Stories about Corona:
Building resilience through storytelling

Non-formal learning methodology

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Introduction

People use stories to inform others, share common experiences, express their pain, and sort out their thoughts and feelings. Stories help us organise our thoughts, find meaning and purpose, and establish our identity in a complex and sometimes confusing world.

Stories help people to understand what is happening in their lives, what happened in the past, and what it means for their future. Stories provide opportunities for more meaningful life and relationships. When people tell their stories, they distance themselves from their traumatic experiences and become aware of how to make a better future. By creating this distance, people find the opportunity for a more meaningful life.

During the pandemic, people were experiencing multiple losses. Some of these losses were obvious, such as jobs, income, and physical connectedness. Less obvious losses included the loss of freedom, trust in others, future plans, and sometimes the loss of basic trust in the world that is the basis of our mental health. Many people were living in a state of chronic grief during the pandemic as they managed these multiple losses, which might result in long-term symptoms of depression and anxiety.

After the pandemic, people are still suffering from the negative mental health effects of the pandemic (Kok et al., 2022). The most common symptoms include depression, anxiety, worry,

and loneliness (Bueno-Notivol et al., 2021). During the pandemic, the usual strategies of coping with stress, loss and anxiety were not available. Social gatherings, public funerals, visiting friends and families were severely restricted, and the possibilities of travel, sport and public entertainment were practically non-existent (Chowdhury, Khan, & Dhar, 2021). As the result, positive coping steadily decreased and loneliness increased in all demographic groups, but especially in young adults and senior citizens, who were affected by the pandemic in different ways, but equally negatively.

Now, more than ever before, we need stories about Corona to be told. We need stories of courage and compassion, love and loss, triumph and tragedy, hope and resilience. We need funny stories and sad stories; stories of how we get through each day during the lockdown, stories of how we stayed connected to family, friends and colleagues despite the distance and restrictions on movement. We need stories from children and their parents and grandparents; from healthcare workers; from educators teaching our children and young people remotely; from people who have lost their jobs and people who were carrying on, caring for our elderly, transporting our food, maintaining our water and electricity supplies and burying our dead.

In this paper, the partners from Lithuania, Italy, France and the Netherlands present the non-formal storytelling methodology that was developed during the project "Back to normal: Together for health and wellbeing".

Chapter 1. Theoretical framework

Anna Fenko, PhD, FENAN Consulting (The Netherlands)

1.1. Long-term negative consequences of the pandemic

The impact of dysfunctional grief is significant. People who lost somebody can suffer from depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress, dysfunctional grief, and functional impairment. Feelings of grief may be exacerbated by physical isolation. During the pandemic, grieving people no longer had physical access to their supporters. People literally could not reach out and touch others, they relied solely on remote ways to support someone who is grieving. Therefore, among people who lost loved ones to the pandemic, 70% suffered from generalized anxiety, 74% from depression, 63% from functional impairment, and 66% from dysfunctional grief (Breen et al., 2021).

The end-of-life experience with COVID-19 may be particularly difficult for survivors. Family involvement at the end of life is beneficial for patients and families. Family members of patients in intensive care units (ICU) can make patients more comfortable. COVID-19 rolled back many gains of involving family members in end-of-life care. Making matters worse, patients with COVID-19 decompensated quickly, meaning families had little time to process the impending death.

The period after death was particularly surreal for family members. Some family members of COVID-19 victims were in isolation after testing positive themselves; some delayed the memorial service or held a virtual funeral via Zoom. For a lot of people this was very distressing.

Family members are not the only ones at risk under the weight of COVID grief. Many professionals who work with the elderly or with end-of-life issues were overwhelmed. Funeral homes in hard-hit areas had to rent refrigerated trucks to store bodies, and funeral home staff had to work overtime in stressful conditions. The grief of families spilled over to the workers.

Nursing home staff were also struggling with anxiety and grief. Long-term care staff had to live with the fear of spreading the coronavirus. They had a front-row seat to the devastating loss and isolation in many facilities. Some had to take over duties that normally would have been done by funeral home staff, like cleaning and dressing bodies of residents who have died.

> *It is not just death that causes grief. Watching irretrievable moments and milestones vanish could lead to similar grief. Many of these moments—graduations, proms, meeting a newborn grandchild, supporting a loved one during sickness, a child's kindergarten year—are lost forever. People may also struggle with feeling like their government, workplace, or family did not do enough to protect them or their communities.*

People need to recognize that what they are feeling is a loss. Some people try to minimize their loss, saying: 'Well at least I haven't had someone I loved die', but it might be equally important to mourn the death of a familiar lifestyle or dreams and plans that did never come true. For instance, pandemic restrictions caused the loss of time, both for young adults and for elderly individuals.

1.2. Storytelling and dealing with trauma

Storytelling can support the process of bereavement and make the grief over the loss of a loved one more bearable. It may also help in sharing stories in several fields: through experiencing the improvement of empathy, the development of self-reflection, the feeling of being accepted through sharing, and technical learning as empowerment.

Storytelling is not a therapeutic approach; however, it may have a therapeutic effect on participants. Storytelling can also be used as one of the tools in the therapeutic process, such as in therapies aimed at the recovery of persons who underwent trauma. In this case, storytelling sessions are guided by a trained psychotherapist.

Used in normal circumstances, storytelling can be organized by a non-qualified yet careful facilitator with enough grief literacy to carefully handle personal issues related to trauma, bereavement, and sickness. When storytelling is used as part of a therapeutic process, the trainer must be a qualified psychologist and/or psychotherapist.

Our pain of loss can be considered a testimony to our values, moral obligations, goals, passions and commitments that we treasure and cherish. Ongoing psychological pain in response to Covid-19 crisis might be considered a testimony to the importance of what was violated during this crisis.

Stories about traumatic experiences during the Covid-19 crisis can provide a context for the recognition of how people, by sharing their stories of pain and distress, can help each other to recognise what is really important for them.

This can include our understandings about:

- the value of time spent together with friends and family;
- the importance of basic freedoms we lost during lockdown (the freedom of movement, travel and engaging in physical activity);
- treasured experiences of social activities and cultural events that were cancelled;
- moral obligations to support family members that we were not able to perform because of the quarantine restrictions;

- commitment to our way of life, our work, hobbies, social networks, etc.

Emotional distress in response to Covid-19 crisis in people's lives might be considered a tribute to their strong relationship to all of those activities, people, places, purposes, and commitments that people were not able to follow during lockdown. This emotional distress is a tribute to people's determination to maintain relationships with those people, activities and places that were not available during the lockdown. The pain we feel of not being able to follow 'the normal life' is the reflection of the importance of activities we were not able to perform, events we were not able to attend, people we were not able to meet. This pain and distress can be understood as the manifestation of the meaning that is shaping our life.

Psychological pain and emotional distress might be understood as the elements of a legacy expressed by people who, in the face of Covid-19 restrictions, remain determined to restore their life and make sure that their sacrifices were not for nothing, that things must return to normal and that this experience must increase our resilience. We might be better prepared for future crises that might again shatter our normal life, but we are not going to reproduce the same trauma.

1.3. Skills and competences for resilience

In a recent study on loss and trauma, more than half of people respond with resilience (see Figure 1). They may be heartbroken, but they are able to work, connect with others, and concentrate on daily living almost immediately after trauma or loss. However, 17% experienced prolonged difficulties without improvement (Bonanno et al., 2022). This group may meet the criteria for prolonged grief disorder, defined as a pervasive yearning for the deceased that persists past 6 months, coupled with emotional numbness and difficulty functioning. Symptoms of prolonged grief disorder include emotional pain, difficulties engaging in life, and feelings of numbness and meaninglessness one year and longer after the loss.

