

LIGHTLY EDITED FILE

National Resource Center on Domestic Violence
Using Story Circles to Capture Local
Community Responses to Gender-based Violence Webinar
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Paradigm Reporting & Captioning Inc.
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612.339.0545
Captioning-paradigm@veritext.com

>> Hello, everyone.

We are getting ready to start.

As soon as I'm done talking, I'll be recording the session.

I want to thank everybody for joining us.

I see a lot of you are already using the chat box.

Remember, this is not private.

The message that you post, everybody can see, so make sure that you are aware of that.

And you should be seeing the first slide of our PowerPoint that has the title of our session.

If you are having issues, please let us know.

And, again, I see that everybody knows how to use the chat box.

Please continue to use the chat box throughout the presentation, posting any messages, any questions that you have for our presenter today, and we'll be glad to pass them on to Amy.

And I want to thank Breckan.

She is with us NRCDV.

She is taking care of you guys in the chat room.

Thank you, Breckan, you're doing a great job.
So let's start our session.

Good afternoon.

My name is Ivonne Ortiz.

I am the Training Institute Manager for the National Resource Center on Domestic Violence.

I want to thank all of you for joining us today.

And welcome to our webinar session today titled Using Story Circles To Capture Local Community Responses To Gender-Based Violence.

We are really really excited to have you here and we are really really excited to have Amy Hill from StoryCenter joining us today.

She is a great friend and we enjoy her.

Every time she presents, you know, she shares so much great information.

So we are excited.

So let's get started.

Again, we are the National Resource Center on Domestic Violence.

And today we are hosting a webinar for one of our key initiatives and projects, Domestic Violence Awareness Project.

We are a national technical assistance provider that shares information with organizations and individuals, incredible resources for those that want to learn more about domestic violence and its

intersections.

And through the Domestic Violence Awareness Project, we have been mobilizing people to commit to, you know, doing one thing in response to the problem of gender-based violence.

And this has been our theme for this year.

So we are very excited.

And before we start, at the NRCDV, we always pride or remember everybody and remind ourselves, too, of what we stand for.

So, this is our NRCDV Stands I want to share with you.

We stand with individuals and groups who have been targeted, degraded, threatened, or marginalized because they are Native Americans, people of color, immigrants, women, Muslims, LGBTQ, or people with disabilities.

We stand against white supremacy, racism, misogyny, anti-semitism, homophobia, transphobia, xenophobia, and all other forms of structural oppression.

We stand with survivors of domestic and sexual violence, especially those most vulnerable and with limited access to services and protection. We stand together in celebration of the rich diversity of people in this country and the

vitality and strength they bring to our communities and society.

We stand with those who embrace self-care and community connections as necessary and powerful for social change.

We stand with other activity vices and organizations who continue to work passionately for gender, racial, and economic and social justice for all.

So, welcome, everybody.

That is who we are and that's how we guide everything that we do, from materials that we develop, from training events that we create for all of you guys.

So before we start, let me see, before I go on, I just wanted to remind everybody of our campaign.

As you know, in 2008, our Domestic Violence Awareness Project decided to expand the awareness, action equals social change campaign.

And the group intentionally wanted to create a message that it was easy to say, easy to remember and easy to personalize and adapt and making it easier for getting bold and feel connected. So today Amy here will introduce a simple community-based process for sharing and capturing

poignant personal stories of how everybody can take action.

And one of the things that we encounter while working our campaign for Domestic Violence Awareness Month was that everybody has so many pictures, so many videos that they collected from, you know, their community.

And today we're just going to focus on what do we do, now that I have all this information, what do I do with it?

Well, let's use it throughout the year.

Domestic violence awareness shouldn't be just, you know, something that we do during October.

We need to continue sending the message in our communities.

And Amy is here with us today to help us.

So let me just tell you a little bit about Amy, our friend.

Amy is a fourth-generation Californian with deep roots in Sonoma County.

After spending 12 years coordinating women's health and violence prevention projects throughout California for the state's Department of Health Services, Amy discovered digital storytelling and launched the Silence Speaks initiative, which since 2000 has used oral history, participatory

media, and popular education strategies to support people in countries around the world as they've shared personal stories of gender, health and human rights.

She lives in Berkeley, where she continues to lead Silence Speaks and guide much of the Institute's communication and outreach work.

So welcome, Amy, we're so glad to have you.

Amy: Great.

Let me just activate my video.

Thank you so much, Ivonne, I'm really happy to be with the webinar today and hopefully I can provide some useful techniques and tips and ideas for everyone related to storytelling around issues of domestic violence.

