    It's hard to say

    I'd rather not say

    Other _____

What do you wish had happened in the story?

    [a list of events, like "I got the help I needed"]

    [a list of changes, like "This stopped happening"]

    [a list of reactions, like "They finally saw what I needed"]

    [a list of outcomes, like "We found a solution that worked for everyone"]

    It happened just as I would wish

I don't know

I'd rather not say

Other _____

If what you wish for had happened, what could have caused it to happen?

[a list of rules, like "every decision was a vote"]

[a list of behaviors, like "we were open and honest with each other"]

[a list of assets, like "we had excellent support from our management"]

[a list of conditions, like "we had plenty of time to get our work done"]

[a list of skills, like "everyone knew how to listen"]

It happened just as I would wish

I don't know

I'd rather not say

Other _____

How often did things like this happen in other teams you were part of in the past?

Always, this is typical ⟵——————————⟶ Never, I never saw this before

I don't know

What does your answer to the previous question tell you about [the team]?

[free text]

If someone new joined [the team], would you tell them this story?

Yes; they would need to hear it ⟵——————————⟶ No, I would not tell it

I don't know

If you would tell the story to a new person joining [the team], what *else* would you say to them about it?

[free text]

How long ago did the events of this story take place?

[some number of weeks, months, or years) ago ⟵——————————⟶ Today

I don't know

Is there anything else you [would like, feel a need, have] to [say, tell me or us, explain] about this story, or about your answers to any of these questions?

[free text]

Questions about participants

How does [the team] compare to other teams you have been part of in the past?

    It's infinitely better ⟷ It's infinitely worse

    I don't know

If you could change one thing about [the team], what would it be?

    [a list of rules, like "every decision would be a vote"]

    [a list of behaviors, like "we would be open and honest with each other"]

    [a list of assets, like "we would have excellent support from our management"]

    [a list of conditions, like "we would have plenty of time to get our work done"]

    [a list of skills, like "everyone would know how to listen"]

    I don't know

    I'd rather not say

    Other _____

What do you hope and/or worry will happen in [the team] in the future?

    [free text]

If you could say anything you wanted to every member of [the team], and they would have no way of knowing that it was you who said it, what would you say?

    [free text]

12. To build stronger community connections

Story-eliciting questions

Think back to the last time you felt truly connected to [the community]—or truly disconnected from it. What happened during that time?

What was your best or worst day in [the community]? What happened on that day?

Did your feeling of connection to [the community] ever undergo a change? What happened that caused the change?

Think about the people in [the community]. Choose a person to whom you feel especially connected to (or disconnected from, your choice). Can you recall [the first time, the first few times, the last time, a memorable time when] you met that person? What happened during that interaction?

Who do you rely on in [the community]? Who do you avoid? Could you tell [me/us] about a memorable experience—memorable to you, not to anyone else—that you had with any of those people?

Did you ever see something happen in another community and think to yourself, "I wish that happened here!" or "I'm glad that doesn't happen here!" What did you see happen?

Say you meet someone who thinks they might like to [move to, join, be a part of] [the community]. Knowing that you are part of it, they ask you for advice. You look back through your experiences and decide to tell them about one particular experience that will show them what being part of [the community] has been like for you. What experience do you choose to tell them about? Could you tell [me/us] about it?

Is there any other experience related to [the topic] that you would you like to tell [me/us] about? What happened that mattered to you?

Follow-up questions

How do you feel about that story?

> See page 9 for three ways to ask this question.

How important is this story to you?

> See page 9 for three ways to ask this question.

How long ago did the events of this story take place?

> [some number of weeks, months, or years) ago ⟵——————⟶ Today
>
> I don't know

Based on your experience, would you say that [the events, the situation, the outcome, the emotions] in this story [is/are] common or rare in [this group, organization, community]?

> This happens to everyone every day ⟵——————⟶ This rarely happens to anyone
>
> I don't know

What does this story tell you about [the community]?

> [a list of conditions, like "we are all struggling here"]
>
> [a list of norms, like "we help each other out"]
>
> [a list of shared experiences, like "we all know what it's like to face discrimination"]
>
> [a list of problems, like "we need to get to know each other better"]
>
> [a list of indications, like "we are starting to fall apart"]
>
> I don't know
>
> I'd rather not say
>
> Other _____

Where in the story do you see [cooperation, community, togetherness, solidarity]? Where you do see [conflict, isolation, pulling away, working against each other]?

[free text]

Who do you think would be surprised to hear this story?

[a list of roles or positions, like "Our congressperson"]

[a list of groups, like "Teachers"]

[a list of people in situations, like "People who are thinking about moving here"]

[a list of people in relationships, like "People who care for people with this disability"]

[a list of people with feelings, like "People who feel angry about this"]

[a list of people with opinions, like "People who think this"]

I don't know

I'd rather not say

Other _____

Who do you think needs to hear it?

[a list of roles or positions, like "Our congressperson"]

[a list of groups, like "Teachers"]

[a list of people in situations, like "People who are thinking about moving here"]

[a list of people in relationships, like "People who care for people with this disability"]

[a list of people with feelings, like "People who feel angry about this"]

[a list of people with opinions, like "People who think this"]

I don't know

I'd rather not say

Other _____

If they did hear it, how much do you think it would help you personally?

A huge amount ←————————→ Not at all

I'm not sure

If they did hear it, how much do you think it would help [the community] in general?

A huge amount ←————————→ Not at all

I'm not sure

What would you want to say to them about the story?

[free text]

Is there anything else you [would like, feel a need, have] to [say, tell me or us, explain] about this story, or about your answers to any of these questions?

[free text]

Questions about participants

How long have you been a part of [the community]?

My whole life ⟵——————⟶ A few days

It's complicated

How much of your time do you spend [here, in this community, at this organization, in this role]?

Every minute ⟵——————⟶ Very little, almost none

It's complicated

What is your [role, position, place] in [the community]?

[a list of official roles, like "I am on the planning board"]

[a list of unofficial roles, like "I keep the park clean"]

[a list of experiential or knowledge-based roles, like "People ask me about the lake"]

[a list of historical roles, like "My family goes back three generations here"]

I don't have a [role, position, place] here; I just [live, work, come] here

I don't know

I'd rather not say

Other _____

To what extent do you feel included in [the community]?

I feel totally included ⟵——————⟶ I feel completely excluded

I'm not sure

How much responsibility do you feel that you have for what happens in [the community]?

Me? None ⟵——————⟶ I am responsible for everything that happens here

I'm not sure

How much do you feel that you have contributed to [the community]?

An immeasurable amount ⟵——————⟶ Nothing at all

I'm not sure

To what extent do you feel that you get what you need from [the community]?

I get everything I needed ⟵——————⟶ I get nothing

I'm not sure

If you were in charge of [this community], and you wanted to bring people together more than they are now, what would you do first?

[free text]

Chapter 4

Problem or crisis mitigation

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13. To address a longstanding problem

These question sets might be useful for projects focused on intractable problems or long-standing issues.

Story-eliciting questions

When you think about your experiences with [the problem], can you think of a moment that explains what [the problem] is really like [for you, in your situation, in your experience, from your perspective]? What happened in that moment?

Think of a day when you felt hope or despair about [the problem]. What happened on that day?

Looking back over your experiences with [the problem], can you recall an experience that was exceptionally [surprising, memorable, consequential, hopeful, disappointing, illuminating]? What happened in that experience?

Did your experience of [the problem] ever get better or worse, suddenly or slowly? What changed, and what happened that caused the change?

What's an experience you have had related to [the problem] that you think would surprise people who think they know everything there is to know about [the problem]? Could you tell [me/us] what happened in that experience?

Did anything ever happen that made you think to yourself, "That's what's really going on with [the problem]." What was it that happened?

Is there any other experience related to [the topic] that you would you like to tell [me/us] about? What happened that mattered to you?

Follow-up questions

How do you feel about that story?

> See page 9 for three ways to ask this question.

How important is this story to you?

> See page 9 for three ways to ask this question.

Based on your experience, would you say that [the events, the situation, the outcome, the emotions] in this story [is/are] common or rare in [this group, organization, community]?

> This happens to everyone every day ⟵————————⟶ This rarely happens to anyone
>
> I don't know

What do you think would have made the story turn out better?

> [a list of solutions, like "Medicine with fewer side effects"]
>
> [a list of assets, like "More money to spend on support"]
>
> [a list of qualities, like "More curiosity"]
>
> [a list of actions, like "Getting help sooner"]
>
> [a list of interactions, like "People listening to me"]
>
> I don't know
>
> Other _____

What do you think would have made the story turn out worse?

> [a list of obstacles, like "Medicine with more side effects"]
>
> [a list of missing assets, like "Less money to spend on support"]
>
> [a list of missing qualities, like "If i had not been determined"]
>
> [a list of actions, like "I could have given up"]
>
> [a list of interactions, like "People might not have listened"]
>
> I don't know
>
> Other _____

Was there ever a time when the opposite of this story happened? If so, what was different between the two situations?

> [a list of conditions, like "I didn't have as much help then"]
>
> The opposite of this story never happened
>
> I don't know
>
> Other _____

If there was a time, someday in the distant future, when [the problem] was no longer a problem, what would that time be like?

> [a list of conditions, like "Everyone would have all the support they needed"]
>
> I don't know
>
> Other _____

What stands between the current situation and that ideal future?

> [a list of obstacles, like "Lack of understanding"]
>
> I don't know
>
> Other _____

How long ago did the events of this story take place?

> [some number of weeks, months, or years) ago ⟵——————⟶ Today
>
> I don't know

Is there anything else you [would like, feel a need, have] to [say, tell me or us, explain] about this story, or about your answers to any of these questions?

> [free text]

Looking back over the story you just told, is there a moment within it that you have different (or mixed) feelings about? If so, could you tell [me/us] happened in *that* moment?

> [free text]

> Repeat the same follow-up questions about the second story. In this way you can draw out negative stories without asking people to tell only negative stories. To use this option, ask half as many follow-up questions per story as you normally would.

Questions about participants

How long has [the problem] been important to you?

> Forever ⟵——————⟶ Very recently
>
> I'd rather not say

To what extent does [the problem] matter to you, in general?

> Very little ⟵——————⟶ Very much
>
> I'd rather not say

How much does [the problem] seem to matter to other people [in general, around you, in the community]?

> Not at all ⟵——————⟶ A lot
>
> I don't know

How much do you see being done about [the problem] right now?

   A lot, and it's helpful

   A lot, but it's not very helpful

   Just the right amount

   Some, but not enough

   Nothing at all

   Too much is being done

   I don't know

   Other _____

If you were placed in charge of a huge effort to [eradicate, deal with, remove, fix] [the problem], what would you do first?

   [a list of actions, like "Allocate more funding to research"]

   I don't know

   Other _____

If you were to describe [the problem] as a [metaphorical thing—cloud, animal, building, person in a profession], what kind of [metaphorical thing] would it be?

   [a list of metaphorical things, like "A dancer, fast and nimble"]

   I don't know

   Other _____

14. To bring out unheard perspectives on a problem

Story-eliciting questions

Do you remember a time when you learned something new and important about [the problem]? Could you tell [me/us] what happened?

Did you ever experience a change in your perception of [the problem]? What happened that caused the change, and how did your perception change?

Could you tell [me/us] about a time when you felt [hopeful, hopeless, pleased, disappointed, relieved, angry] about [the problem]? What happened that you remember?

Did anything ever happen to you that caused you to question your assumptions about [the topic]? What happened, and how did you react?

Did you ever see someone say or do something and realize that they thought about [the topic] in a way that was completely unfamiliar to you? What did they say or do that stood out?

Most people think [the problem] is about [something]. Did you ever have an experience that complicates or contradicts that understanding? What happened?

Did you ever have something happen to you and think to yourself, "If [a person, role, or group] saw this happening right now, they would not think the way they do about [the problem]"? What was it that happened?

Is there any other experience related to [the topic] that you would you like to tell [me/us] about? What happened that mattered to you?

Follow-up questions

How do you feel about that story?

> See page 9 for three ways to ask this question.

How important is this story to you?

> See page 9 for three ways to ask this question.

Based on your experience, would you say that [the events, the situation, the outcome, the emotions] in this story [is/are] common or rare in [this group, organization, community]?

> This happens to everyone every day ⟵――――――――⟶ This rarely happens to anyone
>
> I don't know

What did you learn from this story? What lessons did (or do) you draw from it?

> [free text]

How surprising is this story, to you, in the light of your experiences with [the topic]?

> Not at all ⟵――――――⟶ Completely
>
> I don't know

If [a person, role, group] heard this story, how surprising do you think it would be to them?

> Not at all surprising ⟵――――――――⟶ Totally surprising
>
> I don't know

Why do you think they would be as surprised (or not) as that?

> [a list of reasons, like "They don't know what it's like"]
>
> I don't know
>
> Other _____

What would you like to tell them about the story?

> [free text]

Was there ever a time when the opposite of this story happened? If so, what was different between the two situations?

> [a list of conditions, like "I didn't have as much help then"]
>
> The opposite of this story never happened
>
> I don't know
>
> Other _____

Is there anything else you [would like, feel a need, have] to [say, tell me or us, explain] about this story, or about your answers to any of these questions?

> [free text]

Looking back over the story you just told, is there a moment within it that you have different (or mixed) feelings about? If so, could you tell [me/us] happened in *that* moment?

> [free text]

📄 Repeat the same follow-up questions about the second story. In this way you can draw out negative stories without asking people to tell only negative stories. To use this option, ask half as many follow-up questions per story as you normally would.

Questions about participants

What do you think is the cause of [the problem]?

> [a list of causes, like "Inequality"]
>
> I don't know
>
> I'd rather not say
>
> Other _____

What do you think [people in general, or a person, role, or group] need[s] to know about [the problem] that they don't know now?

> [a list of things, like "It's connected to [another problem]"]
>
> There isn't anything everyone doesn't know
>
> I don't know
>
> I'd rather not say
>
> Other _____

Who knows the most about [the problem]?

> [a list of people, roles, or groups, like "People with direct experience of it]"]
>
> Everyone knows the same amount
>
> I don't know
>
> I'd rather not say

Other _____

Who knows the least about [the problem]?

[a list of people, roles, or groups, like "People who own their houses]"]

Everyone knows the same amount

I don't know

I'd rather not say

Other _____

What do you think should be done about [the problem]?

[a list of actions, like "Pass laws"]

Nothing can be done

Nothing needs to be done

I don't know

I'd rather not say

Other _____

If you said some things need to be done, are those things already being done?

No, not at all $\longleftrightarrow$ Yes, they are

I don't know

If the things are being done, how are they being done? If they are not being done, why aren't they being done? If you don't know, why don't you know?

[free text]

15. To adapt to a changing world

Story-eliciting questions

Do you remember the very first time you experienced [an event or emotion related to the topic]? Could you tell [me/us] about it?

Think back to when you were [some age]. Could you tell [me/us] about an experience, a moment in time, that illustrates what [the topic] was like back then?

Was there ever a time when [you, a person or group, this community] adapted particularly well or poorly to change with respect to [the topic]? What happened at that time?

Thinking of [the topic], did you ever react (or see someone else react) to change in a way that was nimble (like a dancer) or lumbering (like a turtle)? Could you tell [me/us] what you did or saw?

Did you ever think to yourself, "Well, I guess this is the way [the topic] is going to be from now on, so I'd better …"? What happened that made you think that, and what did you do as a result?

Thinking of [the topic], what is something you [do, see, or experience] now that you wouldn't have [done, seen, or experienced] [in the past, X years ago]? Could you tell [me/us] about the change and what it has meant to you?

Imagine it's [X years] in the future, and a historian is interviewing you about [the topic]. What experience would you tell them about to explain what it was like to live through the change[s] you have experienced? Could you tell [me/us] about that experience?

Is there any other experience related to [the topic] that you would you like to tell [me/us] about? What happened that mattered to you?

Follow-up questions

How do you feel about that story?

> See page 9 for three ways to ask this question.

How important is this story to you?

> See page 9 for three ways to ask this question.

How long ago did the events of this story take place?

> [some number of weeks, months, or years) ago ⟵————————⟶ Today
>
> I don't know

If this story had happened [X months or years] ago, how do you think it would have turned out?

> Infinitely worse ⟵————————⟶ Infinitely better
>
> I don't know

Now imagine the same story playing out [X months or years] in the future. How will it turn out?

> Infinitely worse ⟵————————⟶ Infinitely better
>
> I don't know

What do you wish had happened in the story?

> [a list of events, like "I got the help I needed"]
>
> [a list of changes, like "This stopped happening"]
>
> [a list of reactions, like "They finally saw what I needed"]
>
> [a list of outcomes, like "We found a solution that worked for everyone"]

It happened just as I would wish

I don't know

I'd rather not say

Other _____

Where in the story do you see [change, uncertainty, doubt, anxiety]? Where you do see [stability, certainty, confidence, comfort]?

[free text]

Why do you think what you wish for didn't happen?

[free text]

To what extent would you say that the people in the story adapted well to change in [the topic]?

Horribly ⟷ Perfectly

I don't know

In what specific ways did they adapt to change in [the topic]?

[a list of actions, like "They stopped going out to eat"]

They did not adapt

I don't know

Other _____

If they did adapt, did their adaptations help them to get what they needed?

No, not at all ⟷ Yes, a lot

I don't know

Why did their adaptations help or not help them?

[free text]

Is there anything else you [would like, feel a need, have] to [say, tell me or us, explain] about this story, or about your answers to any of these questions?

[free text]

Questions about participants

With respect to [the topic], if things were exactly the way you wish they would be, what would [the world, your life, the community] be like?

[a list of conditions, like "We would have everything we need"]

Everything is already the way I would wish it to be

I don't know

I'd rather not say

Other _____

How much hope do you have for the future of [the topic]?

None at all ⟵—————————⟶ A huge amount

I don't know

How much hope do you think [your friends, your family members, your fellow community members, the people around you] have for the future of [the topic]?

None at all ⟵—————————⟶ A huge amount

I don't know

What gives you hope about [the topic]?

[a list of people, roles, or groups, like "Our volunteers"]

[a list of experiences, like "Seeing the spring flowers"]

[a list of changes, like "We are gaining ground"]

[a list of events, like "We won our case"]

[a list of actions, like "I am working hard on it"]

[a list of norms, rules, or agreements, like "We have agreed to work together"]

I give myself my own hope

I have no hope

I don't know

I'd rather not say

Other _____

What drains your hope about [the topic]?

[a list of people, roles, or groups, like "The protesters"]

[a list of experiences, like "Seeing the dying crops"]

[a list of changes, like "We are losing ground"]

[a list of events, like "We lost our case"]

[a list of actions, like "They have bombed our hospital"]

[a list of missing or lost norms, rules, or agreements, like "The treaty is in shambles"]

Nothing can drain my hope

I have no hope to drain

I don't know

I'd rather not say

Other _____

What's one good thing about the changes in [the topic] over the past [X months or years]?

[a list of good things, like "It has brought us closer together"]

Nothing is good

I don't know

I'd rather not say

Other _____

What's one bad thing about the changes in [the topic] over the past [X months or years]?

[a list of bad things, like "It has made daily life harder"]

Nothing is bad

I don't know

I'd rather not say

Other _____

16. To bring out good news for optimism

Story-eliciting questions

The best way to gather positive stories—or negative stories—is to leave the door open to both. When you only allow people to tell the stories you want to hear, you lose the opportunity to hear the stories they want to tell. Having said that, this is a good time to use an "opposite story" follow-up question, and then some follow-up questions about it.

When you look back over your memories about [the topic], is there a particular memory that brings you energy—or drains your energy? What happened in that memory?

Was there ever a time when you felt hopeless about [the topic], then found a reason to hope? Or the reverse? What happened?

What's a good or bad thing that happened [to you or to someone else] related to [the topic] that not many people know about? Could you tell [me/us] what happened?

Can you recall a time related to [the topic] in which things went a lot better or worse than you expected? What happened during that time?

What was the best news you received with respect to [the topic] in the past [X months or years]? How did you hear it? What was it like to hear it? How did you respond?

With reference to [the topic], what's the best or worst thing you've heard about happening lately?

If someone you cared about felt hopeless about [the topic], and you wanted to cheer them up by telling them about a hopeful experience you had (or heard about]

related to [the topic], what experience would you tell them about? Or the reverse—if you felt they had false hope and you wanted to help them avoid disappointment, what experience would you tell them about? Could you tell [me/us] about it?

Is there any other experience related to [the topic] that you would you like to tell [me/us] about? What happened that mattered to you?

Follow-up questions

How do you feel about that story?

See page 9 for three ways to ask this question.

How important is this story to you?

See page 9 for three ways to ask this question.

What do you like best about this story?

[a list of events, like "We fixed the problem in the end"]

[a list of emotions, like "It was exhilarating"]

[a list of actions, like "They came through for me"]

[a list of interactions, like "We came to an agreement"]

I don't like anything about it

I don't know

Other _____

What do you like least about it?

[a list of events, like "The storm was awful"]

[a list of emotions, like "How hard it was when it started"]

[a list of actions, like "They didn't listen to me"]

[a list of interactions, like "The fight itself"]

I like everything about it

I don't know

Other _____

Who needs to hear this story?

[a list of roles or positions, like "Our congressperson"]

[a list of groups, like "Teachers"]

[a list of people in situations, like "People who are thinking about moving here"]

[a list of people in relationships, like "People who care for people with this disability"]

[a list of people with feelings, like "People who feel angry about this"]

[a list of people with opinions, like "People who think this"]

    I don't know

    I'd rather not say

    Other _____

If those people did hear the story, what do you think would happen?

    [a list of outcomes, like "They would be excited to help"]

    Nothing would happen

    I don't know

    Other _____

If stories like this one aren't heard often enough, why do you think that is so?

    [a list of reasons, like "Everyone thinks they already understand"]

    Stories like this one are heard often enough

    I don't know

    Other _____

Why do you think someone would want to [read, hear] this story?

    [a list of reasons, like "to find new hope"]

    I don't know

    Other _____

Can you remember a time when the *opposite* of this story happened, a time when things turned out badly instead of well, or well instead of badly? Could you tell [me/us] about it?

    [free text]

⬜ Repeat the same follow-up questions about the second story. In this way you can draw out positive stories without asking people to tell only positive stories. To use this option, ask half as many follow-up questions per story as you normally would.

Is there anything else you [would like, feel a need, have] to [say, tell me or us, explain] about either of the stories you told, or about your answers to any of these questions?

    [free text]

Questions about participants

In general, would you say that you are an optimist or a pessimist? Or some of both?

    Pessimist ⟵——————⟶ Optimist

    I don't know

When it comes to [the topic], where do you look for your optimism?

    [a list of people, roles, or groups, like "My friends"]

[a list of activities, like "Spending time in nature"]

[a list of norms or rules, like "Our town charter"]

[a list of beliefs, like "My faith in humanity"]

I don't need to look for optimism; I just have it

I don't know where to look

I don't have anywhere to look

I'd rather not say

Other _____

If you were to design a perfect future related to [the topic], what would it look like?

[a list of scenarios, like "We would all help each other"]

I don't know

I'd rather not say

Other _____

What about the worst possible future? What would that look like?

[a list of scenarios, like "Everyone would be on their own"]

I don't know

I'd rather not say

Other _____

17. To listen to criticism without censorship

Story-eliciting questions

Did you ever have an experience related to [the topic] that caused you to reflect on the strengths or weaknesses of [me, our, our community's] [support for, approach to, work on] [the topic]? What happened in that experience?

What's an experience you've had related to [the topic] that you wish you could tell more people about? Could you tell [me/us] about what happened?

Think about a time when you [encountered, spent time with, dealt with] [me, us, the topic] that stands out in your memory because it was important to you. Could you tell [me/us] what happened in that experience?

Did you ever experience [a situation related to the topic, like "an interaction with a cashier"] in a way that changed the way you think about [the topic]? What happened that you remember?

Did you ever have an experience related to [the topic] that made you think, "This [thing related to the topic, like "policy" or "sign"] is worth keeping"—or "has to go"? What happened that made you think that?

Is there any other experience related to [the topic] that you would you like to tell [me/us] about? What happened that mattered to you?

Follow-up questions

How do you feel about that story?

>   See page 9 for three ways to ask this question.

How important is this story to you?

>   See page 9 for three ways to ask this question.

Choose a person who [wanted or needed] something in the story. Who did you choose?

>   [a list of identities, like "a citizen"]
>
>   [a list of relationships, like "a neighbor"]
>
>   [a list of positions, like "a manager"]
>
>   [a list of people with feelings, like "a person who was disappointed"]
>
>   [a list of people in situations, like "a person who got a traffic ticket"]
>
>   Other _____

What did that person [want or need] in the story?

>   [a list of needs, like help, support, information, to be understood, to understand, freedom, respect, trust]
>
>   Other _____

To what extent did they get what they [wanted or needed]?

>   They got everything they needed ⟵——————⟶ They got nothing at all
>
>   I don't know

Who or what helped them get what they [wanted or needed]?

>   their [trait, like "determination"]
>
>   their [person in a relationship, like "friend"]
>
>   their [group, like "work team"]
>
>   their [helper, like "counselor"]
>
>   [a list of resources, like "our web site"]
>
>   [a list of rules, laws, or policies, like "traffic laws"]
>
>   I'm not sure
>
>   Other _____

Who or what stood in their way?

>   their [limitation, like "anxiety"]

their [person in a relationship, like "friend"]

their [group, like "work team"]

their [helper, like "counselor"]

[a list of rules, laws, or policies, like "traffic laws"]

I'm not sure

I'd rather not say

Other _____

How does thinking about this story change your [feeling, opinion, belief] about [something related to the topic, like "our policy"]?

[a list of changes, like "It makes me want to move away from here"]

It doesn't change anything for me

I don't know

I'd rather not say

Other _____

Now choose a person who made a mistake in the story. Who did you choose?

[the same list as in the previous question]

Other _____

What was the mistake?

[free text]

Where did the mistake come from? Who or what caused it?

[free text]

What impact did the mistake have on the person who made it? What impact did it have on the people around them?

[free text]

Was the mistake fixed? If so, how was it fixed, and by whom?

[free text]

How does thinking about the mistake change your [feeling, opinion, belief] about [something related to the topic, like "our policy"]?

[a list of changes, like "It makes me want to move away from here"]

It doesn't change anything for me

I don't know

I'd rather not say

Other _____

If you could go back in time to the start of this story, what would you say or do to help it turn out differently? What would you avoid changing?

[free text]

Is there anything else you [would like, feel a need, have] to [say, tell me or us, explain] about either of the stories you told, or about your answers to any of these questions?

[free text]

Questions about participants

In general, how well do you think [something related to the topic] is working?

It's a disaster ⟵―――――――→ It's perfect

I don't know

Choose (or list) three [actions, policies, rules, groups, assets] that make you feel [good, grateful, happy] about [the topic, or about a group related to it].

[a list of actions, like "The recent parade"]

[a list of rules or policies, like "The new equal-voice policy"]

[a list of groups, like "Our local news station"]

[a list of assets, like "Our library"]

None of these things make me feel [good, grateful, happy]

I don't know

I'd rather not say

Other _____

Choose (or list) three [actions, policies, rules, groups, assets] that make you feel [unhappy, sad, angry] about [the topic, or about a group related to it].

[a list of actions, like "The recent ban"]

[a list of rules or policies, like "The so-called equal-voice policy"]

[a list of groups, like "Our management"]

[a list of missing assets, like "No way to find out what is going on"]

None of these things make me feel [unhappy, sad, angry]

I don't know

I'd rather not say

Other _____

If you were in charge of [something related to the topic], what would you change, and what would you keep the same?

    [free text]

What's an experiment you would like [someone in charge of something about the topic] to try?

    [a list of experiments, like "Try other voting methods"]

    I don't know

    Other _____

18. To make sense of a disaster

Story-eliciting questions

What happened to you during [the disaster]? Tell [me/us] as much or as little as you want to about the experience.

What's the one moment of your experience that you will remember the longest? Could you tell [me/us] what happened in that moment?

When [the disaster] was going on, at what moment did you feel the most hopeful or hopeless? What happened in that moment?

When [the disaster] was going on, at what moment did you feel the most connected to other people—or the most isolated? What happened in that moment?

When [the disaster] was going on, did you ever gain or lose information that was important to you? What was the information, and how did you gain or lose it?

When [the disaster] was going on, was there a moment when you thought to yourself, "[I/We] can get through this, [I/we] just need to focus on [something]"? What happened in that moment?

When [the disaster] was going on, did anyone or anything give you strength—or take your strength away? Who or what was it, and what happened as a result?

Was there a moment during [the disaster] when your sense of what was happening shifted, either because you finally understood something or because you were suddenly bewildered?

If you wanted to help someone prepare for another [disaster] that might happen in the future, what one moment of your experience would you choose to tell them about? Could you tell [me/us] what happened in that moment?

Is there any other experience related to [the topic] that you would you like to tell [me/us] about? What happened that mattered to you?

Follow-up questions

Whether you should ask fully open-ended (free text) or partially-closed (choice/scale) questions about this type of story depends on commonality and intensity. If everyone will be talking about similar experiences, they may find answer lists helpful and appropriate. But if people will be sharing intense emotions, they may need more freedom to choose how they want to frame their thoughts.

How do you feel about that story?

[free text]

How intense are the feelings you described just now?

Overwhelmingly intense ⟵————————⟶ Not intense; mild

I don't know

Why do you think the story turned out the way it did? Explain as little or as much as you would like to about it.

[free text]

Based on your experience, would you say that [the events, the situation, the outcome, the emotions] in this story [is/are] common or rare in [this group, organization, community]?

This happens to everyone every day ⟵————————⟶ This rarely happens to anyone

I don't know

Choose a person who [wanted or needed] something in the story. Who did you choose?

[a list of identities, like "a citizen"]

[a list of relationships, like "a neighbor"]

[a list of positions, like "a manager"]

[a list of people with feelings, like "a person who is disappointed"]

[a list of people in situations, like "a person who just got a traffic ticket"]

Other _____

What did that person [want or need] in the story?

[free text]

Did they get what they [wanted or needed]?

They got nothing ⟵————————⟶ They got everything

I don't know

What do you think surprised that person the most?

[free text]

If that person could have gone back in time, what one thing do you think they would have changed?

[free text]

What changed for that person over the course of the story?

[free text]

What do you think the person learned from what happened, if anything?

[free text]

What do you think people in general can learn from this story?

[free text]

Who needs to hear this story?

[a list of roles or positions, like "Our congressperson"]

[a list of groups, like "Teachers"]

[a list of people in situations, like "People who are thinking about moving here"]

[a list of people in relationships, like "People who care for people with this disability"]

[a list of people with feelings, like "People who feel angry about this"]

[a list of people with opinions, like "People who think this"]

I don't know

I'd rather not say

Other _____

If you told the story to them, how would you tell it?

[free text]

How do you think they would respond?

[free text]

What do you think would happen as a result?

[free text]

Is there anything else you [would like, feel a need, have] to [say, tell me or us, explain] about this story, or about your answers to any of these questions?

[free text]

Questions about participants

In general, how much experience have you had with [disaster situations, or a specific type of disaster]?

None before this ⟵—————————⟶ I've been through this many times

I'd rather not say

How much responsibility do you think [our government, society, town, community] has to help people [avoid, cope with, recover from] [disaster situations, or a specific type of disaster]?

Complete responsibility ⟵—————————⟶ None at all

I don't know

Why do you think [disasters in general, or a specific type of disaster] happen, in general?

[a list of reasons, like "poor planning"]

There are no reasons; things like this just happen

I don't know

Other _____

What do you think [our government, society, town, community] should do about [disasters in general, or a specific type of disaster]?

[a list of actions, like "plan better"]

Nothing needs to be done

Nothing can be done

I don't know

Other _____

Do you consider yourself a [careful, prudent, resourceful, strong] person?

Absolutely ⟵—————————⟶ No, not at all

I don't know

What about your [neighbors, co-workers]? Do you see them as [careful, prudent, resourceful, strong]?

Absolutely ⟵—————————⟶ No, not at all

I don't know

How strong is your personal support network?

We can get through anything together ⟵—————————⟶ What support network?

I don't know

Is your support network weaker or stronger than those of your [neighbors, friends, family members, co-workers]?

Infinitely weaker ⟵—————————⟶ Infinitely stronger

I don't know

Who or what gives you strength to cope with life's ups and downs, in general?

    [a list of relationships, like "my dad"]

    [a list of roles or groups, like "our firefighters"]

    [a list of norms or rules, like "our laws"]

    [a list of characteristics, like "my faith"]

    [a list of conditions, like "the beauty of nature"]

    Nothing and no one; I'm just a strong person

    Nothing and no one; I'm just a weak person

    I don't know

    Other _____

Who or what drains your coping strength, in general?

    [a list of relationships, like "my dad"]

    [a list of roles or groups, like "our hospital staff"]

    [a list of norms or rules, like "our laws"]

    [a list of characteristics, like "my own bad attitude"]

    [a list of conditions, like "my disability"]

    Nothing and no one; I'm just a strong person

    Nothing and no one; I'm just a weak person

    I don't know

    Other _____

19. To nip an emerging problem in the bud

Story-eliciting questions

Did you ever feel like the situation you were in with respect to [the topic] was beginning to shift or change in any way? What happened that made you feel that way?

When was the last time you felt a sense of increasing or decreasing [certainty, confidence, calm, uncertainty, worry, anxiety, dread] about [the topic]? Could you tell [me/us] what happened then?

Can you remember a surprise you experienced related to [the topic]? Could you tell [me/us] about it?

Looking back over your experiences with [the topic] over the past [number of days, weeks, months, years], can you think of a time when you saw a promising or worrying sign? What happened that you remember?

Have you had a [hunch, intuition, feeling, foreboding, glimmer of hope] lately about [the topic]? What was it, and what happened that brought it on?

Did anything happen recently related to [the topic] that you thought you should tell [someone, your teacher, a police officer, an authority] about? What happened, and who did you tell about it?

Did anything ever happen related to [the topic] that made you think, "That's not the way [the topic] used to be"? What happened, and how was it different?

When you think about the saying "change is the only constant," what recent experience comes to mind? What happened in that experience?

Did you ever see something happen and think to yourself, "I hope that doesn't happen again"? Or did you think, "I hope that happens more often"? What was it that happened?

Is there any other experience related to [the topic] that you would you like to tell [me/us] about? What happened that mattered to you?

Follow-up questions

How do you feel about that story?

> See page 9 for three ways to ask this question.

How important is this story to you?

> See page 9 for three ways to ask this question.

How long ago did the events of this story take place?

> [some number of weeks, months, or years) ago ⟵——————⟶ Today

> I don't know

Based on your experience, would you say that [the events, the situation, the outcome, the emotions] in this story [is/are] common or rare in [this group, organization, community]?

> This happens to everyone every day ⟵——————⟶ This rarely happens to anyone

> I don't know

To what extent would you say that this story offers a cautionary tale?

> Not at all ⟵——————⟶ Completely

> I don't know

To what extent would you say that the story offers a glimpse of a better future?

> Not at all ⟵——————⟶ Completely

> I don't know

What do you see as the most important problem or solution in the story?

    [a list of problems, like "meeting deadlines"]

    [a list of solutions, like "teamwork"]

    There was no problem or solution in the story

    I don't know

    Other _____

Whose was responsible for solving the problem or providing the solution?