"Back to Normal" project is aimed to define what it means to be resilient and to develop a model to help young adults and senior citizens gain knowledge, skills, and abilities that can help them persist during times of crisis and build the personal capacity to thrive in the workplace and in their personal lives.

> *Resilience is an individual's persistent development and application of knowledge, skills, and resources that effectively help one adapt to change and overcome adversity.*

The Resilience Competency Model was developed to help learners gain the knowledge, skills, and abilities to build personal resilience during crises and disasters. The resilience competencies can be taught and developed over time through a variety of experiences.

Five core competencies make up the model:

1. • **Critical thinking:** Purposeful use of reasoning to identify strengths and weaknesses of alternative approaches in diverse situations.

2. • **Adaptability:** Successful adjustment to a variety of positive and negative conditions and circumstances.
3. • **Self-awareness:** Clear understanding of one's qualities, characteristics, strengths, and weaknesses, and how they impact one's self and others.
4. • **Reflective learning:** Integration and application of prior and current learning to new situations.
5. • **Collaboration:** Working with others to achieve a goal.

1.4. Pandemic and core beliefs

Grief does not only cause pain of loss; it can also shatter our beliefs about the world. We all have a basic view of how the world works and our place in it. The core beliefs include the idea that the world is basically good, that life is meaningful, and that the self has worth. Death, especially traumatic death, can rupture these core beliefs. But so can other types of losses. People with prolonged grief often feel that they have lost a sense of security or their way of life.

People possess a set of implicit core beliefs that the world is a fair place where we can influence our circumstances and live with relative confidence regarding the future, the meaningfulness of our existence, our identity, personal worth, and the integrity of our relational networks (Cann et al., 2010; Park et al., 2016). Stressful or traumatic events can cause mental health disorders by violating such core beliefs, thereby leaving individuals disoriented as to who they are, their expectations for the future, and the nature of the world.

The COVID pandemic is tailor-made for violating the core beliefs. As a highly infectious, debilitating illness with global reach, COVID became a threat to our sense of agency over our lives and our certainty regarding what the future holds. Further, pandemic-related loss of employment diminished our sense of worth, our identity, and the meaningfulness of our lives. At the same time, conditions of social isolation placed undue strain on our primary relational figures, eroding these security-enhancing relationships. The latter has been evidenced by increased rates of divorce and domestic violence during the pandemic (Prasso, 2020).

After these potential core belief violations, people try to make sense of challenging events, such as the pandemic, by restoring or revising violated core beliefs. Grief research has shown that poor mental health outcomes following loss result from failed attempts to make meaning, wherein the bereft struggle to rebuild beliefs and life-narratives that were violated by the death (Neimeyer et al., 2022).

Both core belief violation and making sense of the pandemic explain how COVID-19 leads to anxiety, stress and depression (Milman et al., 2020). Core belief violation and disrupted meaning making explained the severity of depression, general anxiety, and COVID anxiety to a significantly greater degree than did demographics, direct COVID stressors, and indirect COVID stressors combined. In addition, core belief violation and disrupted meaning making predicted the impact of direct and indirect COVID stressors on all mental health outcomes.

Core belief violation indicates whether the pandemic is experienced as a traumatic event. Traumatic experiences are defined by the disruption of core beliefs (Park and Kennedy, 2017). If an event undermines foundational, largely implicit beliefs that govern everyday functioning, it becomes traumatic. It is not the objective circumstances of the pandemic but their impact on core beliefs that determines whether the pandemic is experienced as a trauma, even in cases where the pandemic does present threat of death and/or serious injury.

> *Core belief violation about the self, the world, and the future, establishes the perceived catastrophic, existentially-threatening nature of the pandemic, resulting in symptoms of depression and anxiety. Therefore, making meaning can function as a cognitive process that restores mental health.*

The meaning making process entails revision of violated beliefs, rendering such beliefs more useful and adaptive (Neimeyer, 2019). For example, COVID illness may challenge the notion that one's life circumstances are stable and secure, but making sense of COVID illness can foster a more nuanced belief that life should be cherished and lived fully precisely because stability and security are not guaranteed. As another example, a COVID job loss could initially undermine achievement-oriented definitions of self-worth, but ultimately lead one to consider new sources of self-worth such as perseverance despite setbacks. In each case, the pandemic violates core beliefs, which are then modified giving rise to new and reaffirming meanings.

Despite the seemingly stressful nature of social isolation, the choice to socially isolate appears to mitigate anxiety by facilitating meaning making of the pandemic and by preserving core beliefs in the controllable and predictable nature of the world. During the pandemic, intact core beliefs are associated with greater sense of meaning and life satisfaction, which in turn are associated with lower anxiety and COVID stress. In other words, while violation of core beliefs

and disrupted meaning-making appear to mediate poor outcomes, the preservation of core beliefs and enhanced meaning-making appear to mediate improved outcomes.

Adapting to the challenges posed by the pandemic depends on one's ability to make meaning of these challenges. In other words, as suggested by the work of Victor Frankl, it may be that we are "ready and willing to shoulder any suffering" as long as we can "see a meaning in it" (Frankl, 1961, p. 5).

Storytelling interventions can be used to support learners in reconsidering their identities, life stories, and worldviews so as to better adapt to challenging events (Madigan, 2011; May and Yalom, 1989; Neimeyer, 2022; White, 2007).

1.5. Overcoming traumatic experience of Corona by storytelling

The basic objective of overcoming a traumatic experience is to gain control over traumatic memories over the Corona period. Used as a method of group work in education and social help, storytelling might have beneficial effect on participants' mental health and wellbeing.

Storytelling can help in overcoming traumatic experiences of Corona survivors due to the following benefits of this method:

- growing (self-)compassion,
- the improvement of self-reflection,

- the sense of being accepted through sharing and the experience
- help the healing of trauma, grief and loss,
- assisting reintegration into society,
- putting individual life stories in a broader social and cultural perspective.

> *By saying it out loud, negative memories and emotions are articulated and become a part of a storyteller's identity. If the memory was previously blocked from awareness because of its traumatic character, speaking openly about it makes it an integral part of the personality. In this case the negative memory loses its traumatizing effect.*

The beneficial effect of storytelling lies in the fact that it may help participants to process and recover from a traumatic experience which had been so far hidden, untold or stored in a "trauma bubble". When telling a story about a traumatic experience during Covid-19, the participant identifies and articulates the painful memories that can induce anxiety, loss, stress and despair. When the group or facilitator listens and responds in accordance with the strict rules of empathy and active listening, the participant constructs a story about the traumatic events. This makes it easier to deal with the traumatic experiences and to incorporate them in their life.

Goals. If the group session is targeted to specific issues (such as trauma, bereavement, or sickness), the first step is that the group will receive a very clear and explicit explanation of what is the goal of the session. For example, when the group is targeted specifically at bereavement, it must be clear that the storytelling will not become a solution or a recovery from the grief by itself, but a tool to reduce the pain by sharing it with others.

Rules. Once the group clearly understands and shares the common goal, the adult educator will proceed to explain the rules: what to do and how it should be done. Like in any group session, the constant maintenance and monitoring of the group dynamics is important to encourage the group and its members. A good process must always alternate moments of experiencing and sharing emotions with moments of analysis of the process itself, focusing on what was shared, what are the results so far, and what are the changes.

The amount and the quality of communication of the emotions within the group experience is a part of the process which might be specifically handled with care. The ability to listen to the emerging needs and emotions of the group members helps the trainer to cope with some blocks and delicate issues that may arise during the work.

If a participant is working with traumatic or painful material, it is recommended to discuss in advance whether the participant wants to share this traumatic experience, taking into consideration the possible vulnerability of the participant. Adult educators care for the well-being of participants. Therefore, they need to make sure that they are ready for the stories of participants. This is why it is recommended that the educator is familiar with the experiences the participant wants to share and is able to ensure the safety and wellbeing of vulnerable participants.