So I'm not going to say anything more about who I am because Ivonne just gave me that lovely introduction.

I want to just jump right in to the content.

And, so, what we had planned for today is, first, for people that -- oops -- first, for people who are not familiar with our work at StoryCenter, I'll give just a bit of background about the organization.

And then we'll look at the rationale for working

with personal stories to address domestic violence and domestic violence prevention.

And just to be clear, while our organization, StoryCenter, does a good bit of work with digital storytelling to support people in creating and sharing stories as videos, this webinar is really focused on oral storytelling because it's really difficult -- you know, you can't really train people how to do video production in an online -- in a webinar.

But if the digital storytelling format is something you're interested in, of course, there can be chances to follow up later about that.

And then we'll spend, really, most of the webinar, then, looking at our story circle approach in terms of process and best practices for leading groups and sharing personal stories.

And then also some simple tools and methods for documenting stories.

And then, finally, we should have some time at the end for questions and discussion.

So that is our plan.

So, let's go ahead and -- oh, yeah, and then I did also want to give a quick heads-up that I'm going to share a digital story that does touch on issues of sexual violence and, so, just wanted to invite

everyone to take care around that.

And that's coming right up here.

So since I am going to be talking quite a bit during the webinar, I wanted to start by sharing a story by somebody other than me.

So I'm going to bring up all these slides.

And, first, we are going to watch a story that was created in one of our workshops.

So you have a couple of options for viewing it.

You can either click on the link in the slide itself, which will take you to a new tab in your browser and you can access the story there or you can click on the link down in the chat box, I just pasted it there, and you should be able to either copy it and paste it into a new tab in your browser or just click on the link right there.

So, it's only about two minutes.

So, if everybody could please go ahead and just watch the story, then when you're finished, please feel free to comment with your immediate reactions in the chat box down in the lower left-hand corner of the screen there so I know when I can continue.

Or at least it's on the left on my screen.

So we'll take just a moment now to watch the story.

All right.

So I see a few people are typing some comments.

Thank you very much for your comments on the -- on that powerful story.

So I'm going to go ahead and continue just so we can make sure that we get through all of the content today.

So that story was shared as part of a workshop with alumni who have been involved as peer educators with a violence prevention program at City College at San Francisco and I think it's a great example to start with because it's really told from a position of strength, even though it touches on some very sensitive topics and because the workshop was a good example of how to begin from the premise that stories -- personal stories can be developed in ways that can be shared publicly.

So now I'm going to just go on to the -- and I do really appreciate the comments.

And I'm going to go -- if people have more questions about that story, we'll come to questions at the end, and I'm just going to move on.

So just as a bit of background about StoryCenter, as you can see, we developed the original digital

storytelling methodology way back in 1993, even though that term is currently used to describe a lot of different media-making practices, for us it refers to a participatory storytelling and media process that brings small groups of people together over several days to share and create as short videos stories from their own lives.

We have a really long history of training thousands of people and lots of different organizations all around the world, speaking many different languages.

And then, finally, just in terms of kind of the core philosophy underlying our work, it's really built out of an impulse to democratize cultural practice, basically to displace the act of media production and storytelling from a kind of professionalized realm into a truly community-based realm so that everyday people can share and witness compelling stories.

So that's who we are.

Just a few -- I'm sure that this -- you know, I'm sure most of you on the webinar could really come up with this next set of bullet points yourselves in terms of just the value of personal storytelling, but I wanted to just go over a few

points for why stories can make such a difference in an effort to address domestic violence.

So, first, related to work at the individual and community level, research really does show that telling and listening to real people's real stories can increase self-esteem and well-being, particularly people's sense of self-efficacy or the belief that they have agency and can handle life's challenges.

And I've included a link here to some material on digital storytelling impact from our website and then also a link to a "New York Times" article about some of the research on the value of specifically personal writing for health and happiness.

And then, secondly, from the public health world, the idea of health literacy is defined as the degree to which individuals have the capacity to obtain, process, and understand basic health information and services needed to make appropriate health decisions.

And, so, clearly, storytelling has the capacity to bring across important factual information, along with that human interest perspective drawing upon emotions.

And, so, in this way stories can prompt reflection

on the part of listeners and this allows them to apply what they've heard to their own life situation.

So it's a great education method.

And then next, practicing storytelling and sharing are key practices in the popular education realm.

So people might be familiar with the work of Brazilian educator who really believed that the development of critical consciousness was something he felt was key to taking action for social change must begin with close examination of one's own direct experience and its position within unjust social, political, cultural environments.