    [a list of people, like "the mayor"]

    [a list of relationships, like "my boss"]

    [a list of roles or groups, like "doctors"]

    Nobody was responsible

    I don't know

    Other _____

Who *took* responsibility for solving the problem or providing the solution?

    [the same list as in the previous question]

    Nobody took responsibility

    I don't know

    Other _____

What does this story say to you about the future of [the topic]?

    [free text]

Is there anything in the story that you think [people, our town, our organization, management] will need to pay more attention to in the future?

    [a list of problems, like "inflation"]

    [a list of needs, like "getting people the health care they need"]

    [a list of solutions, like "the benefits of wind power"]

    I don't know

    Other _____

Is there anything in the story that gives you [hope, strength, optimism]?

    [a list of solutions, like "the benefits of wind power"]

    [a list of strengths, like "collaboration"]

    I don't know

    Other _____

Is there anything in the story that drains your [hope, strength, optimism]?

    [a list of problems, like "inflation"]

    [a list of weaknesses, like "divisiveness"]

    I don't know

    Other _____

Is there anything else you [would like, feel a need, have] to [say, tell me or us, explain] about this story, or about your answers to any of these questions?

    [free text]

Questions about participants

What is your role with respect to [the topic]?

    [a list of roles, like "citizen"]

    I'd rather not say

    Other _____

How long have you been [involved in, connected to, concerned about] [the topic]?

    [a list of time spans, like "six months"]

    I'd rather not say

    Other _____

Where do you see [the topic] going in [some number of months or years]? What do you think is going to happen?

    [a list of events or outcomes, like "everyone will have enough to eat"]

    I'd rather not say

    Other _____

How strongly do you support [the official policy, a law, a particular opinion] about [the topic]?

    Not at all ⟵—————————⟶ Completely

    I'd rather not say

Please choose the [2,3,4] [problems, issues, conflicts] you think are most pressing with respect to [the topic].

    [a list of problems, like "storm surges"]

    Other _____

Please choose the [2,3,4] [solutions, proposals, ideas] you think are most promising with respect to [the topic].

> [a list of solutions, like "a new bridge"]
>
> Other _____

In your own words, describe the most important problems and/or solutions you see in [the topic]. How do you see it?

> [free text]

If you were put in charge of [the topic], and you had infinite power, freedom, and resources to work with, what would you do?

> [free text]

20. To detect growing but as-yet-invisible problems

Story-eliciting questions

What's the biggest surprise you've had lately in relation to [the topic]? Could you tell [me/us] what happened?

Have you had an experience lately with [the topic] that caused you to say to yourself, "Well, *that's* different"? What happened that was different?

Can you remember a recent experience with [the topic] that felt newly [happy or sad, relieving or frustrating, confusing or enlightening, exciting or boring, hopeful or hopeless]? What was it that happened?

Have any of your recent experiences related to [the topic] felt new, strange, or unfamiliar to you lately? What happened that felt that way?

Have you heard any rumors about strange goings-on related to [the topic] lately? What have you heard about happening?

Looking back over your experiences with [the topic], can you remember any recent changes that were important to you? Could you tell [me/us] what happened in one of those changes?

Is there any other experience related to [the topic] that you would you like to tell [me/us] about? What happened that mattered to you?

Follow-up questions

How do you feel about that story?

> See page 9 for three ways to ask this question.

How important is this story to you?

> See page 9 for three ways to ask this question.

How long ago did the events of this story take place?

[some number of weeks, months, or years) ago ⟵————————⟶ Today

I don't know

Based on your experience, would you say that [the events, the situation, the outcome, the emotions] in this story [is/are] common or rare in [this group, organization, community]?

This happens to everyone every day ⟵————————⟶ This rarely happens to anyone

I don't know

Which of these things were obvious problems or solutions in the story (things anyone can see)?

[a list of problems, like "more aches and pains than usual"]

[a list of solutions, like "a new treatment plan"]

Other _____

Were there any *non-obvious* problems or solutions in the story that some people might miss but that mattered to you? If so, could you describe them?

[free text]

From your perspective, what's the difference between what's obvious about this story and what's not obvious about it? (And is there anything you would like to say about that?)

[free text]

What might someone who hears this story miss if they don't truly understand what happened in it and how you feel about it?

[free text]

Why do you think what happened in this story happened? What lies behind it, do you think?

[free text]

If what happened in this story keeps happening in the future, what do you think that will mean?

[free text]

If what happened in this story never happens again, what do you think that will mean?

[free text]

Please choose someone in the story who felt anxiety or concern (about the present, the future, or both). Who did you choose?

[a list of identities, like "a citizen"]

[a list of relationships, like "a neighbor"]

[a list of positions, like "a manager"]

[a list of people with feelings, like "a person who is disappointed"]

[a list of people in situations, like "a person who just got a traffic ticket"]

Nobody learned anything in the story

Other _____

What did that person feel anxiety or concern about?

[a list of things people might feel concerned about, like "getting an effective treatment"]

Nobody felt concerned

Other _____

Was that person's concern alleviated by the end of the story?

Yes, totally ⟵————————⟶ No, not at all

I don't know

If their concern was alleviated, what alleviated it?

[a list of things that might alleviate concerns, like "finding a new medicine"]

Nobody felt concerned

Other _____

If their concern was *not* alleviated, what do you think might have alleviated it?

[a list of things that might alleviate concerns, like "finding a new medicine"]

Nobody felt concerned

Other _____

Is there anything else you [would like, feel a need, have] to [say, tell me or us, explain] about this story, or about your answers to any of these questions?

[free text]

Looking back over the story you just told, is there a moment within it that you have different (or mixed) feelings about? If so, could you tell [me/us] happened in *that* moment?

[free text]

> Repeat the same follow-up questions about the second story. In this way you can draw out negative stories without asking people to tell only negative stories. To use this option, ask half as many follow-up questions per story as you normally would.

Questions about participants

How long have you been [involved with, dealing with, handling, doing] [the topic]?

    [a list of time periods, like "two years""]

    Other _____

How much of an impact does [the topic] have on your [life, work, health, family]?

    Completely ⟵⟶ Not at all

    I don't know

To what extent do you help other people [do, deal with, handle] [the topic]?

    Not at all ⟵⟶ It is what I do

    I'd rather not say

What are some new problems you see on the horizon with respect to [the topic]?

    [free text]

What are some new solutions you see on the horizon with respect to [the topic]?

    [free text]

What do you think your own experience with [the topic] is going to be like [some number of days, weeks, months, years] from now?

    [free text]

What do you think [the topic] is going to be like [in, for] [our group, our community, our organization, people connected with the topic] [some number of days, weeks, months, years] from now?

    [free text]

Chapter 5

Planning and Policy

These question sets might be useful for projects focused on planning and policy making—finding out what people want, choosing among available options, dealing with problems, envisioning the future.

21. To understand why people support some policies and not others

Story-eliciting questions

Can you remember the first time you [learned about, were impacted by, voted for or against] [a particular policy or program]? What happened during that time?

Has your [life, work, family] ever been impacted by a [community, governmental, organizational] [policy, plan, initiative, program]? What was the [policy, plan, initiative, program], and how did it impact you or someone you know?

Have you ever been surprised by [a particular policy or program]? What happened that surprised you?

Did you ever play a part in carrying out a [community, governmental, organizational] [policy, plan, initiative, program]? What did you do, and how did you feel about it?

Looking back over your experiences with [the topic] and thinking about [a particular policy], what experience springs to mind that says something important to you about [the policy]? Could you tell [me/us] about that experience?

Did you ever experience a moment of social comparison related to [the topic], where you realized that your experience with [the topic] was either the same as, or very different from, the experience of another person? What happened in that moment?

When you hear someone praise or condemn a [community, governmental, organizational] [policy, plan, initiative, program], does a particular moment from your past

experiences with [the topic] ever come to mind? Could you tell [me/us] about that moment?

Did you ever hear about a [policy, plan, initiative, program] and think to yourself, "Yes, that is exactly what we need"? Or did you ever think, "What is the point of that?" What happened that made you think that?

Is there any other experience related to [the topic] that you would you like to tell [me/us] about? What happened that mattered to you?

Follow-up questions

How do you feel about that story?

> See page 9 for three ways to ask this question.

How important is this story to you?

> See page 9 for three ways to ask this question.

Based on your experience, would you say that [the events, the situation, the outcome, the emotions] in this story [is/are] common or rare in [this group, organization, community]?

> This happens to everyone every day ⟵———————⟶ This rarely happens to anyone
>
> I don't know

Which of these [policies, programs, projects, initiatives] played the most important part in the story?

> [a list of policies, programs, projects, or initiatives, like "the new all-voices initiative"]
> None of these
> I don't know
> Other _____

If you chose a [policy, program, project, initiative] in the previous question, how would you describe its impact on the outcome of the story?

> Large and negative ⟵———————⟶ Large and positive
>
> I don't know

In the story, did the [policy, program, project, initiative] you chose (if you chose one) work as it was intended to work? Why or why not?

> [free text]

What do you wish had happened in the story?

> [a list of events, like "I got the help I needed"]
> [a list of changes, like "This stopped happening"]
> [a list of reactions, like "They finally saw what I needed"]

[a list of outcomes, like "We found a solution that worked for everyone"]

It happened just as I would wish

I don't know

I'd rather not say

Other _____

If you were asked to design a new [policy, program, project, initiative] to address situations like the one in the story, what would it do and why?

[free text]

If that new [policy, program, project, initiative] had been in place at the time of the story, what do you think would have happened differently?

[free text]

What do you think would support (or stand in the way of) building such a [policy, program, project, initiative]?

[free text]

Is there anything else you [would like, feel a need, have] to [say, tell me or us, explain] about this story, or about your answers to any of these questions?

[free text]

Questions about participants

Which of these [policies, programs, projects, initiatives] do you support most strongly? (Choose up to three.)

[a list of policies, programs, projects, or initiatives, like "the new all-voices initiative"]

None of them

I don't know

Other _____

How strongly do you support the [policies, programs, projects, initiatives] you chose in the previous question?

A huge amount ⟵——————⟶ A tiny amount

I don't know

Are you involved in carrying out any of the [policies, programs, projects, initiatives] you chose? If so, how?

[free text]

Which of these [policies, programs, projects, initiatives] do you oppose? (Choose up to three.)

> [a list of policies, programs, projects, or initiatives, like "the new all-voices initiative"]
>
> None of them
>
> I don't know
>
> Other _____

How strongly do you oppose the [policies, programs, projects, initiatives] you chose in the previous question

> A huge amount ⟵——————————⟶ A tiny amount
>
> I don't know

In your own words, what do you think [our community, organization, society] [must, should, need(s) to] do about [a problem, issue, or opportunity]?

> [free text]

Describe an ideal world in which the [issues, problems] addressed by the [policies, programs, projects, initiatives] we are talking about no longer exist. What are some things that always happen in that world? What are some things that never happen?

> [free text]

22. To gather feedback on a policy, program, project, or initiative

Story-eliciting questions

When you look back on your experiences with [the policy, program, project, or initiative], what one experience stands out to you as the most important—to *you*, not to anyone else? What happened in that experience?

Can you remember a high or low point of your experience with [the policy, program, project, or initiative]? What happened in that moment?

Can you remember a moment when you were strongly affected by [the policy, program, project, or initiative], in a good or bad way? What happened to you because of it?

When you think about the word "[some important word from the plan, message, statement, or policy]," what experience with [the policy, program, project, or initiative] does it remind you of? Could you tell [me/us] what happened in that experience?

[Look at, listen to] this [policy, law, statement, message]. [Show or read it aloud.] Does any part of it bring to mind anything that has happened to you—good or bad? Or does it remind you of anything that you heard about happening to someone else? Could you tell [me/us] what you remember?

Say you have been placed in charge of [the topic] in [the community or organization]. Say you have written a policy that will guide how [the topic] is dealt with from now on. Say you have been asked to make a speech about your new policy. In that speech, you have decided to tell your audience about something that happened to you that influenced your decision. What experience do you choose to tell people about? And can you tell [me/us] about that experience?

Is there any other experience related to [the topic] that you would you like to tell [me/us] about? What happened that mattered to you?

Follow-up questions

How do you feel about that story?

> See page 9 for three ways to ask this question.

How important is this story to you?

> See page 9 for three ways to ask this question.

How long ago did the events of this story take place?

> [some number of weeks, months, or years) ago ←——————→ Today
>
> I don't know

Based on your experience, would you say that [the events, the situation, the outcome, the emotions] in this story [is/are] common or rare in [this group, organization, community]?

> This happens to everyone every day ←——————→ This rarely happens to anyone
>
> I don't know

Of these [parts, aspects, rules] of [the policy, program, project, or initiative], choose two that were important to the story in a positive way. Which helped the story to turn out better than it would have without them?

> [a list of aspects, rules, parts of the policy, program, etc, like "the fact that citizens had a voice"]
>
> None of these
>
> I don't know
>
> Other _____

Now choose two [parts, aspects, rules] of [the policy, program, project, or initiative] that played a part in making story turn out worse than it would have without them.

> [the same list as in the previous question]
>
> None of these
>
> I don't know
>
> Other _____

What do you wish had happened in the story?

    [a list of events, like "I got the help I needed"]

    [a list of changes, like "This stopped happening"]

    [a list of reactions, like "They finally saw what I needed"]

    [a list of outcomes, like "We found a solution that worked for everyone"]

    It happened just as I would wish

    I don't know

    I'd rather not say

    Other _____

If [the policy, program, project, or initiative] was changed in a way that made your wish come true, how would [the policy, program, project, or initiative] be different? What would it be like?

    [free text]

If there was a vote on changing [the policy, program, project, or initiative] in the way you described, who would vote for it?

    [a list of roles or positions, like "Our congressperson"]

    [a list of groups, like "Teachers"]

    [a list of people in situations, like "People who are thinking about moving here"]

    [a list of people in relationships, like "People who care for people with this disability"]

    [a list of people with feelings, like "People who feel angry about this"]

    [a list of people with opinions, like "People who think this"]

    None of these

    I don't know

    I'd rather not say

    Other _____

Who would vote against it?

    [the same list as in the previous question]

    None of these

    I don't know

    Other _____

Who would be helped by the change?

    [the same list as in the previous question]

    None of these

I don't know

Other _____

Who would be harmed by it?

[the same list as in the previous question]

None of these

I don't know

Other _____

Is there anything else you [would like, feel a need, have] to [say, tell me or us, explain] about this story, or about your answers to any of these questions?

[free text]

Questions about participants

How do you feel about [the topic] in general?

[free text]

What does [the topic] mean to you?

[free text]

What would you like to see happen about [the topic]?

[free text]

To what extent do you think [the policy, program, project, or initiative] has been [formed, designed, planned, run, implemented] well?

It could not be better ⟷ It is a disaster

I don't know

How strongly do you support [the official policy, a law, a particular opinion]?

Not at all ⟷ Completely

I don't know

Would you say that [our community, organization, country] is going in the right or wrong direction with respect to [the topic]?

Completely wrong ⟷ Totally right

I don't know

Is there anything else you would like to say about [the topic] that you haven't had the opportunity to say so far?

[free text]

23. To find out why people stay and leave

Story-eliciting questions

This question set has a lot of trust icons. Asking people why they want to stay or leave in a community or organization requires extra up-front work on building a safe-to-speak privacy policy and a let's-make-things-better win-win proposal.

What was the best or worst moment of your last [month, six months, year] [at, in] [this group, our community, this organization]? What happened in that moment?

Can you recall a time when you felt especially [happy, comfortable, satisfied, pleased, safe, free, productive] (or not) [living, working] here? What happened during that time?

When you think about the saying ["It takes a village to raise a child," "Many hands make light work," "A rising tide lifts all boats," or some other saying that pertains to collective life and work], does any experience [living, working] in this [community, organization] — good or bad — come to mind for you? Could you tell [me/us] about it?

Can you recall an experience that made you feel like an essential [part, element, component, member] of [this group, community, organization]? Or can you recall an experience that left you feeling like you were on the outside looking in? What happened that made you feel that way?

Did you ever wake up in the morning excited to [work, live] here? Or did you ever wake up ready to find another place to [work, live]? Could you tell [me/us] that happened that made you feel that way?

When you think about what makes you want to stay in or leave [this community, this organization], is there a particular experience that comes to mind that explains why you feel that way? Could you tell [me/us] what happened in that experience?

Did anything happen to you in the past [few months, year] that made you think to yourself, "The next time this happens, it will be the last straw"? Or did anything happen that made you think, "If this keeps up, I might just start liking it here"? What was it that happened?

Is there any other experience related to [the topic] that you would you like to tell [me/us] about? What happened that mattered to you?

Follow-up questions

How do you feel about that story?

   See page 9 for three ways to ask this question.

How important is this story to you?

   See page 9 for three ways to ask this question.

These are some [ideas, changes, proposals] [our leadership, our research group, our task force, our advocacy group] has [come up with, considered, advocated]. Which of them do you think would make stories like this one turn out better in the future?

>   [a list of ideas, changes, or proposals, like "more money for ambulance services"]
>
>   None of these
>
>   I don't know
>
>   Other _____

Which of those [ideas, changes, proposals] do you think would make stories like this one turn out worse in the future?

>   [the same list as in the previous question
>
>   None of these
>
>   I don't know
>
>   Other _____

Is there anything else you would like to say about what would have made this story turn out better or worse, from your perspective?

>   [free text]

If there was a problem or a solution in this story, what was it, and who was involved in it?

>   [free text]

Based on your experience, would you say that [the events, the situation, the outcome, the emotions] in this story [is/are] common or rare in [this group, organization, community]?

>   This happens to everyone every day ⟵——————————⟶ This rarely happens to anyone
>
>   I don't know

To what extent do you think other people in [our community, our organization] would feel the same way as you do about this story?

>   Everyone would feel this way ⟵——————————⟶ Nobody else would feel this way
>
>   I don't know

What are some of the other perspectives you think people in [our community, our organization] would have on the story? What do you think people would say about it? Would they say it turned out well, was important, was common?

>   [free text]

Why do you think you chose this particular experience to tell [me/us] about?

>   It says a lot to me about [the topic]
>
>   It seemed like the right answer to your question

I remember it well

I learned a lot from it

It's a good memory

I thought you would like it

People need to hear it

It's funny

I don't know

I'd rather not say

Other _____

If you could go back in time to the start of this story, what would you say or do to help it turn out differently? What would you avoid changing?

[free text]

Is there anything else you [would like, feel a need, have] to [say, tell me or us, explain] about this story, or about your answers to any of these questions?

[free text]

Questions about participants

What do you think will come next for your [job, home, group membership]?

I plan to stay forever

I would like to stay forever, but we'll see

I am not sure how long I want to stay

I am considering a move

I am actively seeking a new [job, home, group]

I don't know

Other _____

Which of these reasons explains your answer to the previous question?

[a positive reasons, like "We have a great team"]

[a negative reasons, like "I don't feel like I fit in here"]

I don't know

Other _____

What would change your responses to the previous two questions?

[free text]

Based on your experiences, how many people in [this group, our community, this organization] feel the way you do about staying or leaving?

Everybody ←——————————→ Just me

I don't know

In general, which of these [ideas, changes, proposals] [our leadership, our research group, our task force, our advocacy group] has [come up with, considered, advocated] do you like best?

[a list of ideas, changes, or proposals, like "more money for ambulance services"]

None of these

I don't know

Other _____

Which do you like least?

[the same list as in the previous question

None of these

I don't know

Other _____

What would you like to see happen in this [community, organization, group]? What would make it the ideal place to [live, work] for you?

[free text]

If you were in charge of this [community, organization, group], what would you do to convince more people to stay in it?

[free text]

24. To find new and innovative ideas

Story-eliciting questions

Have you thought of (or heard about) a new [idea, hunch, brainstorm, brainwave, stroke of insight, epiphany] related to [the topic] lately? What was it, how did it come about, and what happened as a result?

What was the best or worst new idea you've had or seen [in the team, our community] in the past [month, year]? Where did the idea come from, and how did it play out?

When you think of the phrase "out of the box thinking," what moment from the past [time period] comes to mind for you? Could you tell [me/us] what happened in that moment?

Looking back over your experiences with [the topic], can you recall a time when you (or somebody else) found a new way of [dealing with, handling, improving] [the topic]? What happened then?

What's the best solution you've found (or come up with) for [dealing with, handling, improving] [the topic] over the past [number of weeks, months, years]? How did the solution come about, and what happened as it played out?

Can you recall a time in the past [few weeks, six months] when something happened and you thought, "Now that's an idea worth keeping (or not)"? What happened that led you to think that?

Did you ever do something (or see someone else do something) related to [the topic] that is not the usual way of doing things, but works very well anyway? What was it? How did it get started? Why does it work so well?

Is there any other experience related to [the topic] that you would you like to tell [me/us] about? What happened that mattered to you?

Follow-up questions

How do you feel about that story?

> See page 9 for three ways to ask this question.

How important is this story to you?

> See page 9 for three ways to ask this question.

Choose a person who had a new idea in the story. Who did you choose?

> [a list of identities, like "a citizen"]
> [a list of relationships, like "a neighbor"]
> [a list of positions, like "a manager"]
> [a list of people with feelings, like "a person who is disappointed"]
> [a list of people in situations, like "a person who just got a traffic ticket"]
> Other _____

What was the new idea?

> [free text]

Who or what helped that person to come up with the idea?

> their own [quality]
> their [role, group member, or group]
> nothing and nobody
> I don't know
> Other _____

Who or what hindered them in coming up with the idea?

    their own [issue]

    their [role, group member, or group]

    nothing and nobody

    I don't know

    Other _____

To what extent did the idea make a difference in how the story played out?

    It ruined everything ⟵——————⟶ It fixed everything

    I don't know

What happened to the idea after the story was over?

    [free text]

Who do you think most needs to hear this story?

    [a list of roles or positions, like "Our congressperson"]

    [a list of groups, like "Teachers"]

    [a list of people in situations, like "People who are thinking about moving here"]

    [a list of people in relationships, like "People who care for people with this disability"]

    [a list of people with feelings, like "People who feel angry about this"]

    [a list of people with opinions, like "People who think this"]

    I don't know

    I'd rather not say

    Other _____

What do you think would happen if this story was more widely known?

    [a list of outcomes, like "more people would understand"]

    it is already widely known

    I'm not sure

    Other _____

How long ago did the events of this story take place?

    [some number of weeks, months, or years) ago ⟵——————⟶ Today

    I don't know

Based on your experience, would you say that [the events, the situation, the outcome, the emotions] in this story [is/are] common or rare in [this group, organization, community]?

    This happens to everyone every day ⟵——————⟶ This rarely happens to anyone

I don't know

What in this story surprised you? What didn't surprise you?

[free text]

Is there anything else you [would like, feel a need, have] to [say, tell me or us, explain] about this story, or about your answers to any of these questions?

[free text]

Questions about participants

Would you say that [our group, community, organization] is an idea-*generating* [place, group, community]?

Not at all ←—————————→ Completely

I don't know

Would you say that [our group, community, organization] is an idea-*welcoming* [place, group, community]

Not at all ←—————————→ Completely

I don't know

How do you feel about your answers to the previous two questions?

This is perfect ←—————————→ This needs to change

I don't know

In general, how would you say new ideas are received in [our group, community, organization]?

they are supported

they are celebrated

they are put into practice

they are considered

they are evaluated

they are dismissed

they are ignored

it depends on who has them

it depends on who they are told to

I don't know

Other _____

In general, how do you think we ought to receive new ideas in [our group, community, organization]?

    We should be more welcoming to them

    We should take them more seriously

    We should be more careful about them

    We should be more equitable about them

    I don't know

    Other _____

25. To decide where to allocate funds

Story-eliciting questions

Can you remember a time when you felt that [our group, team, community, organization] made a turn in the right or wrong direction? What happened that made you feel that way?

When was the last time you felt like [our group, team, community, organization] was in good working order—or wasn't? What happened during that time?

Looking back over your experiences in [our group, team, community, organization], what one moment stands out to you as an example of something (anything) worth investing in? What happened in that moment?

When you think back over your experiences with [the topic], can you think of a time when you saw a small change make a big difference, good or bad? What changed, and what happened as a result?

Can you remember a time when you saw something happen in [our group, team, community, organization] and thought, "This is what needs to happen"? Or can you remember a time when you thought, "This is what needs to stop"? What happened that needs to happen or stop?

Say you are talking with someone who wants to help [our group, team, community, organization] by making some kind of contribution. Say you decide to tell them about an experience that will show them how you feel about the past or the future of [our group, team, community, organization]. What experience do you choose to tell them about? And can you tell [me/us] about it?

Is there any other experience related to [the topic] that you would you like to tell [me/us] about? What happened that mattered to you?

Follow-up questions

How do you feel about that story?

    See page 9 for three ways to ask this question.

How important is this story to you?

See page 9 for three ways to ask this question.

How long ago did the events of this story take place?

[some number of weeks, months, or years) ago ⟵————————⟶ Today

I don't know

Based on your experience, would you say that [the events, the situation, the outcome, the emotions] in this story [is/are] common or rare in [this group, organization, community]?

This happens to everyone every day ⟵————————⟶ This rarely happens to anyone

I don't know

What do you wish had happened in the story?

[a list of events, like "I got the help I needed"]

[a list of changes, like "This stopped happening"]

[a list of reactions, like "They finally saw what I needed"]

[a list of outcomes, like "We found a solution that worked for everyone"]

It happened just as I would wish

I don't know

I'd rather not say

Other _____

What does the story say to you about what our [group, team, community, organization] needs most in the future?

[free text]

What does it say to you about what we already have?

[free text]

Does the story say anything to you about anything we have lost?

[free text]

These are some of the assets our [community, organization, group] depends on. Which of them were the most helpful in the story?

[a list of assets, like "our library"]

I don't know

Other _____

Were any of the assets missing or unavailable in the story?

   [the same list as in the previous question]

   I don't know

   Other _____

Were any of the assets present but harmful in the story?

   [the same list as in the previous question]

   I don't know

   Other _____

These are some investments [our group, team, community, organization] is thinking about making. Which of them do you think would be most helpful in situations like this?

   [a list of investments, like "more money for road maintenance"]

   I don't know

   Other _____

Would any of the investments be harmful in situations like this?

   [the same list as in the previous question]

   I don't know

   Other _____

Why do you think you chose this particular experience to tell [me/us] about?

   It says a lot to me about [the topic]

   It seemed like the right answer to your question

   I remember it well

   I learned a lot from it

   It's a good memory

   I thought you would like it

   People need to hear it

   It's funny

   I don't know

   I'd rather not say

   Other _____

Is there anything else you [would like, feel a need, have] to [say, tell me or us, explain] about this story, or about your answers to any of these questions?

   [free text]

Questions about participants

Would you say that people are equal in this [group, team, community, organization]?

Absolutely not ⟵——————⟶ We are all exactly equal

I don't know

Are you happy with the way we make plans in this [group, team, community, organization]?

I am perfectly content ⟵——————⟶ I am miserably unhappy with it

I don't know

How much say do you have in this [group, team, community, organization]?

None whatsoever ⟵——————⟶ I'm in charge

I don't know

How much say would you *like* to have?

I'm good ⟵——————⟶ So much more

I don't know

If you were in charge of investing in [our group, team, community, organization], which three of these allocations would you prioritize most?

[a list of things funds could be allocated to, like "fixing potholes"]

I don't know

Other _____

Which would you prioritize least?

[the same list as in the previous question]

I don't know

Other _____

26. To ground-truth decisions

Story-eliciting questions

When you think about [the topic], do any success stories come to mind? How about cautionary tales?

When you think about what works (and doesn't) in relation to [the topic], do any experiences come to mind for you?

Can you think of a time when your experience of [the topic] went better or worse than expected? What happened at that time?

Did anyone ever decide to [one of the options under consideration, or a few different options] in a way that impacted your [work, life, family] or the [work, life, family] of someone you know? What happened because of that decision?

Have you heard any rumors about [the topic] that you think should influence the decisions [I, we, our community, or organization] [make, makes] about [the topic]? Could you tell [me/us] what you have heard?

Please take a look at this [draft decision]. Does it remind you of any experiences you've had (or heard about)? Could you tell [me/us] about that experience?

Did you ever see someone do something related to [the topic] and think to yourself, "We need more of *that*"? Or did you think, "I hope we won't be doing *that*"? In either case, could you tell me what you saw and how you felt about it?

Say you are talking with someone who is [making, helping to make] a decision about [the topic]. Say you want to influence the decision in some way. You decide to tell them about an experience you've had that will show them how you feel about [the topic]. What experience do you choose to tell them about? Could you tell [me/us] about that experience?

Is there any other experience related to [the topic] that you would you like to tell [me/us] about? What happened that mattered to you?

Follow-up questions

How do you feel about that story?

> See page 9 for three ways to ask this question.

How important is this story to you?

> See page 9 for three ways to ask this question.

Based on your experience, would you say that [the events, the situation, the outcome, the emotions] in this story [is/are] common or rare in [this group, organization, community]?

> This happens to everyone every day $\longleftrightarrow$ This rarely happens to anyone
>
> I don't know

What does this story say to you about what [we, our community, our organization] need[s] to do about [the topic]?

> [free text]

What in this story surprised you? What didn't surprise you?

> [free text]

Who in [our team, community] do you think would agree with your interpretation of what the story has to say about [the topic]?

 [a list of roles or positions, like "Our congressperson"]

 [a list of groups, like "Teachers"]

 [a list of people in situations, like "People who are thinking about moving here"]

 [a list of people in relationships, like "People who care for people with this disability"]

 [a list of people with feelings, like "People who feel angry about this"]

 [a list of people with opinions, like "People who think this"]

 I don't know

 I'd rather not say

 Other _____

Who would disagree with your interpretation of what the story has to say about [the topic]?

 [the same list as in the previous question]

 I don't know

 I'd rather not say

 Other _____

What do you think either of these groups (those who would agree, or those who would disagree) would say about the story?

 [free text]

Which of these proposals would have made the story turn out better, do you think?

 [a list of proposals (things the community or organization is considering), like "allocate more funding for science"]

 I don't know

 Other _____

How much better?

 Infinitely better ⟵——————————⟶ A tiny bit better

 I don't know

Which of these proposals would have made the story turn out worse, in your opinion?

 [the same list as in the previous question]

 I don't know

 Other _____

How much worse?

    Infinitely worse ←—————————→ A tiny bit worse

    I don't know

Was there ever a time when the opposite of this story happened? If so, what was different between the two situations?

    [a list of conditions, like "I didn't have as much help then"]

    The opposite of this story never happened

    I don't know

    Other _____

Is there anything else you [would like, feel a need, have] to [say, tell me or us, explain] about this story, or about your answers to any of these questions?

    [free text]

Questions about participants

How strongly do you feel about [the topic]?

    I don't care about it at all ←—————————→ I care deeply about it

    I don't know how I feel about it

How involved are you with making decisions about [the topic]?

    Not at all ←—————————→ Fully

    I'm not sure how involved I am

Which of these proposals do you favor most with respect to [the topic]?

    [the same list of proposals as in the questions about the story]

    I don't know

    Other _____

> The next four questions ask participants to imagine multiple fictional futures. These fictional stories, when juxtaposed with stories of real experiences, can shed light on the hopes and fears people have about the future (and maybe where they come from).

If the decision of what to do about [the topic] was entirely yours to make, what would you decide [we, our group, our community, our organization] should do?

    [free text]

    [or ask them to choose from the list of proposals you used above]

Once you had made your decision, how would you explain it to the [group, community, organization]?

　　[free text]

Say it's [some number of weeks, months, years] later, and the [group, community, organization] has carried out your decision, with [fruitful, excellent, wonderful] results. What happened? What is the [group, community, organization] like now?

　　[free text]

Say it's [some number of weeks, months, years] years later, and the [group, community, organization] has carried out your decision, with [minimal, disappointing, disastrous] results. What happened? What is the [group, community, organization] like now?

　　[free text]

27. To gather visions for the future

Story-eliciting questions

What's something that happened to you (related to [the topic]) in the past that you would like to see happen again—or not? Could you tell [me/us] what happened?

Looking back over your experiences with [the topic], can you remember a time when something happened that you wish would keep happening—or stop happening? What was it that happened?

If you could go back in time and choose one experience with [the topic] to repeat (or never repeat) in the future, what experience would that be? Could you tell [me/us] about it?

What's an experience you would like to include in (or exclude from) your ideal future with respect to [the topic]? Could you tell [me/us] about a time when you had an experience like that?

Did you ever see something happen related to [the topic] and think to yourself, "I hope that happens again!" Or did you ever think, "I hope that *never* happens again!" In either case, what happened that made you think that? Could you tell [me/us] about it?

Imagine a situation [in the future, or in a specific future time frame, like "in 20 years"] that is either perfect or horrible with respect to [the topic]. Now look back on your past experiences related to [the topic]. Can you recall an experience you have had that connects to the future situation you chose? What happened in that experience?

Shakespeare said "the past is prologue," meaning that what has happened in the past sets the stage for what will happen in the future. When you reflect on that phrase with respect to [the topic], what one experience from the past comes to mind for you? What happened in that experience?

Is there any other experience related to [the topic] that you would you like to tell [me/us] about? What happened that mattered to you?

Follow-up questions

How do you feel about that story?

See page 9 for three ways to ask this question.

How important is this story to you?

See page 9 for three ways to ask this question.

How long ago did the events of this story take place?

[some number of weeks, months, or years) ago ⟵————————⟶ Today

I don't know

Based on your experience, would you say that [the events, the situation, the outcome, the emotions] in this story [is/are] common or rare in [this group, organization, community]?

This happens to everyone every day ⟵————————⟶ This rarely happens to anyone

I don't know

Which of these problems and/or opportunities were involved in the story?

[a list of problems, like "crumbling infrastructure"]

[a list of opportunities, like "better education"]

I don't know

Other _____

Which of these roles and/or groups seem were involved in the story?

[a list of roles, like "our CEO"]

[a list of groups, like "HR"]

I don't know

Other _____

What about this story would you like to see happen many times in the future?

[free text]

What about it would you like to leave behind in the past?

[free text]

How do you think this story would have ended if it had happened [2, 10, 50, 100] years ago?

Infinitely worse ⟵————————⟶ Infinitely better

I don't know

If the story would have ended differently in the past, why is that? What has changed?

[free text]

How do you think stories like this one will end [2, 10, 50, 100] years in the future?

Infinitely worse $\longleftrightarrow$ Infinitely better

I don't know

If stories like this one will end differently in the future, why do you think that will happen?

[free text]

Why do you think you chose this particular experience to tell [me/us] about?

It says a lot to me about [the topic]

It seemed like the right answer to your question

I remember it well

I learned a lot from it

It's a good memory

I thought you would like it

People need to hear it

It's funny

I don't know

I'd rather not say

Other _____

Is there anything else you [would like, feel a need, have] to [say, tell me or us, explain] about this story, or about your answers to any of these questions?

[free text]

> The "choose a person who wanted or needed something" question set also works well in this type of project (see page 14).

Questions about participants

When you think about the future of [the topic] in [our group, community], how do you feel?

Devoid of hope $\longleftrightarrow$ Full of hope

I don't know

How involved are you in making decisions about the future of [the topic] in [our group, community]?

Not at all $\longleftrightarrow$ It is my responsibility

I'd rather not say

How involved would you like to be in making decisions about the future of [the topic] in [our group, community]?

Much less involved $\longleftrightarrow$ I wish I was in charge of it

I don't know

In your opinion, what are the [2, 3, 4] most important problems [our group, community, organization] will face in the future?