Sometimes a trauma may surface in certain participants during the workshop, which can only be processed with the help of a trained therapist. The adult educator must recognize if that is the case and privately suggest to the learner to seek out outside help. The adult educator cannot practice therapy, but the process of storytelling may have a therapeutic effect on participants, which can be encouraged with empathy and attention. If the educator notices that a learner

cannot cope with a problem alone during the session, it is the educator's responsibility to suggest to the participant to call in an outside expert.

1.6. Storytelling in educational communities

Educational communities have a key role in supporting learners to face depressing scenarios caused by the periods of crisis, lockdown and the lack of possibilities of life interaction between learners and educators. During lockdown, some learners become socially invisible, due to social conditions (poverty, lack of equipment and technical skills for online education). They need to develop a sense of belonging and to build up their identity during the process of storytelling.

Storytelling is a way to keep up and empower the joy of participating in a community, and especially in an educational community. Storytelling can lead participants to feel the joy of learning and discovering their experience and real needs in a creative procedure.

Educational communities can use the storytelling method for supporting vulnerable and disadvantaged learners to analyze their situation and to plan an exit strategy from their vulnerable condition. Educators can use storytelling to bring out the competences and skills of learners. Storytelling helps learners to take an active role in the learning process rather than passively receiving information from instructors. Storytellers can become knowledge creators, producers, editors, and evaluators in a more interactive and learning environment (see Figure 3).

It is especially useful for vulnerable people to take an active role in realizing their personal learning goals. For instance, storytelling can be used to help migrant learners to express their expectations about their learning goals, difficulties they face in adaptation to a new environment, and to articulate their capacities and expertise that can help them to succeed in a new culture. Storytelling can help migrants to increase their awareness of their own abilities and focus on their expectations in order to reach their goals in the host country.

Educational communities can implement storytelling in their educational practices in order to:

- promote interaction, communication and collaboration in a knowledge community,
- increase the joy of learning,
- foster curiosity and creativity of learners,
- empower learning responsibility and autonomy of learners,
- support the social visibility of vulnerable groups,
- increase the transgenerational and transnational transfer of knowledge and skills,
- contribute to creating the link between the learning process and one's identity.

Educational communities can benefit from the implementation of storytelling at different levels:

- the promotion of learning autonomy and learning responsibility,
- implementing an educational method that focuses on knowledge creation, learning outcomes and learning self-management,
- reinforcement of active citizenship of learners,
- making learners actively responsible for addressing social changes,
- fostering social learning,
- strengthening educational communities,
- fostering continuous creation of knowledge.

Chapter 2. The structure of the storytelling session

Pavel Smulski, MITRA (France)

Since the dawn of human language, storytelling has been how cultures pass on shared beliefs and values. Some of the stories told today come from stories our ancestors were sharing over 6,000 years ago. Every person has a story, but the art of storytelling can make a story transformative. Storytelling improves resilience in both research participants and story listeners and readers. Personal stories can provide direction to the listener or reader: by reflecting on the personal stories of others, we can learn (Frank 1995). We may obtain understanding and insight into how others have endured and worked through adversity and suffering, and how we might apply these ideas into our lives and experiences. We can strengthen our resilience by listening to and reflecting on the stories of others.

Storytelling is an effective way to relay facts and give your listeners the information they need in a context they can understand. Unfortunately, crafting a story that resonates with listeners isn't always easy. Stories need structure, something that keeps participants involved until the end.

2.1. Facilitating storytelling

Storytelling is an efficient method of communicating with adults in an entertaining manner (Bouchard et al., 2013). Storytelling provides an insight into personal difficulties and facilitates emotional recovery (Heath et al., 2005). There are numerous theories that support the usage of

storytelling among adults. Morgan and Rinvolucri (1983) highlight how storytelling may be used to develop successful listening and textual comprehension.

> *Stories transmit values and emotions, as well as the distinctions and similarities in people's lives. Elucidating personal experiences requires sharing, which can aid in the formation of ties and social networks. Storytelling promotes personal resilience and gives opportunity to recognize the tenacity of individuals who share their experiences of difficulties and struggle.*

To construct a comprehensive story, people need to choose what to include, making particular occurrences and features evident while excluding others (Bauman, 2004). The story would not be a story if some features are not chosen, illuminated, and excluded. As a result, stories are personal and subjective. Stories of personal experience are unique and carry significance and worth for both the storyteller and the listener. Stories are told from a subjective perspective, and their objective is not to provide generalizable conclusions (Koch, 1998).

Storytelling has the ability to uncover concealed experiences (Reichert, 1998) and can serve as the foundation for the building of connections and support networks (Dean, 1995; Banks & Wallace, 1999). When people share their stories, they are encouraged to relive situations that were most likely traumatic and painful, and that may have involved uncomfortable feelings such as sadness, rage, grief, humiliation, and embarrassment.

When our voices and stories are listened to and heard, we may begin to heal from unpleasant events (Leseho & Block, 2005). Personal stories have the power to make sense of and boost knowledge of personal experiences (Frank, 1995). Carlick and Biley (2004) emphasized how sharing and listening to stories may enhance awareness of and reflection on life conditions, whereas Cowling (2005) acknowledged the introspection and desire for positive change that comes with storytelling and dialogue.

A good storyteller guides the audience through the plot of the story. They do it confidently and clearly with their voice, speech, and posture. There are certain requirements for both educators and students to become effective storytellers. McWilliams (1998) suggests telling the story with passion, excitement, and animation. He also suggests speaking at an acceptable level, utilizing clear enunciation, using non-monotonous vocal expressiveness, and distinguishing our normal voice from character voices in order to make them convincing.

Individual stories convey meaning and perceptions (Atkinson 2002), because when stories are told, people place themselves in the story to emphasize or minimize sections of the story, or to avoid being regarded poorly by others (Frank 1995, Kitzinger 2004). As a result, it is critical to spend time developing rapport and creating an acceptable environment in order to improve the comfort and safety of the storyteller.

2.2. Organizing the Storytelling Session

There are several approaches to organizing and structuring the activity of storytelling. Inform the participants about "the event" of the storytelling session. Plan and organize it in a defined rhythm within the didactic program so that the participants are constantly aware of what is coming and may look forward to it with anticipation. However, according to Pedersen's (1995), the most practical method to plan activities and resources for the story is to consider: before,

during, and after. The following exercises have been extracted and modified from Pedersen's (1995) essay Storytelling and the Art of Teaching, as well as Berman's article (2006) Ways of employing stories in an ELT classroom. Educators can employ story-related activities to allow adults to engage their feelings and thoughts, practice motor skills, and facilitate the development of resilience, as well as to improve the many vocabulary of reading, writing, listening, speaking, and, thinking.

Before

- ➢ Know the story as a whole rather than in fragmented portions. Don't attempt to remember it. If the story is about their own life or previous experience, outlining such stories is a fantastic way to convey the actual events and characters in it.
- ➢ Practice telling the story to someone else and get feedback. You may also tape record it, listen to it, and make modifications as needed.
- ➢ Do some preliminary research on the major theme of the story.
- ➢ To play stories in a more creative and interesting way, use an overhead projector, audio or video recording, shadow theater, masks, puppets, make-up, and so on.
- ➢ Using flashcards, pre-teach or refresh words linked to the story.
- ➢ Hold a brainstorming session to determine how much the class already understands about the story's theme.

During

- ➢ Elicit whatever terminology they may know in each picture/page.
- ➢ Read the dialogue/narration aloud with exaggerated tone, repeating if required.

➢ To maintain pace and audience concentration, vary vocal inflection and tone, as well as body movement and eye contact.