And, so, practices like personal storytelling can essentially function as a form of popular education by supporting people really in connecting the dots between their own lives and the larger social, cultural, historical, political structures in which their lives are unfolding.

And as they make these connections, they bond with each other around a shared sense of purpose and can become mobilized to speak out for change.

So this is the power of storytelling in groups.

And then related, sharing and listening to stories

have also been shown to build solidarity and help people bond across difference and spur their desire and involvement in change-making activities.

And I think there's a link here to a research study from our work with grassroots down in South Africa a few years ago, there's a link there in the slide which shows that participating in digital storytelling can mobilize young women to take part in community building and mobilization efforts.

And then, finally, those of you who have been involved in policy advocacy don't need any of the research that I'm pointing to here to know, really, that storytelling and personal testimony can have a huge influence on legislative decision making and policy issues.

So those are just a few bits of rationale to motivate you around storytelling. So now let's look at what kinds of stories can be most compelling.

So you don't have to be an anthropologist to realize that stories are universal.

People everywhere tell them and listen to them in lots of unique ways in order to understand themselves, their communities, and the larger

world.

And, so, now that we've talked about rationale, let's look at the kinds of stories that can be especially valuable.

So, first, a story might be really culturally specific in terms of language, local references, and details, like the story that we just watched, for instance, but when that story addresses universal themes like compassion or vulnerability or coming of age, relationships, this really adds to its power.

And, so, just as people everywhere tell and listen to stories, all people are also capable of experiencing the same basic human range of emotions and feelings.

Sadness, anger, courage, compassion.

And, so, when a story addresses a universal theme, the likely emotional response of viewers can make them feel connected to the story and better able to make meaning from it.

And this is, in fact, consistent with research in neuroscience about mirror neurons which suggests that exposure to expressions of deep emotions fire off these corresponding neurons for people who are, you know, listening to expressions of emotion

and then enable us to feel empathy.

So for all of you who work with survivors, this is what's happening when you're having an empathic response to somebody sharing their experience.

Okay.

So, secondly, stories can really help create a sense of intimacy, when they're told in first person voice.

And, so, the intimacy piece, you know, dialogue spoken in the moment, close description of something that someone has gone through, all of these kind of first person strategies can really help create intimacy and touch people in a way that third person reporting or facts and figures just can't.

And then next, the quality of honesty in a narrative story can play a big role in making the story compelling.

So one element we found is really key to this is whether or not a storyteller is willing and able to make themselves vulnerable.

And, so, part of the power of the story circle approach, which we'll get to, is kind of creating a Kare-11 for this to occur.

And by contrast, when stories are overly exploitive or graphic or when they sensationalize

topics or even when they're just a little too slick and polished, these things tend to detract from that sense of honesty.

And then, finally, the last point here really refutes the idea that a story itself has to convey some type of message.

So, you know, if you think about how barraged people are everywhere with all types of messages, both from advertising, public service, et cetera, et cetera, the beauty of a well-told story lies in its subtlety so it might include important information, but it doesn't sound demanding or preachy or bossy.

So, our perspective at StoryCenter is when specific understandings or actions are hoped for as a result of watching or hearing a story, these meanings and actions can be encouraged in discussions and through training activities and through supplemental information shared alongside the story.

And I think the hashtag -- the 1thing hashtag is a great example, right?

You don't necessarily have to talk about, oh, we have this #1thing in a story but that's an accompanying piece that can help get the story out

into the world.

It doesn't have to be part of the art of the story itself.

All right.

So now I want to turn to one of our core methods at StoryCenter, which is what we call a story circle.

And, of course, we owe such a huge debt of gratitude to indigenous communities in the evolution of this method, which really originates in age-old practices and ways of gathering people together to share and listen to stories from their own lives.

So I'm just going to go over some key information about the process as we've adopted it in our work.

So, first, the story circle is a group process that works best with very small, carefully facilitated groups of people.

I'd say no more than about ten people at a time.

So particularly in working with very sensitive or trauma stories, it's important not to overwhelm people with too many stories.

And, so, -- and then, secondly, in terms of just the ability to help people focus in, in a story circle focused on domestic violence prevention, we found that it's important to provide clear and

concise story prompts so that people really have a framework in which to explore their experiences. And I think when you think of the fact if you have ten people in a story circle, you know, it's really not a time for each person to tell their whole life story because you would be there for days and days, right?

So working with story prompts really helps people zero in on a specific story, like the one, for instance, that we just watched at the beginning of the webinar.