[the same list as in the questions about the story]

I don't know

Other _____

What are the [2, 3, 4] most important opportunities that will support [our group, community, organization] in the future?

[the same list as in the questions about the story]

I don't know

Other _____

What do you think [our group, community, organization] should do about [the topic, or the problems you chose above]?

[a list of actions, like "listen to the people"]

I don't know

Other _____

Describe your ideal future with respect to [the topic]. What will happen? What will not happen?

[free text]

Chapter 6

Education and knowledge management

These question sets might be useful for projects focused on individual or collective learning in a group, community, or organization.

28. To find out what people need to understand a complex concept

Story-eliciting questions

Can you recall the first time you ever came into contact with [the topic]? What did you first [hear, see, read] about it, and how did it affect you?

Could you tell me the history of your understanding of [the topic]? What did you learn first? What did you learn later?

Did you ever experience a step forward—or back—in your understanding of [the topic]? What led to the step, and what happened as a result of it?

What was the best or worst learning resource you ever used to learn about [the topic]? What happened when you used it?

Can you recall a moment when you felt curious about [the topic]? What were you curious about, and what happened as a result?

Did you ever encounter a disagreement about [the topic]? How did you encounter it, and what did you [do, think, learn] as a result?

Have you ever realized that your understanding of [the topic] was wrong? What were you wrong about, and what did you [do, think, learn] as a result?

Did you ever have a hard time explaining [the topic] to someone else? What happened then?

Have you ever felt [confused, stuck, under-confident, intimidated, overwhelmed]   🤝
in your learning about [the topic]? What was the problem, and what happened
afterward?

Is there any other experience related to [the topic] that you would you like to tell [me/us]
about? What happened that mattered to you?

Follow-up questions

How do you feel about that story?

> See page 9 for three ways to ask this question.

How important is this story to you?

> See page 9 for three ways to ask this question.

Choose a person who [learned, needed to learn, wanted to learn] something in the story.
Who did you choose?

> [a list of identities, like "a citizen"]
>
> [a list of relationships, like "a neighbor"]
>
> [a list of positions, like "a manager"]
>
> [a list of people with feelings, like "a person who is disappointed"]
>
> [a list of people in situations, like "a person who just got a traffic ticket"]
>
> Other _____

How much did that person learn from the start to the end of the story?

> They learned nothing at all ⟵───────────⟶ They learned a lot
>
> I don't know

How easy was their learning journey?

> It was like walking on a flat smooth path ⟵───────────⟶ It was like climbing a high
> mountain
>
> I'm not sure

Who or what helped them to learn?

> their [trait, like "determination"]
>
> their [person in a relationship, like "friend"]
>
> their [group, like "work team"]
>
> their [helper, like "counselor"]
>
> [a list of resources, like "our web site"]
>
> [a list of services or tools, like "our training course"]
>
> I'm not sure

Other _____

Who or what stood in the way of their learning?

    their [limitation, like "anxiety"]

    their [person in a relationship, like "friend"]

    their [group, like "work team"]

    their [helper, like "counselor"]

    [a list of resources, like "our web site"]

    [a list of services or tools, like "our training course"]

    I'm not sure

    I'd rather not say

    Other _____

What might have made the story turn out better than it did?

    [free text]

What might have made it turn out worse?

    [free text]

What surprised you the most about the story?

    [free text]

If you were designing a learning resource, tool, or service to help people who were in situations like the one in this story, what would it be like?

    [free text]

How would this story have turned out if such a resource, tool, or service had been available when it happened?

    [free text]

Is there anything else you [would like, feel a need, have] to [say, tell me or us, explain] about this story, or about your answers to any of these questions?

    [free text]

Questions about participants

Are you a big-picture or detail-oriented thinker?

    I delve in to the details $\longleftrightarrow$ I stay at the top level

    I don't know

Are you a concrete or abstract thinker?

I think about real things $\longleftrightarrow$ I think about concepts

I don't know

Do you learn new things quickly or slowly?

I'm a snail with new things $\longleftrightarrow$ I pick up new things very quickly

I don't know

Which of these ways of learning work well for you?

reading

writing

listening

talking

looking at pictures and diagrams

solving problems

doing things with my hands

doing things with my whole body

I'm not sure

I'd rather not say

Other _____

Are any of those ways of learning difficult for you?

[the same list as in the previous question]

I'm not sure

I'd rather not say

Other _____

Based on what you know about [the topic], what do you think is the best way to explain it?

[free text]

Do you explain [the topic] to people?

No, never $\longleftrightarrow$ Yes, every day

I'd rather not say

29. To find out what people need to understand a complex process

Story-eliciting questions

Can you think of a time in your learning about [the topic] when you crossed a threshold of learning, when your understanding of [the process] changed in a way that mattered to you? What happened during that time?

Can you recall a time in your learning about [the topic] when you (or someone else) got past an obstacle in doing it well? What were you (or they) stuck on, and what happened to get you (or them) unstuck?

In the course of your learning about [the topic], did anyone ever help you make progress that you could not have made on your own? Or did you ever help someone else make progress they could not have made on their own? What happened?

What was the best or worst learning resource you ever used to learn about [the topic]? What happened when you used it?

Think of a [mystery, puzzle, conundrum, confusion, roadblock, problem, issue, dilemma] you encountered while learning about [the topic]. How did it come about, and how did you resolve it?

Did you ever have an "aha" moment with respect to [the topic]? How did it happen, and what was the result?

Are there any learning resources you used to rely on when you [did, followed, carried out] [the topic] at the start that you no longer need to rely on? Could you describe how you found them, used them, and ultimately transcended them?

Can you recall a time (or a period of time) when your [practice of, progress through, work with] [the topic] changed from something you had to keep [checking on, looking up, asking for help with] to something you could do without [checking, looking anything up, asking for help]? How did that change come about, what was it like, and what happened afterward?

In your learning about [the topic], did you ever feel daunted or under-confident, like you would never be able to learn it? Could you tell [me/us] what happened?

Did you ever make a mistake related to [the topic] that taught you something about it? Could you tell [me/us] what happened?

Has anyone or anything ever got in the way of your learning about [the topic]? Have you ever felt intimidated, unheard, or hindered in your learning? What happened?

Is there any other experience related to [the topic] that you would you like to tell [me/us] about? What happened that mattered to you?

Follow-up questions

How do you feel about that story?

> See page 9 for three ways to ask this question.

How important is this story to you?

> See page 9 for three ways to ask this question.

Based on your experience, would you say that [the events, the situation, the outcome, the emotions] in this story [is/are] common or rare in [this group, organization, community]?

> This happens to everyone every day ⟵——————⟶ This rarely happens to anyone
>
> I don't know

Choose a person who learned something in the story. Who did you choose?

> [a list of identities, like "a citizen"]
>
> [a list of relationships, like "a neighbor"]
>
> [a list of positions, like "a manager"]
>
> [a list of people with feelings, like "a person who is disappointed"]
>
> [a list of people in situations, like "a person who just got a traffic ticket"]
>
> Other _____

Which of these [tasks, stages, procedures] related to [the topic] did that person learn in the story?

> [a list of tasks, like "how to admit a patient"]
>
> [a list of stages, like "what to do after an office visit"]
>
> [a list of procedures, like "lab safety protocols"]
>
> Other _____

How hard was it for that person to learn the things they learned?

> Very easy ⟵——————⟶ Very hard
>
> I don't know

Based on what you know about [the topic], do most people find learning those things as hard as that person did?

> Most people find it much easier ⟵——————⟶ Most people find it much harder
>
> I don' t know

How much effort would you say that person put into learning the things they learned?

> A huge effort ⟵——————⟶ No effort at all

I don't know

How much help did that person get?

None at all ⟵——————⟶ All the help they needed

I don't know

Which of these things helped that person to learn the things they learned?

their [trait, like "determination"]

their [person in a relationship, like "friend"]

their [group, like "work team"]

their [helper, like "counselor"]

[a list of resources, like "our web site"]

[a list of services or tools, like "our training course"]

I'm not sure

Other _____

Who or what stood in the way of their learning?

their [limitation, like "anxiety"]

their [person in a relationship, like "friend"]

their [group, like "work team"]

their [helper, like "counselor"]

[a list of resources, like "our web site"]

[a list of services or tools, like "our training course"]

I'm not sure

I'd rather not say

Other _____

If someone was putting together a learning resource about [the topic], how useful do you think it would be for this story (or one like it) to be included?

It would be of no help ⟵——————⟶ It would be of huge help

I don't know

Who do you think this story would help most?

[a list of learning styles, like "people who learn by doing"]

[a list of levels of experience, like "people who are just getting started"]

[a list of roles or positions, like "customer service representatives"]

I'm not sure

Other _____

Who do you think this story would help least?

> [the same list as in the previous question]
>
> I'm not sure
>
> Other _____

What does this story say to you about [the topic]?

> [free text]

Is there anything else you [would like, feel a need, have] to [say, tell me or us, explain] about this story, or about your answers to any of these questions?

> [free text]

Questions about participants

How long have you been learning about [the topic]?

> [a list of time periods, like "two years""]
>
> Other _____

How much do you know about [the topic]?

> Nothing at all ⟵——————⟶ I'm an expert in it
>
> I'd rather not say

In general, how easy has learning about [the topic] been for you?

> Ridiculously easy ⟵——————⟶ Overwhelmingly hard
>
> I'd rather not say

To what extent do you help other people learn about [the topic]?

> I help people learn about it all the time ⟵——————⟶ I never do that
>
> I'd rather not say

Based on what you know about [the topic], what do you think is the best way to help people learn how to do it?

> [free text]

Are you satisfied with the learning resources you have been able to use to learn about [the topic]?

> Yes, they have been perfect ⟵——————⟶ No, they have been useless
>
> I don't know

If the learning resources you have used to learn about [the topic] have been less than perfect, why is that, and what do you think would make them better?

[free text]

30. To help people improve their (individual) learning

Story-eliciting questions

Could you tell [me/us] about your learning journey with [the topic]? Looking back now, is there a particular high or low point that stands out to you as important?

Looking back on your experiences learning about [the topic], can you recall a time when your learning was surprisingly [fast or slow, easy or hard, smooth or rough]? What happened at that time?

While learning about [the topic], did you ever encounter a learning resource that worked exceptionally well or poorly for you? What happened when you used it?

Did anything (or anyone) ever [boost, speed up, improve, enable] or [inhibit, slow down, impair, destroy] your learning about [the topic]? Who/what was it, and how did their/its influence play out?

In your learning about [the topic], did you ever get stuck on an obstacle or discover a better way forward? What happened?

Did you ever encounter a discovery—or a mystery—that changed the way you approached [the topic]? How did it come about, and how did it play out?

Looking back over your experiences with [the topic], was there ever a moment when you realized that the ground had been shifting under you—in a good or bad way—for some time? What had been changing, and what caused you to realize it?

What has been your biggest [success or failure, achievement or mistake] in learning about [the topic]? Could you tell [me/us] about it?

Did you ever think about how you were learning about [the topic], realize that you were going about things the wrong way, correct your course, and get better results afterward? Could you tell [me/us] what happened then?

Did you ever encounter a situation in which the very thing that helped you to learn about [the topic] held someone else back—or vice versa? What was the thing, and how did the learning play out?

Is there any other experience related to [the topic] that you would you like to tell [me/us] about? What happened that mattered to you?

Follow-up questions

How do you feel about that story?

See page 9 for three ways to ask this question.

How important is this story to you?

> See page 9 for three ways to ask this question.

How long ago did the events of this story take place?

> [some number of weeks, months, or years) ago ⟵⟶ Today
>
> I don't know

Based on your experience, would you say that [the events, the situation, the outcome, the emotions] in this story [is/are] common or rare in [this group, organization, community]?

> This happens to everyone every day ⟵⟶ This rarely happens to anyone
>
> I don't know

> 🗎 The "choose a person who wanted or needed something" question set works well in this type of project (see page 14).

What does the story say to you about learning in general?

> [a list of needs, like "people need to hear more real-life examples""]
>
> [a list of observations, like "different people learn differently""]
>
> [a list of ideas, like "shorter bursts of learning might be better""]
>
> Other _____

What does the story say to you about learning when it comes to [the topic] in particular?

> [a list of needs, like "this is an especially practical matter, so people need hands-on practice""]
>
> [a list of observations, like "it's easy to make a costly mistake in this area""]
>
> [a list of ideas, like "how about a video series?""]
>
> Other _____

If the story had turned out better than it did, what could have made that happen?

> [a list of characteristics, like "more curiosity""]
>
> [a list of relationships, like "learning in a team""]
>
> [a list of resources, like "a more comprehensive FAQ""]
>
> [a list of services, like "a dedicated help line""]
>
> [a list of improvements, like "teachers that listened better""]
>
> Other _____

If the story had turned out worse, what might have made that happen?

> [a list of characteristics, like "less curiosity""]
>
> [a list of missing relationships, like "nobody experienced to ask""]

[a list of missing resources, like "a less comprehensive FAQ""]

[a list of missing services, like "no helpline""]

[a list of deteriorations, like "if teachers didn't listen""]

Other _____

If someone came to you and said they were trying to help people learn about [the topic], and you told them this story, what would you say to them afterwards—to make sure they understood what you think people (people like you, or people in general) need when it comes to learning about [the topic]?

[free text]

Is there anything else you [would like, feel a need, have] to [say, tell me or us, explain] about this story, or about your answers to any of these questions?

[free text]

Questions about participants

Which of these ways of learning work well for you?

reading

writing

listening

talking

looking at pictures and diagrams

solving problems

doing things with my hands

doing things with my whole body

I'm not sure

I'd rather not say

Other _____

Are any of those ways of learning difficult for you?

[the same list as in the previous question]

I'm not sure

I'd rather not say

Other _____

In general, do you pick up new things quickly or slowly?

I'm like a snail ⟵——————⟶ I'm like a rocket ship

It's not that simple

If you said "It's not that simple," would you like to explain what you mean?

[free text]

How often do you pause to reflect on how you are learning and seek to improve it?

I do that constantly ⟵——————————⟶ I never do that

It's complicated

If you said "It's complicated," would you like to explain what you mean?

[free text]

Speaking in general, which of these events usually give your learning a boost?

diving deep into a learning resource that "clicks" for me

working out my thoughts in a productive discussion with other people

becoming immersed in a motivating experience

getting excited about what I'll be able to accomplish with what I'm learning

seeing myself make progress towards a goal

explaining what I have learned to other people

putting ideas into practice in real-world applications

I'm not sure

I'd rather not say

Other _____

Again speaking in general, which of the same events tend to drag down your learning?

[the same list as in the previous question]

I'm not sure

I'd rather not say

Other _____

31. To help people improve their (collective) learning

Story-eliciting questions

Can you recall a time when the way [our, your] [group, community, organization] [does, handles, deals with, learns about] [the topic] changed in a way that mattered to you? How did the change come about, and what was its result (for you or for everyone)?

Can you remember a turning point when [our, your] [group, community, organization] got better or worse at [doing, handling, dealing with, learning about] [the topic]? What happened?

Did you ever see [our, your] [group, community, organization] learn something important about [doing, handling, dealing with, learning about] [the topic]? What happened that you remember?

If you look back over [our, your] collective learning journey with respect to [the topic], in what one moment do you think [you, we] learned the most about [the topic]? What happened in that moment?

Is there a moment of [gratitude, hope, energy, joy] or [regret, hopelessness, apathy, sorrow] that especially stands out to you in your memories of [our, your] [group's, community's, organization's] history of [doing, handling, dealing with, learning about] [the topic]? What happened in that moment?

Did you ever see [our, your] [group, community, organization] reach a dead end when it came to [doing, handling, dealing with, learning about] [the topic]? What was the dead end, and how did [you, we] get back out of it? Conversely, did [you, we] ever find a new path forward? What happened then?

Think of something that [our, your] [group, community, organization] does (or avoids) today in relation to [the topic] that we avoided (or did) a long time ago. It could be something that makes things better or worse for all of us. What caused the change, and what happened when it came about?

Is there any other experience related to [the topic] that you would you like to tell [me/us] about? What happened that mattered to you?

Follow-up questions

How do you feel about that story?

> See page 9 for three ways to ask this question.

How well does this story fit into a scenario in which [our, your] [group, community, organization] was the perfect learning [group, community, organization]?

> It would be exactly like this $\longleftrightarrow$ It would be the opposite of this
>
> I don't know

How important is this story to you?

> See page 9 for three ways to ask this question.

How long ago did the events of this story take place?

> [some number of weeks, months, or years) ago $\longleftrightarrow$ Today
>
> I don't know

What was the greatest collective need of [our, your] [group, community, organization] during the story?

   [a list of collective needs, like curiosity, respect, trust, listening, cooperation, information, understanding of the topic. understanding each other]

   I'm not sure

   Other _____

To what extent was that need met in the story?

   It was perfectly met ⟵—————————⟶ It was not met at all

   I don't know

Who or what helped [you, us] to meet that need?

   our [trait(s), like "openness to new ideas"]

   our [relationship(s), like "friendships"]

   our [group(s), like "the task force"]

   our [helper(s), like "council members"]

   [a list of resources, like "our web site"]

   [a list of rules, laws, or policies, like "traffic laws"]

   I'm not sure

   Other _____

Who or what stood in [your, our] way?

   our [limitation(s), like "lack of trust"]

   our [relationships, like "wary collaborators"]

   our [group(s), like "the task force"]

   our [helper(s), like "council members"]

   [a list of resources, like "our web site"]

   [a list of rules, laws, or policies, like "traffic laws"]

   I'm not sure

   I'd rather not say

   Other _____

From your perspective, does the story show things getting better or worse with respect to [the topic]? (If it doesn't show either thing, mark a spot in the middle.)

   It shows things getting much worse ⟵—————————⟶ It shows things getting much better

   I don't know

Why do you think the story shows things getting better or worse?

>   [a list of positive reasons, like "we are here for each other in ways we never were before"]
>
>   [a list of negative reasons, like "we don't have enough time for learning anymore"]
>
>   I'm not sure
>
>   I'd rather not say
>
>   Other _____

What lesson do you think [you, we, our community] can draw from this story?

>   [a list of needs, like "we need to invest more in generational knowledge transfer"]
>
>   [a list of learnings, like "[the topic] is more complicated than we thought"]
>
>   [a list of assertions, like "we had better move faster in this new economy"]
>
>   I'm not sure
>
>   I'd rather not say
>
>   Other _____

If [you, we, our community] learned that lesson, and applied that learning, how would things change in the future?

>   [free text]

Why do you think someone would want to [read, hear] this story?

>   [a list of reasons, like "to find new hope"]
>
>   I don't know
>
>   Other _____

Is there anything else you [would like, feel a need, have] to [say, tell me or us, explain] about this story, or about your answers to any of these questions?

>   [free text]

Questions about participants

In your opinion, what are the three most important things [our, your] [group, community, organization] need(s) to learn about [the topic]?

>   [free text]

What do you think is the best way for [you, us] to learn those things?

>   [free text]

To what extent is that learning already happening

>   We're on our way ⟵————————⟶ We are going in the wrong direction

I don't know

What is working in [your, our] collective learning about [the topic] right now? What is not working?

[free text]

With respect to [our, your] collective learning about [the topic], what's something you would like to see more of in the future?

[a list of norms or traditions, like "listen more to each other"]

[a list of ideas, like "start a community forum on [the topic]"]

I'm not sure

I'd rather not say

Other _____

With respect to learning to [do, handle, deal with, learn about] [the topic], what's something [you, we] [have, do] now that you wish we could [get rid of, stop doing]?

[a list of limiting practices, like "too many meetings"]

[a list of limiting norms or traditions, like "our reluctance to speak up about new ideas"]

[a list of limiting structures, like "our out-of-date knowledge base"]

I'm not sure

I'd rather not say

Other _____

Is there anything from the past that you wish [you, we] could [get back, start doing again]?

[a list of lost practices, like "we used to have such open discussions"]

[a list of lost norms or traditions, like "we used to listen better"]

[a list of lost structures, like "the excellent knowledge base we used to maintain"]

I'm not sure

I'd rather not say

Other _____

If [our, your] [group, community, organization] was completely perfect in [its, our, your] learning about [the topic], what would [its, our, your] learning be like?

[free text]

32. To map knowledge assets

Story-eliciting questions

In this instance it is not necessary to use "better or worse, you decide" questions, because the goal is to surface stories about knowledge assets, not a lack of assets.

What is the most useful thing you ever learned about [the topic]? How did you come to learn it?

In your learning about [the topic], did you ever find just the right information at just the right time? What was the information, and what happened when you found it?

Can you remember any "aha" moments in your learning about [the topic]? Could you tell [me/us] about one of them?

In your learning about [the topic], was there a particular source of learning that helped you more than any other? What was that source, how did you use it, and how did it help you?

Can you recall a surprise that taught you something about [the topic], something that you can now see was important to your learning? What was the surprise, and how did it play out?

Did you ever learn something useful about [the topic] because of something someone did or said? What was it they did or said, and what happened as a result?

When you think back on all of the things you have learned about [the topic] in the past [month, six months, year, decade], in what one moment would you say that you learned the most about [the topic]? What happened in that one moment?

If you think about what you know about [the topic] today, and you look back into your past experiences with [the topic], what one experience do you think explains best what you [know, or still don't know] about [the topic] today? Could you tell [me/us] about that experience?

Is there any other experience related to [the topic] that you would you like to tell [me/us] about? What happened that mattered to you?

Follow-up questions

How do you feel about that story?

> See page 9 for three ways to ask this question.

How important is this story to you?

> See page 9 for three ways to ask this question.

Choose a person who faced a learning challenge in the story. Who did you choose?

> [a list of identities, like "a citizen"]
> [a list of relationships, like "a neighbor"]
> [a list of positions, like "a manager"]
> [a list of people with feelings, like "a person who is disappointed"]
> [a list of people in situations, like "a person who just got a traffic ticket"]

Other _____

Please describe the learning challenge that person faced in the story.

[a list of learning challenges, like "figuring out how to apply for a loan"]
Other _____

To what extent did the person succeed in facing the learning challenge?

Completely ⟵——————————⟶ Not at all

It's complicated

If you said "It's complicated," would you like to explain what you mean?

[free text]

What was the long-term impact of their success (or failure) in facing their learning challenge?

[free text]

Which of these learning assets helped them to meet their learning challenge?

[a list of resources, like "our help system"]
[a list of individual characteristics, like "their curiosity"]
[a list of collective norms or traditions, like "our weekly help session"]
[a list of relationships, like "their friends"]
[a list of roles, like "our help team"]
Other _____

Which assets *could* have helped more had they been [better, bigger, more noticeable, more available, more accessible, easier to use, easier to understand]?

[the same list as in the previous question]
Other _____

Did any of the assets stand in the way of their learning?

[the same list as in the previous questions]
Other _____

How long ago did the events of this story take place?

[some number of weeks, months, or years) ago ⟵——————————⟶ Today

I don't know

Based on your experience, would you say that [the events, the situation, the outcome, the emotions] in this story [is/are] common or rare in [this group, organization, community]?

This happens to everyone every day ⟵————————⟶ This rarely happens to anyone

I don't know

Is there anything else you [would like, feel a need, have] to [say, tell me or us, explain] about this story, or about your answers to any of these questions?

[free text]

Questions about participants

When it comes to [the topic], to what extent would you say that [our group, team, community, organization] has the knowledge assets it needs to meet its learning challenges?

[It has, we have] nothing ⟵————————⟶ [It has, we have] all the assets [it, we] need(s)

I don't know

Which of these knowledge assets do you think are the most useful with respect to [the topic]?

[the same list as in the previous questions]

Other _____

What sorts of knowledge assets do you think [our group, team, community, organization] needs more of to learn about [the topic]?

[a list of possible or proposed assets, like "an updated training course""]

Other _____

What do you think would happen if [our group, team, community, organization] had all of the knowledge assets [it, we] needed to learn about [the topic] perfectly?

[a list of outcomes, like "we would get more work done faster""]

Other _____

Which of these knowledge assets do you personally use on a day-to-day basis?

[the same list of existing assets as in the previous questions]

Other _____

To what extent would you say that you (personally) have the knowledge assets you need to meet your learning challenges related to [the topic]?

I have nothing ⟵————————⟶ I have all the assets I need

I don't know

What sorts of knowledge assets do you personally need more of in your [work, job, life]?

[a list of possible or proposed assets, like "a customized training course""]

Other _____

What do you think would happen if you got all of the knowledge assets you need?

[a list of outcomes, like "I would get more work done faster""]

Other _____

33. To find knowledge gaps

Story-eliciting questions

How did you learn what you know about [the topic]? Could you tell me about the ups and downs of your learning journey about it?

What was the biggest sigh of relief (or frustration) you ever experienced in your learning about [the topic]? What led to it, and what happened afterward?

What's something most people [get wrong, struggle to understand, need time to understand, slowly come to understand] about [the topic]? What happened when you first learned about it?

Did you ever overcome a [gap, misunderstanding, mistaken idea, misconception, confusion, mystery] in your knowledge about [the topic]? Or did you ever help anyone else overcome such a thing? What was it, and how did you (or they) overcome it?

Is there anything you (still) struggle to understand about [the topic]? Could you tell [me/us] the story of your struggle to understand it?

Did you ever realize that something you didn't know about [the topic] was holding you back? What was it, and what did you do about it?

Is there any other experience related to [the topic] that you would you like to tell [me/us] about? What happened that mattered to you?

Follow-up questions

How do you feel about that story?

See page 9 for three ways to ask this question.

How important is this story to you?

See page 9 for three ways to ask this question.

Choose a person who learned something in the story. Who did you choose?

[a list of identities, like "a citizen"]

[a list of relationships, like "a neighbor"]

[a list of positions, like "a manager"]

[a list of people with feelings, like "a person who is disappointed"]

[a list of people in situations, like "a person who just got a traffic ticket"]

Nobody learned anything in the story

Other _____

What did the person learn in the story?

[a list of things someone could learn, like "how to make a tasty salad"]

Other _____

How completely do you think they learned it?

They learned it completely ⟵——————⟶ They have much more to learn

I don't know

How long you think they will remember what they learned?

Forever ⟵——————⟶ They already forgot it

I don't know

What impact did their learning have on their [life, work, practice, understanding]?

It changed everything ⟵——————⟶ It made no difference

I don't know

At the end of the story, were there any gaps in that person's knowledge about [the topic]? Was there anything important that they still needed to learn about it?

[a list of things you could learn about the topic, like "how to check on their application"]

They learned everything they needed to learn about [the topic]

Other _____

What impact did their knowledge gaps (if any) have on their [life, work, practice, understanding]?

They ruined everything ⟵——————⟶ They made no difference

I don't know, or there weren't any gaps

What do you think caused the knowledge gaps?

[a list of things that could cause knowledge gaps, like "not enough time"]

There weren't any knowledge gaps

Other _____

What do you think that person could do to fill the knowledge gaps in the future?

[a list of things that could fill knowledge gaps, like "talk to a coach"]

There weren't any knowledge gaps

Other _____

Based on your experience, would you say that [the events, the situation, the outcome, the emotions] in this story [is/are] common or rare in [this group, organization, community]?

This happens to everyone every day ⟵———————⟶ This rarely happens to anyone

I don't know

How long ago did the events of this story take place?

[some number of weeks, months, or years) ago ⟵———————⟶ Today

I don't know

Why do you think you chose this particular experience to tell [me/us] about?

It says a lot to me about [the topic]

It seemed like the right answer to your question

I remember it well

I learned a lot from it

It's a good memory

I thought you would like it

People need to hear it

It's funny

I don't know

I'd rather not say

Other _____

Is there anything else you [would like, feel a need, have] to [say, tell me or us, explain] about this story, or about your answers to any of these questions?

[free text]

Questions about participants

How long have you been learning about [the topic]?

[a list of time periods, like "ten years"]

I'm not sure

I'd rather not say

Other _____

How much is there to know about [the topic]? How long do you think it would take a person to understand it completely?

[a list of time periods, like "ten years"]

I don't think anyone could ever understand it completely

I'm not sure

Other _____

How much do you know about [the topic]?

Everything there is to know ⟵——————⟶ Nothing at all

I'd rather not say

How much more (or less) do you know about [the topic] compared to the people you [live, work] with? (If you know the same amount, place your marker in the middle of the line.)

A huge amount more ⟵——————⟶ A huge amount less

I don't know

When you are learning about [the topic], what sort of learning resources do you like best?

Brief summaries of the basics

Step-by-step tutorials that lead me through perfectly designed learning experiences

Some expert guidance and some freedom to explore

Comprehensive and well-organized bodies of detailed information

Experts who can answer my questions

Whatever the experts are looking at to answer my questions

The raw data

I'm not sure

I'd rather not say

Other _____

What are some things you would like to know about [the topic] and don't?

[a list of things you could learn about the topic, like "how to check on their application"]

I know everything I need to know about [the topic]

Other _____

Why do you think you don't know those things?

[a list of things that could cause knowledge gaps, like "not enough time"]

I know everything I need to know about [the topic]

Other _____

Which of these things would you be interested in doing to learn more about [the topic]?

[a list of things that could fill knowledge gaps, like "talk to a coach"]

I know everything I need to know about [the topic]

Other _____

This might be a good place for some questions about learning styles (as on page) and things that boost or slow down learning (as on page).

34. To pass on tacit knowledge

Story-eliciting questions

What is the one most important thing people need to understand about [the topic] to [do it well, succeed at it, truly understand it]? What happened when you first understood it?

What's something newcomers to [the topic] always get wrong? What happened when you first got it right?

What's something hardly anyone knows about [the topic]? What happened when you first learned about it?

Can you think of something you learned about [the topic] that seemed to take forever to truly understand? What was it, and what happened before, as, and after you truly understood it?

Describe a [mystery, dilemma, confusion, obstacle, aha moment, discovery, insight] you [faced, found, experienced] in your learning about [the topic] over the past [six months, year, few years, decade]. What was it, how did you [deal with, find, discover] it, and what happened afterwards?

Sometimes learning is a step change: you don't understand something, and then you do. At other times, learning is a sea change: you grow to understand something over time. Can you recall any particularly memorable step or sea changes in your learning about [the topic]? Could you tell [me/us] what you remember?

Looking back over your experiences with [the topic], can you choose one day in which your [understanding of, knowledge about, ability to deal with] [the topic] changed more than on any other day? What happened on that day?

Did you ever learn anything about [the topic] that you had to [gain the trust of, get to know, understand] [someone, the group, the community, the organization] to learn about? What was it, how did you learn it, and what happened afterwards?

Say you are talking with someone who is just getting started [with, in] [the topic]. Say you want to pass on some of your knowledge about [the topic]. You decide to tell them about an experience you've had that you think will help them learn. What experience do you choose to tell them about? Could you tell [me/us] about that experience?

Is there any other experience related to [the topic] that you would you like to tell [me/us] about? What happened that mattered to you?

Follow-up questions

How do you feel about that story?

> See page 9 for three ways to ask this question.

How important is this story to you?

> See page 9 for three ways to ask this question.

Please choose a person who learned something in the story. Who did you choose?

> [a list of identities, like "a citizen"]
>
> [a list of relationships, like "a neighbor"]
>
> [a list of positions, like "a manager"]
>
> [a list of people with feelings, like "a person who is disappointed"]
>
> [a list of people in situations, like "a person who just got a traffic ticket"]
>
> Nobody learned anything in the story
>
> Other _____

Which of these explicit facts or skills did that person learn in the story?

> [a list of facts about the topic, like "the vocabulary of soil percolation"]
>
> [a list of skills related to the topic, like "how to install a septic system"]
>
> Other _____

How did they learn those explicit facts or processes?

> [a list of ways to learn, like "by reading a set of instructions"]
>
> Other _____

How much of an impact did their learning of the explicit facts or processes have on how the story turned out?

> It changed everything ⟵——————⟶ It had no impact
>
> I don't know

What do you think would have helped them to learn those explicit facts or processes better than they did?

> [free text]

What might have prevented them from learning the explicit facts or processes?

> [free text]

Which of these tacit senses or understandings did that person learn in the story?

> [a list of complex senses or understandings about the topic, like "how the ecology of soil affects its structure"]
>
> Other _____

How did they learn those tacit senses or understandings?

> [a list of ways to learn, like "by comparing many different soil samples"]
>
> Other _____

How much of an impact did their learning of the tacit senses or understandings have on how the story turned out?

> It changed everything ⟵————————⟶ It had no impact
>
> I don't know

What do you think would have helped them to learn those tacit senses or understandings better than they did?

> [free text]

What might have prevented them from learning the tacit senses or understandings?

> [free text]

If a person who knew nothing about [the topic] heard this story, what would you think they would learn from it?

> [a list of explicit facts or processes, like "the vocabulary of soli percolation"]
>
> [a list of tacit senses or understandings, like "how the ecology of soil affects its structure"]
>
> Other _____

How useful would the story be to a person who knew nothing about [the topic]?

> Entirely useless ⟵————————⟶ The most useful story they could find
>
> I don't know

Would you like to explain your answer to the previous question?

> [free text]

Why do you think someone would want to [read, hear] this story?

> [a list of reasons, like "to find new hope"]
>
> I don't know
>
> Other _____

Is there anything else you [would like, feel a need, have] to [say, tell me or us, explain] about this story, or about your answers to any of these questions?

[free text]

Questions about participants

How long have you been learning about [the topic]?

[a list of time periods, like "ten years"]

I'm not sure

I'd rather not say

Other _____

How much is there to know about [the topic]? How long do you think it would take a person to understand it completely?

[a list of time periods, like "ten years"]

I don't think anyone could ever understand it completely

I'm not sure

Other _____

How much do you know about [the topic]?

Everything there is to know ⟵——————⟶ Nothing at all

I'd rather not say

What sorts of formal learning have you completed with respect to [the topic]?

[a list of formal learning programs, like named programs or certifications]

Other _____

What sorts of informal learning have you experienced with respect to [the topic]?

[a list of informal experiences, like "I've installed a few septic systems so far"]

Other _____

To what extent are you officially responsible for helping other people learn about [the topic]?

Teaching people about this is what I do ⟵——————⟶ I have no official responsibility for this

I'd rather not say

To what extent are you *unofficially* responsible for helping other people learn about [the topic]?

It's what I always end up doing ⟵——————⟶ I have never helped anyone learn this

I'd rather not say

35. To improve a learning resource

Story-eliciting questions

Could you tell [me/us] about the first time you ever encountered [the resource]? What happened in that first encounter with it?

Walk [me/us] through your last use of [the resource]. What did you use it for, how did you approach it, what did you find out, and how did you use what you found out?

Can you remember a time when [the resource] was exceptionally useful or useless to you? What happened during that time?

Did you ever use [the resource] to help anyone else learn something about [the topic]? What happened?

Have you ever recommended that someone use (or avoid) [the resource] to learn about [the topic]? Or did anyone ever recommend that you use (or avoid) [the resource]? Could you tell [me/us] about that experience?

Did [the resource] ever help you to realize that you had been [misunderstanding something, making a mistake, getting something wrong, doing something wrong] about [the topic]? What did you realize, how did [the resource] help you realize it, and what happened afterwards?

Did you ever find a mistake in [the resource]? How did you find it, how did it affect your use of [the resource], who did you tell about it, and what did you do differently afterwards?

Is there any other experience related to [the topic] that you would you like to tell [me/us] about? What happened that mattered to you?

Follow-up questions

How do you feel about that story?

See page 9 for three ways to ask this question.

How important is this story to you?