➢ Ask a few straightforward questions about the story. This stimulates engagement and forces participants to think more critically about the story.

➢ Before continuing on to the following page, ask them to predict what will happen next. Prediction is natural while following a story, and it also fosters creativity and language usage.

➢ Continuously assess the audience reaction and enhance or decrease engagement based on the need to motivate or relax the learners for improved storytelling effectiveness.

After

➢ Allow each of the participants to portray one of the characters and retell the story from his or her point of view. The retelling might be done orally or in writing.

➢ Have them write a letter to one of the story's characters, asking for guidance or complimenting or criticizing the character.

➢ Divide the story into paragraphs and have learners create together to rearrange them.

➢ Teach them how to create, write, and draw a book, which is then shown in the classroom or on a website. It is critical to make them feel at ease with their work and to compliment them on their efforts.

➢ They can also create a collage or poster utilizing the terminology from the story. Their work may be displayed on the bulletin board.

➢ Ask the participants to consider what they would do if they were one of the characters in the story, and then work in small groups to compare/justify their hypothetical actions.

➢ Suggest that the participants create a cinematic adaptation of the narrative. They must cast the performers, choose a director, and maybe make some changes to adapt it for the big screen. They can do this exercise in groups before presenting the clip to the rest of the class.

To construct a benefiting and proper storytelling session, certain ground rules must be developed and established. These ground rules define a set of expected behaviors for the storytelling session. They might be established by the teacher or devised by the students (Brookfield & Preskill, 2005). It is assumed, however, that students are more likely to follow ground rules that they helped to create. At the onset of the session, ground rules should be established, and the educator should explain their purpose (for example, to ensure that discussions are spirited and passionate without devolving into argumentation, to ensure that everyone is heard, to ensure that participants work together toward greater understanding rather than contributing disjointed pieces).

According to the Indeed Editorial Team (2021), it is expedient for a story to have a beginning, middle, and end. Because most stories have a sequential structure, this makes it easy to follow and comprehend. The exposition of the story is one of its most significant components. This introduces the characters and environment, which might help the audience understand what they're hearing. It should be noted that the participants should share stories that are not just significant to themselves, but also worth sharing with a group of strangers, as the most important person in the room is the audience (Paul C., 2013).

2.3. Identifying resources for resilience

The most crucial aspect in effective change, whether personal or business-related, may be resilience. Resilience is a measure of our capacity to accept loss, difficulties, endure adversity, and return to our goals and aims. With that in mind, here is some information about adapting to change. Resilience is more than just coping; it is the ability to face crises and challenging situations without becoming overwhelmed by them. People who are resilient are better equipped to deal with life's stresses and adjust to changing circumstances. Being resilient can also help you avoid sadness, stress, and anxiety.

Resilient persons have the following characteristics:

➢ Strong connections
➢ Self-motivation
➢ Self-awareness
➢ Emotional control
➢ Communication and problem-solving skill
➢ A positive self-image and belief in one's own qualities and abilities

In their study "How to Cultivate the Resources for Resilience," Rick and Forrest (2018) highlighted that every human being has three basic needs—safety, happiness, and connection—that are rooted in our ancient evolutionary history. So, what are the essential resources for resilience in challenging times? Rick and Forrest (2018) identified 12 resilience resources on which we rely for personal well-being. They stated that we may rely on the following resources:

1. *Resources to satisfy our need for safety:*
   1. Compassion: Sensitivity to the hardships and suffering of others and ourselves, as well as a desire to assist with them whenever possible.
   2. Grit: Being tenaciously tough and resourceful.
   3. Calm: Emotional equilibrium and a sense of capability in the face of danger.
   4. Courage: The ability to protect and advocate for oneself, as well as others.
2. *Resources to satisfy our desire for satisfaction:*
   5. Mindfulness: The ability to stay present in the current moment rather than daydreaming, ruminating, or being distracted.
   6. Gratitude: Appreciating and feeling grateful for what already exists.
   7. Motivation: The pursuit of possibilities in the face of obstacles.
   8. Aspiration: Striving for and accomplishing goals that are important to us.
3. *Resources to satisfy our urge for connection:*
   9. Learning: The process of growing and developing that helps us to nurture all of our other strengths.
   10. Confidence: The feeling of being cared for, worthy, and self-assured.
   11. Intimacy: The willingness to know and be known by others.
   12. Generosity: The act of giving to others out of altruism, compassion, and forgiveness.

Knowing the value of these resources might help us prioritize their development in our own lives. We are sometimes too busy to have people around, but understanding the value of establishing personal and communal connections can help us decide to make the time. To start developing more resilience, choose a challenge in your life and analyze the needs at risk in terms of safety, satisfaction, and connection. Other techniques for identifying and developing resilience are discussed further below.

Helpful connections and positivity

Supportive connections and positivity are critical in the identification and development of resilience (Chadwick 2004, Tusaie and Dyer 2004). Individuals who can call on others for help through adversity are more responsive to help and can acquire coping techniques from others who are more resilient (Dyer and McGuinness 1996). Tusaie and Dyer (2004) define support networks as "the support that an individual offers and gets in a relationship"; interactions in these networks provide individuals with a sense of connectivity and belonging, which is necessary for the identification and development of personal resilience (Chadwick 2004).

Dean's (1995) work, which focused on stories from an HIV/AIDS support group, demonstrates the relationship between storytelling and personal resilience. By sharing their stories, participants were able to create relationships and partnerships in a supportive setting by sharing their stories, allowing them to make meaning of their life and create plans for their future (Dean 1995). Humor was occasionally employed to frame personal experiences and appeared to have a therapeutic impact, making health stories that would otherwise have been too painful to convey palatable (Dean 1995). Storytelling in this and comparable circumstances can boost personal and collective resilience by eliciting good emotions and establishing support networks that build a feeling of belonging.

Psychological intelligence

The ability to recognize and comprehend one's emotions is referred to as psychological intelligence (Roberts and Strayer 1996). Emotional awareness may be enhanced and developed via storytelling and introspection. This was demonstrated in a research that focused on analyzing maternal experiences via personal stories (Jackson and Mannix 2003). Mothers who participated had the chance to share their stories and reflect on their experiences with interested listeners in a safe setting. They got insight into their feelings and responses after reflecting (Jackson and Mannix 2003).

Tenacity to face challenges

Hardiness is an attribute that provides resistance and resilience to hardship (Bonanno 2004, Bartone 2006). Hardy people accept hardship as a natural part of life (Bartone 2006); their capacity to minimize adversity stems from viewing unfavorable events as a valuable part of life's journey rather than as a danger (Bonanno 2004, Bartone 2006). Hardiness incorporates the pursuit of a meaningful life, the belief that one can influence life events, and the belief that life experiences provide possibilities for personal improvement.

Studies undertaken by East and others discovered that sharing stories helped daughters reflect on their experiences with absent fathers and how this influenced many elements of their life (East 2005, East et al 2006). Although they had frequently felt agony and hurt as a result of their fathers' absence, it was through the sharing of their stories and thoughts that they developed a better understanding of their sentiments and were able to investigate the degree of the effects. As a result, participants were able to recognize their tenacity and applaud their survival in the face of hardship.

2.4. Self-assessment and evaluation

The development of an instrument to measure and self-evaluate storytelling in an adult training context necessitated the development of a novel testing approach that combined formative and

summative evaluation (Hunt, Wiseman, & Touzel, 2009). The driving idea for this design was supplied by cognitive psychology in the form of a global cognitive perception model mixed with Aristotle's linear thinking model of standard measure (Aristotle, 2009; Martinez, 2010). The evaluation instrument provided in this article is intended to be used as a performance tool for measuring knowledge in a storytelling session/workshop. According to Suskie (2009), performance evaluations combine learning and assessment in a chaotic real-world experience. The use of this assessment method promotes personal ownership of learning and skill development among adult learners.