So along these lines, we really recommend -- oops -- we really recommend helping people speak from a position of strength.

And, so, again, I know that all of you have lots of experience working with trauma or many of you do, I'm sure, but just to say here that at StoryCenter, we don't actually view story circles as an appropriate intervention with people currently suffering from lots of multiple severe symptoms of post-traumatic stress.

So our goal and view is that to create a safe container where people can kind of delve into their experiences related to domestic violence and then come back out of those experiences rather

than staying lost in a spiral of suffering or victimhood.

So that's a really important piece there is being clear about when and with who this process is an appropriate process to work with.

And then next, part of how the group process functions is to really build participants' sense that they truly are not alone in what they've gone through.

And, so, people might be familiar with Judith Herman's work from quite a long time ago, her pioneering work on trauma, and she, in her book, Trauma and Recovery, she did write about how the process of being witnessed by a group of compassionate listeners can be vital to healing and growth for trauma survivors.

And, so, the story circle is a great way to work with that.

And then, finally, the process of the story circle, that sense of relationship and connection that can be established is really something that we've seen inspire leadership among participants in terms of their interest and willingness to speak publicly and get involved in survivor support or community prevention education efforts, advocacy, and whatnot.

So if you're interested in sort of helping to build cadres of community spokespeople, story circles is a great way to initiate that kind of process.

All right.

So let's turn to some specific concrete tips on how best to facilitate a story circle.

So, again, some of these might seem really obvious, particularly if you have experience in doing kind of group process, group therapy kinds of practices, but I just wanted to gather all the "how to" material on how to one slide.

So, first, being organized and clear about your project in terms of place and time and logistics is always important.

We always suggest allowing at least two to three hours for a story circle with anywhere from six to ten people to make sure that everyone gets a chance to speak.

Typically the way that I facilitate is that depending on how much time and how many people, I divide up the time and leave five minutes of wiggle room between each person and say, okay, we have about 10 to 15 minutes for each person to share and receive some feedback and we designate a

time keeper and do our best to kind of stick with that so that all of the participants get a chance, even though it can be tough to move that along.

So next, from an ethical standpoint, it's really critical to prepare your story circle participants in advance for what's going to unfold during the story circle.

And of, so, this means letting them know what kinds of stories will be shared, what kinds of prompts you're working with, what vision you have for how the stories might eventually be published or worked with or incorporated into your outreach or education work, et cetera.

And then how participants will really be supported through the whole process from bringing them in and any kind of follow-up support that you can offer.

And then in terms of ground rules, so, I always -- maybe this is something that some of you do when you do groups -- or trainings -- I always begin story circles by working with participants themselves create ground rules, people call these all different kinds of things but basically some, you know, guiding principles for how everyone can agree to work with in terms of creating a safe space.

So this would include things like mutual respect, confidentiality, self-care, whatever ideas people have for what they need in the space in order to have a good experience there in the story circle. And then next we've already talked a tiny bit about story prompts and we'll talk more in a slide or two, but in some cases, just to kind of help ease people's anxiety that they might have, you might want to wish to present story prompts at the very beginning and give people either a 10 or 15-minute free writing period or have them get in pairs and just verbally share for, you know, five minutes or so apiece, just to help ease maybe some of their nervousness and help them, you know, really think into a specific personal story that they might share.

And, so, then when you do the story circle, you can invite people to paraphrase or build on what they might have written down or just shared.

And each participant will have their own preference in terms of how they wish to bring their story into the space.

You will find that sometimes people do like to write things down in advance and other people like to really just go for it in the moment there.

Here, I'm sorry, I didn't realize I had this on the slide.

My bad.

So we definitely recommend setting out clear parameters for what you're asking people to do. So just as an example, this would include making sure people understand that in the story circle one person talks at a time, so no interruptions, that each person will have a certain amount of time to speak and share and that to keep things flowing, sometimes we suggest, you know, that this would allow for maybe a maximum of three comments for each person.

So I'll say, you know, we don't have time for everyone in the circle to comment on everyone else's story and, so, I'll suggest that people write down their thoughts and comments in writing and then they can give feedback after the story circle or during a break like that.

Or if you're having lunch, something like that.

And then this is where it's I think really important to point out that your role as a facilitator of a story circle process is not one of -- you know, you're not there to be sort of the content or editorial expert.

Your role is really to guide the process, invite

people to speak and share and encourage conversation and discussion amongst and within the group rather than to kind of position yourself as the expert leader, something like that.