See page 9 for three ways to ask this question.

How long ago did the events of this story take place?

[some number of weeks, months, or years) ago ⟵——————⟶ Today

I don't know

Based on your experience, would you say that [the events, the situation, the outcome, the emotions] in this story [is/are] common or rare in [this group, organization, community]?

This happens to everyone every day ⟵——————⟶ This rarely happens to anyone

I don't know

What does this story say to you about [the resource]?

[free text]

Who do you think needs to hear this story?

[a list of roles or positions, like "Our congressperson"]

[a list of groups, like "Teachers"]

[a list of people in situations, like "People who are thinking about moving here"]

[a list of people in relationships, like "People who care for people with this disability"]

[a list of people with feelings, like "People who feel angry about this"]

[a list of people with opinions, like "People who think this"]

I don't know

I'd rather not say

Other _____

What do you think would happen if they did hear it?

[a list of outcomes, like "they would see what we need"]

Other _____

Please choose a person who needed to learn something in the story. Who did you choose?

[a list of identities, like "a citizen"]

[a list of relationships, like "a neighbor"]

[a list of positions, like "a manager"]

[a list of people with feelings, like "a person who is disappointed"]

[a list of people in situations, like "a person who just got a traffic ticket"]

Nobody learned anything in the story

Other _____

To what extent did [the resource] help that person learn what they needed to learn?

Perfectly ⟵——————⟶ Not at all

It's complicated

If you said "It's complicated," would you like to explain what you mean?

[free text]

How did [the resource] help the person you chose?

> [a list of ways a learning resource could help people, like "with clear explanations"
>
> It did not help the person
>
> Other _____

Are there any ways in which [the resource] stood in the way of the person's learning?

> [a list of ways a learning resource could stand in the way of learning, like "the topics were poorly organized"
>
> It did not stand in their way
>
> Other _____

What do you wish had happened in the story?

> [a list of events, like "I got the help I needed"]
>
> [a list of changes, like "This stopped happening"]
>
> [a list of reactions, like "They finally saw what I needed"]
>
> [a list of outcomes, like "We found a solution that worked for everyone"]
>
> It happened just as I would wish
>
> I don't know
>
> I'd rather not say
>
> Other _____

If what you wish had happened, what would [the resource] have been like?

> [free text]

Is there anything else you [would like, feel a need, have] to [say, tell me or us, explain] about this story, or about your answers to any of these questions?

> [free text]

Questions about participants

How often do you use [the resource]?

> Every day ⟵—————————⟶ Rarely
>
> I'm not sure

How often do you know about [the topic]?

> Everything there is to know ⟵—————————⟶ Nothing at all
>
> I'd rather not say

How much do you rely on [the resource] in your daily [life, work]?

Completely ⟵—————————⟶ Not at all

It's complicated

If you said "It's complicated," would you like to explain what you mean?

[free text]

How long have you been using [the resource]?

For decades ⟵—————————⟶ For a few days

I'm not sure

Compared to other learning resources you have used, how would you rate [the resource]?

Infinitely better ⟵—————————⟶ Infinitely worse

I'm not sure

What do you like most about [the resource]?

[free text]

If you could change anything you wanted to about [the resource], what would you change?

[free text]

What's an example of a learning resource you've used that you wish [the resource] was more like, and why?

[free text]

36. To make a process easier to learn

Story-eliciting questions

What was the best or worst time you ever [went through the process]? Could you tell [me/us] what happened that made that particular experience stand out for you?

During [the process], did you ever see something happen that made you think, "I wish this would always happen" or "I hope this never happens again"? What was it that happened?

Looking back over your experiences with [the process], can you recall a time when you felt [happy or sad, relieved or disappointed, pleased or frustrated, confused or enlightened, excited or bored, hopeful or hopeless, proud or ashamed] about it? Could you tell [me/us] what happened then?

Think of a time when you got stuck on an obstacle—or unstuck because of a discovery—during [the process]. What led you to get stuck or unstuck, and what happened afterwards?

Could you tell [me/us] about a [mystery, dilemma, puzzle, confusion] you encountered while [going through the process]? How did it come about, how did you respond to it, and what happened afterwards?

What's your favorite part of [the process]? Or your least favorite? Can you recall a time when you [did, went through, carried out] that part of [the process] that would help [me/us] to understand why you see it that way?

Is there any other experience related to [the topic] that you would you like to tell [me/us] about? What happened that mattered to you?

Follow-up questions

How do you feel about that story?

> See page 9 for three ways to ask this question.

How important is this story to you?

> See page 9 for three ways to ask this question.

How long ago did the events of this story take place?

> [some number of weeks, months, or years) ago ⟵──────⟶ Today
>
> I don't know

Based on your experience, would you say that [the events, the situation, the outcome, the emotions] in this story [is/are] common or rare in [this group, organization, community]?

> This happens to everyone every day ⟵──────⟶ This rarely happens to anyone
>
> I don't know

Which of these [steps, stages, aspects] of [the process] were most important in the story?

> [a list of steps, stages, or aspects of the process, like "making the appointment"
>
> None of these were important to the story
>
> Other _____

What went well in the story?

> [a list of things that might happen in the process, like "talking to the doctor"
>
> None of these things went well
>
> Other _____

What didn't go well?

> [a list of things that might happen in the process, like "talking to the doctor"
>
> None of these things could have gone better
>
> Other _____

What do you wish had happened in the story?

> [a list of events, like "I got the help I needed"]

[a list of changes, like "This stopped happening"]

[a list of reactions, like "They finally saw what I needed"]

[a list of outcomes, like "We found a solution that worked for everyone"]

It happened just as I would wish

I don't know

I'd rather not say

Other _____

What does the story say to you about how [the process] can or should be improved?

[free text]

What does it say to you about how people should be helped to [learn about, understand] [the process]?

[free text]

Who do you think needs to hear this story?

[a list of roles or positions, like "Our congressperson"]

[a list of groups, like "Teachers"]

[a list of people in situations, like "People who are thinking about moving here"]

[a list of people in relationships, like "People who care for people with this disability"]

[a list of people with feelings, like "People who feel angry about this"]

[a list of people with opinions, like "People who think this"]

I don't know

I'd rather not say

Other _____

How much do you think hearing this story would help people who are just learning [the process]?

It would help them a lot ⟵——————⟶ It would not help them at all

I don't know

To what extent do you think the story shows that [the process] needs to be improved?

Not at all ⟵——————⟶ It shows a total need for improvement

I don't know

Is there anything else you [would like, feel a need, have] to [say, tell me or us, explain] about this story, or about your answers to any of these questions?

[free text]

Questions about participants

To what extent do you think [the process] needs to be improved?

Not at all; it's fine as it is ⟵——————⟶ It needs to be completely redesigned

I don't know

If you were in charge of improving [the process], what would you do first?

[a list of ways the process might be improved, like "giving people more time to choose"

I wouldn't change anything

Other _____

If [the process] was ideal, from your point of view, what would it be like? How would it play out? What would happen?

[free text]

To what extent are you involved with [doing, carrying out, supporting] [the process]?

Not at all ⟵——————⟶ It is what I do

I'd rather not say

How long have you been [involved with, going through, connected to] [the process]?

[a list of time periods, like "six months"

Other _____

How much do you know about [the process]?

Almost nothing ⟵——————⟶ I'm an expert in it

I'd rather not say

Evaluation and research

These question sets might be useful for academic research projects in social science settings.

37. To evaluate the impact of a project

Story-eliciting questions

When you look back over [the project, or the last number of days, weeks, months, years of the project], what was its highest or lowest point—for you, from your perspective? What happened in that moment?

What was the biggest surprise you can remember during [the project, or the last number of days, weeks, months, years of the project]? What happened that surprised you?

Can you recall a time during [the project, or the last number of days, weeks, months, years of the project] when you felt [happy or sad, pleased or angry, relieved or frustrated, excited or indifferent, hopeful or hopeless]? What happened that made you feel that way?

During [the project, or the last number of days, weeks, months, years of the project], did you ever feel grateful that [the project] was happening—or grateful that it would end? What was it that happened?

What is something that happened (to you, or to someone else) during [the project, or the last number of days, weeks, months, years of the project] that would not have happened (or would have happened differently) if [the project] had not been going on?

Looking back over your experiences with [the project, or the last number of days, weeks, months, years of the project], could you choose one experience, one moment in time, that shows what [the project] has been like for you? What happened in that experience?

Say it's [some number of months or years] from now, and [someone] [is, are] thinking about [building, starting, putting together] another [project] like [the project]. Say you want to either encourage or discourage them, so you look back over your

experiences with [the project, or the last number of days, weeks, months, years of the project] and choose an experience to tell them about. What experience would you choose? Could you tell [me/us] about that experience?

Is there any other experience related to [the topic] that you would you like to tell [me/us] about? What happened that mattered to you?

Follow-up questions

How do you feel about that story?

>   See page 9 for three ways to ask this question.

How important is this story to you?

>   See page 9 for three ways to ask this question.

How long ago did the events of this story take place?

>   [some number of weeks, months, or years) ago ←————————→ Today

>   I don't know

Based on your experience, would you say that [the events, the situation, the outcome, the emotions] in this story [is/are] common or rare in [this group, organization, community]?

>   This happens to everyone every day ←————————→ This rarely happens to anyone

>   I don't know

How do you think the story would have played out if [the project] had never taken place? What would have happened?

>   [free text]

What was the most important change [the project] made in the story—important to *you*, not to anyone else?

>   [free text]

Why do you think [the project] changed the story the way it did?

>   [free text]

What does the story say to you about [the project]?

>   [free text]

Why do you think you chose this particular experience to tell [me/us] about?

>   It says a lot to me about [the topic]

>   It seemed like the right answer to your question

>   I remember it well

I learned a lot from it

It's a good memory

I thought you would like it

People need to hear it

It's funny

I don't know

I'd rather not say

Other _____

Which of these things made the story turn out better, from your point of view?

[a list of impacts the project was meant to have, like "better nutrition"

Other _____

Did any of these things make the story turn out worse?

[the same list as in the previous question

Other _____

Were any of these things unrelated to the story?

[the same list as in the previous questions

Other _____

What do you wish had happened in the story?

[a list of events, like "I got the help I needed"]

[a list of changes, like "This stopped happening"]

[a list of reactions, like "They finally saw what I needed"]

[a list of outcomes, like "We found a solution that worked for everyone"]

It happened just as I would wish

I don't know

I'd rather not say

Other _____

If what you wish had happened, how might [the project] have played a part in that?

[free text]

What in this story surprised you? What didn't surprise you?

[free text]

Is there anything else you [would like, feel a need, have] to [say, tell me or us, explain] about this story, or about your answers to any of these questions?

[free text]

Looking back over the story you just told, is there a moment within it that you have different (or mixed) feelings about? If so, could you tell [me/us] happened in *that* moment?

[free text]

⬜ Repeat the same follow-up questions about the second story. To use this option, ask half as many follow-up questions per story as you normally would.

Questions about participants

How long have you been [involved in, affected by, connected to] [the project]?

[a list of time periods, like "six months"

I'm not sure

I'd rather not say

Other _____

To what extent has [the project] affected you and [your life, work, family, whatever the project was supposed to affect]?

It changed nothing ⟵————————⟶ It changed everything

I'd rather not say

Has the change (if any) been positive or negative?

Completely negative ⟵————————⟶ Completely positive

I'd rather not say

Why do you think the project has had the effect it has had on your [life, work, family]?

[free text]

How much do you know about [the project]?

Nothing ⟵————————⟶ Everything

I'd rather not say

If you were in charge of designing a project to [do what the project meant to do] what would you do?

[a list of things that could be done, like "teach people about nutrition"

I wouldn't do anything; things are fine as they are

I'm not qualified to do anything

It's not my responsibility to do anything

I don't know what I would do

Other _____

If [the project] was ideal, from your point of view, what would it be like? How would it play out? What would happen?

[free text]

38. To evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of a process

Story-eliciting questions

Could you tell [me/us] what happened in your best or worst [run-through, example, time through, pass through, moment within] [the process, the past few days, weeks, months going through the process]?

When has [the process] felt efficient or inefficient to you? Could you tell [me/us] about a specific time that felt that way to you?

Can you remember a time when [the process] felt like smooth sailing—or rough seas—to you? What happened that made it feel that way?

Can you recall a time when you felt [confident, proud, grateful, excited, thrilled, privileged]—or not—to be [doing, going through, moving through] [the process]? What happened that made you feel that way?

Did you ever feel like [the process] was working well but going in the wrong direction? What caused it to veer off course, and what happened afterwards?

In your experience of [doing, going through] [the process], can you recall a moment when you thought to yourself, "Yes! This is working"? Or did you ever think, "No, this is all wrong"? What happened in that moment?

When you hear the proverb [a proverb related to time, work, waste, efficiency, or effectiveness, like "A poor workman blames his tools"], does it remind you of an experience you had [with, in] [the process]? Could you tell [me/us] about that experience?

Did you ever see someone do something [in the process] and think, "If everyone did that, this whole thing would be easier"—or harder? What was they did, and what happened afterwards?

When you were [doing, going through] [the process], did you ever think to yourself, "The time I am spending on this is wasted; I should be doing that"? What happened that made you think that?

Is there any other experience related to [the topic] that you would you like to tell [me/us] about? What happened that mattered to you?

Follow-up questions

How do you feel about that story?

> See page 9 for three ways to ask this question.

How important is this story to you?

> See page 9 for three ways to ask this question.

In the story, how effective was [the process] in doing what it was meant to do?

> Not at all effective ⟵——————⟶ Perfectly effective
>
> I don't know

In the story, how efficient was [the process]?

> Not at all efficient ⟵——————⟶ Perfectly efficient
>
> I don't know

Why do you think the story turned out the way it did?

> [free text]

What do you wish had happened in the story?

> [a list of events, like "I got the help I needed"]
>
> [a list of changes, like "This stopped happening"]
>
> [a list of reactions, like "They finally saw what I needed"]
>
> [a list of outcomes, like "We found a solution that worked for everyone"]
>
> It happened just as I would wish
>
> I don't know
>
> I'd rather not say
>
> Other _____

If what you wish had happened, what would [the process] have been like?

> [free text]

Why do you think you chose this particular experience to tell [me/us] about?

> It says a lot to me about [the topic]
>
> It seemed like the right answer to your question
>
> I remember it well
>
> I learned a lot from it
>
> It's a good memory
>
> I thought you would like it

People need to hear it

It's funny

I don't know

I'd rather not say

Other _____

How long ago did the events of this story take place?

[some number of weeks, months, or years) ago ⟵——————⟶ Today

I don't know

Based on your experience, would you say that [the events, the situation, the outcome, the emotions] in this story [is/are] common or rare in [this group, organization, community]?

This happens to everyone every day ⟵——————⟶ This rarely happens to anyone

I don't know

Which of these improvements to [the process] might have made the story turn out better?

[a list of possible improvements to the process, like "better help for beginners"]

Other _____

Are there any improvements that might have made the story turn out worse?

[the same list as in the previous question]

Other _____

Who do you think needs to hear this story?

[a list of roles or positions, like "Our congressperson"]

[a list of groups, like "Teachers"]

[a list of people in situations, like "People who are thinking about moving here"]

[a list of people in relationships, like "People who care for people with this disability"]

[a list of people with feelings, like "People who feel angry about this"]

[a list of people with opinions, like "People who think this"]

I don't know

I'd rather not say

Other _____

How do you think [the process] would change if they did hear it?

[free text]

Is there anything else you [would like, feel a need, have] to [say, tell me or us, explain] about this story, or about your answers to any of these questions?

[free text]

Questions about participants

Generally speaking, how effective do you think [the process] is in doing what it was designed to do?

Not at all effective ⟵————————⟶ Perfectly effective

It's complicated

If you said "It's complicated," would you like to explain your answer?

[free text]

Generally speaking, do you think [the process] is efficient?

No, not at all ⟵————————⟶ Yes, perfectly

It's complicated

If you said "It's complicated," would you like to explain your answer?

[free text]

Are there any groups for whom [the process] works best, in your opinion?

[the same list of groups, roles, etc, as in the "who needs to hear it" question]
Other _____

Are there any groups for whom [the process] works worst?

[the same list of groups, roles, etc, as in the "who needs to hear it" question]
Other _____

Which of these potential improvements to [the process] do you think are worth pursuing?

[the same list as in the previous questions]
Other _____

Do you think any of those improvements would make [the process] worse?

[the same list as in the previous questions]
Other _____

39. To answer a research question on a topic

It's hard to come up with questions to ask that will address *any* research question. I have listed some questions for broad exploration, but I suggest you look through the rest of the book to find other questions that connect well to your topic, your research question, and the goals of your study. For example:

If you are studying	Consider asking questions like	As on page
Needs	Who needed something in the story?	14
Dreams	What do you wish had happened?	30
Voices	Who needs to hear this story?	19

Story-eliciting questions

Think back to your most first, last, or most memorable experience with [the topic]. What happened to you?

When you look back over your experiences with [the topic], what one experience matters the most to you, for any reason? Could you tell [me/us] about that experience?

What was the highest or lowest point of your experience with [the topic]? Can you tell [me/us] what happened?

Can you recall a time when you felt [happy or sad, relieved or angry, pleased or frustrated, hopeful or hopeless, enthused or indifferent] about [the topic]? What happened that made you feel that way?

Did you ever learn or discover something new about [the topic]? What happened?

When you hear the question, "[the research question]," does a particular experience come to mind for you? Could you tell [me/us] about that experience?

Did something ever happen to you (or to someone else) that made you ask yourself, [the research question]? What was it that happened?

Say you are talking to someone and they ask, "[the research question]?" Say you decide to answer their question by telling them about an experience you have had. What experience do you tell them about? And can you tell [me/us] about it?

Is there any other experience related to [the topic] that you would you like to tell [me/us] about? What happened that mattered to you?

Follow-up questions

How do you feel about that story?

See page 9 for three ways to ask this question.

How important is this story to you?

See page 9 for three ways to ask this question.

What does the story say to you about [the topic, or the research question]?

    [free text]

Do you think [other people in your community, group, family, etc, or people in specific roles] would say the same thing about the story? If not, what do you think they would say about it?

    [free text]

If the things you and they would say would differ, why do you think that is?

    [free text]

Based on your experience, would you say that [the events, the situation, the outcome, the emotions] in this story [is/are] common or rare in [this group, organization, community]?

    This happens to everyone every day ⟵——————⟶ This rarely happens to anyone

    I don't know

How long ago did the events of this story take place?

    [some number of weeks, months, or years) ago ⟵——————⟶ Today

    I don't know

How do you think this story would have played out [some number of months or years] ago?

    [free text]

How do you think stories like this one will play out [some number of months or years] in the future?

    [free text]

Is there anything else you [would like, feel a need, have] to [say, tell me or us, explain] about this story, or about your answers to any of these questions?

    [free text]

Questions about participants

How important is [the topic or the research question] to you?

    It does not matter to me ⟵——————⟶ It could not be more important to me

    I'd rather not say

How much does [the topic or the research question] affect you personally?

    Not at all ⟵——————⟶ A huge amount

    I'd rather not say

To what extent is [the topic or the research question] your responsibility?

Not at all ⟵———————⟶ Completely

I'd rather not say

How do you feel about [the topic or the research question]?

[a list of likely feelings, like "happy"—or a scale from negative to positive]

Other _____

What is your opinion about [the topic or the research question]?

[a list of likely opinions, like "there should be more transparency"]

Other _____

What would you like to see happen with respect to [the topic or the question]?

[free text]

If you wanted to study [the topic or the research question], what would you do?

[free text]

40. To gather a wide range of experiences on a topic

Story-eliciting questions

When you think about [the topic], what one experience stands out most in your mind, for any reason? What happened that mattered to you?

Looking back over your experiences with [the topic], what one experience do you remember best? What happened in that experience?

Can you recall a time when you felt a strong emotion—of any kind—about [the topic]? What happened that made you feel that way?

Did you ever have an experience related to [the topic] that you find yourself telling people about often? Could you tell [me/us] about it?

Have you ever had an experience related to [the topic] that [your friends, your family, people in our community or organization, people in specific roles] would be surprised to hear? Could you tell [me/us] about that experience?

Did anything ever happen to you related to [the topic] that you wish you could tell [someone, everyone in our community, the people in charge] about—but you don't feel like you can? Or maybe you just haven't had the opportunity? If you would like to tell [me/us] about that experience, go ahead and do that.

Say you are talking to someone about [the topic], and you feel that they don't understand it, not really. You decide to tell them about an experience you've had

that explains what [the topic] is really like. What experience would you choose to tell them about? Could you tell [me/us] about that experience?

Is there any other experience related to [the topic] that you would you like to tell [me/us] about? What happened that mattered to you?

Follow-up questions

How do you feel about that story?

    See page 9 for three ways to ask this question.

How important is this story to you?

    See page 9 for three ways to ask this question.

What in this story surprised you? What didn't surprise you?

    [free text]

How long ago did the events of this story take place?

    [some number of weeks, months, or years) ago ⟵——————⟶ Today

    I don't know

Are [the events, the situation, the outcome, the emotions] in this story [is/are] common or rare in your [life, work]?

    This happens to me every day ⟵——————⟶ This rarely happens to me

    I don't know

Based on your experience, would you say that [the events, the situation, the outcome, the emotions] in this story [is/are] common or rare in [this group, organization, community]?

    This happens to everyone every day ⟵——————⟶ This rarely happens to anyone

    I don't know

Why do you think you chose this particular experience to tell [me/us] about?

    It says a lot to me about [the topic]

    It seemed like the right answer to your question

    I remember it well

    I learned a lot from it

    It's a good memory

    I thought you would like it

    People need to hear it

    It's funny

    I don't know

I'd rather not say

Other _____

What do you wish had happened in the story?

[a list of events, like "I got the help I needed"]

[a list of changes, like "This stopped happening"]

[a list of reactions, like "They finally saw what I needed"]

[a list of outcomes, like "We found a solution that worked for everyone"]

It happened just as I would wish

I don't know

I'd rather not say

Other _____

If what you wish had happened, what would have caused the change?

[free text]

Who do you wish could hear this story?

[a list of roles or positions, like "Our congressperson"]

[a list of groups, like "Teachers"]

[a list of people in situations, like "People who are thinking about moving here"]

[a list of people in relationships, like "People who care for people with this disability"]

[a list of people with feelings, like "People who feel angry about this"]

[a list of people with opinions, like "People who think this"]

I don't know

I'd rather not say

Other _____

Why do you wish they could hear it?

[free text]

What you think they would say about it?

[free text]

What do you think would happen if they did hear the story?

[free text]

Was there ever a time when the opposite of this story happened? If so, what was different between the two situations?

[a list of conditions, like "I didn't have as much help then"]

The opposite of this story never happened

I don't know

Other _____

Is there anything else you [would like, feel a need, have] to [say, tell me or us, explain] about this story, or about your answers to any of these questions?

[free text]

Looking back over the story you just told, is there a moment within it that you have different (or mixed) feelings about? If so, could you tell [me/us] happened in *that* moment?

[free text]

Repeat the same follow-up questions about the second story. To use this option, ask half as many follow-up questions per story as you normally would.

Questions about participants

In general, how do you feel about [the topic]?

[a list of likely feelings, like "frustrated"]

Other _____

In general, how would you describe your experiences related to [the topic]?

Entirely negative ⟵——————————⟶ Entirely positive

I'd rather not say

How much does [the topic] affect you?

Not at all ⟵——————————⟶ Completely

I'd rather not say

To what extent is [handling, dealing with, doing] [the topic] your responsibility?

Not at all ⟵——————————⟶ It is what I do

I'd rather not say

Which of these ideas do you like best for [addressing, dealing with, improving] [the topic]?

[a list of ideas, like "teach people how to avoid this problem"]

Other _____

Which ideas do you like worst?

[the same list of ideas as in the previous question]

Other _____

If you could tell anyone anything you wanted to say about [the topic], what would you say, and to whom would you say it?

[free text]

If you wanted to understand [the topic] better, what sorts of questions would you ask, and of whom?

[free text]

What's something you [hope for, fear, worry about, know] about [the topic] that you don't hear people talking about very often?

[free text]

Why do you think people don't talk about it?

[free text]

41. To test a hypothesis

Story-eliciting questions

Looking back over your experiences with [the topic], can you recall a time when you felt [an emotion related to the hypothesis]? What happened that made you feel that way?

What was the [most or least of some quality related to the hypothesis, like easiest or hardest] experience you ever had [with, related to] [the topic]? Could you tell [me/us] about it?

Did you ever experience [something suggested by the hypothesis]? Or did you experience [something suggested by the alternative hypothesis]? Could you tell [me/us] what happened in that experience?

When you hear the statement, "[the hypothesis]," does a particular experience come to mind for you? Could you tell [me/us] what happened in that experience?

Did you ever have an experience related to [the topic] that convinced you that [the hypothesis]—or [the alternative hypothesis]? What happened in that experience?

Did you ever see something happen and think to yourself, "[the hypothesis]"? Or did you ever see something happen and think, "[the alternative hypothesis]"? What happened that made you think that?

Can you recall a time when you went from thinking [the alternative hypothesis] to thinking [the hypothesis]? Or vice versa? Was there a particular experience that changed your mind? What happened in that experience?

Say you are talking to someone, and they say, "[the hypothesis]." Say you either agree or disagree with them. You look back over your experience with [the topic] and decide to tell them about a particular experience that will support (or argue

against) their statement. What experience do you choose to tell them about? And can you tell [me/us] about it?

Did anyone ever try to convince you that [the hypothesis]—or [the alternative hypothesis]—was true by telling you about an experience they had? If it's something you can share, could you tell [me/us] about the experience they had?

Is there any other experience related to [the topic] that you would you like to tell [me/us] about? What happened that mattered to you?

Follow-up questions

How do you feel about that story?

> See page 9 for three ways to ask this question.

How important is this story to you?

> See page 9 for three ways to ask this question.

Based on your experience, would you say that [the events, the situation, the outcome, the emotions] in this story [is/are] common or rare in [this group, organization, community]?

> This happens to everyone every day ⟵——————⟶ This rarely happens to anyone
>
> I don't know

What does this story say to you about the idea that [the hypothesis]?

> [free text]

What does it say to you about the idea that [the alternative hypothesis]?

> [free text]

Who do you think would agree with your interpretation of the story?

> [a list of roles or positions, like "Our congressperson"]
>
> [a list of groups, like "Teachers"]
>
> [a list of people in situations, like "People who are thinking about moving here"]
>
> [a list of people in relationships, like "People who care for people with this disability"]
>
> [a list of people with feelings, like "People who feel angry about this"]
>
> [a list of people with opinions, like "People who think this"]
>
> I don't know
>
> I'd rather not say
>
> Other _____

Who do you think would disagree with your interpretation of the story?

> [the same list as in the previous question]

I don't know

I'd rather not say

Other _____

What do you think the people who disagree would say about the story?

[free text]

What would you like to say to the people who disagree with your interpretation of the story?

[free text]

Was there ever a time when the opposite of this story happened? If so, what was different between the two situations?

[a list of conditions, like "I didn't have as much help then"]

The opposite of this story never happened

I don't know

Other _____

Is there anything else you [would like, feel a need, have] to [say, tell me or us, explain] about this story, or about your answers to any of these questions?

[free text]

Questions about participants

In general, how would you describe your experiences related to [the topic]?

Entirely negative ⟵——————⟶ Entirely positive

I'd rather not say

How much does [the topic] affect you?

Not at all ⟵——————⟶ Completely

I'd rather not say

To what extent is [handling, dealing with, doing] [the topic] your responsibility?

Not at all ⟵——————⟶ It is what I do

I'd rather not say

In general, how well does the statement "[the hypothesis]" fit your experience of [the topic]?

Perfectly ⟵——————⟶ Not at all

It's complicated

[free text]

If you said "It's complicated," would you like to explain your answer?

[free text]

How do you feel when you hear someone say "[the hypothesis]"?

[free text]

When you hear someone say "[the hypothesis]," what do you wish you could say to them?

[free text]

What about "the alternative hypothesis]"[? How well does that statement match your experience?

Perfectly ⟵——————⟶ Not at all

It's complicated

[free text]

If you said "It's complicated," would you like to explain your answer?

[free text]

How do you feel when you hear someone say "[the alternative hypothesis]"?

[free text]

When you hear someone say "[the alternative hypothesis]," what do you wish you could say to them?

[free text]

What do you think people need to know about [the topic] that they don't know?

[free text]

Chapter *8*

Advocacy

42. To surface persuasive stories

Story-eliciting questions

What happened the [last, first, most memorable] time you [experienced something related to the topic]? Could you tell [me/us] what happened?

Looking back over your experiences with [the topic], what one moment mattered the most to you, for any reason? What happened in that moment?

When you think about what [the topic] is really like—not what people *think* it's like, but what it's *really* like—does any particular moment come to mind? What happened in that moment?

Have you ever changed your mind about [the topic]? How did you see [the topic] before, what happened to change your mind, and what was the result?

Was there a moment when [the topic] changed for you? What happened in that moment?

What experience have you had with [the topic] that would surprise people who think they know [the topic]? Could you tell [me/us] about it?

If you wanted to inspire someone to [do something about, help fix, rethink, donate for, volunteer to help with] [the topic], what one day of your experience with [the topic] would you tell them about? What happened on that day?

When you hear people say [something about the topic], is there a story you wish you could tell them from your own experience? Could you tell this story to [me/us]?

Say you meet someone who thinks [something about the topic]. Say you want to convince them that [something else about the topic]. You decide to tell them about an experience you have had with [the topic]. What experience do you choose to tell them about? Could you tell [me/us] about it?

Is there any other experience related to [the topic] that you would you like to tell [me/us] about? What happened that mattered to you?

Follow-up questions

How do you feel about that story?

> See page 9 for three ways to ask this question.

How important is this story to you?

> See page 9 for three ways to ask this question.

Based on your experience, would you say that [the events, the situation, the outcome, the emotions] in this story [is/are] common or rare in [this group, organization, community]?

> This happens to everyone every day ⟵————————⟶ This rarely happens to anyone
>
> I don't know

How long ago did the events of this story take place?

> [some number of weeks, months, or years) ago ⟵————————⟶ Today
>
> I don't know

Why do you think you chose this particular experience to tell [me/us] about?

> It says a lot to me about [the topic]
> It seemed like the right answer to your question
> I remember it well
> I learned a lot from it
> It's a good memory
> I thought you would like it
> People need to hear it
> It's funny
> I don't know
> I'd rather not say
> Other _____

Where in the story do you see [hope, gratitude, joy, optimism, confidence]? Where you do see [hopelessness, disappointment, sadness, pain, fear]?

> [free text]

What do you wish had happened in the story?

> [a list of events, like "I got the help I needed"]
> [a list of changes, like "This stopped happening"]

[a list of reactions, like "They finally saw what I needed"]

[a list of outcomes, like "We found a solution that worked for everyone"]

It happened just as I would wish

I don't know

I'd rather not say

Other _____

Is there anything else you [would like, feel a need, have] to [say, tell me or us, explain] about this story, or about your answers to any of these questions?

[free text]

Questions about participants

How long have you been [involved in, affected by, dealing with] [the topic]?

[a list of time periods, like "six months"]

I'm not sure

I'd rather not say

Other _____

To what extent has [the topic] had an impact on you and [your life, work, health, family]?

Completely ⟵———————⟶ Not at all

I'd rather not say

Has the impact of [the topic] on your [life, work, health, family] been more positive or negative?

Completely negative ⟵———————⟶ Completely positive

It's complicated

If you said "It's complicated," would you like to explain your answer?

[free text]

How much do you know about [the project]?

Nothing ⟵———————⟶ Everything

I'd rather not say

How do you feel about the future of [the topic]?

Perfectly hopeful ⟵———————⟶ Desperately hopeless

I'm not sure

What do you wish more people knew about [the topic]?

   [free text]

What do you wish more people would *do* about [the topic]?

   [free text]

If you were in charge of [addressing, handling, doing something about] [the topic], what would you do?

   [a list of things that could be done, like "teach people about nutrition"

   I wouldn't do anything; things are fine as they are

   I'm not qualified to do anything

   It's not my responsibility to do anything

   I don't know what I would do

   Other _____

Picture an ideal future world, one in which [the topic] is [solved, not a problem, easy, better]. What is that world like, and how did it get that way?

   [free text]

43. To raise consciousness about a problem

Story-eliciting questions

When you think about [the topic], what one experience stands out most in your mind, for any reason? What happened that mattered to you?

Did you ever have an experience related to [the topic] that you find yourself telling people about often? Could you tell [me/us] about it?

Can you recall a time when you felt [happy or sad, relieved or disappointed, pleased or angry, hopeful or hopeless, excited or indifferent, optimistic or pessimistic] about [the topic]? What happened that made you feel that way?

When you hear someone say "[an often-repeated truism about the topic]," what's an experience that comes to mind for you, either in support of it or to refute it? Could you tell [me/us] what happened?

There are a lot of misconceptions about [the topic], like [a misconception or two]. When you hear people say things like that, what experience do you want to tell them about? Could you tell [me/us] what happened in that experience?

What's an experience you've had that you wish you could tell [everyone or specific people or roles or groups] about so they could understand what [the topic] is really like? Could you tell [me/us] what happened in that experience?

Think of an experience you've had that would change people's minds about [the topic] if they heard it. Could you tell [me/us] what happened in that experience?

What's something that happened to you related to [the topic] that nobody would ever guess had happened to you? Could you tell [me/us] about it?

Say you're talking to someone about [the topic] and they say, "Oh, that just [something dismissive or simplistic about the topic]." Say you decide to tell them about an experience you've had to convince them that [the topic] is not just [something dismissive or simplistic]. What experience do you choose to tell them about? Could you tell [me/us] about it?

Is there any other experience related to [the topic] that you would you like to tell [me/us] about? What happened that mattered to you?

Follow-up questions

How do you feel about that story?

   See page 9 for three ways to ask this question.

How important is this story to you?

   See page 9 for three ways to ask this question.

How long ago did the events of this story take place?

   [some number of weeks, months, or years) ago ⟵——————⟶ Today

   I don't know

Based on your experience, would you say that [the events, the situation, the outcome, the emotions] in this story [is/are] common or rare in [this group, organization, community]?

   This happens to everyone every day ⟵——————⟶ This rarely happens to anyone

   I don't know

To what extent do you think other people in [our community, our organization] would feel the same way as you do about this story?

   Everyone would feel this way ⟵——————⟶ Nobody else would feel this way

   I don't know

If you said "I don't know," why don't you know? What would you like to know?

   [free text]

Who do you think needs to hear this story?

   [a list of roles or positions, like "Our congressperson"]

   [a list of groups, like "Teachers"]

   [a list of people in situations, like "People who are thinking about moving here"]

[a list of people in relationships, like "People who care for people with this disability"]

[a list of people with feelings, like "People who feel angry about this"]

[a list of people with opinions, like "People who think this"]

I don't know

I'd rather not say

Other _____

Why do they need to hear it?

[free text]

What do you think they would say about this story if they did hear it?

[free text]

What do you think would happen after they heard the story? What would change?

[free text]

What would you like to say to those people—specifically to the people you chose—about this story?

[free text]

Is there anything else you [would like, feel a need, have] to [say, tell me or us, explain] about this story, or about your answers to any of these questions?

[free text]

Questions about participants

How long have you been [involved in, connected to, concerned about, affected by] [the topic]?