Open-Ended Formative Peer Assessment Instrument

The assessment instrument's design goal is to produce a testing tool that indicates the level of learning obtained in a workshop context. The total scores of each peer will allow for formative evaluation, which provides a chance for progress through individual, teacher, and peer reactions. When peers grade each story and use the criteria and mind map to draw their conclusions, the session gives an opportunity with a shared objective and purpose (Suskie, 2009). Stories can represent any form of topic from any genre, but telling a story at a learning environment with room for peer assessment provides a training system that allows for the development of storytelling abilities with tangible benefits. This evaluation tool also assesses the performance of adult learners in the storytelling class who are learning the requisite skills to tell a story.

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Storytelling is more than just learning about and comprehending life events. Personal experiences spoken to interested listeners in an affirming and welcoming setting can provide the groundwork for the development of resilience. Storytelling is a strong technique and strategy that may bring forth strength and healing that goes beyond research. Although all ethical research standards must be followed and appropriate procedures implemented to lessen the discomfort that might arise when conveying experiences, however, storytelling as a method offers several advantages.

Chapter 3. Storytelling toolbox for adult educators

Non-formal Learning club "We"

The storytelling toolbox consists of exercises and explanations of how to create stories and use them as one of the forms of non-formal learning. Prepared exercises could be used to train adult educators and adults of different ages.

Below we present and discuss three methodologies (narrative sense-making, storytelling, and digital storytelling) important to understand storytelling as a non-formal learning tool.

3.1. Learning materials

Storytelling skills could be learned and successfully used not only in daily life but as one of the tools of non-formal learning. Nowadays, when we are overloaded with information we have to choose attractive and useful tools for adult education. Fish et al. (2020) emphasize that storytelling is a universal and powerful way of making meaning and knowledge transfer. Stories are used in therapeutic, educational, and research areas. Therefore, we need to know and respect them more than before.

First of all, you have to know the main idea or the message that you wish to convey**. Narrative sense-making methodology** suggests to use words that describe the senses (touch, sight, hearing, smell, taste) that could bring listeners to the memories or associations by activating their sensory imagination.

The storyteller should create stories based on real examples and experiences that are relevant to the audience. Most people go through the same phases of life, their emotions are similar, however, it depends on the storyteller, how to express a topic and ideas. The story should always start from the beginning (What are the reasons to tell this story?) and summarize the most important learnings in the end. When we listen to a story, we should be inspired, learn, and confirm our experience. But in order to achieve this, we should trust the storyteller. The storyteller should always know what the goals of telling the story is: what message is important to bring across. Stories should be easily understandable, relevant to the audience and lead the audience to the main message.

Digital storytelling methodology is based on social media trends to use short, attractive images, visual materials, and films to present a story. The young generation is used to digital storytelling because of Tiktok, Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, and other social channels. A digital storyteller could be a person who is able to use digital technologies and convert stories to visualization. According to Cunsolo-Willox and al. (2013), "the nature of audio-visual storytelling allows to examine sensitive phenomena and display sensory information that is not accessible via text with an interview, and participants can express their stories in a multidimensional way".

Most stories are based on personal experience. Using digital storytelling makes it easier and more comfortable to present a story. A clear and powerful message can be created by combining digital and storytelling skills. By using digital storytelling, adult educators can reach persons who do not know a lot about the benefits of non-formal learning possibilities.

It is easier to reach and inspire people with attractive and short stories. Digital stories should be between 2 and 3 minutes, written or recorded, with music, animation, photos, or video. Each story should have an introduction, story writing (presenting section), audio recording, digital media selection, editing and producing, sharing and disseminating.

Lambert (2013) outlines seven steps of digital storytelling projects:

1. owning your insights,
2. owning your emotions,
3. finding the moment,
4. seeing your story,
5. hearing your story,
6. assembling your story,
7. sharing your story.

3.2. Exercises

Interesting storytelling skills could be learned, and you only need practice. Please follow the below-prepared exercise to create your own story and develop your storytelling skills.

Exercise 1. Warm-up for the storytelling or how to start?

1. First of all, we suggest you do a warm-up and relax your mind from stress. Please think and write down the three most delicious dishes.

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Then imagine and write down:

2. Please describe the touch of your beloved one.

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3. Please describe three holidays that were the most impressive.

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4. Please describe three smells.

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5. Please describe three sounds.

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6. Please describe the feeling of the most successful event in your life. Only the feeling!

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After you described what was asked, please select from each section just one word or word combination and then create meaningful sentences (story). You can use extra words if needed, but please use all six mentioned words.

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Please read your sentences out loud. Are you surprised? Did you expect that sentences could be transferred into such a meaningful story?

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Please explain why your story could be interesting, touchable, and relevant for others.

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Are you eager to listen to your colleague's stories? Please share it within the group.

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Do the stories from your colleagues were similar, different, recognizable, and actual to you?

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Conclusion

In the first exercise, we used senses (taste, touch, sight, smell, hearing) to create a story that each of us could imagine, feel, remember or relate to. The feeling that someone is telling about experiences that are similar to ours makes it interesting to listen to the story.

After the warm-up exercise, you can try to create your storytelling based on sense methodology on your own.

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Exercise 2. Create a story for the future generation

Imagine that you have to tell your future children about this world in 10 minutes. What would be the main message? What would you like to emphasize and bring to their attention?

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Get to know your audience

To create an actual story and present it to the audience we should know the audience. Connection with the target group (to whom the story was told) should touch on interesting and relevant topics and expressions. Storytelling depends on the way it is presented, i.e., in a group or individually, online or in person, for people we know, or for a wider audience. If possible, adult educators should get information about the audience, such as their age and profession, in advance. If this is not possible, it is advisable to prepare several topics for different target audiences.

In the beginning, you can ask several questions to get to know your audience better. It can help you to identify people's interests and problems.

Storytelling topic

Depending on the main topic, storytellers should be prepared with different small sub-topics. Sub-topics could be an introduction, main story, or a summarized story.

Involving participants in storytelling

Depending on the main topic, you can include interesting and attractive questions to the audience. Questions when the audience can express their opinion by raising their hands also make them part of the story. It is advisable to only include questions in the beginning of the story or at the end of the story. Questions shouldn't be used if the story is short, concrete, and to the topic point. Questions could be used also as a measurement element if you wish to see any changes after storytelling.

> **Exercise 3. Ask questions to get to know your audience**
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> Imagine you need to give a talk to the audience you know nothing about. Which questions would you ask to understand their interests, problems, and motivations?
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Storytelling elements

The storytelling approach depends on learning goals. There are different storytelling techniques but what is most important is to make the story charming, engaging, giving place for fantasy and imagination, and association. Albert Einstein said that imagination is more important than knowledge: "Knowledge is limited. Imagination encircles the world". In storytelling, the possibility to follow your own imagination gives you the possibility to visualize the story in your own way. Digital storytelling already presented visualization and story.

Main elements of storytelling:

- Choose the topic and the main goal
- Tell a story through a personal perspective (with privacy elements if needed)
- Create intrigue or conflict or express a tension between white and black, good and bad, or other binary oppositions
- Present the main reasons for how the story starts and why
- Mix the story with elements of fun, metaphors, serious facts, and daily expressions
- Use dialogs
- Use characters in the story and some stereotypes that people could recognize from daily life
- Create a scene from the story as a movie, or theater scene, that helps listeners to imagine it
- Choose the main sentence, message, idea, or quote, and repeat it several times in a story to make it stick
- Add a surprise element to your story

● Finalize your story with a takeaway message.

Each element of the story should release listeners' emotions. How can adult educators start creating a story?

Exercise 4. Create a story for your learners

Please write ideas that came to your mind. Use the main elements of the storytelling:

What is the main topic of your story?