You know, the best story circles work when there's a good conversation and flow of comment and feedback among the participants themselves.

So it's very much a collaborative experience and not a top-down kind of educational experience.

So you're there to moderate, to keep people to the guidelines, move along with the time.

So those are a few tips on methods.

And then I wanted to offer just a very simple formula for sharing stories, which might be useful as you work directly with prevention advocates, survivors, et cetera, in developing stories.

So this is something that you can just have in mind yourself or this is something that you can certainly share with groups that you might lead.

But this is what we call the four Cs and it can be a really helpful way to frame story content, especially for people who might not have much experience with delving into a personal story and sharing it.

So, first C is connection.

So this is all about establishing a relationship,
how are you going to do this.

What's your little introductory spark or hook
that's going to engage your listeners in the
story.

So this might be done through a really poignant
detail, some kind of teaser comment.

I think in Becca's story, you know, she really
begins talking about -- not about sexual violence
at all, she begins by talking about her love of
pottery and, so, that's a way of kind of easing us
into the story and, you know, we want to hear more
about how she developed that relationship with
that art practice.

It might be slightly kind of suspenseful
introduction but that piques people's interest but
doesn't give away the content of the story.

So there are lots of different ways to establish
that connection.

But the main idea is to begin with something
that's going to really draw people in.

Okay.

So the next C, using this framework, is all about
context.

And, so, while personal stories shared in a story
circle are quite short and anecdotal, it is

important to make sure that the story has enough information about what it's about to enable the listeners to make meaning and make sense of it. And, so, you know, this is where the perspective of kind of uninformed audience members in the story circle can be really key in terms of filling in missing content.

Again, going back to Becca's story that we watched, she does fill in enough detail about the assault she went through without getting too graphic or sort of overdoing it and risking retraumatizing her audience or turning people off. And she also uses the approach of addressing her perpetrator directly, which was an interesting choice and I think creates kind of a nice sense of intimacy because it's sort of like we're invited into this conversation and these questions that she has for him.

So that's about the context, just in terms of giving enough back story.

And then we come to the idea of change.

So often people tell stories to illustrate an experience that has somehow deeply impacted or changed them.

And, so, rather than telling an audience what that

change is, we really recommend showing the audience through the use of specific details that zero in on a particular moment or theme.

So for instance, you know, Becca doesn't give us some lecture, you know, like finding pottery really changed my life.

She actually points to the specific time she encountered a particular piece of pottery and her engagement with it as something that really helped her grow and move.

And she gives us that specific example of that moment of change of finding that art form. So obviously this idea of change will look

different for every story, but using this to help a story move through a narrative art can be really helpful in terms of coming to the next C, which is conclusion, or closure some people will say.

You know, in our work we really do try to stay away from this idea of wrapping stories up too neatly and tidily, just given the open-endedness and the fact that in many cases people are still kind of in and moving through the stories that are shaping their lives.

And, at the same time, it can be important, especially with sensitive content, to offer some sense of closure.

And, so, in the story that we heard and that we watched, Becca does this really simply and powerfully by continuing to talk directly to the perpetrator.

In this case where she makes that statement about she herself determining how she feels about herself rather than believing what that person might think.

So she doesn't go on and on sort of telling us about how she's healed and everything is fine.

She keeps it very concise and focused so we're left at least in a place of clarity about where she's ended up in relation to the story.

So I always, you know, generally feel like, you know, less is more with this idea of conclusion and that really more of the power of the story comes in those earlier parts, but there's lots of different ways to do the conclusion.

All right.

So now we've talked about the idea of working with story prompts and this being something that can be really helpful to ease people into a story circle process and give them just a clear sense of what it is your storytelling project is all about.

And, so, these are really just some sample prompts

that I wrote up for this particular webinar.

And I kind of came up with them working from a place of a little bit more vulnerability to a place of support to a place of action.

And I think all of the three prompts together lend themselves to exploring that #1thing concept.

In your work, you'd want to adapt and revise these to fit your context and you could even say, tell a story about the one thing that you've done to address domestic violence.

Right?

The purpose of the prompt is to help, again, people direct -- help direct people towards a very specific story rather than, you know, talking generally about their lives, their work, their experiences.

So think anecdotal stories, again, rather than life histories or, you know, sort of project reports and that kind of thing.

And I did also -- you know, I wanted to kind of allude to those three levels of experience in terms of vulnerability around a direct experience of violence, experience of being supported, and an experience of action because, really, at the end of the day, if you're doing some story circle work in your community and you're inviting people in,

you may have a little better sense of what their past experience is, but you're not necessarily going to really know exactly what story is calling to them that needs to be shared in the particular moment and experience of the story circle.