[a list of time spans, like "six months"]

I'd rather not say

Other _____

If you were to design a perfect future related to [the topic], what would it look like?

[a list of scenarios, like "We would all help each other"]

I don't know

I'd rather not say

Other _____

What about the worst possible future? What would that look like?

[a list of scenarios, like "Everyone would be on their own"]

I don't know

I'd rather not say

Other _____

Please choose the [2,3,4] immediate [problems, issues, conflicts] you think are most pressing with respect to [the topic].

[a list of problems, like "storm surges"]

Other _____

Please choose the [2,3,4] immediate [solutions, proposals, ideas] you think are most promising with respect to [the topic].

[a list of solutions, like "a new bridge"]

Other _____

Where do you see [the topic] going in [some number of months or years]? What do you think is going to happen?

[a list of events or outcomes, like "everyone will have enough to eat"]

I'd rather not say

Other _____

In your own words, describe the most important problems and/or solutions you see in [the topic]. How do you see it?

[free text]

If you were put in charge of [the topic], and you had infinite power, freedom, and resources to work with, what would you do?

[free text]

44. To help people find common ground

Story-eliciting questions

This first set of questions asks people to share stories about things they might have in common with people they think they have nothing in common with. That's why they are framed around simple, everyday things that every human being will be likely to have experienced. This is an oblique way to help people find common ground about a contentious topic: ask about other things, then swing around to the topic later on.

When was the last time you felt happy or sad about a simple thing, an everyday thing, like [feeling the sun on your face, seeing a beautiful sunset, stubbing your toe, or forgetting where you put something]? What happened that made you feel that way?

What's something that happened to you [lately, in the past number of days, months, years] that you think probably [happens, has happened] to [every human being, every human being who has ever lived]? Could you tell [me/us] about it?

Looking back over your [life, work], can you recall a time when you had a nice, simple, carefree moment with a [friend or family member, colleague]—or wished you could have such a moment? What happened that you remember?

When was the last time you got confused about a simple, everyday thing, like a [recipe, gadget, map, shoestring]? What was it that confused you, and what happened afterwards?

When was the last time you felt [loved, respected, appreciated, supported]—or wished you were? Could you tell [me/us] about that experience?

What's one of your favorite [foods, meals, views, movies, tv shows, hobbies]? What happened the first, last, or most memorable time you [had it, saw it, did it]?

When was the last time you felt proud of yourself for helping someone (or the opposite)? What happened that made you feel that way?

Picture in your mind the place you [live, work, visit often]. Think of an object in that place that means something to you. Think of something that happened to you that is connected to that object (like when you got it, or when you last used it, or what you remember happening about when you look at it). Tell [me/us] what happened.

This second set of questions asks people to reflect on aspects of their experience—again, not specific to the topic of the project—that complicate the simplistic identities they (may) have formed of themselves, making it more possible for them to find common ground with people they think can be nothing like them.

You're a complicated person, just like everyone else. Did you ever surprise yourself by saying or doing something you don't usually do? What surprised you, what led to it, and what happened as a result?

Have your views on anything—anything at all, even something simple like [food, exercise, a hobby]—changed over the course of your [life, career]? What brought about the change, and what happened afterwards?

Did you ever realize that something you thought you understood was more complicated than you thought it was? What happened in that moment?

If you could magically talk to yourself as you were [some number of years] ago, can you think of an experience that now-you would see differently than then-you did? What happened in the experience, and how would each of you see it?

Think of a "yes but" moment in your [life, work], a moment when your thoughts about something changed from simple to complex. It could be anything, even a simple thing like [food, exercise, a hobby]. Could you tell [me/us] about that moment?

What's something you've said or done that would surprise the people who know you best? Could you tell [me/us] about it?

Did you ever realize that somebody you were arguing with was actually partly right, and you didn't want to admit it in front of them, but you thought about it later? Could you tell [me/us] about that experience?

Did you ever realize that you were wrong about something, even something simple and everyday, like [tying a shoe, using a map, folding clothes, cooking food]? How did you realize it, and what happened afterwards?

Think about the values you hold, deep down. Now think of something you've done or said in the past (recently or long ago) that *seems* disconnected from those values but actually connects to them on a deeper level. It may be something people have misunderstood about you. Could you tell [me/us] about that experience?

Is there any other experience related to [the topic] that you would you like to tell [me/us] about? What happened that mattered to you?

Follow-up questions

How do you feel about that story?

> See page 9 for three ways to ask this question.

How important is this story to you?

> See page 9 for three ways to ask this question.

Who do you think would find this story familiar? Who would recognize it as similar to their own experiences?

> Every human being
>
> [a list of groups, like "Teachers"]
>
> [a list of people in situations, like "People who are thinking about moving here"]
>
> [a list of people in or from an area, like "People from Slovenia"]
>
> [a list of people in an ethnic group, like "Black women"]
>
> [a list of people with experiences, like "People with young children"]
>
> [a list of people with specific backgrounds, like "Archaeologists"]
>
> [a list of people in relationships, like "Married folks"]
>
> [a list of people with feelings, like "People who feel angry about this"]
>
> [a list of people with opinions, like "People who think this"]
>
> I don't know
>
> Other _____

If you chose "Every human being," what is it about the story that you think everyone would find familiar?

> [free text]

If you *didn't* choose "Every human being," is there *anything* in the story that every human being would find familiar? An emotion, maybe?

[free text]

If you chose "I don't know," *why* don't you know? Could you find out? How? What would you like to know? What are you curious about?

[free text]

Do you think anyone would find this story *unfamiliar*, strange, or even foreign?

[the same list as in the previous question]

I don't know

Other _____

If you could talk to the people who would find this story unfamiliar, strange, or foreign, what would you say to them about it?

[free text]

How do you think they would respond?

[free text]

What sorts of stories do you think those people would tell? What do you think their experiences have been like?

[free text]

What does this story (and what do your answers to these questions) say to you about [disagreements over, perspectives on, beliefs about] [the topic]?

[free text]

Is there anything else you [would like, feel a need, have] to [say, tell me or us, explain] about this story, or about your answers to any of these questions?

[free text]

Questions about participants

How deeply are you [involved in, connected to, concerned about, impacted by] [the topic]?

Completely ←——————————→ Not at all

I'd rather not say

What is your role with respect to [the topic]?

[a list of roles, like "citizen"]

[a list of group memberships, like "I live in Nashville"]

[a list of relationships, like "My mom has the disease"]

[a list of values, like "I care about the environment"]

[a list of opinions, like "I support local businesses"]

I'd rather not say

Other _____

How long have you been [involved in, connected to, concerned about, impacted by, dealing with] [the topic]?

[a list of time spans, like "six months"]

I'd rather not say

Other _____

What do you think [most people, or a specific group of people] [think about, have experienced in relation to] [the topic]?

[free text]

What would you like to know about the experiences [most people, or a specific group of people] have had, either in general or related to [the topic]? What are you curious about?

[free text]

What do you have in common with [most people, or a specific group of people], in general and in relation to [the topic]?

[free text]

What do you *not* have in common with [most people, or a specific group of people], in general and in relation to [the topic]? What is unique about your own experience and outlook in comparison to [most people, or a specific group of people]?

[free text]

How strongly do you support [an official policy, a law, a particular opinion] about [the topic]?

Not at all ⟵——————————⟶ Completely

I'd rather not say

If you were put in charge of [the topic], and you had infinite power, freedom, and resources to work with, what would you do?

[free text]

45. To help people see through the eyes of people in another group

Story-eliciting questions

Walk [me/us] through a recent day, a day that meant something to you in relation to [the topic]. What happened on that day?

What's something that happened to you [lately, or in the past number of days, months, years] in relation to [the topic] that would surprise [most people, or a specific group of people]? Could you tell [me/us] about it?

Can you remember a time when you felt [proud or ashamed, heard or unheard, understood or misunderstood, judged or accepted, included or excluded] in relation to [the topic]? What happened that made you feel that way?

Did anyone ever make an assumption about you that was incorrect? Or did you ever make an assumption about someone else that was incorrect? What was the assumption, how did it come about, and what happened as a result of it?

Have you ever felt like you didn't belong because of something you couldn't change about yourself? Or did you ever see someone else feel that way? What caused you (or them) to feel that way, and what happened as a result?

Did you ever make a decision that you think it would be easy or hard for [most people, or people in a specific group] to understand? Could you walk [me/us] through that decision?

Did you ever have an experience [with, related to] [the topic] that made you think to yourself, [Nobody is going to believe this, If only they could see this, This is what they need to see]? What happened in that experience?

Say you're talking to someone about [the topic], and it's clear that they don't understand what [the topic] is *really* [like, about], or they say something that shows a [simplified, stereotypical, knee-jerk] understanding of it (or you). So you choose an experience to tell them about to help them understand. What experience do you choose? Could you tell [me/us] about that experience?

Has anyone ever reacted to a story you told them about an experience you had in a way that surprised or confused you? What happened that you told them about, how did they react, and what happened as a result?

If you wanted to help someone understand what you are really like, down deep, below the surface, what experience would you choose to tell them about yourself? What has happened to you that you would tell someone about to help them understand you? Could you tell [me/us] about it?

Is there any other experience related to [the topic] that you would you like to tell [me/us] about? What happened that mattered to you?

Follow-up questions

How do you feel about that story?

> See page 9 for three ways to ask this question.

How important is this story to you?

> See page 9 for three ways to ask this question.

Are there any groups for whom stories like this one are especially common?

> [a list of groups, like "disabled people"]
>
> I don't know
>
> Other _____

Can think of any groups for whom stories like this are especially *uncommon*?

> [the same list as in the previous question]
>
> I don't know
>
> Other _____

Why do you think stories like this one are common or uncommon in the groups you chose? What does that mean to you?

> [free text]

What does this story say to you about [the topic], with respect to the groups you chose, or in general?

> [free text]

Who do you wish could hear this story?

> [a list of roles or positions, like "Our congressperson"]
>
> [a list of groups, like "Teachers"]
>
> [a list of people in situations, like "People who are thinking about moving here"]
>
> [a list of people in relationships, like "People who care for people with this disability"]
>
> [a list of people with feelings, like "People who feel angry about this"]
>
> [a list of people with opinions, like "People who think this"]
>
> I don't know
>
> I'd rather not say
>
> Other _____

If you told the story to them, how would you tell it? What would you say?

> [free text]

What do you think they would say in response?

[free text]

What do you think would happen as a result?

[free text]

Is there anything else you [would like, feel a need, have] to [say, tell me or us, explain] about this story, or about your answers to any of these questions?

[free text]

Questions about participants

Which of these groups do you belong to?

[a list of roles or positions, like "Managers"]

[a list of group memberships, like "People who live near the power plant"]

[a list of relationships, like "People with twin boys"]

[a list of values, like "People who care about safety"]

[a list of opinions, like "People who support local businesses"]

I'd rather not say

Other _____

Consider [people in a specific group or groups]. How much do you know about them?

Everything ⟵——————⟶ Nothing

It's complicated

How much do [the same people] know about [you, people in the group(s) you are in]?

Everything ⟵——————⟶ Nothing

It's complicated

Would you like to explain anything about your answers to the two previous questions?

[free text]

Which of these things do you think [people in a specific group or groups] [like, dislike, want, need, are worried about, etc]?

[a list of things people might like, dislike, want, need, be worried about, etc, like "grocery prices"]

I don't know

I'd rather not say

Other _____

If you wanted [people in a specific group or groups] to understand [you, people in the group(s) you are in] better, what would you say to them?

[free text]

If you wanted to better understand [people in a specific group or groups], what would you ask them?

[free text]

What do you think [you, people in the group(s) you are in] and [people in a specific group or groups] get wrong about each other?

[free text]

What do you think [you, people in the group(s) you are in] and [people in a specific group or groups] have in common?

[free text]

How do you think [one group of people] and [another group of people] could get to know each other better?

[a list of ideas for bringing people together, like "snacks after town hall meetings"]

I don't know

Other _____

Chapter 9

Question sets with project scenarios

In this chapter I have pretended to be starting five projects in five different contexts: a museum renovation, a neighborhood park, a coffee shop, a support group for a medical condition, and a town planning office.

46. A museum renovation

This scenario imagines an organizational environment (a museum) with a kiosk situation (scattered motivation) and individual, in-person interviews.

Project plans

Why are you doing the project? In preparation for our historical museum's renovation project in the spring, we want to find out if there are any problems the museum should be addressing in its educational displays. Our hope is to provide input to the renovation process that will help the museum staff refine its exhibits to better serve the community.

What is the project about? We will mainly focus on *gaps*—places where the museum isn't helping its visitors learn as much as they could about our area's past. When people leave the museum puzzled about the past, we want to know why.

Who will take part in it? We are the Friends of the Museum. Our project is supported in spirit by the museum, but we are providing all the volunteer time to make it happen. We have shown our plan to the museum staff, and we plan to meet with them for a final sensemaking meeting, but what comes in between will be our work. Our project participants will all be visitors to the museum.

What experiences matter to the project? We want to cover three ranges of visitor characteristics: from first-time guest to dedicated member; from local resident to regional or foreign traveler; and from all levels of educational background. We will assess our range at a few different times during the project and try to balance out our collections by seeking out visitors in areas where we have few stories.

How big will the project be? Our plan is to sit in the museum lobby and ask departing visitors for a few moments of their time. We have ten volunteer interviewers who will do the interviewing. Our interviews will be no more than a few minutes long. We will ask each visitor to tell one story. We will ask four questions about each story, and four about each participant. Each volunteer will collect ten stories, for a total of one hundred stories. We will record the stories on audiotape and fill out paper forms as we do the interviews.

How will you carry out the project? After the interviews are collected, we will transcribe the recordings. Then we (the Friends) will have a catalytic meeting to work together on patterns. We will print each story and its answers to questions on a card; then we will sort the cards and take pictures of the results. Together we will choose which patterns we find strongest and prepare some notes in multiple interpretations.

After that we will hold a sensemaking meeting of the Friends and the museum staff, where we will work with the stories and with our observations and interpretations. We will also invite interested members of the public, including those who told stories, to come to the sensemaking session. We hope to finish the sensemaking meeting with some suggestions and ideas for our renovation.

Interview script

Hi. My name is [say name]. I'm a volunteer with the *Friends of the Museum*. [Show volunteer badge.] I'm helping with a project to improve our museum's educational displays. May I ask you a few questions about your visit to the museum today?

Thank you! This will just take a *few minutes*. I'd like to *record* our interview so I can be sure to catch what you say. After we transcribe the recording, we will destroy it. This is *completely anonymous*. I won't be asking for your name. Is the recording all right with you?

- It is? Great. [turn on tape recorder]
- No? Then I won't turn on the recorder. I'll just take notes while you talk. [be prepared with notepad to write notes]

Now let's begin. Looking back over your visit to the museum today, can you remember a *time* when you felt *confused* or *puzzled* by anything? Maybe you said to yourself "What's that?" What happened when you felt that way?

[Extra questions, if this one doesn't get a response (use only when necessary):]

- (if they say they never felt confused) Okay, then can you recall a time when you had *questions* that you didn't feel were answered? What happened then?
- (if they say all their questions were answered) Okay, then did you encounter any signs or educational displays that weren't as *complete* as you wanted them to be? What happened then?
- (if they still say this was not true) Okay, then can you just tell me *what happened* during your visit?

[after the story is told]

May I ask you a few questions about the experience you just told me about? Thanks.

1. How do you *feel* about this story? Can you show me a spot on this line that describes how you feel about it? [they hold up a large card with a line on it, with "wonderful" on one side and "horrible" on the other]

2. Thanks. Where were you in the museum when this happened? [only ask this if they didn't say it in the story][open ended answers, classify later]

3. Great. How *common* do you think this experience is among visitors to the museum? Do you think it is something *everybody* would have a problem with, or just a *few* people? Can you show me where you would mark your answer on this line? [from few people to everybody]

4. What do you think would have made this story *turn out differently*? [they listen to the answer or note it down]

Now I'd like to ask you a few questions about *yourself*.

1. Do you live in the *local* area, in the *state, outside* the state, or outside the *country?*

2. *How long* have you been coming to the museum? [choose answer from fixed list based on what they say]

3. Can you tell me roughly what your *educational experience* has been? High school, community college, university, and so on? [write down level mentioned]

4. Finally, is there anything you would like to say to the people who will be doing the renovation next spring?

Thank you very much for your time. Would you like a flower or a chocolate as a token of thanks for participating? Great.

If you are interested, you can *participate* in the meeting where we will be using our stories to help the museum plan its renovation. Here is some information on that meeting. [hand them the prepared paper] If you have any *questions* about the project, call this number *here*.

We will be posting a report on the project in next month's *Friends of the Museum newsletter*, like this one. You can pick these up at the museum or find them online at our web site. I've written that information *here*.

Thanks again for your help!

[Each interviewer notes, without asking, age category, gender, apparent level of interest, whether the participant allowed the recording, and any other significant comments the participant made before or after the recording.]

47. A neighborhood park

This scenario imagines a community environment (people who live near a park) with a volunteer situation and one-on-one interviews.

Project planning

Why are you doing the project? I got dragged into it, that's why. We picked this house ten years ago partly because it had such a great park across the street, and we've been going there ever since our oldest was in a stroller. Well. A few weeks ago the kids found a ... I don't know the *technical* term for it, but it has something to do with drugs, in the park. I was pretty freaked out, I'll tell you. I told the kids the park is off-limits for the time being while we figure out what is going on. Joyce next door said she was walking her dog last week and saw the remains of a campfire and some beer cans, and that isn't supposed to be happening in our park either. It's a *playground* for goodness' sake!

Anyway, so Joyce and I, and Martin who has three kids too got together and we are going to talk to everybody along both sides of the street to see if we can figure out what's going on and what we can do about it. I went down to the town hall and told them what we are doing and they said that's fine, they will support us. So here we go, we're doing a project, as Joyce says.

What is the project about? Things have been changing around the park, and we want to know what is going on. Who is using the park and what are they using it for? We aren't vigilantes or anything, don't get me wrong. Martin says it is a listening tour. That sounds about right.

Who will take part in it? We are just concerned parents who worry about our kids and our park which is supposed to be a fun place for them to play, not a dangerous drug hang-out. What is this world coming to? We want to hear from everybody who lives around the park and find out what they've seen and heard in the park over the last year or two. Joe at the town office said he wanted to hear what we find out, and Karen at the desk said she'd help us too.

What experiences matter to the project? Well like I said we plan to walk up and down all around the park talking to people. Martin said, and I guess I agree, that we should make sure to get over to the university dormitories too because he thinks some of the college kids are coming over to the park at night and maybe not cleaning up after themselves. He says what's the point of hearing what's going on only from one perspective? Which is kind of a point. He works at the university so I guess he can ask around there to find kids to talk to. He already asked the housing person there and they said they will support him if anybody gives him a hard time about it.

How big will the project be? Well, there's about twenty houses near the park, and then if you put in say ten kids from the dorms that'd be about thirty conversations with people. Also Martin says he'll hang out in the park for a few hours in the morning and evening to catch hold of anybody else who might not live nearby, so that might be another five or ten. If we ask each person about one or two things that happened to them, then just ask them a few questions about that, I think we should be able to get some kind of picture of things. I've never done this kind of thing before and I'd rather do something small to start with. Joyce did a project like this last year in her school so she is the expert here, I've been just peppering her with questions.

How will you carry out the project? I have no idea what we will do with the stories once we get them. Joyce says she can make some graphs using her computer. Me, I'm focused on just getting the stories to the town and I guess the university so people can be more *aware* of things. I do have this kind of thought in my head that if those college kids, who maybe are the ones hanging out at night, hear about us folks wanting our little kids to be safe running around in the park, maybe they'll think twice about leaving stuff around. I mean I went to college a hundred years ago and I remember those times, but they could be more considerate, you know? Maybe they just aren't *aware*. I was pretty clueless at that age.

So hearing from people, looking for patterns a little, and maybe getting some stories to some people who need to hear them? That's as far as I'm thinking. Karen says she'll be happy to give out copies of the stories to anybody who wants them and comes to the town hall.

Interview script

Here's what we're thinking about asking people when we walk around. We don't have anything written down but this is what we've been practicing saying. Well I guess it's *my* version of it anyway. Let's pretend to have the interview right now. You be the interviewee.

Hi neighbor! (That part's important, *neighbor*, because it means I'm part of the same community as them.) I'm Mary Smith and I live down on Orchard Street right across from the park? Yeah, and so me and Joyce and Martin, do you know them? are just walking around talking to people about the park. The Orchard Street park, you know it, right? Yeah?

Anyway so we're just walking around talking to people about the park and what has been going on there lately. We're calling what we're doing *Eyes and Ears for the Park* (that part's important so they have a name to remember the project). We just want to keep an eye on the park for our kids, and maybe help people remember that it's everybody's park, you know what I mean?

So our plan is to write down what people tell us, then give our notes to the town so they can be aware of what's going on. That's the whole thing, it's just, it's a *listening tour* about the park (that's another good name people can remember). Anybody can look at all the notes in the town hall, just ask Karen at the desk for a copy. Now, we aren't writing down any names even if we *know* your name so don't worry about that, it's all anonymous. But anybody will be able to hear what you say about the park. So, are you okay with telling me about the park? Yeah?

Great. Okay then, here's my question. *Has anything ever happened at the park that you especially remember*, like especially good or bad on any day? Can you tell me what happened?

(And here I'll wait while they tell me what happened. I'll take notes on whatever they say. If they don't tell a story, I'll gently guide them to giving an example of *something that actually happened*. I've practiced doing that, I think I've got it down.)

(So now this *next* part is the part that comes *after* they finish telling the story. But by the way I'm not going to *say* the word "story" ever. I think it would just confuse people.)

How do you feel about what happened? Like, does that make you feel happy? Or sad or what?

And that was when?

You know lots of people go to the park, along these streets and even from the university. What you just told me about, how do you think *other* people would react to it? I mean, would they feel the same way you did about it, or would they feel different? (That's to ask people how they think everybody else wants to use the park.)

Can I ask you one more question? If the park was perfect, how would it be different from what you just told me about? Or was it perfect then already? (That's to ask what people want the park to be.)

Do you think that would be perfect for *everybody* or just for *you?* (More on what they think other people want.)

Wow thanks a *lot*. I'm really glad to hear from you. Like I said no names here. Is there anything *else* that happened at the park you think the town should know about? (If they want to tell another story I'll write that down, then I'll ask the same five questions again.)

Now can I just ask you a few questions about using the park? How often do you go to the park? What time of day do you usually go there? What do you do there?

That's great. Like I said, we will be giving our notes to the town to look at. Karen should have all our notes by probably about a week from now, so you can go look at them there. Thanks for helping make our park better!

And then we'll all write down, not *who* they are but how old they are and how far away from the park they live and whether it's a house or apartment or dorm or whatever. All that's roundabout and not exact so they are still anonymous.

That's the plan. Wish us luck!

48. A coffee shop

This sample imagines a combined organizational and community environment (a coffee shop and people in the community who visit it) with a volunteer situation and a survey.

Project planning

Why are you doing the project? Joe Schmo's is an institution in this town. My grandfather started it sixty years ago next fall. I'm the up-and-coming generation, and I guess I want to put my mark on things. I want to know more about what people in the town think of Joe Schmo's, where we have been, where we are now, and where we are going in the future. I want some new ideas.

What is the project about? What happens at Joe's. I want to know what used to happen here, what happens now, and what people want to happen. I know enough about what *seems* to happen here, or what happens on the surface. We have our sandwiches and our different kinds of coffee. We have our reading groups and our private rooms and our lectures and live music and all that. I know about all of that. What I want to know is what all that looks like, not to me and my family, but to all the people of the town. People who have come here for sixty years, or ten years, or a year. What happens at Joe Schmo's for *them?* What's good and bad about that? What do they want to happen, and when does that happen or not happen? That's the focus.

Who will take part in it? This year I'm taking over running Joe Schmo's from my dad and mom who are retiring. I also have three cousins and my brother who come by sometimes and pitch in when we have something big going on. So there's kind of a generational change thing going on. The customers who come here are different than they used to be, too. There used to be more regular regulars, you know? Old guys who would come in every morning before work. But now the demographics are changing. There's soccer moms coming in with little kids in strollers, and there's couples on the weekends getting an egg bagel. There's more of an occasional regular pattern. Also some of the university kids are showing up looking for a new place now that they shut down that student-run cafeteria over there in the business school. So who are we? We are part of this town, but what that means exactly has been changing, and I guess I want to know about that.

What experiences matter to the project? I want to make sure we hear from all ages, that's first. Then, weekdays and weekends is big. Time of day, some people come in at six in the morning and some stay until we close at midnight. And then I want to hear from people who come here for lots of different reasons: to meet friends, to find other single people, just to hang out in public, to go to meetings and lectures, to hear great music, to drink great coffee, everything, everything. What else in terms of range? Let me think. I guess people from all walks of life and income levels, yeah, and people who speak different languages, and … whatever. Just everyone who comes here for any reason.

How big will the project be? My cousin Joey will be graduating next spring and he's just a computer whiz. He is doing a student project of some kind and I said why not build me a kiosk? So he's doing a whole thing where he's putting up a little soundproof booth in the corner for people to go in, either by themselves or together, and talk about what happens at Joe Schmo's. We will be recordi ng the stories for something like a month. Joey's got a whole survey thing up on the kiosk computer to ask people about their stories. We know people won't want to spend much time, so we're keeping it short and sweet, like a five minute thing. Of course free coffee for doing it, but I don't think anybody will do it for the coffee! Joey's idea of asking people to interview each other, if they come to Joe's together, is a great one. I can imagine some of the old folks doing that. I'm also going to get mom and dad and grandpa and every cousin I can round up to spend some time in there too.

How will you carry out the project? After a month, or after we have enough stories, I'm planning to hold a "It's Happening at Joe's" night. Great title, huh? It'll be a sort of party, with free food and great music, and we'll ask people to listen to stories and talk about Joe's and what happens here, and kind of help us figure out what we should do to stay the

institution we are going forward. My brother, that's Joseph right over there at the coffee machine, see him? He's been reading about this story stuff, and he wants to get people to build a time line of happenings at Joe's over the years and into the future. He says if I *don't* get any new ideas from it he will buy me a coffee every day for a week. I said Joseph, how can you buy *me* coffee? I *sell* coffee! But anyway, he says he knows what he's doing and I trust him. Just don't tell him I said that, all right? But that's the plan.

Audio-booth survey

Want to take a look at the kiosk? Joey is still working on it, but you can see what he has so far.

It's Happening at Joe's

Thank you for being a part of Joe Schmo's and our town. We would be so glad if you could help us keep Joe's going strong by telling us *what has happened to you* at Joe Schmo's.

Will you do it? Will you talk to us?

This is a completely anonymous story collection. The audio recordings and answers you give in this booth will not be identified *in any way*. If you want to change *anything* you say here later, ask a Joe's employee and they'll help you find your contribution and remove or change anything you like about it.

   <Count me in!> <No thanks.>

Thanks neighbor!

First question. *Your biggest surprise ever* at Joe's: What was it? When did you say to yourself, "I cannot *believe* this just happened!" What was it that happened, good or bad?

   <Record your answer>

Was it a good or a bad thing that happened? (Slide the button to mark your answer.)

   Super great! — — — –<>– — — — Just awful.

   <I don't know>

Do you think what you just told us about could *only* have happened at Joe Schmo's? Or could it have happened anywhere?

   Only at Joe's — — — –<>– — — — Anywhere

   <I don't know>

Now think ten years into the future. Say the thing you just told us about happens *every day*. What would Joe's be like if that happened every day?

   <Record your answer>

Second question. *Best or worst time ever* at Joe's. Be honest! We want to hear it either way, you choose. What happened? What stands out? When did you say to yourself, "I'm so *glad* I came here today!" or "I wish I had *never* come here today!"

   <Record your answer>

Was that a good or a bad thing?

　　Super great! — — — –<>– — — — Just awful.

　　<I don't know>

Could *that* have happened only at Joe's? Or could it have happened anywhere?

　　Only at Joe's — — — –<>– — — — Anywhere

　　<I don't know>

If that sort of thing happened at Joe's every day, what would Joe's be like?

　　<Record your answer>

Thanks so much for telling us about those things!

Can you tell us what decade you were born in?

　　<20s> <30s> <40s> <50s> <60s> <70s> <80s> <90s> <[00s>

　　<I'd rather not say>

How long have you been coming to Joe's?

　　<decades> <[years]> <months> <weeks> <days> <I'm not sure>

How often do you come here, on average?

　　<daily> <weekly> <monthly> <occasionally> <rarely>

　　<This is my first time> <I don't know>

What do you do here? (Check as many as you like.)

　　<get coffee and run out again>　　<get coffee and drink it>

　　<get lunch to go>　　<eat lunch here>

　　<hang out>　　<listen to music>

　　<people-watch>　　<meet people>

　　<go out with family>　　<go out with friends>

　　<go to events>　　<go to meetings>

　　other _____

Anything else you want to say? Anything at all?

　　<Record your answer>

Thanks so much for being part of "It's Happening at Joe's" !!

　　<Print your coupon for free coffee or ice cream!>

June 20th is "It's Happening at Joe's" night! We'll have free coffee and food, great live music, and a chance to influence what Joe Schmo's will be like ten years from now! We will

be listening to audio recordings, looking at patterns, and building crazy castles in the air. It'll be fun! Come and have a say in what Joe's becomes! We need you!

49. A support group

This sample imagines a graduate-school practicum project in a peer support community with a medical focus.

Project planning

Why are you doing the project? I'm working on my Master's degree in public health. The first time I heard about Participatory Action Research, I fell in love with it. So I was reading about PAR, and then I found PNI, and I fell in love all over again. I also happen to be a migraineur. So I thought I'd bring all of those things together for my practicum research project. I belong to a wonderful migraine support group in my city. I pitched the project to them, and they loved it.

What is the project about? We are going to gather up our migraine experiences and see what we can learn from each other. That's our hope: that we can help each other learn a few new things we can use by talking in a way we haven't before. Along the way, I can fulfill the requirements for my practicum project. Win-win!

Who will take part in it? Everyone in our support group—that's about 60 people—will be invited to join in, and I think they all will. We will meet in-person and online. I have asked three of our group's founding members to act as an oversight group. I will show them my plans, listen to their feedback, and give them progress reports as we go.

What experiences matter to the project? We have agreed that we want explore the emotional aspects of coping with chronic migraines. We want to trade experiences about how we cope not just medically but emotionally and existentially. We've already been talking (venting, mostly) for years, and we'd like to see if we can go deeper.

How big will the project be? Over the next two months, I hope to gather at least 100 stories from our 60-member group and include at least ten of them in sensemaking.

How will you carry out the project? I plan to give everyone four options. They can come to a story circle (I have an exercise picked out that I think will fit in perfectly), sit for an interview (by themselves or with a friend), do a peer interview with a friend, or fill out a paper or on online form. I'll use the same basic questions in each case.

Once I get all of the stories, I'll do a little bit of catalysis work, building a few graphs for people to look at. Then I'll facilitate three sensemaking sessions, two in-person and one online. After that I will write a report that tells the story of the project and set up a searchable story database. Okay, it might actually just be a spreadsheet, but it will be *something* we can all use to find the stories we need when we need them.

Peer interview script

> Thank you for participating in our story-sharing project! These are your instructions.
>
> 1. Look over the following script. You are going to interview each other by reading it aloud. Give each person a chance to be interviewed.
>
> 2. Record the stories you tell using the phone or link I gave you. Answer the questions using the form or link I gave you. Take your time. Say as much or as little as you like.
>
> 3. When you're done talking:
>
>   - If you recorded your stories and answers online, that's all you need to do.
>
>   - If you used a phone and paper forms, give or send them back to me.
>
> 4. Consider joining us at any of our three sensemaking workshops, when we will read and work with everyone's stories. Their dates and times are on the forum.

We are all in this group to support and learn from each other. In this story-sharing project we are listening to each other in a way that we hope will help us learn even more.

To start, please choose a question that appeals to you from this list.

1. Can you recall an insight that changed the way you thought about migraines? How did the insight come about, and what changed for you because of it?

2. Have you ever felt newly optimistic or pessimistic about treating or preventing migraines? What happened that made you feel that way?

3. Looking back over your experiences with migraines, what one experience do you think would be the most helpful for other people to hear about? Could you tell us about that experience?

4. Is there any other experience related to migraines that you would like to share with the group? What happened that mattered to you?

Which question did you choose?

    1   2   3   4

Now I'll listen while you answer the question.

> Listen while they tell the story. If you think of any questions you would like to ask, go ahead and ask them.

Please answer these questions about the story you just told.

1. How do you feel about that story? Please choose up to three emotions.

    happy   sad

angry   pleased

energized   indifferent

hopeful   hopeless

I'm not sure

Other _____

2. Among all of your experiences with migraines, how important was this one to you?

Most $\longleftrightarrow$ Least

I am not sure

3. Do you think this sort of story is common among the members of our group?

This happens to all of us all the time $\longleftrightarrow$ This rarely happens to anyone

I don't know

4. Why do you think you chose this particular experience to tell us about?

It says a lot to me about migraines

It seemed like the right answer to your question

I remember it well

I learned a lot from it

It's a good memory

I thought you would like it

People need to hear it

It's funny

I don't know

I'd rather not say

Other _____

5. As you know, we are gathering these stories in part to create a searchable collection. Why do you think someone might want to read this story?

To find out if their symptoms are migraine-related

To find out if their symptoms are common or rare

To learn more about migraines in general

To learn about a specific trigger

To learn about a specific treatment

To learn about a specific preventative measure

To get some ideas to experiment with

To decide what to do next

To find a sense of hope

To feel less alone

I don't know

Other _____

6. Please describe any triggers that were mentioned in the story.

Alcohol   Caffeine   Chocolate

Gluten   Tyramine   Sulfites   MSG   Aspartame

Another food or food additive _____

Stress   Exertion   Sleep   Weather

Hormones   Lights   Smells   Sounds

Another condition/situation _____

A medication _____

A trigger in a category not listed here _____

No triggers were mentioned in the story

7. Please describe any treatments that were mentioned in the story.

Caffeine   Aspirin   Acetaminophen   Ibuprofen

Triptan   Gepant   Ergotamine   Opioid   Anti-nausea drug

Another pain killer or other acute treatment _____

No treatments were mentioned in the story

8. Please describe any preventative measures that were mentioned in the story.

Blood pressure-lowering medication   Antidepressant

Anti-seizure drug   Monoclonal antibodies

Botox   Nerve stimulation   Biofeedback   Meditation   Massage

Sleep hygiene   Exercise   Special diet   Food diary   Stress relief

Another preventative treatment _____

No preventatives were mentioned in the story

9. What did you learn from this story? What do you think other people could learn from it?

_____

10. Is there anything else you would like to say about this story, or about your answers to any of these questions?

_____

Would you like to share another story? If so, go back to the original list of questions, choose a question, tell a story, then answer questions 1-10 about it. When you are done, please answer these questions about yourself.

a. How long have you had migraines?

 50 years or longer ⟵——————⟶ A few days

 I'm not sure

b. How severe are your migraines, compared to what you have seen?

 More severe than almost everyone ⟵——————⟶ Milder than almost everyone

 I'm not sure

c. How much effort have you put into controlling your migraines?

 A huge amount ⟵——————⟶ None at all

 It's complicated

d. To what extent do you feel like you have your migraines under control, that is, as good as things are probably going to get?