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Why is this topic important for you personally?

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What is the main conflict in your story?

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How did the story begin and why?

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What metaphors or jokes can help you to make your story interesting?

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Describe the main characters of your story

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Write a short dialogue between the main characters

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Add a surprising element to your story. Start with: All of a sudden...

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Formulate the main message you want your audience to remember

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3.3. Which learning materials are appropriate for your target group?

Adult educator target groups are very different and could be multicultural. Based on the target group characteristics adult educators have to use different tools and methods. If the target group is young adults, tools should be used based on the needs of this target group (videos, attractiveness of material, workshop). If the target group is senior people, another tool should be chosen to help them to tell the story.

Storytelling appropriateness depends on how it is presented: in a written form, verbally, or in a video. All these forms could be integrated in the same story.

To be able to use storytelling as a non-formal learning method, adult educators should, first of all, clearly define their goal. The content of the story depends both on the topic and the target group. However, all storytelling elements mentioned above can be used to explain the importance of the main message. If used correctly, storytelling unites storytellers and listeners as partners in participatory learning.

Adult educators know very well that each learning activity should be carefully prepared. Storytelling is no exception. The secret of successful storytelling lies in careful preparation and clear planning of all the elements.

The most important objective of storytelling in adult education is creating a participatory experience and giving participants the opportunity to express their feelings, share their experiences, and connect with others.

For storytelling sessions with adult learners, the most important learning outcomes are the possibility to share their experiences, to tell and hear their stories, to listen to other experiences, and to be in a moment of self-reflection. Adult educators don't need to evaluate the stories created by participants. They just need to listen to the story and let participants reflect and analyze them.

World championships of public speaking brings people to share the best of stories. We recommend watching best talks (e.g., TED Talks) with the aim to find useful tips and inspirations to use in adult education and especially in non-formal learning activities.

We recommend also doing exercises and trying participatory workshops to stimulate public speaking skills, storytelling and constructive talks. Adult educators as facilitators of storytelling should be familiar with guiding storytellers, and empathy to listen and supervise during reflections and analysis. The adult educator has to create an environment for successful storytelling, to ensure a supportive atmosphere, and to be open to storytelling. Most people are interested in personal, emotional elements of the stories. It is important to guide storytellers on how to tell stories, but also protect their privacy.

Chapter 4. Final suggestions and conclusions

Carlo Smaldone Villani, Prometeo

4.1. Benefits of storytelling methodology for various audiences

Much research that tries to clarify personal stories – particularly in healthcare literature – portrays sad rather than happy experiences. In telling their stories, people are asked to relive experiences that were probably traumatic and distressing, and that could involve uncomfortable emotions, such as sadness, anger, grief, shame and embarrassment. Storytelling has the potential to make hidden experiences visible (Reichert 1998) and can be the basis for the formation of relationships and support networks (Dean 1995). However, although not definitively stated, the literature also highlights how storytelling can help to develop personal resilience and celebrate the hardiness of participants.

Resilience can be defined as the capacity for individuals to overcome adversity (Dyer and McGuinness 1996, Rutter 1999). It is influenced by individual and environmental factors, and is reflected through individuals and groups demonstrating positive outcomes and functioning in the face of adversity (Schoon 2006). Resilience refers to the ability of individuals and groups to develop and achieve positive outcomes following detrimental events and experiences that have the potential to generate adverse effects and outcomes (Dyer and McGuinness 1996, Rutter 1999, Hauser et al 2006).

Personal resilience consists of various traits and characteristics. These include: hardiness; the ability to draw on supportive networks and positive emotions, even in the face of adversity; reflexivity; and emotional insight (Jackson et al 2007). All these characteristics of personal resilience can be developed via storytelling.

Healing after painful experiences can begin when our voices and stories are listened to and heard (Leseho and Block 2005). Frank (1995) asserted that personal stories have the ability to make sense of and increase understanding of personal experiences, while Murray (2003) found that new perspectives could be gained through the telling of personal stories to an interested researcher. Carlick and Biley's (2004) review highlighted how sharing and listening to stories can promote awareness of and reflection on life circumstances, while Cowling (2005) recognised the reflection and the desire for positive change that accompanies storytelling and dialogue.

Personal reflection is the ability of individuals to draw understanding and knowledge from their experiences (Jackson et al 2007). This can be used to improve outcomes in other experiences and events. Hauser et al (2006) asserted that insight into how people develop resilience can be gained through studying stories of personal experience as resilience is shaped by a person's experience. The stories we use to manage experience shape it and point to new courses of action.

Storytelling enhances the resilience of those who tell them and those who listen to them. Frank (1995) stated that personal stories can offer guidance to the listener or reader.

> *We can learn by reflecting on the personal stories of others. Through this reflection, we can gain understanding and insight into how others have overcome and worked through their adversity and hardship, and how we can incorporate these insights into our lives and experiences. Therefore, both the storyteller and the audience can develop their resilience by learning and reflecting on a story.*

4.2. Supportive networks and positive emotions

Supportive networks and relationships are important in developing resilience (Chadwick 2004, Tusaie and Dyer 2004). Individuals who are able to draw on others in times of hardship are receptive to support and can learn coping mechanisms from others who are more resilient (Dyer and McGuinness 1996).

By sharing their stories, people were able to form connections and bonds in a supportive environment from which they were able to make sense of their lives (Dean 1995). Humour can be used to frame personal stories and have a therapeutic effect, making the stories of illness that might otherwise have been too painful to share (Dean 1995). Storytelling can enhance personal and group resilience by drawing on positive emotions and creating support networks that foster a sense of connectedness.

Banks-Wallace (1999) found that storytelling among women forged strong bonds and provided validation of their experiences, the opportunity to acknowledge and celebrate their strength, and to devise ways to resist oppression together.

4.3. Developing emotional insight

Storytelling and reflection can enhance and develop emotional insight, the ability to acknowledge and understand one's emotions (Roberts and Strayer 1996). This was evident in a study that focused on exploring experiences of motherhood through personal stories (Jackson and Mannix 2003). Participation provided mothers with the opportunity to share their stories and reflect on their experiences to interested listeners in a supportive environment. After reflection, they gained insight into their emotions and responses (Jackson and Mannix 2003). Studies have shown that storytelling can help participants to view their experiences from different perspectives and make sense of them (Murray 2003); reflect on their past emotions and make sense of their feelings (Peters 2006); and grow and move on with their lives (Peters 2006).

Hardiness is a characteristic that offers protection against adversity (Bonanno 2004, Bartone 2006). Hardy individuals consider adversity a normal part of life (Bartone 2006); their ability to minimise this adversity comes from considering negative experiences not as threatening but

as a meaningful component of life's journey (Bonanno 2004, Bartone 2006). Hardiness encapsulates striving to unearth a purposeful life, believing that one influences life events, and believing that life experiences offer opportunities to foster personal growth (Bonanno 2004). Additionally, hardiness influences thoughts and perspectives of how people view their world and experiences (Bartone 2006).

Leseho and Block (2005) used a storytelling approach to gain insight into the experiences of individuals who were oppressed through military dictatorship and who had family members taken, never to be seen again. Despite the evident anguish and adversity, participants discovered an essential purpose in their lives and were determined to speak of their traumatic experiences and aim for 'social justice': to speak the truth, to be heard and to speak for the loved ones who had lost their lives.

Studies undertaken by East and others (East 2005, East et al 2006) found that telling stories helped with reflection by daughters on their experiences of absent fathers and how these affected aspects of their lives. Although they had often felt anguish and hurt by their fathers' absence, it was through the sharing of their stories and reflections that they gained greater understanding of their feelings and were able to explore the extent of the effects. Thus, participants were able to acknowledge their hardiness and celebrate their survival in the face of the adversity they had experienced.