And, so, I think it's important to make space for various different levels of experience related to domestic violence and not sort of force one particular angle when people might really, you know, sort of finally be ready to speak out publicly about something that they went through.

So, you know, just creating a safe container to work with lots of different levels of experience. So I see a lot of questions, and, I'm sorry, I'm just, like, breezing through the slides, but I do see the questions there.

So we're almost finished.

I'm just going to finish with the slides and then we can go back and work through the questions.

Okay.

So let's turn now to offering feedback to storytellers.

So this can be one of the pieces -- I'm not so much concerned about this with this particular audience because my sense is that anyone who would

sign up for this webinar would probably have some specific interest and experience already in working with survivors, community members, et cetera.

But this whole issue of story feedback can be a tricky one to train people on.

And, so, at StoryCenter, just from our years of experience, we know that it's super important when you're working with sensitive content in story circles to really follow the storyteller's lead when it comes to offering any kind of input or comments like that.

So even if you're framing your project with a prevention focus, as I said, you might find that you'll have people disclosing experiences of violence as well.

And, so, you know, if somebody is, for the first time, using her or his own words and voice to describe a situation over which they had no control, only to encounter a so-called helper giving them unsolicited advice about what they're saying, this can be hurtful and, you know, might shut the person down.

So in terms of feedback, these are just -- I'm just going to bring these all up at once.

So these are from some of the most basic

elements -- basic content from our facilitator training program at StoryCenter in terms of how we talk with entry-level trainees about responding to stories.

And, again, I'm sure that this kind of thing is really second nature to many of you, but I wanted to just bring these up as examples.

And, you know, nonetheless, when you're setting up a story circle, even if you as a facilitator have lots of experience with offering sensitive feedback, it's important to take a moment to set some guidelines for the group and, you know, request that people tread lightly when it comes to offering feedback, for example, in the ways that are listed here.

So you can suggest beginning with an appreciation for the story, using "I" statements to really take ownership for your comments rather than like you should do this and this.

And, of course, providing validation.

So, again, your job as a facilitator is not one of, you know, authority, your role is to really help create that safe space and support the storytellers and offering feedback to each other because they're really the ones who need to be

engaged in that dialogue and sharing with one another.

All right.

So, great, we're almost done.

We'll have some good time for questions.

So, before we end, I wanted to just share a quick glimpse of some ways you might approach actually documenting stories shared through the story circle process.

So maybe there are some of you on the webinar who have lots of experience with documentation, with developing films and videos, et cetera.

Just, you know, take this with a grain of salt, this is very introductory kinds of suggestions and just trying to present, you know, different levels, I guess, of where you can go with the documentation piece.

So I've arranged these from kind of no tech to higher tech, starting with the always available option of doing a story circle as a tech-free experience, which, in fact, is the way it really needs to be done, meaning you do need to make sure one of your ground rules, if nobody suggesting it, is that people need to put their phones -- turn it off or put it on silence, no cell phones during that process.

That can be very disruptive.

But, anyway, just doing the story circle as a lived tech-free experience and focusing on the process of sharing and offering support and feedback can be super powerful.

And then another option that you have would be to do some follow-up meetings with storytellers after a story circle to audio or video record the story that they told using whatever equipment or smartphone tools you have or to build in some time for participants themselves to construct stories. Again, if you're interested in that and that kind of participatory production, reach out to me off-line and I can give you some consultation on what might be possible there.

I would say that for us at story circle, we never allow the story circle process to be audio recorded or filmed because we feel like it really kind of breaks the sacredness and the safety of that experience.

So I definitely would steer away from that because it just -- it would really just change the whole dynamic there.

And then, finally, of course, you can, with a higher-tech option, you could hire a freelance

person to conduct follow-up interviews and edit material or work with someone on your staff who has this experience to actually create some edited video.

You know, a lot of your decision making around this is going to depend on your particular aesthetic preferences and on your sense of what kinds of presentations are going to work best for whatever purposes you have for developing and sharing stories.

Some people really prefer the more kind of homemade anecdotal survivor-driven aesthetic, such as the one of Becca's story that I shared.

Other people prefer, you know, more traditional kind of talking head mini documentary types of presentations.

It really depends on your particular inclinations around that.

Okay.

So now we do have a little bit more than ten minutes for questions.

So I think what I'll do, maybe, is just scroll back up in the chat box and try to get through the questions -- oh, okay.