 Completely ⟵——————⟶ Not at all

 I'm not sure

e. If you said "It's complicated" to any of the previous questions, would you like to explain any of those answers?

 _____

f. Which of these triggers cause migraines for you?

 Alcohol   Caffeine   Chocolate

 Gluten   Tyramine   Sulfites   MSG   Aspartame

 Another food or food additive _____

 Stress   Exertion   Sleep   Weather

 Hormones   Lights   Smells   Sounds

 Another condition/situation _____

 A medication _____

 A trigger in a category not listed here _____

g. Which of these acute migraine treatments do you use?

 Caffeine   Aspirin   Acetaminophen   Ibuprofen

 Triptan   Gepant   Ergotamine   Opioid   Anti-nausea drug

 Another pain killer or other acute treatment _____

h. Which of these preventative measures do you use?

Blood pressure-lowering medication   Antidepressant   Anti-seizure drug   Mono-clonal antibodies

Botox   Nerve stimulation   Biofeedback   Meditation   Massage

Sleep hygiene   Exercise   Special diet   Food diary   Stress relief

Another preventative treatment _____

i. What is the single most important thing you have ever learned about migraines?

_____

j. What is the single biggest frustration you feel about migraines?

_____

50. A public safety campaign

Thank you for coming. Can I get you something to drink? No? Just introduce myself? Okay.

So I'm Rose Marie Levin, and as you know, I'm on the city's Walk-Safe Task Force. We started our work in April. The first thing we did was educate ourselves about pedestrian accidents, why they happen, and how we can protect our pedestrians better than we do now. Did you know that there were 182 pedestrians injured in our city last year? I don't think many people know that. And that number is up 5.7 percent from the previous year. That's what we're trying to do, bring those numbers down. We have lots of new ideas.

But you're here to ask me about the listening project. Go ahead, ask away.

Why are you doing the project? Our task force was essentially formed to decide where to recommend lower speed limits. That's all they expected us to do. And at first that was all we thought we were going to do. But we did some reading, and we found a better way to reduce pedestrian accidents. We want to recommend changes to how our streets are built. It's called *traffic calming*. You can look it up. Lots of cities and towns are doing it. Let me tell you a little about it. Stop me if I'm going on too long.

So the basic idea of traffic calming is to improve pedestrian safety by creating natural rather than artificial reasons for drivers to slow down. When people drive down streets that are wide, straight, simple, and smooth, they naturally want to drive faster, because there seems to be no reason not to. I mean, when a street looks and feels like a racetrack, why not race down it? Think about Temple Street. Doesn't it *feel* like a racetrack? On a street like that, a speed limit is an artificial, extrinsic reason to slow down, which means people only slow down because they can't afford the ticket. That's not a good enough reason to slow down, at least not for everyone. There were 18 pedestrian accidents on Temple Street last year.

Now picture somebody driving down a street that is narrow, winding, bumpy, hilly, or just, you know, *complicated*. Like, say, Mason Street. Anyone would naturally drive slower on Mason Street than they would on Temple Street, no matter what it says on the sign.

Navigating complicated streets requires attention, and attention requires time, and time requires a slower speed. Streets like Mason Street give people *intrinsic* reasons to slow down. Our argument is that we need more streets like that. So we intend to propose changes to how our streets are built. Rebuilt, in some cases.

We know the idea will be a hard sell. It's going to cost more. We might have to hold a city-wide referendum to fund it. But we think it will make us all safer in the long run, and that's the issue our task force was created to address. So we want to build a case for our argument. To do that, we need to hear about the experiences of people who have experienced the outcomes of natural and artificial speed limits.

What is the project about? It's about the impact of natural and artificial speed limits on pedestrian accidents in our city. Luckily, there are several places around the city where some limited traffic calming measures were implemented last year. We didn't have anything to do with that, but one of our members knows the guy who made it happen. We talked to him, and he suggested asking people about their experiences in those places, as well as in some of the places where pedestrian accidents have been especially high.

Who will take part in it? We don't just want to talk to pedestrians. That would only give us half of the story. We also want to hear from drivers of cars, trucks, and buses, and from riders of bicycles and motorcycles. We will also aim to cover all ages and income levels.

What experiences matter to the project? We plan to ask people about things that happened to them on streets like the ones I told you about. We want to contrast the experiences people have had on the different types of streets.

How big will the project be? We hope to get at least 200 people to share stories with us, and we hope to get at least 20 people to come to our town hall meetings. We would love to engage with more people than that, but we have never done this kind of thing before, so we're taking it slow.

How will you carry out the project? There are ten of us in the task force, and we will each gather at least 20 stories. We will confer with each other to see if we have covered all of our demographic categories. Actually I'm hoping we can get 30 stories each, but we'll see how it goes. In my neighborhood we have a big block party coming up, and I'm going to ask people to sign up for my interviews then. They will be an hour long. I will bring pizza.

I should mention that a few of our younger members are keen on facilitating group exercises instead of doing interviews. They say it will bring out better stories. That's fine, I guess. I don't feel comfortable doing that, but I don't see how it could hurt. At least we have all agreed that we will collect stories in person. Nobody gets to just hand out survey forms. We will all talk to people face to face.

After we get the stories, we'll transcribe them and look at the patterns and get ready to help people make sense of what we found. That will happen at the town hall meetings. And then there will be a final report, hopefully with lots of persuasive stories in it.

Well, yes, of course we also want to explore the downsides of our proposal. Look, I'll show you the interview script, and you'll see what we'll be asking people. All right?

Interview script

First I'll say this.

Hello fellow citizens! I'm Rose Marie Levin, and as you may know, I'm on the Walk-Safe Task Force. Thank you all for agreeing to help us make our city a safer place by telling us about your experiences walking, riding, and driving in our city.

Here's what we're going to do. I'm going to show you some photographs, then I'll ask you to respond by sharing your experiences. You don't have to take turns. I'll make sure everyone has a chance to talk.

Before I turn on this recorder, I want to check that everyone is okay with being recorded. After we're done I will transcribe the recording, then destroy it so you cannot be identified by voice. You will only be identified by the participant number on the handout I gave you when you came in. It's right here at the top.

Three months from now, this interview will be among the 30 or so interviews we will use to discuss pedestrian safety in our town hall meetings. We invite you to join one of the meetings and hear what everyone else had to say. Here on the handout you can see the meeting dates and locations.

So, do you all give me permission to record you and to use your words in our town hall meetings and in our final report?

Great, thanks. You can contact me anytime in the next month if you want to see or change what you said. My number is right here on the handout. I also want to ask you not to refer to anyone else by name. Just say "my neighbor" or something. Can you do that? Thanks.

Okay. Let's get started. Please look at the streets shown in these photographs.

Here I will spread out on the table a "card deck" of 24 photographs. I'll spread them out all mixed up, but they are in four groups:

- *Six wide-open, racetrack-like streets, like Temple Street.*
- *Six streets that are historically or topographically complicated, like Mason Street.*
- *Six streets where traffic calming measures were implemented last year, like Hester Street.*
- *Six streets that are in-between, not fast or slow, like Augustine Avenue.*

Then I'll ask:

Can anyone remember any incidents related to pedestrian safety that happened to you or to someone you know in any of these areas over the past year? Please look over the photos and see if any memories come to mind. Take your time.

I'll give people a few minutes to look over the photos and think. Hopefully at least a few people will recognize the streets and remember some things that happened, and that might get stories flowing. But if nobody says anything for a good while, I'll show the group this list of potential events.

For example, maybe you remember a time when:

- You were involved in, or saw, an accident, or a near-accident, involving a pedestrian.
- You saw someone walking, riding, or driving in a way that seemed especially safe or unsafe to you.
- You felt a sudden need to speed up or slow down because of where you were and what was happening around you.
- Something happened that surprised you in some way.

These extra prompts should help people think of some stories to tell. But if they don't, if nobody still says anything, I have one more question I can ask.

If these photographs don't bring any memories to mind, can you remember any experience related to pedestrian safety, anywhere, at any time, that you would like to tell us about?

That should be enough to get people going. As each person tells a story, I'll give it a short reference name drawn from the story, and I'll write the name on a paper form. Then, when everyone has told at least one story, I'll give everyone their forms and ask them to fill them in. The forms look like this.

Would you say this story ended well?

    It ended in disaster ⟵————————⟶ It ended in the best possible way

    I don't know

How important is that story to you?

    It could not be more important ⟵————————⟶ It's trivial

    I don't know

Where on this map did the events of the story take place?

    Here the form will show a map of the city that they can write on.

How long ago did the events of the story take place?

    Fifty years ago ⟵————————⟶ Today

    I don't remember

Could you describe the street on which the story took place? What is it like to walk, ride, or drive on that street (now and/or in the past)?

    _____

Please choose someone in the story you would like to think about. It can be you, but it doesn't have to be. How did that person move around in the story?

    They walked   They rode a bicycle   They rode a motorcycle

    They drove a personal car or truck   They drove a commercial truck

    They drove a taxi   They drove a bus   They rode in a bus

They didn't move around at all

Other _____

Can you describe (or guess at) any decisions the person made in the story? How do you think they made those decisions? What factors did they take into account?

_____

If the person made a mistake at any point in the story, what do you think it was, and what were its repercussions?

_____

If everyone traveled the way that person did in the story, what would our city be like?

_____

What do you think could have caused the story to turn out differently?

_____

Is there anything else you would like to say about that story, or about your answers to any of these questions?

_____

If there is time, we might have a second round of story sharing, but we'll see. When there are five minutes left in the hour, I will give people another form with a few questions about themselves. It looks like this.

How long have you lived in our city?

My whole life ⟵——————⟶ Just a few days

I'd rather not say

Please choose the top two ways you move around on the city's streets.

I walk   I ride a bicycle   I ride a motorcycle

I drive a personal car or truck   I drive a commercial truck

I drive a taxi   I drive a bus   I ride in a bus

I'd rather not say

Other _____

Have you ever gotten a speeding ticket in our city? (Remember, this is anonymous.)

Yes, and it was entirely justified

Yes, and it was partly justified, but it was also partly unfair

Yes, but it was totally unfair

No I haven't

I'd rather not say

Other _____

If you said you got a ticket and it was unfair (partly or completely), would you like to explain why you think it was unfair?

_____

Please place these red sticky-note dots on the map at places where you think speed limits should be lower. Place the green sticky-note arrows at places where you think speed limits should be higher.

Each form will have three red dots and three green arrows to place on the map.

Which of these non-speed-limit ways of reducing pedestrian accidents do you think would be most helpful in our city?

Cobbled or bumpy streets

Curvy or winding streets

Tree-lined streets

Narrow streets

Speed bumps

Sidewalks that run across streets at corners

Sidewalks that stick out onto streets at corners

Sidewalks separated from streets by medians

I don't know

Other _____

In your own words, what do you think our city should do to reduce pedestrian accidents?

_____

So that's the plan. I would love to have your feedback on all of this. Do you see anything you think we should change?

That's … a really good idea. I'll tell everyone else what you said.

Part II

Case Studies

In this second part of the book are stories about PNI projects: projects I have worked on, and projects other people have worked on. Reading through these project stories will help you get a better idea of how, when, and why people use PNI.

Chapter 10

Brief Case Studies

In this chapter you will find 50 case studies of projects I have worked on in some way: planning the project, writing questions, interviewing participants, analyzing data, preparing catalytic material, facilitating sessions and workshops, and/or helping or coaching other people as they did any or all of those things.

All of these project stories have beginnings and middles. None of them have endings. You will have to imagine how they turned out. I left out the endings for four reasons:

1. **I can't tell you.** Consultants are a little like therapists. It's fine to talk about clients and projects in broad terms, but people expect me to be discreet about the details of their private affairs. Project beginnings and middles are usually broad in scope, so they are easy to write about. Project endings are always detailed and private. Even with anonymization, I don't think some of my clients would want me to tell you what they found in their stories.

2. **I was never told.** As a consultant (and often a consultant to consultants), I am usually told quite a lot about the beginnings and middles of projects. That's what I do: I help people plan and carry out PNI projects. But I am often told little about the ends of projects. Even when I have helped to plan sensemaking workshops—even when I have *facilitated* sensemaking workshops—I'm not always in the loop on what happened afterwards. I always ask, and once in a while I do get a detailed answer, but when I do it is almost always too confidential to pass on (see point one).

3. **I'd rather not say.** Not every project I have worked on has ended as well as I hoped it would. The practices I recommend in *Working with Stories* grew out of the lessons I learned working on these (and many other) projects. I'm always happy to describe my own mistakes, but I don't like to talk about the mistakes of others (see point one).

4. **I can't remember.** In writing this chapter I have been looking back over 25 years of research and consulting. I have been surprised by how many project details I have forgotten or lost. Even for some of my favorite projects, I have not been able to find enough reliable documentation to be able to write case studies. I wish I had taken better notes.

Most of these case studies follow a story template that goes like this:

> A/n ___ gathered stories from ___ about ___. The project's goal was to ___. Participants reflected on ___.

That's frustratingly incomplete, isn't it? There is no resolution to the story. I'm frustrated about it too, but it can't be avoided. As I wrote these case studies, my fingers often itched to tell you more: that I was proud of the work we did together, that we uncovered fascinating and useful insights, that the project's participants were energized and inspired. But to tell you those outcomes, as I said above, I would also have to tell you about many mistakes and miscommunications, and I would sometimes have to tell you that I simply don't know how the story ended.

I can tell you that about half of these projects met my expectations, a quarter exceeded them, and a quarter fell beneath them. But none of these projects failed. Each of them gathered useful stories, and each of them helped people learn useful things.

I have sorted the projects into seven categories:

1. Education: delivering or improving an educational program or training course
2. Evaluation: examining the impact or effectiveness of a process or system
3. Future planning: discussing and deliberating on future plans
4. Human resources: supporting employees in their work
5. Needs assessment: finding out what specific groups of people want and need
6. Process or product improvement: making improvements to a process or product
7. Research: Answering research questions

Most of the projects could have fit into two categories. I moved them around until the category groups were of roughly equal size.

Projects related to education

What can we learn from each other about learning? An inter-organizational learning network gathered stories from its members about times when they had drawn knowledge together from disparate domains, for example using ideas or techniques from one domain to solve problems in another domain. The project's goal was to help network members become more effective at building synergistic knowledge across domains. Participants reflected on the boundary-spanning skills evident in the stories, how they developed, and the impacts they had on outcomes.

What are children learning at our museum? A museum gathered stories from children about their experiences at the museum. The project's goal was to get new ideas for building more engaging, informative, and impactful exhibits. Participants reflected on issues such as interest, learning, inspiration, and impact.

How can we help our leaders improve their management skills? An IT firm gathered stories from the direct reports of its top executives about their experiences working with

those executives. The project's goal was to provide a training exercise in leadership skills to the executives about whom the stories were told. In addition, a collection of stories about leadership was gathered from historical sources. The executives were guided through an exploration of the two intermingled story collections, juxtaposing stories about their own leadership choices, about the leadership choices of their (anonymous) colleagues, and about the leadership choices of historical figures.

How can we help our analysts improve their policy making? A government defense agency asked its employees to gather case studies of recent and historical conflicts (not their own experiences, but published accounts they found interesting or useful) and to imagine a set of "alternative histories" that explored other ways the conflicts could have ended. These were combined with a second collection of case studies about historical conflicts. The project's goal was to provide a training exercise in innovation as it related to analysis and policy planning. Participants reflected on the stakeholders, themes, and driving forces involved in all three sets of stories, then used all of this material to discuss policy making in the face of current and future threats.

How can we improve our narrative skills? An international non-profit had already been gathering stories from its employees about their work (in which they helped factory workers learn about and assert their human rights). The project's goal was to help employees learn how to gain more useful insights from the stories they had already gathered. A series of group exercises helped participants learn how to use their stories (and the patterns they formed) to zoom out on their experiences, go beyond the obvious, and delve more deeply into the core values (and conflicts) of their work. For example, participants used their stories to build story elements, which they combined into fictional scenarios, which they used to role-play stories of tensions between competing forces, such as the energy of passionate action versus the careful impartiality of open-ended inquiry.

How can we help people navigate a complex process? A technology firm gathered stories from its engineers about their experiences with the patent process. The project's goal was to build a better learning support system for inexperienced engineers. Participants reflected on obstacles they had overcome, mysteries they had solved (or hadn't), and lessons they had learned.

What helps children learn? A government education agency gathered stories from teachers, students, and parents about what works and doesn't in designing educational experiences to inform, engage, and inspire children. The project's goal was to explore what children need to learn, what sorts of initiatives best supported those needs, and how success and achievement should be defined. Participants reflected on issues such as interest, inspiration, motivation, creativity, fear, stress, challenge, strength, sincerity, dedication, and selflessness.

How can we help our customers use our product wisely? A manufacturing firm gathered stories from its customer-facing staff about a product that could be used in unsafe ways. The project's goal was to better understand the sources of customer confusions and misconceptions in order to improve customer support. Participants reflected on the challenges they faced in educating customers about how to safely use the product.

What is the best way to lead in a complex education environment? A government education agency gathered stories from teachers and other educational professionals about situations of change, uncertainty, and complexity in education. The project's goal was to help leaders navigate complexity and balance innovation with patience, professionalism, and integrity. Participants reflected on issues such as inspiration, passion, challenge, power, control, and communication.

Projects related to evaluation

What impact are our museum exhibits having on our visitors? A historical museum gathered stories from its visitors about their experiences in the museum. The project's goal was to evaluate the impact of the museum experience on visitor understandings, feelings, and beliefs about the museum's topic. Participants reflected on aspects of their visits that informed, surprised, challenged, and inspired them.

Which schools need help creating better learning environments? A government education agency gathered stories from teachers, students, and parents in several schools about their experiences in school. The project's goal was to identify unmet needs for learning support. Participants reflected on issues such as student curiosity, engagement, confidence, cooperation, contribution, and leadership, as well as aspects of school cultures such as stability, support, and responsiveness.

How can we better meet the needs of our members? A professional association gathered stories from its members about their experiences interacting with the association and its members. The project's goal was to find new ways to provide value to the association's members. Participants reflected on the needs they saw in their stories (e.g., for information, support, connection, leadership) and on whether and how the association had reliably met those needs.

How well have we supported the empowerment of women? An international agency gathered stories from women about their experiences with household decision making. The project's goal was to evaluate the impact of a development project on the empowerment of women. Participants reflected on issues such as respect, hope, participation, influence, control, and the impact on these things of their involvement in local community groups and their access to information and support.

How can we help our customers feel more welcome? A government transportation agency gathered stories from its customers about their experiences traveling on its trains. The project's goal was to generate ideas for improving the overall experience of train travel. Participants reflected on their feelings of control, freedom, and comfort (or the absence of those feelings) during their journeys.

How can we make our educational system more inclusive for children with disabilities? A government agency gathered stories from teachers, parents, and students about their experiences with an education policy that sought to ensure that each child was given adequate learning support regardless of their physical or intellectual disabilities. The project's goal was to evaluate the impact of the policy and find ways to better support

it. Participants were asked about positive and negative changes as a result of the policy, and they reflected on issues such as challenges, changes, collaborations, relationships, and systemic influences.

How well have we supported farmers in our program? An international agency gathered stories from farmers and farm produce collectors about their experiences bringing foods to market. The project's goal was to evaluate the impact of a development project on improving access to markets. Participants reflected on issues of interaction such as power, fairness, transparency, and negotiation, as well as on business issues such as transport costs, seasonal variation, access to markets, and availability of pricing information.

Projects related to future planning

What will the future hold for our organization? A government environmental agency gathered fictional scenarios from its employees about possible futures (good and bad) they could foresee with respect to such issues as species extinction, pollution, and climate change. The project's goal was to guide decision making about future plans for the organization. Participants reflected on issues such as uncertainties and instabilities, threats and opportunities, adaptations, and the allocation of time and resources.

What is the future of volunteering? A consortium of museums and other non-profit organizations gathered stories from volunteers and managers of volunteers about their experiences volunteering and managing volunteers. The project's goal was to understand the volunteer experience and how best to support volunteers in the future. Participants reflected on issues such as needs, motivations, challenges, options, support, praise, reward, recognition, control, connectedness, autonomy, and achievement.

How do our citizens feel about the future of communications technology? A government agency gathered fictional scenarios from the general public about the future of communications technology. The project's goal was to understand prevailing attitudes, both positive (hopes) and negative (fears). Participants reflected on issues such as needs, wants, productivity, vulnerability, safety, trust, power, and inequality.

How do our farmers feel about the future? A food processing firm gathered stories from farmers about the past, present, and future of farming. The project's goal was to better understand the needs and concerns of farmers facing economic and environmental challenges. Participants reflected on issues such as: dedication, pride, hardship, and disappointment; respect, recognition, fairness, and support; their relationships to other people in the farming community (from farmers to traders to processors to consumers); and their hopes and concerns for their children and the future of farming.

What is the future of our youth sports organization? A youth sports organization gathered stories from parents, coaches, volunteers, and players about their experiences participating in group sports. The project's goal was to find ways to improve the organization's support for everyone involved in the game. Participants reflected on the balance between casual fun and purposeful skill building; on teamwork and collaboration; on the organization and

management of sports teams; and on the essential qualities of a good coach, volunteer, player, and involved parent.

Projects related to human resources

How can our merging organizations form a new shared culture? A manufacturing firm that had purchased a much smaller firm gathered stories from both groups about their experiences working in their respective organizations. The project's goals were to assess the two cultures, help people get to know each other, and seek common ground as the two groups began to work together. Participants reflected on "how we do things around here" with respect to such issues as identity, control, leadership, cooperation, trust, and change.

How can we improve our retention of employees? A military branch gathered stories from its employees about their work experiences, highlighting moments of collaboration and synergy (or lack thereof). The project's goal was to improve the quality of work life for employees. Participants reflected on issues such as stress, control, trust, fairness, cooperation, conflict, and effectiveness.

What do our employees need to get their work done? A government environmental agency gathered stories from its employees about the challenges they faced getting their work done on time. The project's goal was to find out what employees needed to do their best work. Participants reflected on their frustrations and inspirations as well as the support they received (or didn't) from the agency.

How can we help our medical workers? A hospital gathered stories from its nurses and medical receptionists about their experiences with career development. The project's goal was to improve retention by helping employees meet their career goals. Participants reflected on issues such as stress, work-life balance, motivation, challenge, and inspiration.

How can we help our overburdened employees? A pharmaceutical firm gathered stories from its employees about their experiences (and those of their co-workers) managing workloads and deadlines. The project's goal was to discover insights that might help to resolve conflicts over workload management in a particular department. Participants reflected on issues such as needs, priorities, responsibilities, empowerment, mastery, and support.

How can we help our employees find a better work-life balance? A manufacturing firm gathered stories from its employees about work-life balance. The project's goals were to better understand employee needs and to generate new ideas to meet those needs. Participants reflected on issues such as stress, pressure, burnout, mastery, efficiency, responsibility, support, respect, trust, integrity, and empowerment.

How can we help our volunteer firefighters balance work and volunteering? A government environmental agency gathered stories from those of their employees who were also volunteer firefighters about their experiences balancing work and volunteering. The project's goal was to better understand how the agency could support its volunteers while protecting its mission. Participants reflected on the value of their volunteer work (achieve-

ment, pride, camaraderie) as well as the difficulties they faced in integrating it with their work for the organization (fatigue, distraction, falling behind).

How can we help our employees get new ideas? An IT firm gathered stories from its employees about innovation at work. The project's goal was to help the firm get better at supporting and encouraging innovation. Participants reflected on ideas they (and others) had, heard about, discussed, researched, and implemented, and they talked about factors that supported or held back the development of new ideas.

What can we do to promote leadership in firefighting? A government environmental agency gathered stories from its firefighters about their experiences fighting fires, focusing primarily on interactions between teams and their leaders. The project's goal was to better support and train team leaders. Participants reflected on skills such as leading while listening, leading with confidence and humility, and working to build the trust and skills of the team.

Projects related to needs assessment

What do our lower-income customers need from us? A power utility gathered stories from some of its lowest-income customers about times when they felt their needs were met or unmet. The project's goal was to address a previously discovered pattern in which the utility's lowest-income customers said that they did not feel adequately heard or supported. Participants reflected on their perceptions of the utility's values, priorities, and responsibilities, and about its trust and respect for its customers.

What do doctors value? A pharmaceutical firm gathered stories from doctors about the high and low points of their medical careers, memories they treasured or regretted, and lessons they wanted to pass on. The project's goal was to better understand what drives doctors and what they value and need in their work in order to better support them. Participants reflected on issues such as control, ambition, validation, impact, innovation, inspiration, caring, community, and trust.

What do our customers need? A pharmaceutical firm gathered stories from patients with a medical condition (treated by one of its products) about their experiences dealing with the condition. The project's goal was to understand the met and unmet needs of patients with the condition in order to better inform them about the product's features and uses. Participants reflected on how they felt about the condition, how they managed it, how they sought information about it, and how they made decisions about it.

How can we help our students succeed? A university scholarship program gathered stories from its beneficiaries about their experiences throughout their university years. The project's goals were to discover unmet needs and to help students build their skills, realize their potential, and contribute to society. Participants reflected on issues such as fear, courage, change, adaptation, self-reliance, self-discipline, motivation, support, encouragement, and community.

How can we improve our medical support services? A non-profit organization that helps people with a chronic medical condition gathered stories from patients about their experi-

ences getting help from its support services. The project's goal was to discover insights that could guide the group's research agenda, improving its ability to support people in need. Participants reflected on crises, concerns, challenges, and decisions, as well as moments of learning, listening, and reassurance.]

What do mediators need? A professional mediation association gathered stories from experienced mediators about their most memorable mediation experiences. The project had three goals: to understand the needs of mediators (to guide the association's future work), to communicate the value of mediation to the public, and to help new mediators understand the mediation experience. Participants reflected on issues such as the value of mediation, the essential skills of a successful mediator, and other factors that affect mediation success (e.g., support, cooperation, understanding, respect).

Projects related to process or product improvement

How should we redesign our official documents? A government agency gathered stories from its employees about their experiences checking the identifying documents of travelers. The project's goal was to inform the redesign of an identifying document. Participants reflected on situations in which they examined certain aspects of official documents (or the people who held them), and they reflected on how certain changes to the documents might affect the inspection process, making it run more or less smoothly.

How can we improve our medical devices? A manufacturer of medical devices gathered stories from patients with a variety of medical conditions about their experiences using medical devices. The project's goal was to generate new ideas for product design. Participants reflected on issues such as safety, comfort, control, privacy, effectiveness, reliability, and ease of use.

How can we help patients manage their medical conditions? A pharmaceutical corporation gathered stories from patients about managing a variety of chronic medical conditions. The project's goal was to better understand patient values, beliefs, priorities, challenges, and motivations. Participants reflected on issues such as uncertainty, trust, respect, confusion, problem solving, cooperation, control, and decision making.

How can we balance efficiency with care? A hospital gathered stories from physicians, nurses, and staff about their experiences at work. The project's goal was to explore the delicate balance between patient safety, compassionate care, quality care, and efficiency. Participants reflected on the efficient and effective deployment of time and resources as well as on compassion, respect, teamwork, accountability, and quality care.

How can we improve the synergy of our patient care? A hospital gathered stories from its patients, care providers, and administrative staff about their experiences with decision making. The project's goal was to uncover systemic issues that could improve patient outcomes through better synergy. Participants reflected on issues such as trust, respect, listening, consent, access to information, power, and control.

How can we improve our support of children at risk? A group of four organizations that collaborate to help children in danger (mostly due to poverty and domestic violence) gath-

ered stories from parents, family members, and service providers about their experiences receiving or providing help. The project's goal was to improve the coordination of support services. Participants reflected on issues such as help, hindrance, collaboration, conflict, trust, respect, action, and reflection.

What do our software users believe? An IT firm gathered stories from the users of its communications software about their experiences. The project's goal was to uncover non-obvious beliefs about how the software was built, how the people who built the software felt about its users, why the software was the way it was, and how decisions were made about its design and implementation. Participants reflected on their confusions, discoveries, and theories about how the software worked and why.

How can we improve communication between scientists and policy makers? A government science agency gathered stories from scientists and policy makers about their experiences working across the science-policy interface. The purpose of the project to was to find new ways to improve the interface between these two groups. Participants recounted the forms and impacts of various interactions, from personal interactions to the use of databases and tools, and reflected on the impacts of culture, beliefs, time constraints, education, urban and rural differences, technology.

Projects related to answering research questions

What is leadership? A university gathered stories from leaders of organizations (across countries, industries, ages, and differently-sized firms) about decisions they had made. The project's goal was to better understand the qualities of effective leadership. Participants reflected on issues such as risk-taking, learning from mistakes, and finding balances between self-reliance and teamwork and between innovation and safety.

What constitutes success in an urban transport project? A university gathered stories about a large urban transport project from government employees, contractors, local businesses, citizens, and members of community and activist groups. Participants told stories about decisions they had made, aspects of the project they were proud of or regretted, learnings they would like to pass on, and how the project impacted their work and life experiences. The project's goal was to explore the contours of success in large urban transport projects. Participants reflected on issues such as: power, influence, and advocacy; coalition, cooperation, and conflict; organization, fragmentation, and chaos; and expectations, perceptions, and reality.

What does it mean to be from our country? A government agency asked students and teachers to recall experiences that related to their identities as citizens of their country. The project's goal was to explore intergenerational patterns in perceptions of national identity. Participants reflected on whether certain behaviors and attitudes were expected and acceptable and what happened when residents, immigrants, and visitors didn't behave as expected.

What happens when sexual abuse is unveiled? A university research program gathered stories from victims, perpetrators, and bystanders about their experiences before, during,

and after the disclosure of sexual abuse. The project's goal was to better understand how to help people through the process of recovery (and possibly reconciliation) in the aftermath of abuse. Participants reflected on issues such as: the nature of the disclosure; reactions, conflicts, and other interactions around the disclosure; and the impacts of the disclosure on various relationships.

Why do people steal? Analysts at a police department answered a series of story-based questions about a collection of theft incident reports. The project's goal was to look for patterns that linked conditions (such as location, time of day, crowding, security presence) to the histories, decisions, perceptions, motivations, and attitudes of thieves (as revealed in their histories and in any statements recorded in the reports).

What makes a good rehabilitation therapist? A researcher gathered stories from health professionals about their experiences with rehabilitation therapy. The project's goal was to discover skills and abilities to support—and gaps to fill—in order to improve rehabilitation therapy. Participants reflected on the skills and abilities they value most in a rehabilitation therapist, from communication to organization to compassion.

Case Studies from Other PNI Practitioners

The case studies in this chapter were written by friends and colleagues who graciously allowed me to include their stories here. My goal in including these stories is to help you get a better idea of what goes on in PNI projects from people who were actually in the projects from start to finish (not consultants like me who don't always know the whole story). Many thanks to Jonathon, John, Stephen, Stéphane, and Tatiana for writing up their adventures and giving me permission to include them here.

Pre-publication note: At the time of this writing (June/July 2025) I expect to add another 2-4 case studies to this chapter that people have promised to send. I can add a few more than that if I receive them in July or August. If you are interested in contributing, send me an email (cfkurtz@cfkurtz.com).

Collecting stories in a poor urban community

Jonathan Carter (janniecarter at gmail.com)

Framing the project

What was the impetus for your project? What led to it taking place? Why were you doing it?

Policy documents by the South African government express an interest in social networks and suggest that interventions should be improve the utility of these networks. These documents define terms like social networks, social capital and social cohesion hazily and tend to merge them. I had a particular interest in social networks and set out to understand the dynamics of social networks and groups in poor communities that could be tapped into by government to assist in government service delivery.

What were the project's goals?

My 'research objective' was to assess how existing government approaches to service delivery 'fit' with social networks. I was searching for a set of unknown unknowns. I didn't like the social network analysis approach to networks and when I started the research decided to use techniques like event maps, open discussions and repeated sessions with groups. I hoped these repeated visits would establish trust and insight into the dynamics of the community.

My research started in a predominantly Black African community with a scoping exercise to test the feasibility of the techniques I wanted to use and by what we saw, it looked like we would get what we wanted. Soon after the research started, the colleague I was working with decided to take a job elsewhere. This was a major problem as she spoke the local language, which I couldn't. As a result, I asked someone else to assist me and I gave her the opportunity to decide which community to work with. As I was subject to government funding cycles, I was under time pressure to get the work done quickly and therefore did not have the luxury to scan the new community. What we didn't know was that the new community held a set of worst case examples of managing and working with social networks. The history of the community is plagued with stories of corruption, being ignored by government, state land being handed over to an un-democratic entity to run, poverty and the transient nature of life that comes with poverty in many parts of the country.

When we first arrived, we heard one set of stories through the first few interviews we held. We then broke into another circle of people and we could not believe the stories we were told. The most interesting aspect of this was that I still feel no person lied to me. Some people failed to mention some facts that they could have, but I have no reason to think that anyone lied. After about two months of getting to know the community I was still not sure what 'the vibe' was. Too many gaps were missing.

At that time, I was fortunate enough to attend the *Cognitive Edge* course and learn about anecdote circles [Editor's note: I call these "group story sessions"] and then planned to hold some anecdote circles with what I determined were a representative sample of the community.

So in a nutshell, I ran the anecdote circles because after two months of conversations and discussions with a wide range of people I still could not validate anything I had found to that point. I saw anecdote circles as the way to really get into the head of the community. My plan was to gain a deeper understanding of the community.

The story of the project

How did the project get started? What happened first?

Getting people into the anecdote circles was really easy as we had been visiting the community for a while. So a few key people knew us and were happy to be part of the process. I had given the community a feedback report based on the research up to the time of the anecdote circles, which also built our trust.

What sorts of stories did you collect? How were they collected? Who collected them?

I agreed with my research assistant that she would arrange the groups, the venue and the time groups would meet as part of her fee. We discussed how to arrange the groups and identified key people to ask to pull the groups together. These were as follows:

A priest we knew and had interviewed arranged a meeting with the religious leaders in the community. We managed to get seven priests; unfortunately, no Islamic leaders from the community were able to attend.

A lady who worked with people living with HIV/AIDS was asked to bring a group of people living with HIV/AIDS together. Four ladies attended this anecdote circle.

A group of women we had met a few times were asked to participate in a group and four of them came.

We asked an NGO in the community to arrange some youth and got a group of four men and two women between the ages of about 20 and 22, all unemployed. This was a cracking success.

An elderly lady who is an active civic leader in the community was asked to arrange a group of African ladies. This was the first group, seven attended and it was a complete failure due to my inexperience.

We asked a youth civic leader to arrange a group of youth that would be very mixed racially. We got a group of five youth together. He asked to arrange a second group, which flopped because we could not find enough people.

We asked a principal of a pre-school to organize a group with other principals and five attended.

All circles were held in a church hall. All the groups were seven or less, but none were less than four. I think four, plus myself and the research assistant, is an ideal number. From the second anecdote circle on, I sat at the opposite side of the circle to my assistant.

All groups were preceded by an explanation of the ethical issues concerned and signing of consent forms. This was an absolute pain, but unavoidable. If handled properly, it can be used to create the right atmosphere, although that atmosphere can be achieved a lot quicker than the time it takes to explain these forms.

Once the forms were signed, I explained the three rules:

- no interrupting,
- if you disagree tell the experience how you remember it, and
- only share experiences.

I also showed them the voice recorder and warned, quite sternly, that everything I said would be recorded.