4.4. Successful learning tools for building resilience

Step One: Help learners to be safe, resilient and contribute to social cohesion

Educational interventions can contribute greatly to safety, resilience, and social cohesion. Education can serve as a driver of resilience. It can reduce the risk of conflict by creating positive learning environments or curriculum materials which promote social cohesion. Similarly, education can help reduce the impacts of the pandemic by teaching learners how to prepare for and respond to hazards such as the actual pandemic. The starting point for curriculum enhancement is to review the curriculum to determine whether and how it addresses safety, resilience, and social cohesion and whether additional or revised objectives are needed.
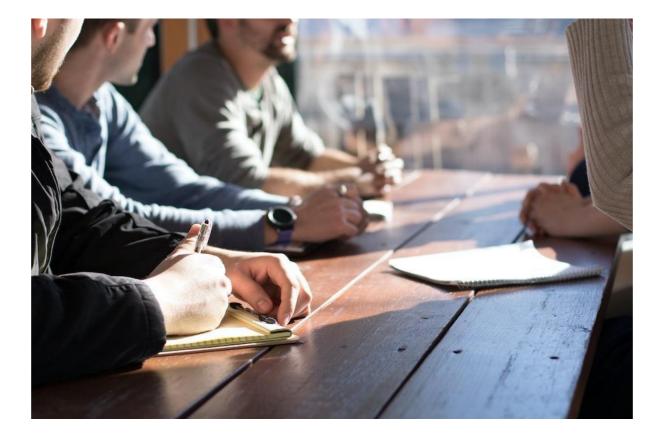
Step Two: Adopt a realistic approach to achieve wide impact

Wide impact entails actions that have the potential to make changes in different contexts. An example is the development or revision of study programs to promote learning for safety, resilience, and social cohesion (including resilience and infection risk reduction), adapted realistically to different target groups. Another method with wide outreach is online courses for adults that can complement safety initiatives. In contrast, in person 'intensive' programmes generally include personal interaction through experiential activities designed to deeply change hearts and minds and are implemented on a smaller scale. They require specially trained educators and ongoing teacher support, as well as small classes, and, usually, extra time in the study schedule.

Organize a process for developing local content that can inform the creation of new educational materials (e.g., online tutorials, webinars).

Incorporating learning to live together and pandemic risk reduction initiatives into the curriculum is difficult to assess by standard tests or exams. Therefore, a carefully developed approach is needed which is relevant to a learner's personal life and developing identity and can be used to connect with learners even in large classes. Learning goals can be measured using both formative and summative assessment tools.

Incorporating safety, resilience, and social cohesion into the curriculum should be understood as part of an ongoing process that is in perpetual motion. Multi-pronged approach is needed to ensure that adult learning organisations are provided with new materials.

Step Three: Develop a plan of action

An action plan for incorporating safety, resilience, and social cohesion into adult education should include the following sequence:

- Develop a set of priority competencies and desired learning outcomes to support safety, resilience, and social cohesion;
- Review existing curriculum for the inclusion of vulnerable learners and conduct a baseline study of the actual situation in adult learning organisations and the perceptions of learners, educators, and other stakeholders;
- Decide how to incorporate units of resilience and infection risk reduction explicitly into teaching materials, as well as integrating more generally throughout all programmes;
- Develop, pilot, and introduce new or revised learning content and other education materials that incorporate resilience and infection risk reduction;
- Find effective ways to support and train adult educators for resilience and infection risk reduction;
- Design appropriate tools to assess learners' achievement;
- Monitor and evaluate programme implementation and impact.

Step Four: Build strong stakeholder support

Strengthening curriculum elements related to safety, resilience, and social cohesion will require extensive consultation with a wide range of stakeholders. The changes must have the buy-in of a wide spectrum of the population. Unless members of different ethnic, religious, and political groups agree on the approach to be adopted, the changes will not take root. There should be opportunities from the start for the inclusion of representatives of these groups in the design and development process. Updates should be provided to the public through media and other relevant channels to help maintain public support as progress is made.

Adult education specialists from all relevant organizations should be included, as far as possible. Without collaboration and wide support the initiative can be seriously impeded. Key actors from within the adult education system, such as educators, managers, counsellors, and NGOs need to understand and accept the approach as beneficial and practical. Ensuring that these stakeholders are part of the initial design process is critical. Past difficulties in implementing similar initiatives (e.g. on gender awareness, life skills, and peace education) must be discussed with adult educators and addressed.

Stakeholders to be consulted may include:

- representatives of political leadership assigned responsibility for adult education;
- representatives of other ministries working with young people, and families, or in education (such as a ministry of youth and culture) at national and local levels;
- relevant national and international NGOs active in adult education, disaster risk reduction, citizenship, peacebuilding, and similar themes;
- organizations representing learners, parents, youth, women from different ethnic or religious groups, different regions, and marginalized social groups;
- representatives from business, who can advise on skills needed for a workplace;

- adult educators;
- community organizations.

4.5. Further developments

Storytelling is not limited to gaining knowledge and understanding of life events. The relating of personal stories to interested listeners in an affirming and accepting environment can provide the foundation for the development of resilience. Storytelling is a powerful process and method that has the ability to bring about strength and healing. It is an effective way of gaining insight, knowledge and understanding of events as they have been lived and experienced. It is also a method that can celebrate survival and contribute to the resilience of storytellers, listeners and others who engage with the story.
Bringing these diverse perspectives of the vulnerable, local partners, and humanitarian actors into dialogue with each other is challenging. They require investments in time and finances. There is value to gain from integrating multiple narratives within storytelling in the post-Covid-19 world. They will help bring to the forefront the multi-faceted nature of the challenges facing the humanitarian community, while allowing the vulnerable and local communities to tell their own stories can also help empower them. Integrating the perspectives of local governments is particularly useful for engaging with some of the more complex challenges of the pandemic. Yet, in producing such forms of stories, what is also essential is that the country context is considered in understanding whose voices or perspectives should be integrated. This would require working closely with local partners and other local stakeholders. At the same time, it is imperative that humanitarian actors ensure that such integration of multiple narratives within storytelling do not bury the voices of the most vulnerable among other wider perspectives, thus contributing towards producing more inclusive stories that can help foster credibility and solidarity in the post-Covid-19 era.

Case studies

Case 1. Digital storytelling during the pandemic

The context and goals of the session

In response to the current coronavirus pandemic, two Dutch psychotherapists from Den Haag started practicing online digital storytelling workshops. The aim of a workshop is to facilitate storytellers to produce a digital story. Over the course of 6 two-hour sessions participants created their own 2-4 minute videos that might include photos, music, narration, drawings and other elements of digital storytelling.

Target group

The participants included vulnerable patients who faced stronger lockdown restrictions than general population; people working in health and social care; people working in education that struggled with the switch to digital education and wanted to learn new ways to engage and inspire students or illustrate challenging concepts; people in bereavement who lost loved ones to Covid-19, parents struggling to keep their jobs and to take care of their children health and educational needs during lockdown.

Format of the workshop

Online small-group workshops sessions with storytellers, who may be patients, carers, managers and/or healthcare professionals. These workshops typically last between two and four days, with pacing and level of technical content adjusted to suit each group of storytellers. The reflective digital storytelling process includes the creation of digital stories that use video, audio, still images and music to convey participants' stories in a unique way.

Rules and norms

- The trainers are certified psychotherapists with more than 10 years' experience in group work and trauma counselling
- All participants signed an informed consent and a privacy agreement
- Trainers and participants agreed to respect privacy, discretion, and confidentiality of all group members
- The participants had the right to withdraw their consent at any moment
- Those participants who decided to share their digital story with the general public signed a Creative Commons agreement.
- Participants who shared their stories have consented to their use as an educational and learning resource as part of the international drive to improve the quality and responsiveness of services for patients and carers. Any other use or modification or editing of the stories without prior written agreement is not acceptable.

