

STORYCENTER

LISTEN DEEPLY... TELL STORIES

Core Principles

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Everyone has many stories to tell.

The ritual of sharing insights about life can be immensely valuable both to those who speak and those who bear witness. People who believe they are mundane, uninteresting, or unmemorable possess beneath this mask a vivid, complex, and rich body of stories just waiting to be told.

People need to be heard.

Being heard meets a deep-seated human need for connection. The simple yet critically important act of being acknowledged, being listened to – truly being heard – often changes everything. It can create trust and enduring relationships between the person being listened to, the people listening, and everyone connected to these people.

Listening is hard.

Most people are either too distracted or too impatient to be really good listeners. In some parts of the world, this has resulted in a profusion of individuals who get paid to do the emotional labor of listening. Researchers, therapists, social workers, and others often play this role, yet anyone can learn to listen deeply. When this listening is offered, space is created for the storyteller to journey into the heart of the matter at hand.

People see, hear, and perceive the world in different ways.

This means that the forms and approaches they take to telling stories and representing important community issues are also very different. There is no formula for making a great story – no prescription or template. Providing a map, illuminating the possibilities, outlining a framework – these are better metaphors for how one can assist others in crafting a story.

Creative activity is human activity.

From birth, people around the world make music, draw, dance, and tell stories. As they grow to adulthood, they often internalize the message that producing art requires a special and innate gift, tendency, or skill. Many people simply give up and never return to creative practice. Others are shut out from opportunities to produce art. Confronting this lack of resources and sense of

inadequacy and encouraging people in artistic self-expression can inspire individual and community transformation.

Technology is a powerful instrument of creativity.

Many people blame themselves for their lack of technological savvy, instead of recognizing the complexity of the tools and acknowledging that access and training are often in short supply. But it's important to remember that new information and communication technologies will not in and of themselves improve our lives or make a better world. Developing thoughtful, participatory approaches that truly engage communities, particularly typically marginalized or “othered” communities, in the use of technology is essential.

Sharing stories can lead to personal and social change.

Personal stories can touch viewers deeply, moving them to reflect on their own experiences, modify their behavior, treat others with greater compassion, speak out about injustice, and become involved in civic and political life. Whether online, via social media, in local communities, or at the institutional/policy level, the *sharing* of stories has the power to make a real difference in supporting a more equitable and just society.

For more information, email info@storycenter.org

StoryCenter is committed to challenging white supremacy and supporting social justice, in every aspect of our work.