I had read over the guide to anecdote circles from *Anecdote* [Editor's note: see the References appendix for a link] a few times and wanted to experiment and find the ultimate

question. Experimenting was a bad idea as I found myself asking very long winded questions about past friends and happy and sad experiences that took long to ask and were not understood. I stopped experimenting once we found that keeping it as simple as possible was the most effective route and started them by asking: Let's say I am looking for a place to live and I am considering this place, what experiences about living here would you share with me to help me decide to live here or not?

I think this question can be asked in any community. It is ambiguous enough, but simple enough to be understood. Ambiguity is critical to ensure that people do not game and are forced into raising issues that they decide are important to them.

Occasionally we had to remind the participants that opinions were not of value and that we just wanted to hear experiences, but most of my time was spent as an engaged listener.

In some groups, they would decide to go around the group giving each person a chance to answer the question. Once the first round was finished, a pause of silence would follow before the random outpouring of experiences began. It was best to let the group decide how best to start and simply not force anything. Out of all the circles, we had to probe two or three people to get them to talk, otherwise most people contributed without any encouragement. Generally, the people who needed probing would open up after the probing. The probing involved nothing more than just asking: what about you, do you have any experiences?

There was only one group that did not lead to the sharing of many experiences, which was the first. I had planned to take a research assistant that could be a translator but she couldn't make it. We had also not prepared the venue before picking up the group, which didn't set the right tone. In the rush, I didn't think about how best to arrange the group and as result we had seven women staring at the two of us. One of the people in the group acted as a translator, which did not work. I think it created a power imbalance that we could not manage or influence. It was an awkward experience from beginning to end and being the first one didn't help my confidence much.

On average, the introductory part lasted thirty minutes and the main discussions lasted an hour. Most of them fizzled out fairly rapidly and it was usually quite clear when to end the session.

How did the project end? Were conclusions drawn, and by whom?

I have written up the findings elsewhere in terms of data that emerged. [Editor's note: If you are interested in those findings please contact Jonathan.]

Evaluation

What turned out the same as you expected? What was worse than expected? What was better?

Part of the deep insight that was shared was stories about important events in the history of the community. These were especially important to me as I was aware of some events, e.g. a housing project, in the past that had created tensions, but was told different and contradictory versions of the events. During the anecdote circles, the detail shared was

incredibly helpful in clearing up confusion. I did not get the full history of the community, but did get some of the events that are marked in individual and collective memories as turning points in the community. Knowing these turning points provides a base from which one can explore further.

The extremely rich detail in the stories and experiences shared gave a sense of where, when, why, what and how. Myths and stories of how myths were formed also emerged, adding to these rich insights. For instance, a number of people commented about people that spread rumours about HIV/AIDS in drunken conversations in a bar. From these simply told stories it became clear that there is stigma towards HIV/AIDS in the community and that the bars are one place where consciousness about HIV can be dealt with. This is one example of many insights I never asked for or planned to ask about, but I got it.

Can you share one conclusion of your project that you don't think you could have arrived at in any other way than by asking for and looking at stories?

Kurtz and Snowden (2007) argue that the naturalizing sense-making approach collects a sufficiency of information, rather than trying to collect all that can be known. When I finished the anecdote circles, I felt I had a sufficient sense of the ecology of the community to stimulate evolution (as Kurtz and Snowden suggest). A wide range of issues were brought forward, but I don't have enough to validate or verify any of them. As an example, I was told stories about children on drugs a sufficient number of times to know it was a problem that must be dealt with. In a general sense I understand the dynamics of the problem well enough to start breaking it (the key issue is being addressed in that community), but also understand exactly how complex an issue this is to address that a few constantly monitored and coordinated efforts are required. My understanding of these coordinated interventions, and associated risks, was gained only from what I heard during the anecdote circles. However, I have no valid measure of the number of young children addicted to drugs; how many of them finance their habits by selling scrap at an illegal scrap yard, or; how many take drugs with their parents. But I know all of these are problems that require a coordinated effort to deal with.

Many of my colleagues love their quantitative methods and want to show how valid and reliable their findings are. I am not sure how to respond to validity. I heard the above issue enough times to know I collected a sufficiency of information to know that the above issue is real. I did it very quickly. I don't need time to conceptualize how to repeat this in another community, nor do I need many resources.

What sorts of reactions did you get to the project during and after it?

I have used the results in articles I have written and to inform other research I am doing. But I am very disappointed, and ashamed, that I cannot use the findings of the research to effect change in the community. The only consolations I have are the people who participated enjoyed the discussions and were given quite personal advice from an experienced social worker. I also gave the community the report I mentioned above. The major recommendations I made in that report have not changed. I have sought advice from a range of role players, one of whom have extensive experience with communities similar to this community and have personal experience with individuals from the community. He advised

me sternly to not publicize my recommendations unless I am able to spend the time that will be necessary to defuse tensions as a result of my findings. I will not be able to manage these and keeping away from the community in hand happens to be the most responsible way forward.

I was not asked by the community to do the research and was asked during the research to be responsible. I have taken the 'cop out' way, which happens to be the most responsible way out too.

High and low points

Do you remember any pleasant surprises during the project?

I found the participants to be incredibly open about their experiences. We thought that the participants probably never get opportunities to speak openly like we gave them and reveled in it. Besides the trauma that is shared, it also means that you are able to gain a deep and rich insight into the psyche of the community in an incredibly short period of time. The short time spent creating the right atmosphere is all that is needed to create the trust and start peeling open a deep can of worms. I learnt more about the community from completely ordinary people in the first three anecdote circles (i.e. 2 days) than I had in the previous two months of direct questioning.

How about unpleasant surprises?

I found more than I wanted to know. The experiences shared to me during the anecdote circles depressed me at the time I hosted them and they depressed me again when I read the transcripts. The community was an extremely poor and psychologically damaged community so the issues were extreme, but I am sure similar stuff will emerge in similarly poor communities elsewhere in the world, including Northern hemisphere countries. I think above all, preparing yourself to hear traumatic experiences is critical and do not try ignore the effects they have on you. I have read similar comments by Dave Snowden.

My assistant is a mature and experienced social worker and I knew she would be able to counsel anyone were a very traumatic experience shared. Researchers wanting to use the same technique, especially in poor urban communities anywhere in the world, should have a clear plan for counseling someone after sharing an experience of rape or sexual abuse. I hate to put it that way, but want to get the message across.

Do you recall any "aha" moments when you realized or learned something critical?

There were so many surprises and aha moments during the research as a result of dots being joined and complete hair raising issues being discussed (e.g. a priest visited a family to find a two year old smoking a joint with his parents) that it is difficult to pin-point one worth mentioning. However, I was very surprised by (a) how easy it was to get the deep insight into the way people behave and think in the community and (b) that the simpler the question I asked, the deeper were the insights and the richer were the stories. We all have stories and you don't have to read and write to be able to tell them!

Advice

What do you wish you had known before your project that you know now?

I think most people like to talk and discuss their experiences. I have only ever participated in one focus group. I was badly placed and felt that throughout the process I was being judged. In anecdote circles, participants are not being judged about their perceptions. They are being asked to share their experiences and the dynamic is completely different and this creates openness and plenty of sharing. Be prepared for the volume that comes out.

I shared the details of the failed circle because I think other researchers who want to use this technique should plan for failed anecdote circles. Occasionally they are going to happen and you must accept it. In a focus group, you can ask direct questions. This does not work in an anecdote circle and a lot of what determines success is out of your hands and you should not be put off by the odd failure. You are working with the natural side of humans; failure is a natural part of success.

What do you think you'll do the same and differently when you do your next project?

I think that were I to approach this research from the start now, I would plan that my first visit to the community is a Monday or Tuesday morning in the middle of the month. This timing is important so that the effects of end-of-month and weekend socializing and bingeing are avoided. I would arrive with a research assistant (of appropriate ethnic origin), a cartoonist, a voice recorder and some refreshments and find a private place, like a church that I could use and then ask a few people to join in an anecdote circle in return for some refreshments. I would literally ask people on the side of the road to join and would host two or three anecdote circles on that first day. Each anecdote circle would have no more than seven people. I would start by explaining to them that I have come to do some research in the community to understand the community's strengths and ask them to share experiences with me about living in this community to help me decide whether to live here or not. Every word said will be recorded and I would let the cartoonist run wild as he draws up cartoons of the various characters in the anecdotes.

At the end of this first day, I would get the recordings transcribed and the cartoons drawn up neatly and then decide on my next steps. I feel confident enough in this technique that I could follow the above steps tomorrow in any community in South Africa where levels of unemployment are high. I cannot think of any research interventions that would benefit from starting this way. However, had I started like this in the community I worked in I would have probably run like mad and never set foot in it again.

An example where I could have applied the above approach is to understand aspects of xenophobia. This could be achieved by hosting anecdote circles with each of the ethnic groups living in the area. Start each group with the question I mentioned above and once it is going, ask them what experiences they would share if you were of other ethnic origins in the community (e.g.: if I was Somali, If I was Zulu). However, if xenophobia is a problem, it will come out naturally in a group that is targeted by xenophobic hatred without having to fish for it as long as you have not mixed ethnic groups in the same group. The above tips are provided for extreme cases: if something is an issue, it is likely to emerge without prompting.

Advice

What advice would you give to a person who wants to do a similar project?

I have touched on some process issues that others should be aware of, but based on what I experienced, I think the following are critical:

Keep the starting question (and any others) short and simple.

Although not always possible, two facilitators create an atmosphere that participants are part of a discussion rather than talking to a facilitator. When using two facilitators they must sit at opposite sides of the circle.

I feel four in a group is a minimum, even if there is only one facilitator, and this is a very good number. My guess is that eight participants is the maximum feasible limit.

If you use a voice recorder, advise the participants that it will capture everything said. Dave Snowden comments that if you force people to tell the truth, they lie; if you let them lie, they tell the truth. I advised participants to hold back and they did the opposite.

Anecdote circles are best used when trying to capture unknown unknowns. It is not a technique that can be used for all purposes, but it can complement other techniques, especially quantitative techniques, very well. It is possible to find out some specific issues, but do not rely on the technique to achieve this. In their guide, Shaun Callahan and others from *Anecdote* use the analogy of a ship setting sail. I think this is appropriate as you can't force the wind to blow or even blow in a certain direction, but once you get going you can tack within the limits of the wind strength and direction. The same applies in an anecdote circle. Get the group going by asking a very simple and ambiguous question, then steer them by asking the starting question from a different angle. For instance, if you want to know HIV/AIDS related issues you could ask some way into the discussion what experiences they would share if you had HIV/AIDS. However, do this intelligently. For example, asking this question to a group of people whose HIV status you do not know may backfire.

Be conscious of the bonds of coherence. I hoped bringing all the priests together would increase the variety of issues discussed as well as reveal the full ambit of issues relevant to the churches. I had vague inclinations about a problem all the priests had with one of the priests in the community, but didn't fully understand it. Nor did I appreciate the lack of communication between the priests. We asked one priest to invite the rest so assumed if there were unworkable tensions the invitations would reflect this. The disliked priest came, but could only stay for the first few minutes and once he left, the mood changed and they started sharing experiences. But not all the priests knew each other and therefore the anecdote circle was hard work. It did not produce as much volume as I hoped. If I was more conscious about the lack of communication between the churches, I would have held separate anecdote circles with parishioners from each church i.e. individual anecdote circles with three churches would have produced far deeper insight than one anecdote circle represented by 8 churches together.

But we a very successful anecdote circle with some pre-school principals who were all from different organisations. The major difference between the pre-school principals and the

churches is the pre-schools help and support each other, whereas the churches compete with each other. Remember those bonds of coherence!

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Helping a community market listen to its customers

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Framing the project

What was the impetus for your project? What led to it taking place? Why were you doing it?

The Broad Street Market of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, was founded in 1860, and is the oldest continuously operated market house in the United States. More than forty Market vendors sell fresh produce, meats, prepared foods and gifts to residents, workers from the nearby State Capitol complex, and visitors. The Market is the anchor of the culturally- and economically-diverse Midtown neighborhood, which is undergoing a renaissance with new facilities like the Harrisburg Area Community College intown campus and the Midtown Arts Center.

I am a member of the board of directors of the market. The idea to do the project came during a phone conversation I had with our new board chairman. I mentioned that, given the evolution of the market's surrounding neighborhood, I wasn't sure what the role of the market should play in the neighborhood, the city and with its customers. The chairman replied that he knew what the role was, and he spelled it out very clearly and succinctly. "Interesting," I said. "The person in the mayor's office who oversees the market said this was the market's role, and that's very different from what you just said." At that moment I felt like we needed to go to the various stakeholders and find out what role they wanted the market to play in their lives.

What were the project's goals?

The goal of the project was to gain a shared understanding among the various market constituencies—including customers—about their view of the market—what was its mission and purpose, and what they envisioned as the future role of the market. In my original project proposal, I anticipated interviewing all different types of constituencies—customers, representatives of the City, the board, non-customers, community leaders.

The story of the project

How did the project get started? What happened first?

The first step was getting the approval of the board. I wrote up a proposal and presented it at a board meeting. I don't think I explained it very well at all, and I doubt the proposal was carefully reviewed—but it was cheap and addressed a question we all were curious about, so the board said "go ahead."

Once I got started, I realized the scope was going to be too broad to present results within the expected timeframe (2 months). With some constituencies (community leaders, noncustomers), it would take a lot of legwork even to figure out how to reach them. So I scoped down and focused on the customers. I got a voice recorder and headed to the market.

What sorts of stories did you collect? How were they collected? Who collected them?

I made six trips to the market to record stories. My goal was to get 60 stories, and I ended up with about 65.

What sorts of annotations or question-asking were done? Who answered the questions or added the annotations?

I didn't really understand "questions about stories" then, so I ended up asking fairly de-mographic questions—how long have you come here? How close do you live? Etc. [As I started reviewing the transcripts, I realized that some themes emerged. Some people mentioned that they found being at the market entertaining. Others that they came there to see friends. Etc. But because I didn't ask specific questions about these, I didn't get enough information on those themes. If I had the project to do over again, I would do a few interviews to see patterns, then create some questions around the themes that were emerging, and ask those of everyone after.]

How were the stories looked at or considered? Who was involved in this?

Once the interviews were done, I had the stories transcribed (the most expensive part of the exercise: about $200). In addition to the answers to questions about the stories, I took some of the patterns I saw (did they mention community? Friends? Entertainment?) and put the results into a spreadsheet.

In preparation for looking at the stories, a nice person was able to take my spreadsheet and do a huge number of pairwise comparisons, which she put into graphs. For example, of the people who mentioned community, what age group did they fall into? And a hundred other comparisons. Out of these, I pulled out the ten or so most interesting graphs. I also took the transcripts and extracted about 30 of the most vibrant or interesting stories in them.

The board took a few hours one night to review the excerpts and the graphs. I stuck hardcopies of the graphs on the wall, and laid the excerpts around the meeting room. I had the group look at these and put their ideas on stickies (pretty much following the process described in this book).

We came up with 9 clusters, named:

- Events
- Parking/Facilities/Accessibility
- Safety
- Community
- Marketing/Signage
- Convenience
- Social Interaction
- Sanitary/Cleanliness
- Business incubator

We didn't do much with the graphs, though a few people who reviewed it saw some patterns, specifically that with a younger demographic we can tap into strong yearnings for community and local sourcing.

Then we talked about what we had just done. There was 90 minutes of discussion about the 9 items, which everyone agreed represented the customers' perceptions about what the market was and what it needed to be. We established a bunch of near-term actions, including a very frank discussion of the need to assure the financial viability of the market (which had really existed month-to-month for years).

How did the project end? Were conclusions drawn, and by whom?

We are using the information in the project in various ways. On one level, when we have board discussions, we refer to the findings and to the customer stories to help us understand the customer's viewpoint. This has been helpful, for example, in being assertive with vendors about their need to keep their stands utterly clean. Another example: the local police department approached us to see if we would allow them to set up a temporary recruiting station in the Market. It took about three seconds of discussion to say yes—it supports our "safety" and "community" pillars.

Also, we are using these findings as input to our strategic planning process and visioning for the market. We can create stories that describe how we see the market evolving, using these 9 fundamentals, and those stories can underpin our planning and fundraising activities.

High and low points

Do you remember any pleasant surprises during the project?

There were a lot of pleasant surprises. It was really nice to hear from the customers. In particular, learning what an important part the Market plays in the life of the community—not only as a provider of food, but of connection and diversion.

How about unpleasant surprises?

There weren't any unpleasant surprises. People were very open and receptive to talking. The board took their responsibilities seriously.

Do you recall any "aha" moments when you realized or learned something critical?

In one interview, a woman began to discuss growing up in the neighborhood 60 years earlier, where the trolley ran and the various merchants with shops near the market. Then she said that one of the Market stands they went to then is still in operation, run by the daughter of the former owner. It struck me then that the Market was more than just a collection of stands with vendors, more than just a building. It was the continuation of a legacy, a connection to the past, and needed to be preserved and cherished.

Were there any times during the project when things seemed too difficult or challenging to go on? What was the challenge and what did you do about it?

I did begin to run out of steam collecting stories near the end. I wasn't looking forward to the last couple of trips. I just told myself that on that trip I needed 10 stories, that I wasn't leaving before I got ten stories. And I stuck it out.

Evaluation

What turned out the same as you expected? What was worse than expected? What was better?

I expected to learn a lot from the customers and that didn't surprise me. It was harder than expected to do the interviews. I couldn't imagine doing it all day—even though people were very gracious and very few declined to talk.

Did the project meet its goals? Were there other benefits you hadn't expected?

The project met its goals; we got a list of important, customer-validated findings to use as a basis for strategic planning. These included the importance of community, safety, pricing, local content, cleanliness. Since we did the project these terms have become a standard part of our dialogues about the market.

Can you share one conclusion of your project that you don't think you could have arrived at in any other way than by asking for and looking at stories?

One of the most gratifying and surprising outcomes of the project occurred after we had finished the sensemaking exercise. Six of us sat around a table, eating pizza and drinking beer, and spent an hour and a half (!) discussing the stories, the implications, and things we should do. I was very surprised that the session lasted that long. It was also surprising that the dialogue was very rich, very open and unbounded. Some novel ideas came up and were discussed at length, including the frankest discussion of the market's financial situation and how to fix it than we had ever had. People came up with lots of new suggestions to do things with little/no investment.

One unexpected finding from the project was the realization that many customers drive to the market. There is a deep-seated assumption on behalf of the board and City that most market customers walk from their homes or workplaces to shop there. But fully half of the people I talked to drove there. And, as a result, the question of parking, which was not a topic of serious discussion before, became one after the study was complete. We had never heard of this as an issue, and, since it was such a widely-held assumption, I don't know how we would have learned this other than through a story project.

Advice

What do you think you'll do the same and differently when you do your next project?

The biggest change I'll make going forward is to do more advance research before plunging into story-gathering. As I mentioned earlier, I found that interesting items emerged from the initial interviews, but I didn't ask any questions about those items. In the future I'll note those and create "questions about the stories" for those items. For example, the idea of friendship & entertainment were not items I thought about in advance of talking to customers. If I had asked questions about these items, we probably would have gotten more data about them.

What advice would you give to a person who wants to do a similar project?

I would tell anyone considering a story project to go ahead and do it. Even as a beginner, even though you'll make lots of mistakes, as long as you gather enough stories, the patterns will make themselves known. You'll get useful, surprising, powerful results even if you're not a skilled practitioner yet.

Evaluating effectiveness helping youth in foster care

Stephen Shimshock

Framing the project

What was the impetus for your project? What led to it taking place? Why were you doing it?

I work for a non-profit organization that provides services to youth and families impacted by the foster care system. In our direct service offices we often have a small group of people involved in community work. One major focus or our community work addresses the needs of youth aging out of care. Our organization was looking for a way to understand the impact of our involvement in this community work. The work was collaborative in nature often involving 20-40 organizations. Challenges with sharing data and information resulted in stilted efforts in the past.

I was beginning my doctoral studies in Social Science and volunteered to try some type of Action Research approach. I was also growing increasingly fascinated with Internet groups (such as Wikipedia) and how they self-organized to accomplish incredible tasks. Past efforts of evaluation focused on the "effectiveness" of the collaboration. Effectiveness is particularly hard to measure in dynamic social interactions. Ponder this question, "How effective are you as a parent?" Now, imagine I added the statement, "Please provide evidence of your parenting effectiveness so I can help determine if you should continue this activity." What type of conversation do you think would emerge from such a line of inquiry? To most people that scenario appears absurd; however to most organizations it isn't absurd to ask, "How effective is this community collaboration?" Imagine a slight change in the inquiry question. "What have you learned as a parent?" Changing the question will likely lead to a more engaging conversation. Both the asker and the asked gain a richer understanding of parenting. The foundational inquiry question became, "how do the

members of the collaboration learn together, what have they learned, and what action will they take based on what they learned?"

What were the project's goals?

The goals for the project were to:

- Help the collaborative group learn about their community and act on the information they learned.
- Involve community members as much as possible.
- Build a method for a community to conduct and author their own evaluation.
- Distribute the role of "researcher" across the group be researched.

What did you think would happen during the project before it started? What were your expectations?

The prospect of trying a different approach to inquiry excited me. However, I am the type of person that like things fairly well laid out and clear before starting. I would be six months into my project before I discovered Working with Stories. My expectations were supplanted by my fear of the unknown. Intuitively, I felt like I was moving in the right direction. My main expectation was to end up with something that felt more respectful to the human condition, in particular to the struggles youth aging out of care. So many efforts to evaluate social services focus on various types of outcome measures thought up by professionals without consulting those that are subjected to the inquiry.

The story of the project

How did the project get started? What happened first?

I work for a fairly large organization so I needed some executive approval before I began. The project started with an unceremonious yellow light, meaning it wasn't seen as a dumb idea but it also wasn't seen as the beacon of break-through inquiry I thought it to be. In addition, what I "sold" was merely the idea of doing evaluation differently. I actually didn't have a fully baked plan for what to do. I moved forward with a patchwork of ideas, primarily gleaned from the book *Fourth Generation Evaluation*.

My first thought was to provide the collaborative group with a social networking site where they could communicate with each other more readily and problem-solve in a near real-time environment. I could simply be a fly on the wall and watch the conversations as they unfolded and use that as the data set for inquiry. The idea was well received and I set up a site for them, invited over 100 participants and then I waited patiently to the sound of crickets. Only a handful of people signed up and beyond creating a profile they visited the site very infrequently.

After months of struggling I introduced the idea of interviewing people to gather more information. The group liked the idea and once again I needed to find a methodology. This is when I stumbled upon Working with Stories and the project took on some real structure. I felt so lucky to find such a valuable resource of information that aligned so perfectly to the overall mission of my project.

What sorts of stories did you collect? How were they collected? Who collected them?

I work at our headquarters unit in Seattle and my project site was at our Boise field office. I didn't have much money in my budget to travel so the geography created a slight barrier to story collection. After doing some research on the web I decided to try Anecdote Circles as a method for story collection. I like this idea because it afforded me the opportunity to meet with multiple people at once and it seemed like something I could do via our video conferencing system—which works rather reliably.

I met with the collaborative partners to identify the types of stories they wanted to collect. It was decided that Service Providers and Young Adults would have separate Anecdote Circle sessions. The thinking was that Young Adult may feel more comfortable sharing stories with each other and may speak more freely about the services offered in the community.

The Service Providers were interested in how people experienced services in the community—in particular when services were being offered by multiple agencies. They wanted to know if they were doing a good job working with each other. In addition we developed questions to solicit stories that have impacted Young Adults and Service Providers. This would hopefully reveal what types of situations and experiences are important to people. The questions were intentionally left open ended and worded in such a way that a participant could easily tell a positive or negative story. Below are a few samples of the questions asked to each group. Notice that some questions are somewhat similar. This was done in hopes of being able to compare stories of a similar nature across the two groups.

Young Adult Samples

Have you ever had an experience where you worked with multiple service providers at the same time? Can you recall a time when you wished things were better coordinated, or can you recall a time when you surprised at how connected and smoothly things worked?

Picture a time in the future when you are perhaps 70 or 80 years old. Looking back on your life, what experience from your transition into adulthood do you believe you will remember as a "turning point" in your life? (it could be a turning point that led to better things or one that made things worse—or you may be in the middle of it right now and it's too soon to tell)

Imagine you just met someone. They recently turned 18 and had to move out of the foster home where they lived. They tell you that they are a bit scared and unsure about how to get housing, a job, etc. They ask if you know anyone they could talk with and get some help. Who would you refer them to and why? (It may be someone in the helping profession but it could also be a friend, pastor, etc.)

Service Provider Samples

Think of a time when you had to arrange services across multiple agencies for a young adult. Please talk about a time when coordinating these services went really well or a time when it didn't go so well?

Picture a time in the future when you are perhaps 70 or 80 years old. Looking back on your work with young adults, what experience do you believe you will remember and still be retelling?

Talk about a time when you made what you thought was a "small" gesture but it seem to make a big difference to your client.

My role in this project was to be the inquiry facilitator (as opposed to researcher). In that capacity I facilitated the Anecdote Circle sessions. There were two sessions for Service Providers and two sessions for Young Adults. We ended up gathering 65 stories from 14 Service Providers and 12 Young Adults.

In addition to the Anecdote Circles we also set up a Google Docs account and created an online form for collecting stories. While many were enthusiastic about this option only two people submitted stories by that method. For future projects I think online collection methods can work but we would need to develop a better strategy for alerting and directing people to the form.

What sorts of annotations or question-asking were done? Who answered the questions or added the annotations?

We developed a set of questions about the story. This was printed out in advance and a stack of these forms were placed within reach of participants during the Anecdote Circle sessions. When someone told a story they were instructed to grab a form and provide a title for their story. In order to keep the flow and focus of the session moving we asked participants not to fill out the form right away but rather wait until the end of the session. Participants were given about 10 minutes at the end of the session to answer the questions about their stories.

In retrospect I see this as one of these most critical parts of the process and unfortunately it was a part that I didn't put enough thought into at the time. The questions about the stories are a great source for finding patterns. However, the source is only as good as the questions asked. In this case the wording of my questions made some of the analysis difficult. In the future I would spend more time thinking through what types of analysis can be done with the questions.

There were three questions that I found useful in the analysis for this case. The first was asking how the participant felt when telling the story. They were given a set of emotions they could check or identify their own. Second, they were asked to rate the circumstances in the story from a range of very predictable to unpredictable. Finally, I also found value in the question about the frequency of the circumstances in the story they told. The questions I did not find much value in were about when the story occurred and the purpose of their story. This does not mean those are not important questions, rather the way in which I worded them made it difficult to analyze.

How were the stories looked at or considered? Who was involved in this?

Once the Anecdote Circles were complete I created transcripts of all the stories. I also provided some initial analysis and in consultation with Cynthia decided to use her naming convention and called the report a "Catalysis Report." The purpose of catalysis report is

to provide a first level of analysis with the intention of catalyzing the group into further thought and inquiry. I found this report difficult to write and in the end I believe (based on my own opinion and feedback from the group) that I included too much information. It is preferable to keep this report brief and to highlight multiple and perhaps competing perspectives.

Did you do any group exercises? If so, what were they and how did they go?

In addition to the Catalysis Report the group also agreed to have a full day Sense Making session. This was the one and only time I interacted with participants face to face. Both Service Providers and Young Adults participated in the Sense Making day. The participants included people from the Anecdote Circles and those new to the project. This was done intentionally to broaden the input into the project. The Sense Making day started with a quick review of the project to set the context for participants. The we dove right into the stories.

Each group (Service Providers and Young Adults) were broken into two subgroups of four (we had a total of 16 people). We then proceeded with a variation of the story elements exercise as outlined in the book. We decided to focus on Situations, Characters, and Values. This process actually went smoother than I expected. Once we had filled numerous sticky notes we began the clustering and re-clustering process.

One major learning moment for me came when we were naming clusters. In the future I will ensure that I develop a set of rules for what types of names people give to their clusters. For example, the Service Providers named one of their characters "Systemic Barriers." This is hardly the name of a character. One of the attributes in this cluster was called "Robber of Souls." This would have been a more apt title for the cluster. Instead of developing some new language and terms that would break them from entrenched thinking they provided the clusters with common categorical names. As a side note, in the future I will find a way to have someone take notes during the clustering. The conversations that occurred were very rich and it would have been helpful to capture some of them for further sense making.

After the groups developed several clusters they placed their clusters on the Confluence Framework. This process actually took far less time than I thought. I didn't spend much time explaining the framework. I also didn't draw any lines. I simply established four corners. The bottom right is where everyone knows the answer. The upper right is where experts know the answer. The upper left is where there are many answers and the bottom left is where there are no answers. This was adequate enough to get them to place their clusters on the framework. I the future I think it would be helpful to have them identify the four corners by telling a story that exemplifies the extreme corners and then place their clusters within that context. I think this would add another level of contextual relevance to the framework.

The development of the framework moved quickly. At this point in the process the Service Providers and Young Adults had been working separately. With their frameworks complete they entered into a discussion about their frameworks to talk about similarities and differences as well as providing the rational for their cluster placements. This conversation then led into an exercise where the participants developed a list of ideas, recommendations,

and issues for the collaboration. These lists were forwarded to the collaboration steering committee for review and action.

How did the project end? Were conclusions drawn, and by whom?

After the Sense Making day the lists developed by the Sense Making participants were reviewed with the Steering Committee. In addition, a summary of the project was sent out to many members of the collaboration with an invitation to provide a summary of their own thoughts and/or findings. This input was summarized in a final document that highlighted the findings, implications and recommendations. My initial hope was that this document would get produced collaboratively by the group using Google Docs. However, this group is fairly tech-avoidant and it was difficult to garner support for this type of participation. As the facilitator I ended gathering the feedback and typing up the summary report myself.

There were several key findings for the group. For the sake of brevity I will highlight one of the most poignant findings. It became clear from the stories and the framework that the Young Adults in the community very often find themselves in complex space. They are looking for a job, a place to live, applying for a service, starting school, etc. The Young Adults identified working with Service Providers as a complex exchange. "We don't know we are going to get burned by a Service Provider until we get burned. They may be having a bad day or they may not like us." This issue was juxtaposed against the Service Providers who identified that Young Adults seem to lack motivation. This led to a conversation, although briefer than I expected, about how Young Adults may be motivated but they haven't reached a level of trust with a Service Provider. This trust-earning phase of the relationship could appear like a lack of motivation. In addition, the Young Adults joked about how there are indeed times when they are unmotivated.

I asked the Young Adults to identify what they thought would be a good method for learning and navigating in complex space. They identified trial-and-error. Problem solving skills can be a real asset in complex space and there is a vast amount of research that points to deficiencies in problem solving skills for those who come from abusive backgrounds. This insight led Service Providers to consider how they can build in the teaching of problem solving skills into their service offering. They also are exploring how they can provide Young Adults the opportunity to experience failure and recovery in a safe environment. This may change how Service Providers set up eligibility and compliance requirements for services.

There were several other findings that will hopefully impact the direction of the collaboration. The overall process worked well despite participants expressing confusion at times. They said they weren't always sure where things were going. I am not sure yet if this is a valid concern or if this is par for the course with this type of work. I do believe that I could have done a better job providing more interim communication to ensure people understood the status of the project on a regular basis.

What happened after the project was over?

The collaboration steering committee is in the process of integrating the recommendations into their planning. One of the recommendations was to engage in this type of process on an annual basis. It is unclear at this point if they will continue the process.

High and low points

Do you remember any pleasant surprises during the project?

There were too many pleasant surprises along the way to describe them all adequately here. I will highlight a few of the more memorable ones. I can be quite abstract in my thinking and problem solving. However, when it comes to planning I am pretty logical and linear. Planning a story project for the first time is anything but linear. It was quite challenging for me to continually reshape the plans for the project. I was pleasantly surprised to see how well this worked out. There were times I would hang my head in despair thinking I was prodding people down a path of total confusion. Yet, somehow in the end things come together and we ended up with some tangible items to act on.

I was amazed at how engaged people were in the Sense Making process. I believe this is in part because they have a vested interest in the material being made sense of, it's their stories! People enjoy diving deeper into their own stuff. I am a fairly seasoned facilitator and that was a big plus for making this stuff work. Adapting along the way is crucial. The best advice I received from Cynthia regarding the Sense Making day was "if you want to have a successful Sense Making session then have another one first." Essentially, the only way to get good at this stuff is to do it. While having experience as facilitator was helpful it's no substitute for Sense Making facilitation experience. In retrospect, I think it would be wise to have several mini-sessions with trusted friends and co-workers before trying out the real thing.

I started my career (and it was short lived) as a therapist. I was always struck by how incredibly honored I would feel to be in the midst of someone's story. This work has brought me back in touch with that sense of awe and wonder. Listening to the stories of others is a fantastic way to put you in touch with the vast spectrum of the human experience.

How about unpleasant surprises?

The main unpleasant surprise was more my own issue rather than an issue with story work. In this project several people expressed a sense of being confused as to the point of the whole process. I have come to learn that part of this is par for the course and part of it is a by-product of experience. If you could tell people exactly what to expect from a story project and exactly what they will get from it—you are more than likely doing it wrong. However, you can provide people with a general map of what you are doing and what to expect along the way. In the future I will make sure I identify the key stakeholders and ensure that I am continually providing them with updates about the project and reminding them about the purpose of the work.

Do you recall any "aha" moments when you realized or learned something critical?

My aha moments happened on a regular basis and many of them I have shared already in my comments above. Overall, I would say the biggest aha for me is that story work is really about cultural change. The promise of story work in my opinion is in its ability to provide a method for managing complexity. A story project isn't intended to find some universal truth and spread it across the world. Rather, it's best suited to help a group find their own

localized versions of the truth and co-create new realities. A story project does not lead you to the change—it is one of the primary mechanisms of change. The project becomes an intervention in itself. The resulting cultural shift will fuel the changes needed.

Were there any times during the project when things seemed too difficult or challenging to go on? What was the challenge and what did you do about it?

Yes! The primary challenge with a story project is quite simple to articulate; there are multiple ways to have a successful story project. While that statement sounds innocuous it really creates a challenge for learning how to do a story project. Let me share a personal story. I saved a bundle on my children's swing set because I bought an open box item that was missing a few parts. However, I am a fairly competent handy-person and could quickly assess the situation and determine with confidence that I could improvise and build the swing set with stuff I had in my garage. My decision was based on years of experience building and putting together a wide variety of things. I adapted and few things put the swing set up without any major issues. My kids love it—and after 3 years it's still going strong.

The conundrum is how do you get years of experience doing story work? Who is going to let you take on a story project if you have never done one? How do you sell something whose outcome isn't known? Imagine being with your boss and saying, "we will bring people together, have them share stories, make sense of them, and then we will have an output of something but we won't know what that is until the project is over." That is a very tough sell. My advice is to start small and start often. Don't pin all of your hopes on a big story project. Do several small ones with friends and coworkers. Or start a project with a local club or church group that is unaffiliated with your work. Start small and start often. The more you do the more you can articulate what to expect and the more confidence you gain in your ability to adapt along the way.

What turned out the same as you expected? What was worse than expected? What was better?

Given this was a new venture for me I tried to set less-than-ambitious expectations. I had some hopes for the project but I kept my expectations low, such as, I expect to get a handful of participants—even if they are only going along because they know and trust me. I found low expectations were the easiest to meet.

My questions about the stories turned out to be worse than I expected. I really thought I had a good set of questions but I found them only minimally useful. In the future I will spend way more time testing questions not only for the integrity of the question itself but also for its usefulness to be analyzed.

