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Description:

People learn from stories more than anything else. Storytelling is an essential skill for humans to pass along the lessons that we learn from highly complex and challenging situations. Storytelling is about sitting in circle together and having each person tell his or her story on any given topic. Storytelling is how we pass along lessons from generation to generation, culture to culture. The past is a parable; the future is a fable. Storytelling is the most basic form of communication – more prevalent and more powerful than facts and figures. People also believe stories more than they believe numbers.

Uses:

To help people listen and learn from each other. Storytelling breaks many of the barriers to learning and understanding simply because we as humans love stories and listen to them.

Materials:

None

Instructions:

Provide a forum for a story designed to teach or storytelling as a sharing in a circle where each person shares for understanding. Attributes of a story to consider include:

- Agents: the people who figure in the story
- Predicament: the problem the agents are trying to solve
- Intentions: what the agents plan to do
- Actions: what the agents do to achieve their intentions
- Objects: the tools the agents use
- Causality: the effects (both intended and unintended) of carrying out the actions
- Context: the many details surrounding the agents and actions
- Surprises: the unexpected things that happen in the story

Listen for these attributes when listening to a story. If designing a story to help build community, plan to include these attributes in your story.

Tips:

Do not demand specific answers to questions. There is no right or wrong format for a story. Simply let people tell a story and provide the space for that story by listening without interruption.

References:

Kouzes, James & Posner, Barry (1999) *Encouraging the heart; A leader's guide to rewarding and recognizing others*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.