So it looks like the questions are pasted over to the side.

So there's a few.

Yeah.

And then if there's others, people can feel free to type them into the chat box.

Okay.

So the first question is, what questions -- I guess you mean maybe -- what prompts move us from service needs to prevention needs?

That's a great question.

To be honest, much of the work that StoryCenter has done has focused probably more on, you know, advocacy for service needs and survivor support, et cetera.

For me, I think the interesting prevention questions are more around, you know, tell a story about a time when you then intervened in something that could have gone awry or tell a story about, you know, a time when you saw something that could have happened, that kind of thing.

So getting people to think about and talk about, you know, the role of what roles bystanders can take, the importance of kind of early warning signs, things like that that can focus on prevention.

So, yeah, so that's what I would say about that.

And I would encourage people to take a crack at developing some questions around prevention, you know, maybe sharing them out with the entire group.

I think that would be a great activity.

And I'm happy to help.

I didn't do it specifically for this webinar, just because, you know, there was sort of a focus on intervention, prevention, yeah.

And then other question there is, build resilience and self-worth, not just addressing once harm has been experienced.

Yeah, related, that's, of course, that's a great point there.

So I think questions that can really help people articulate experiences when they felt that they were able to act with agency and tap into their resilience and self-worth is great.

You know, so tell a story about a time when you, you know, when you really stood up for yourself in a situation when you could have been vulnerable or tell a story about, you know, a moment when you really saw your own self-worth and decided not to believe what other people think about you.

Things like that that can get at those types of experiences.

And then Nicole has a question about young people. So, absolutely, so we do quite a bit of work with young people.

I would say I have worked with middle school, it's a little bit of a young age for that.

I think you'd want to tread pretty lightly with the story circle approach.

I think maybe storytelling is great, but with a middle school audience, I would see it being more appropriate to do story writing and kind of story sharing in pairs because oftentimes young people will feel a little bit put on the spot if they're asked to kind of share something with a larger group or, at the very least, to kind of work up to the group sharing with some more structured activities that help people work first on their own and then maybe in pairs and then maybe in groups of three, that kind of thing.

Help them polish a story before they have to share it with a group.

And then for that, you know, the trauma-sensitive, trauma-informed approaches would be really key.

And we can send out afterwards, but we have some really good resources that I didn't include links to here on ethical practice in storytelling as

well as trauma-informed approaches, so we can send those out to people afterwards to take a look at. But particularly with young people, I think you'd want to pay really close attention to not doing anything that's going to trigger them like that.

And then the other thing I was going to say about working with young people is, in my experience, I've really seen that in working with youth, you know, if you look at adolescent development and the whole literature on early, middle and late adolescence, it's typically the young people who are in the late adolescence category that have more of a capacity to self-reflect and to think critically and kind of analyze their own experience and, so, this kind of reflective practice of personal storytelling tends to work better with slightly older youth.

You know, so often when we're working with organizations around youth issues, prevention issues, we'll frame it as slightly older youth but telling stories about things that might have happened when they were slightly younger youth, that kind of thing rather than diving right into working with the very young age, young people. But the bottom line is that if you're working with young people already, you have a sense of their

capacities and what is and isn't appropriate.

So I would go with -- really go with that.

And then we have a question around working with participants who become overwhelmed and upset.

So, again, I'm going to share out the trauma-informed storytelling piece.

You know, the main answer to that is, you do really careful screening in advance of your participants and if somebody is really in a place of challenge, difficulty, distress, and has never shared their story before, that person would not be a good candidate for the experience of the story circle.

Again, we don't see it as a clinical intervention for people who are having lots of active distress.

And I think it works much better, particularly from a prevention angle with this #1thing idea, it's going to work a lot better if you do work with survivors or people who have experienced violence that they have a pretty substantial period of time between when that might have occurred and what they're doing now and that they've already done some group process work and some various community activities and whatnot.

So the exception to that would be, of course, if

you have a clinical person, you know, counselor, therapist, social worker and you wanted -- you know, you specifically wanted to work with storytelling as an intervention, but I would view that as a very separate endeavor from, you know, a more community-based kind of prevention advocacy experience.

You know, and I say that based on many many years of experience and, you know, at StoryCenter we have very clear screening guidelines that I'm happy to share around how we help assess whether or not people are ready for something like story circle or digital storytelling and, you know, those were developed in collaboration with a licensed clinical social worker because we had had a couple of experiences where, you know, even with organizations like the ones where you all work doing the outreach and recruitment for storytellers, we still ended up with people in groups who really should not have been there and who, in fact, took up all my time because then that becomes very much of a one-on-one situation of, you know, just really listening and being present and helping kind of guide people through that difficult content and find their way out. So that's probably a more long-winded answer than

you wanted but we'll follow up with those resources.