The stories collected were far better than I expected. It was such an honor to listen to the stories told by the participants. When faced with open ended questions and a sincere desire to listen, people really seem to open up. It was a pleasure to interact with others in a way that felt respectful of their time and their point of view. I wasn't extracting information from them; rather I wanted to listen to them.

Did the project meet its goals? Were there other benefits you hadn't expected?

This project had two overarching goals. First, I wanted the community collaboration to have some type of evaluation of their work. Second, I needed a project for my PhD dissertation—merely doing the project met this goal. As to the first goal, I would say the goal was met somewhat. That isn't a very enthusiastic evaluation but in all honesty I feel like I gained more from this project than anyone else. However, that says more about me and my newness to this work than it does about the work itself.

The collaborative partners had mixed feelings about the project. They were troopers and really did put their best foot forward. We didn't have anyone that hated the project. However, some of them felt like we took a long route to get to findings they felt were nearly self-evident. I think the group ended up with something of value. While some of the finding do have a "no duh" feel to them, for the first time the collaborative group can back up these findings with evidence. They can point to the specific stories that highlight the findings. Much of their work has been based on anecdotal evidence already. They historically took action based on a consensus from the group. They can continue to base their actions on anecdotal evidence but now they can produce the body of evidence.

My assessment of goal achievement may seem somewhat negative but my outlook on future projects is very positive. I am now engaged in multiple small story projects and I am constantly looking for ways to "play" with stories to increase my experience level. I am certain that each project I take on will get better and better. Managing complexity is not easy, in fact its downright messy. However, the results are often elegantly beautiful.

Can you share one conclusion of your project that you don't think you could have arrived at in any other way than by asking for and looking at stories?

Yes! It was so interesting to see that negative stories from young adults occurred frequently in circumstances that were unpredictable. In essence, a good portion of their stories occur in complex space. The service providers also had a high number of complex stories but there was one startling difference. For the workers, the complex situation was one they faced as part of their job. For young adults the complex situation was their life (they were being removed from home, kicked out of school, etc.). The service provider can go home after work to relative stability and predictability. They have a way out of the complex situation at the end of the day. For the young adult the complexity doesn't stop at five o'clock, it ebbs and flows continuously. This is a dynamic that isn't that difficult to conceptualize, it makes sense. However, it would be difficult to develop a survey tool or other measure that could highlight that specific issue. Narrative inquiry allows for a much more nuanced and multifaceted understanding of a dynamic.

What sorts of reactions did you get to the project during and after it?

This question has been answered throughout some of the other questions. The response to the project was good as the project was being introduced. People were open and receptive to the idea. I think people are yearning for something deeper and more humane when it comes to understanding social issues. From that perspective the project felt very much at home with many of the social service providers and young adults.

With the project in its final stages it's too early to comment on reactions "after" the project. As stated earlier, some struggled with making the connections between what was learned and what actions to take next. Others felt the project worked well and provided the collaboration with some tangible ways to articulate the value of collaborating.

Advice

What do you wish you had known before your project that you know now?

Start small and practice lots. I cannot stress enough how important it is to play with these concepts before taking on a project. Take the time to practice some of the group exercises before trying them with a "real" group. When developing story eliciting questions and the questions about the stories be sure to take adequate time to test the questions. Again, test the questions for how easy they are to understand by others and for their analytical usefulness. For example, when you formulate a story eliciting question ask yourself what types of stories you expect to hear from such a question. Then go ask a few people that you know to answer the question and see what you get. Did they understand the question? Did they tell a story? Was it the type of story you thought you would get? Then have people try out your questions about the stories and then try to analyze the data. Is it easy to analyze? Will you be able to see patterns in the data? The story eliciting questions and the questions about your stories are the crux of the project—take the time to get this part solid. Special Note: I say all of this with one caveat to those like me; don't get stuck in this step! Get this part solid (I used the term solid as opposed to the word right). Don't spend so much time that you stall the project. Get a good set of questions move forward and don't be afraid to course correct along the way.

What do you think you'll do the same and differently when you do your next project?

I have discussed many things I would change and do the same already but there are a few worth repeating. I like anecdote circles as a method for story collection. However, I would find other methods to increase the diversity in the ways people tell their stories. Also, I like the idea of introducing things other than told-stories. A picture, for example could tell a story. And, there are numerous other sense making items like newspaper articles, reports, etc. These should all be fair-game for a story project as inputs.

I am continually experimenting with both story eliciting questions and questions about stories. Currently, I am in between projects but my friends and coworkers would think I am in the thick of a major project. I continually ask them to try stuff out and refine questions. I am not looking for the "perfect" question, but rather I am experimenting with "types" of questions to get a sense of the "types" of responses they evoke and how those responses will inform a project.

What advice would you give to a person who wants to do a similar project?

The easy advice is read *Working with Stories*. Seriously, don't skim it, take the time to really read it. My copy is filled with notes, dog-eared pages, coffee stains and highlighter marks. Read it thoroughly and then lock it in a draw. Go and try a small scale story project. Then unlock the draw and read the book again. The book is very comprehensive and seems to make more sense the more times you read it.

Another indispensible piece of advice would be to find people that are doing this work and talk to them frequently. Because there isn't a cookie-cutter way to do a project it helps to hear voices of experience. I have a small community of fellow story practitioners and they provide me with a tremendous amount of inspiration and ideas.

Finally, let me offer one metric of success. If you are engaged in story work and you find that your life is changing in some small or large way, then you're heading in the right direction.

Using a specific narrative process to face conflictual situations

Stephane Dangel (http://storyable.posterous.com)

Framing the project

What was the impetus for your project? What led to it taking place? Why were you doing it?

This French industrial company averaging 900 employees requests anonymity due to privacy policy. The company operates on BtoB and BtoC markets and, though mid-sized, is organized in two business units. Each of them is largely autonomous and somewhat competing and has its own internal structure and "equipment for success". A few support departments, independent from the two business units, are shared resources (Finance, Human resources).

The development of a brand new product range required a major organizational change: two departments each belonging to different business units had to be merged to perform the task.

The departments had very similar missions however different goals.

The newly created department's manager quickly felt something was wrong in the team. A strong resentment of tension was felt and sometimes fierce overt arguments were occuring far beyond what we could have expected from old rivals and from "ordinary" business pressure.

Before I joined the group to help as a consultant, the department's manager had run a workshop with the whole department. The workshop was not narrative-driven: traditional quality management tools were implemented. The manager was very upset because he learnt from the workshop that "evrything was ok" which would have been great if only it were true!

What were the project's goals?

The goal of the project was to understand what was really going on over there. What was the sense of people's behaviour? Why weren't they speaking overtly? In order to go beyond the official version, rich material was required, meaning a narrative one. I chose to use a very specific narrative technique I developed myself [Editor's note: see below for more information on this method]. The "I forgive" method is a solution to elicit stories and make

sense within conflictual situations. Note that forgiveness needs to be considered here from a positive and somewhat humorous view.

What did you think would happen during the project before it started? What were your expectations?

As the situation seemed to be highly conflictual, it is easy to understand that the more sensitive the matter is, the more difficult it is to get easy to use and meaningful material. The most meaningful definition is to view conflictual situations from a storytelling prism. Most narrative capture occurs in situations where people naturally tell stories. So, by extent, conflictual situations are those where people are reluctant to tell stories. It restricts conflictual situations to blocked and stressful ones, and that's what I thought at the very beginning.

So, I expected from my method to surpass these potential fences.

The story of the project

How did the project get started? What happened first?

A place outside the company was chosen to gather team-members and run a new workshop. However skeptical, everybody came to attend, which was a good start!

I explained the rules and whereabouts of the "I forgive" method.

To sum it up, people were assigned to recount events related to the matter at stake involving other team-members, beginning their sentences with "I forgive". "I forgive" has a double-sense and that's what loosens the stress attached to the conflictual situation.

What sorts of stories did you collect? How were they collected? Who collected them?

I was aiming at collecting material instead of data and events instead of opinions, bias-exempted.

People were divided into three groups, each one was asked to form kind of a story circle. Groups were picked at random with one member writing everything that was said. At the end of each round, these "secretaries" went to another table to recount stories they had just collected. This specific phase generated complementary stories, either similar ones (similar situations) or stories as answers to other stories.

For example, someone told: "I forgive X for playing the seducer to get some financial advantages from Human Resources". Another person told: "I forgive the organization for unjustified salary stagnation so that the only thing I could do was to mourn to the Human Resources".

People told me they wouldn't have shared all these stories without the "I forgive" process.

What sorts of annotations or question-asking were done? Who answered the questions or added the annotations?

People asked questions to secretaries to make sure they had understood retold stories but factual comments and expressing point of views were firmly prohibited. These precisions

were added as annexes to the original stories by secretaries in order to be shared with the plenary group.

How were the stories looked at or considered? Who was involved in this?

The group began to cluster stories in "stories that seemed to go together".

Three clusters were spontaneously identified:

- workplace related stories
- personal stories
- mix-up between personal and workplace stories

The third one offered the most numerous stories, followed by workplace related and personal stories.

After that and despite having added sub-clusters, people didn't feel comfortable because they didn't know what to do out of that stuff. They understood the situation better, but what they wanted now was to find ways to improve things.

How did the project end? Were conclusions drawn, and by whom?

I introduced a complementary ad hoc process that wasn't scheduled to manage the new issue of improving things. The way I built the process was inspired from the original and interesting David Snowden's Cynefin Framework, however not following all its rules. [Editor's note: this is a form of landscape exercise]

It helped people to organize their stories into territories with frontiers that could be crossed under the banner of "sharing knowledge and best practices". In the case of the negotiated financial advantage with Human resources, the story has crossed the frontier between "personal initiative" and "established trick" for potential general use.

What happened after the project was over?

Personal stories were located in a place named "Not relevant to the team", and the assignment was to keep them safely there. It's neither a negation of those nor an attempt to hide them, which would have been a counter-productive "I put my hands in front of my eyes, then I'm invisible" action. People who wanted to deal with them were simply encouraged to find another place than the workplace to do so.

Everything else had to be treated to evaluate their potential contribution to the department's improvement. The department is now planning to build a "constant improvement system", where I hope stories could have some importance.

High and low points

Do you remember any pleasant surprises during the project?

The successful experience! When tackling conflictual situations, there is some uncertainty. Well, it's the same thing when you're tackling ordinary situations… It reminded me of an old conversation with a trade-unions basic representative, years ago during a strike in a factory. He told me the reasons for most strikes weren't that people wanted more money

because they didn't have that money yesterday and they weren't bothered by it. The real reasons are often very intimate, internal, located in the relationship area and involving a high level of individual tension. Because these reasons are not corporate correct and lack collective ambition, trade unions put the "more money" message forward. It was also a relief to see we succeeded in getting to the real stories with the group.

How about unpleasant surprises?

We had to add archetypes [Editor's note: I call these "story elements"] to facilitate the flow of stories because some participants were reluctant to involve namely other people. So, archetypes like "The Careerist", "The Icy Organization" aso. were introduced in the process.

It was a real challenge, as was the somewhat fuzzy situation, when people didn't know what to do to improve things out of the collected stories.

If these fences hadn't been enforced, the project would have been complicated.

What was better than expected?

I feared stories would reveal some issues that I couldn't tackle properly because they would be close to psychotherapy. Even if I've been trained to narrative therapy, I'm not a therapist and I would have had trouble in handling such things.

Were there other benefits you hadn't expected?

This common experience seems to have helped the department to really become and act as a team. And it is also important regarding the development of the product range they have to achieve. So, we got some benefits in the team building area as well as in the comprehension and improvement-action ones.

Can you share one conclusion of your project that you don't think you could have arrived at in any other way than by asking for and looking at stories?

I remember this six-word story: "everyone has scars, everyone has stories". And this sentence: "ancient Greek rhetoricians had (…) different forms of mentioning by not mentioning".

I think they express the whole thing. To illustrate it, I'd tell a single example out of the case. We got stuff like that: "I forgive deaf-blinds for their everyday bringing of cookies to share". And it triggered comments (however not factual ones) and reformulation like that: "I forgive *us*, deaf-blinds, for bringing cookies as smoke screens". It would also have been difficult to obtain frontal attacks with same content and without side damage! The workshop could have turned into a messy and useless moment.

What sorts of reactions did you get to the project during and after it?

I didn't try to get a lot of feedback from the group about their stories because they belonged to them and I didn't want to appear as interfering with their ownership. When tackling some conflictual situations involving other people, you're somewhat the witness of a scene you're not part of. You're like a neighbour witnessing some domestic argument occuring in the next appartment. Your duty is to help as you can, without taking over the argument, or maybe more accurately dispossessing them.

But people felt also globally relieved and appeased.

Advice

What do you wish you had known before your project that you know now?

Having more information about the team's history, being able to conduct a kind of social network analysis prior to the workshop may have been helpful. But it could also have introduced some biases which could have altered my position.

What do you think you'll do the same and differently when you do your next project?

I would focus and reflect more on clusters and ways to build and handle them. I think we could have benefited more from clustering than we did. Deepening the clustering stage could have provided as effective results as we did with the method we have used. Reading and reflecting on the chapters Cynthia Kurtz wrote, detailing the use of clusters, will be relevant.

What advice would you give to a person who wants to do a similar project?

Spend a lot of time before the project in reflecting on the methods you're planning to implement in order to make them stick to the situation: when necessary, reframe them even if your frame is well designed. The issue is to avoid losing precious time during the course of a workshop to really focus on the matter at stake as well as maintaining your legitimacy as a facilitator.

The I forgive methodology

Complexity and honesty

When asked to unpack stories, people don't hesitate much. Usually, they agree to deliver. Most narrative capture occurs in the day to day realities and is natural. Except when there are tensions or conflicts either related to the question at stake or regarding relationships (when working with a group of persons, but similar trends concern individuals as well). Even if a privacy statement is issued, valuable, meaningful stories are difficult to obtain, notably because nobody is innocent and everybody is often afraid of retaliation in the form of back-prosecution from other participants. In those cases, people prefer to tell stories of secondary interest, avoiding telling really interesting stories, or to tell stories showing that everything is (falsely) OK.

Using the subtleties of the "I forgive" behaviour

I suggest a specific method which focuses on the problem at stake and tries to get the most out of it.

The basic concept is to require people to begin their sentences with "I forgive [name or archetype] [who…] or [for…] [doing or saying or… something]". They are stories because we ask for events, and the conflictual situation involves kind of a plot.

There's somewhere a humorous dimension, which allows a dual meaning (forgiveness and accusation in the same time) to be expressed overtly and The author as well as the targets

of the story easily understand such duality. That's why participants accept to play along. Yes: play.

Listen: "I forgive my mother-in-law for establishing a huge list of artifacts she will take back when her daughter and me separate".

How to use the "I forgive" device

Apart from the basic concept, the method is open to various techniques.

Eliciting/collecting stories

When working with a relatively small group, story circles (anecdote circles) are adequate. When working with a larger group, techniques such as World Café and Open Space are also efficient.

Story elements are also highly adequate and even the old-fashioned KJ-diagrams technique may produce good results.

Asking for events beginning with "I forgive…" will generally be sufficient to trigger the process. Otherwise, eliciting stories questions can be used.

When several groups of people are involved in the process, it is often valuable to switch people and/or material at certain stages (rounds) to get additional perspectives. As a side effect, it will also loosen some amount of stress.

Distant collecting work is possible, through social media apps. Blog storming (David Snowden initiated the device), instant messenging, Twitter, a Facebook group aso. can be used, solely or in combination. I favour freeware and well-known apps. because leading people to use tools for purposes they weren't meant for empowers them positively.

Archetypes construction

Some participants may have trouble naming individuals within extreme conflictual situations and face-to-face confrontation. The sole way to avoid it is to forgive fictional characters instead of real persons, through archetypes. Cynthia Kurtz told me she had experienced archetypes such as "the controlling monster", "the over-reactor", "the nagger", "the lazy bum"… in some corporations. Going so far into archetypes constructions is useful and may be achieved through a behavioral grid and attributes sorting but more generic and universal archetypes are also relevant, depending on the matter at stake.

Working on stories and Sensemaking

The "I forgive" very simple frame is open and adapted to a wide range of techniques. Ad hoc techniques such as the one I've developed in the case study are efficient. Story elements are completely described in the book in a ready-to-use manner. And I invite people to refer to this paper http://opim.wharton.upenn.edu/~ulrich/documents/ulrich-KJdiagrams.pdf to remember if necessary about KJ diagrams. Story elements and KJ are very different in the sense one avoids to categorize items whereas the other sees no harm in categorization.

For distant work on stories, additional device such as a wiki may be associated with apps I quoted in the collecting section. Apps that are integrated in the Facebook platform (discussions functions, questioning applications, wikis and Digg-like) can be operating as

well. Specific storytelling applications could also achieve the task: Cynthia Kutz's Rakontu project is an example.

Decision making

Bridges to decision-making are integrated in most techniques I described above. For distant work, a basic poll application may be a valuable solution. As for the sensemaking and working stage, it's up to the user's preferences. However, merely statistical tools are far less adapted than combinations between statistics and qualitative approaches.

Greater connectivity and awareness

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Framing the project

What was the impetus for your project? What led to it taking place? Why were you doing it?

The president of a large multinational company contacted us saying that they had conducted an internal survey and, as a result of the survey, had identified that there were many "disconnections" related with their internal processes. They were asking for our help to redesign their processes.

After a few meetings with the president and some senior directors to better understand their needs, they were convinced that further exploration of their real needs could be very helpful, since the group did not seem confident in stating that the scenario would improve by only redesigning the processes, They realized a broader exploration was necessary.

That was when we suggested to start a PNI project. At the beginning, we didn't know exactly what we were going to explore. but we knew that the reason why we were starting the project was the need for a greater understanding of the company's problems.

What were the project's goals?

Below is the project synopsis, which includes the project goal.

> With the goal of helping all professionals to act with greater synergy and more CLIENT FOCUS and prepare them to deal with their complex challenges, seeking greater connectivity between people and areas, increasing the level of awareness about the importance and value of their activities, enabling better decision-making (OBJECTIVE), Set Consultoria facilitators, internal focal points, managers and co-ordinators (dedicated team) and directors (extended team) (RELATIONSHIPS), will collect and interpret experiences that people have had in the recent past related to relevant aspects of their work (FOCUS).

> Stories will be collected from the company professionals who perform different roles at different levels (SCOPE). Around 100 stories will be collected from 24 people from the dedicated team and 13 people from the extended team. Finally, the entire work group will generate a backlog of prioritized ideas for experimentation that will emerge from observations of patterns found in their context. (SCOPE)

What did you think would happen during the project before it started? What were your expectations?

I was eager to put people in touch with stories that could bring different perspectives from their own. I wanted people to perceive new possibilities of acting in their environments. I wanted them to open their minds to new possibilities. I wanted them to have new ideas and, above all, have more meaningful days, minimizing the feeling that problems are caused by others. They all together are part of the problem and the solution. I wanted them to see that there are no culprits and/or victims in complexity when we understand how interconnected we are.

The story of the project

How did the project get started? What happened first?

The project started with a kick-off meeting with the company president, directors, managers and key professionals in other roles that would participate in the project.

After that, we started the planning phase with a small team of four people who played key roles in the company.

What sorts of stories did you collect? How were they collected? Who collected them?

We collected stories about how areas are integrated in the company and the impact of independent attitudes in the search for solutions. This "topic" was decided in a workshop session. All stories were collected by me. Most of them were collected in individual interviews. Stories were also collected in group sessions.

What sorts of annotations or question-asking were done? Who answered the questions or added the annotations?

Questions about stories:

- How would you define in one sentence the main message you want to convey with your story? Imagine that this sentence will be a headline in a newspaper...
- Why did you choose to tell this story? What's special about it?
- How did you feel about this situation told in your story?
- What is the impact of this story? Is it positive or negative?
- What do you think would happen to the company in the next 5 years if this situation you described were to happen again and again?
- When you read this story, what does it tell you about bureaucracy at the company? Choose as many answers as you wish.
- What is the TRUST level between the people in your story? (From 01 to 05)
- What is the EMPATHY level between the people in your story? (From 01 to 05)
- What is the COLLABORATION level between the people in your story? (From 01 to 05)
- What is the SENSE OF OWNERSHIP level between the people in your story? (From 01 to 05)

- What is the COMMUNICATION level between the people in your story? (From 01 to 05)
- What is the COMPASSION level between the people in your story? (From 01 to 05)
- Choose a person from your story to think about.
- From the perspective of the person you chose, did this story end well or badly?
- What did the person you chose want or need?
- Did the person get what she wanted/needed?
- How long ago did your story take place?
- How long do you think you will remember this story?
- Who needs to hear your story? (choose as many as you want)

Questions about participants:

- Could you tell us a little about your beliefs and values?
- How much does this project affect your work?
- Do you have the autonomy you would like to have to carry out your work? (Yes/No)
- How long have you worked at this company?

The questions were answered by me to the people interviewed and people who participated in group sessions.

How were the stories looked at or considered? Who was involved in this?

The stories were looked at and considered in sensemaking workshops. The exercise we used most was story elements. We have also used the Confluence framework.

We also worked with material produced in the catalysis phase.

Story elements is one of my favorite exercises. It worked very well not only with groups in this company but with all other groups I have worked with.

All managers, coordinators and some key stakeholders from different roles were involved in the sensemaking workshops.

How did the project end? Were conclusions drawn, and by whom?

The project ended with a list of "things to be done". Ideas, Actions, Initiatives etc. Some of the ideas were related to doing another PNI project (in two different areas of the company) to explore some aspects were discovered in this first project more deeply.

The conclusions were drawn by the team. However, we had meeting with the project sponsors (president) and some senior directions to share a final presentation.

The presentation included an executive summary including the team's conclusions.

High and low points

Do you remember any pleasant surprises during the project?

Yes! I remember how people felt grateful because they had the opportunity to be heard. I also remember one team member who said:

> "I have spent my whole life in this company complaining about back-office areas. I now understand that their life is as difficult as mine. It's not because I work on the front line with the customer that my problems are bigger.... I didn't know their reality demonstrated in these stories.... I think they also didn't know mine... I never ever invited them for a conversation to improve this understanding.... What stops me from doing that?"

Some comments from participants at the end of the project:

> "We need to expand what this experience."

> "It was an inclusive experience. Everyone was heard. We hope to be able to apply everything we experienced."

> "We were privileged and we want to do something different."

> "We identified an opportunity to make room for the new."

> "It was important to understand how everything is interconnected and how it all works."

> "The conversations were constructive and empathetic, which is essential for change. The method and facilitation were essential to the success of the process."

> "Satisfaction, awareness and recognition of everyone's work."

> "It was important to be able to look for alternatives rather than simply execute. We have the function of thinking but everyday life forces us to execute."

> "Excellent initiative to solve complex problems that require people's collaboration."

How about unpleasant surprises?

One key director didn't understand the essence of the project and kept suggesting to change the method to do it from the beginning until the end. It was frustrating because his responsibility in the company was related with transformation.

Do you recall any "aha" moments when you realized or learned something critical?

Yep! I remember when I noticed how powerful it is when people discover things by themselves. And as a facilitator, I discovered that it is crucial to let people live their moment. It doesn't matter to people how much you know and how smart you are. It's not about you (the facilitator). It's about them (the people).

Were there any times during the project when things seemed too difficult or challenging to go on? What was the challenge and what did you do about it?

There were moments when I realized that people were going "too deep" in their internal issues, motivated by what they were discovering in the stories. Sometimes I felt that it

was important to let them move on with what was important to them at that point (their internal issues). But at the same time we had a goal to achieve.

What I did was let them discuss a little bit to avoid frustration and then ask them to go back to our work and go deep on their issues later/ It's important to find the right time to interrupt people. If you break a discussion that is important to them at that time, their energy will drop. You can't change what is important to them.

Evaluation

What turned out the same as you expected? What was worse than expected? What was better?

- As expected—I think the project plan was executed as expected. I think we found the "right balance" between following the plan and having some room for improvisation which I think it is important.

- Better than expected—I think that for people who participated in the workshop sessions it was better than expected. I believe they never imagined before that their experience would have such a great impact on them. The project was planned for two months and triggered other projects (PNI and non-PNI) that lasted 2 years in the company. That was not expected in the beginning.

- Worse than expected—I think that people who didn't participate in the workshop sessions. including the president, couldn't "feel" what others experienced and the impact on them and to the company. I know that this is impossible when you don't live the experience, but I believe executive reports could have demonstrated this better.

Did the project meet its goals? Were there other benefits you hadn't expected?

Absolutely. I didn't expect that some senior directors were going to feel so connected with the project and the method. I didn't expect that people were going to keep talking about their experience and how they could act in a different way inside the company.

Can you share one conclusion of your project that you don't think you could have arrived at in any other way than by asking for and looking at stories?

People would not have been able to see things from different perspectives and move from a "linear way of thinking" to a "complex way of thinking".

People would not have been able to see that their problems don't start in the neighboring area. That the problems are all tangled up in a web influencing and being influenced.

They would never have been able to think about new decisions they could make.

Advice

What do you wish you had known before your project that you know now?

That I don't need to feel insecure about my work because it makes a lot of sense to a lot of people. I could have been less anxious and enjoyed the process more.

What advice would you give to a person who wants to do a similar project?

Believe in the process.

Don't try to control it.

Try to act according to what you live.

Be present.

PNI Projects in Published Papers

In this chapter I have listed some citations and excerpts from academic papers and dissertations that describe PNI projects. I recommend looking up each of these publications and reading through them. They can give you a good overview of all the ways in which people are using PNI today, including how people have met with difficulties using it and how they have adapted it to suit their needs and goals.

PNI in health care

Scheffelaar, A, Bos, N, Triemstra, M, et al. 2020. Qualitative instruments involving clients as co-researchers to assess and improve the quality of care relationships in long-term care: an evaluation of instruments to enhance client participation in quality research. BMJ Open 2020;10:e033034. doi: 10.1136/bmjopen-2019-033034. Accessed May 2025 at https://bmjopen.bmj.com/content/10/2/e033034.

> The combination of individual interviews and a story meeting allows different client groups to participate. Co-researchers noticed that the theme of the interview was left open and clients could choose which story they wanted to share. Due to the anonymous nature of the stories collected, the results are useful for reflection and learning by a large group of employees of a care organisation. The active contributions of co-researchers increased the commitment of professionals to work on the findings. Co-researchers also noticed that the stories created awareness among employees. However, interest and time are mentioned as conditions for letting professionals join in the reflection meeting. Some clients had difficulties answering some additional closed questions for interpreting the shared experience. One possibility for making the interview more easily accessible would be to remove these questions and write the answers after the interview by co-researchers.

Hos, C, et al. 2024. Using Participatory Narrative Inquiry to Assess Experiences and Self-Experimentation with Diet Interventions in Inflammatory Bowel Disease Patients. *Nutrients*.

2024 Nov 24;16(23):4027. doi: 10.3390/nu16234027. Accessed May 2025 at https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/39683421.

> Being chronically ill is life changing. By giving patients the opportunity to tell their stories, everyone involved in the project (including doctors, researchers, and the participants themselves) gains a deeper understanding of the different aspects of the(ir) disease. … If people decide for themselves how they conduct research, they will possibly conduct it much better; moreover, if lifestyle changes are not imposed but are based on the experiences of others, it may be easier to convince people that it can be achieved.

PNI in social work

Giroux, S. 2019. "'Like Being Pecked to Death by a chicken': Resilience and Work-Family Equilibrium in teacher/Mothers". University of Northern British Columbia. doi:10.24124/2019/58941. Accessed May 2025 at https://unbc.arcabc.ca/islandora/object/unbc%3A58941.

> One very significant result that was not measured or recorded by participants was the enthusiasm that group members had for their work in these [sensemaking] groups. In every group there were remarks regarding the familiarity of the stories shared and the recognition participants felt for events in their own lives. These realizations were always accompanied by expressions of relief (and often some surprise) that the experiences shared by so many women had so many similarities to the group participants' own.

Toole-Anstey C, Townsend M, Keevers L. 2023. "I Wasn't Gonna Quit, but by Hook or by Crook I was Gonna Find a Way Through for the Kids": A Narrative Inquiry, of Mothers and Practitioners, Exploring the Help-seeking of Mothers' Experiencing Child to Parent Violence. *J Fam Violence*. 2023 Mar 2:1-13. doi: 10.1007/s10896-023-00511-z. Epub ahead of print. PMID: 37358975; PMCID: PMC9978290. Accessed May 2025 at https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC9978290/pdf/10896_2023_Article_511.pdf.

> This study found mothers identified feelings of fear, shame and judgement related to experiences of and perceptions of social responses in help-seeking for CPV. This finding is supported in research of CPV (e.g. Coogan, 2014). However this study, through applying an intra-active and response-based lens, shifts these from factors which hinder help-seeking to entanglements which co-emerge with the experience of CPV. These feelings associated with perceived and real social responses are inseparable from the experience of CPV and are implicated in the help-seeking processes.

Yurach, W. S., and Ramsden, V. R. 2025. Facilitating well-being with female social workers in northern Canada: A participatory narrative inquiry. Journal of Social Work, 0(0). https://doi.org/10.1177/14680173251318826. Accessed May 2025 at https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/epub/10.1177/14680173251318826.

> Although there were challenges in this study, trusting relationships were successfully developed over time to gather the data needed for participants to answer project-

specific questions. This project was also an opportunity for participants to create a space for healing and transformation, similar to that of narrative therapy, in that problems are assessed to generate a different story to be told moving forward (Morgan, 2000). As such, participants were supported with co-creating their story to understand the impact of the work and what is/was needed to support their well-being, including the development of a "community of practice" in the future.

Shimshock, S. 2012. *Open Source Evaluation: Transforming the Evaluator and the Evaluand from Roles to Participatory Actions*. Ph.D. Dissertation, Taos Institute. Accessed May 2025 at https://www.taosinstitute.net/education/taos-phd-program/completed-dissertations/stephen-shimshock-dissertation.

> [T]he facilitated discussion provided stakeholders the ability to leverage their new understandings into action items for the group. The inclusion of Young Adults was a significant strength as reported by the Service Providers. The Young Adults reported they appreciated having their voice woven into the inquiry. Several of the Young Adults reported that past efforts of inclusion consisted only of invitations to meetings whereas this process seemed to provide Young Adults direct access to the key stakeholders making decisions regarding service provision in the community.

PNI in education

DeRemer, C. 2022. *"Beginning, Again and Again": The Experiences Of Excellent White Educators In Diverse Urban Schools*. Dissertations. 867. Accessed May 2025 at https://digscholarship.unco.edu/dissertations/867.

> The first theme that emerged from participants' narratives was the power of stories, both individual and collective. Participants described a process of self-validation, transformation, healing, and normalization as a result of telling and reading their stories. They explained that reading their collective stories helped to normalize how they were feeling about their work . . . and that it was empowering to share their stories and hear the anecdotes of others for the first time. . . . This research was meaningful to participants, as it provided an opportunity for [participants] to share their experiences and have their voices heard. As well, [participants] were able to understand how their own thinking, biases and beliefs needed to be examined through a process of sensemaking and critical self-reflection. . . .

Bolger, L., Torres, L., Loizzo, J., and Hundemer, S. 2023. Paleo Podcasts: Using Participatory Narrative Inquiry to Evaluate Student Learning in a 4-H Paleontology Summer Camp. *Geological Society of America Abstracts*, Vol. 55, No. 6. doi: 10.1130/abs/2023AM-391524. Accessed May 2025 at https://gsa.confex.com/gsa/2023AM/meetingapp.cgi/Paper/391524.

> University science communicators in the University of Florida's Department of Agricultural Education and Communication and a paleontologist from the Florida Museum of Natural History designed and led the 4-H summer camp of youth (ages 10-15) through stations of dinosaur, vertebrate, and invertebrate fossils and a final station of the applications of paleontology to conservation to showcase the diversity of paleontology. To assess student learning and attitudes toward paleontology,

we used arts-based research methods in the form of narrative inquiry and youth co-creation of the Paleo Podcast. In pairs, campers were guided through how to create podcasts and interview their partner about paleontology concepts they learned and narrate what they think a day in the life of a paleontologist is like. The conversational framework allowed students to formulate and articulate their own thoughts, providing a more participatory and active approach to learning.

PNI in human rights

Olshanska, Z., J.van Doorn and S.C.van Veen. 2016. My story, my rights: how individual stories of people with disabilities can contribute to knowledge development for UNCRPD monitoring. *Knowledge Management for Development Journal* 11(2): 43-62. Accessed May 2025 at https://www.km4djournal.org/index.php/km4dj/article/view/303/396.

> Sense-making sessions allowed persons with disabilities to engage in a dialogue with other community members about their human rights experience. These sessions offered a platform for sharing of different views on important themes, barriers and actors in relation to disability rights, which contributed to abetter understanding of complex issues.The dialogue promoted and enhanced the participants' knowledge about-and respect for disability rights. Similar experiences were shared by participants in the final workshop when the invited representatives of local CSOs reflected on their first exposure to disability rights work. In this sense, monitoring UNCRPD implementation by using the PNI method provided space for diverse community members to reach new understandings of disability experiences, thereby contributing to the process of knowledge co-creation about issues faced by people with disabilities in Uganda.

Myumbo, L. J. . (2023). Importance of participatory narrative inquiry in sensitive research. *Asian Journal of Social Sciences and Management Studies*, 10(1), 19–28. https://doi.org/10.20448/ajssms.v10i1.4445. Accessed May 2025 at https://asianonlinejournals.com/index.php/AJSSMS/article/view/4445/2577.

> While at times it was noticeably painful for the participants to recount their abusive relationships, they particularly noted that the sharing of stories was part of a healing process and a source of empowerment. Hence, it is important that a platform is provided in sensitive research of this nature when participants can freely tell their stories for healing, regaining control, and most importantly giving meaning to their lived experiences from their own voices and perspective.

Mallos, M., 2020. Exploring the identities of Greek migrant young adults through their new media use: Combining public pedagogy, participatory narrative inquiry, A/r/tography and heteroglossia. Journal of Public Pedagogies, (5), pp.20-30. Accessed May 2025 at https://jpp.vu.edu.au/index.php/jpp/article/view/1211.

> Through a series of participatory arts workshops, my research design aimed to:
>
> 1. Document new public pedagogy media practices of the young adult Greek migrant population in Melbourne.

2. Record participant reflections on their identities through their new media use.

3. Create multimodal digital narratives and portraits to explore and communicate these identities.

4. Enable participants to collectively identify and respond to themes from the data collected.

5. Choose ways to disseminate key findings to the Greek community in Melbourne to deal with issues migrant youths face when migrating to Australia.

Zucchini, E., Carbon, M., Bosch, C., & Felloni, F. 2022. Evaluation through narratives: A practical case of Participatory Narrative Inquiry in women empowerment evaluation in Niger. *Evaluation*, 28(4), 426-445. Accessed May 2025 at https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/13563890221123821. [Note: The full report on this project, in French, is at available (at the time of writing) at https://ioe.ifad.org/documents/38714182/41491261/niger_1625_ie.pdf/979325cb-8763-81c2-437e-59c993a17b49.]

The study concludes that PNI is a powerful alternative to existing qualitative and participatory narrative evaluation methods. Within mixed-method approaches, PNI allows for greater inclusion of project beneficiaries in the evaluation process, while helping to elaborate a thorough theory of change, understand the complexity of the context, identify and assess outcome pathways, and provide an evidence-based evaluation.