

Telling Your Story

In this activity, youth will learn how to tell their story in their community as a way to make connections with others and share what is important to them in a more public manner.

Part I: The 'what', 'why', and 'how' of stories

1. Begin this activity as a large group discussion by asking youth the following questions:

- What makes something a 'story' rather than a speech, a statement or sentences that are simply put together?
- What structure does a story often take?

Write their ideas up on a big sheet of poster paper.

2. Next, share with them the idea of a 'story spine'. A typical story structure, or 'story spine' as some call it, tends to look something like this:

- Once upon a time... (set the scene)
- And everyday... (what we assume or what normally happens)
- Until one day... (what happened that was unusual)
- And because of that... (emphasize the learning or impact of this unusual event)
- Until finally... (conclusion or outcome of the event)
- And ever since then... (how yours or other's thinking has changed.)
- And the moral of the story is...(optional)

Write the story spine up on the sheet of paper and put it in a place where everyone can see it.

3. Next, ask the group:

- What makes a story a *good* story?
- What elements are needed to make a story engaging?
- What kinds of stories make an impression on us and leave us remembering them long after we heard them? Write group brainstorm points up on the paper.

4. Finally, discuss:

- How can stories be offered by a leader or community group to connect with others, and through that connection, share what is important to this leader or group?



- How can stories be offered to welcome in and learn the stories of others?
- Ask if anyone can share an example of a time when a leader, organization, or community group used storytelling as an entrée into a more public conversation about what is most important to them. Then ask for examples of when this wasn't 'one way,' and opened up a community dialogue inviting the stories of others.

Part II: Practicing the art of storytelling

5. Next, ask youth to pair up with a partner. Once they are paired up, ask them to think of a time when people in their community got together to elevate a public concern in an effort to bring about a positive change for the common good. (If they can't think of a real example, tell them it's okay for them to imagine how this might happen). Give them three to five minutes each to tell their stories to each other. Emphasize that during the listening time, we are practicing active listening – not spending that time thinking about our own story or what we are going to say next – rather, really listening to details and elements with interest.

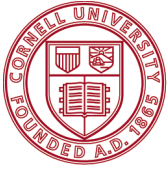
6. Next, give them the opportunity to practice telling their own story to their partners. They will have just two to three minutes each, but this time they will have several rounds to improve it and refine it. This time, the partner will be listening keenly and asking a couple of clarifying questions to help the speaker focus.

7. Once their stories are refined and revised (and they've each told it at least three times to their partner), they can take turns presenting their story to the whole group.

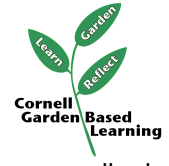
8. Debrief the activity. The following question prompts might help to facilitate a quick debriefing:

- What have you learned about the art of storytelling?
- Has this activity generated some confidence in telling your story in your community?
- How can telling our stories help us as young leaders in the local food movement?
- What next steps will be helpful or necessary to assist you as you step further into a more public conversation about things that are important to you?

Taking It Further: One way to take this activity further would be to have youth work together to come up with a group or community leadership story. This story would



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highlight how they collectively were faced with a challenge, what choices they made in relation to that challenge, and what the outcomes of those choices were for their group and the community at large.

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