Okay.

So, any other questions that people might have?
Ivonne: I have a question, Amy.

You mentioned that, you know, working with survivors that have -- you know, are at a different stage in their journey, not that they've been recently, you know, recently left the relationship, but somebody who has been sharing their story, but what about if their story is still in progress?

You know, it takes a long time to heal, but they still want to share.

Is that okay?

There's not, you know, resolution yet.

Amy: Yes.

No, that's a great question.

I mean, I think, you know, that's really such a case-by-case, one-on-one kind of question.

You know?

I think that's where it becomes very important for staff to do that kind of screening and assessment to determine readiness.

Personally, if it were me, I would, you know, do a

separate process around, you know, stories for people who are kind of trying to work through a more present-day experience.

I would frame that as a separate activity or process from something that was really framed as, you know, what's the one thing you can do to prevent domestic violence.

Because I think the needs of direct survivors, you know, people who are really still in some sticky situations is quite different from people who are really mobilized and ready to kind of take action around advocacy and prevention.

So that's probably how I would do it.

And then, again, just, you know, just do that careful screening.

You know, I don't want to patronize and say that, oh, it's never a good idea, but just to, you know, be -- I would just say, be careful.

So, for instance, there's a book that we refer people to a lot, it's called "Writing As a Way of Healing, How Telling Our Stories Transforms Our Lives."

It's a great book.

I can send the reference.

It's by -- I forget who it's by.

Even in that book, so she's talking about writing

through difficult life experiences, illness, cancer, et cetera, and she even has a pretty strong kind of cautionary note in there about the potential to retraumatize people if they're too still mired in that situation.

Another way of putting it is, if you look at the trauma theory and the work of that trauma expert, that guy, Bessel van der Kolk, which maybe people are familiar with, so he talks about like a trauma spiral and, so, as an advocate or a support person, you know, your role being to kind of help people spiral into their trauma story as much -- as far as they're ready to in that moment, but then to always help them, like, spiral back out of it and then the challenge being, if you can't help them come back to a position of strength, then they just really get lost in it.

So, for instance, I've had that experience, again, in workshops of working with people who are just so deeply in their current crisis that they can't really find any strength or resolution.

And then it just becomes not a beneficial experience for that person because it's just retraumatizing, bringing up again and again how difficult their experience is.

And I think the same is true, in fact, when, you know, I've read articles about, you know, therapeutic approaches, for instance, with veterans and, you know, some people will say the same thing, like, it's not actually effective to immediately expect somebody to just debrief and share everything they've been through because they don't have the strength and the readiness to be able to do that without getting overwhelmed.

So I'm not a therapist, but I am a trained, you know, sexual assault crisis counselor and I've got lots of experience, so that's all -- all of that is just based on my experience.

So other questions?

I think we're just about at the end.

All right.

So, Ivonne, I'm just going to go to the references, if people are interested.

Again, please -- thank you so much for being on the webinar and please don't hesitate, if people have more questions or specific scenarios you want me to help you with, please feel free to reach out.

My email is on the slide.

And, Ivonne, are we going to send the slides out to people?

Ivonne: Yes.

And Breckan posted a little while ago, they're going to be receiving an email after our session, it's going to have our survey and it's going to have the link to where they can access all of the resources here, the PowerPoint presentation, the transcript, even the chat, and other resources that we want to put in there.

So be on the lookout for that.

I also want for everybody to remember that you can access the free and downloadable #1thing action guide and Breckan also posted the link on the chat.

So make sure that you access it, download it, it has great information on how to, you know, adapt the #1thing message, to get into all of your awareness campaigns.

So, Amy, anything else?

Amy: No, I just was typing in the chat box, I'll send you the link to those two places that I mentioned.

And then we'll get all that out to everyone.

Thank you so much for having me.

Ivonne: It's a pleasure, like always, Amy.

You are wonderful.

And you gave us a lot to think about.

So, everybody else, thank you for joining our session today.

I want to thank our NRCDV staff that has been working really hard and our captioner, Angie, she did an amazing job.

Thank you, everyone.

And please, please, please complete the survey that you're going to receive.

That's information that allows for us at the National Resource Center to, you know, put on great training events for you.

So have a great afternoon and thank you, Amy, and thank you, everybody.

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