The process of creating the digital story

The workshop starts with the trainer interviewing group members to show participants how to make someone feel at ease and facilitate storytelling with open questions, e.g., about childhood memories, aspirations, recent challenges and how the person overcomes these challenges. Group members practice oral storytelling by interviewing each other and discuss the emerging emotions, discoveries, insights and connections between personal experiences.

The second session starts by highlighting the elements of a good story and encouraging participants to practice with storytelling and listening skills. The group discusses which storyteller tells the story in the most engaging way and find out why this way is engaging.

Depending on the specific digital skills and needs of the participants, several sessions are devoted to learning how to use various digital storytelling tools, including video, digital photography, podcasts, recording and editing audiovisual material, etc.

Sharing the stories in a group during workshop

After the participants create their draft digital stories, they present them at the group sessions and discuss the response of other groups. The trainer instructs participants to pay attention to the similarities of experiences, to the emotions that the story evokes in the audience. The discussion is steered to analyzing and formulating positive learning experience and empowerment of the storyteller and the audience.

At the last session, participants discuss what they learned during the workshop, how their emotional situation has changed due to the participation, what they have learned as storytellers and the audience. Participants decide whether they wish to share their story with a broader audience. In case of the positive decision, they sign a Creative Commons license and share their story on the website of the Mental Health center.

Learning outcomes of participants

- Increased self-esteem and self-confidence by telling personal stories and receiving recognition from the audience
- Enhanced digital skills
- Making the translation from a personal story to a digital one by using a smartphone or camera and by making a short video or podcast
- Reflection on one's challenges and rethinking one's identity
- Learning storytelling techniques that can contribute to healing by sharing personal experiences
- Experiencing the power of different creative tools to present personal stories
- Growing empathy and compassion by listening to the stories of other participants,
- Improved self-reflection and self-esteem
- The sense of being accepted through sharing their experience
- Help in the healing process of trauma, grief and loss
- Assisting integration into society
- Putting individual life story in a broader social and cultural context

Listening and empathy

One session in the training is devoted primarily to training active listening and empathy by practicing individual interviews and asking participants to retell the stories they have heard to others. At the last session, the importance of self-empathy and self- compassion is emphasized during the discussion of the personal learnings of storytellers and the audience.

Preventing negative consequences

It is recommended to form groups with participants from similar backgrounds to prevent difficulties in sharing personal stories (e.g., in a mixed-sex groups and groups of people with big differences in socioeconomic status). The trainers recommend to hold workshops for young professionals and elderly, unemployed and vulnerable patients separately, to avoid that social tensions interfere with the goals of developing empathy and compassion and to make sure that all group members have similar digital skills and equal access to digital equipment (computer, mobile phone, audio-visual editing software).

It is important to maintain the balance between sharing emotions and analyzing them, to prevent negative effects of cross-traumatization and re-traumatization of participants. It is also important to monitor group dynamics to prevent emotional breakdown of vulnerable group members and to avoid that certain group members hijack the agenda and to ensure that each group member receive equal attention from the trainer and from the group.

Recommendations for adult educators

- Have a detailed plan for the whole workshop and each session
- Get to know participants before admitting them to the workshop
- Make sure that participants come from similar socioeconomic background
- Work with problems that are familiar to you professionally or personally
- Establish clear rules for participants in the beginning of the workshop
- Manage expectations of participants, regularly ask for their feedback on the process
- Pay attention to group dynamics and maintain group leadership

- Monitor emotions and prevent emotional breakdown
- Keep the balance between sharing experience and analyzing it
- Emphasize shared experiences and learning outcomes for the individual participants and for the group
- Provide the debriefing in the end of each session and in the end of the workshop
- Take care of your own emotional wellbeing: discuss your work with colleagues, share your own insecurities, difficulties and challenges with the supervisor

Case 2: Involving stakeholders in storytelling about pandemic

With the devastating and the more long-lasting social, economic, and environmental impacts of Covid-19 yet to be fully confirmed, the ways in which educators and humanitarian actors choose to tell the stories of the pandemic and its most pressing challenges become vital for the long-term. Interrogating storytelling practices of relief and development organisations, we examined the potential of storytelling to bring to the forefront diverse voices or perspectives in engaging with multi-faceted challenges of a crisis.

Building on this, within the context of Covid-19, what is necessary for humanitarian storytelling is for multiple narratives or a plurality of perspectives to be integrated, including the voices of the most vulnerable as well as those of local partners, policymakers, researchers, and humanitarian actors. As humanitarian actors look towards the post-Covid-19 period, it is important to use storytelling as a way to create dialogue between these diverse and often conflicting voices, in engaging with issues that are difficult or overlooked.

The goals of the training:

- Enhance the sense of belonging within the group;
- Create emotional and social connections within group members;
- Increase knowledge about moments in each participant's life;
- Provide an opportunity to share without overthinking

Participants:

Local partners, policymakers, researchers, educators and humanitarian actors, vulnerable and previously affected by the Covid-19 syndrome.

Ensuring the safety of participants

Psychological safety is a belief that no one will be punished or humiliated for sharing ideas, questions, concerns, or mistakes. Psychological safety is strongly related to trust. Trust in your teammates and trust in your leader is fundamental to being on a psychologically safe team. If you make a promise to someone on your team, you must try hard to follow through.

At the beginning the educator or the operator needs planting seeds of trust:

- Always doing what you say you're going to do, to model accountability;
- Creating time and space for team building, including activities that help members of the team get to know each other better;
- Making space for self-care in the community and modelling taking care of themselves.

Non-formal methods and educational tools

Set-Up: What is the main character's situation or perspective with regard to this story. Set a story with important details that place the main character in a time, place and emotional state. Use sensory and emotional details to bring the audience into that emotional and physical space as much as possible.

Inciting Incident: something happens that impacts the main character's situation or perspective, and he/she must respond. A game-changing moment, an upset to the status quo, an unexpected turn of events. Bring immediacy — using imagery and sensory details to this part of the story as much as possible.

Rising Action: as a result of the inciting incident, the main character makes some choices, which have consequences, and impact the main character.

Climax: The rising action leads to a turning point — the emotional tension rises to a heightened intensity, possibly a breakthrough moment, a low point that forces a redirection or a high point that lights the way.

Transformation: Where this emotional journey takes the main character. What has changed as a result of having gone through this process? A shift in perspective, a letting go of an old role or belief, taking up a new approach or behaviour.

Helping participants to share their stories

One form of encouragement is related to memory. If we want to be remembered, if we want to be talked about, it is essential to have the ability to build a coherent and engaging narrative around the event. In order to understand how best to realise our 'story' of the event, the cinematic metaphor was used. When writing a film scenario, it is important to establish a "stage" for events, like in a real 'screenplay'. In order to do this, it is important to fix what the

salient moments will be, how long they will last, assign each moment a place, and identify the protagonists for each of them.

Listening and empathy

In examining the role of storytelling, lessons in groups have been drawn from scholarly debates on humanitarian communication and mediated messages of crisis, although much of this scholarship focuses on appeals, imagery, and storytelling during and in the aftermath of the pandemic. Other sessions have been realized at individual level especially when the storytelling was an experience moving so many different emotions, especially when the pandemic took lives close to the person involved in the session.

Preventing negative experiences

It's possible to avoid negative consequences putting in contrast, "positive" representations of humanitarianism would emphasise the empowered, hopeful, and resilient nature of the vulnerable. Depicting the vulnerable as determined, hard-working, and deserving of help, has almost become a familiar trope adopted in humanitarian storytelling. But continuing to portray the vulnerable sufferer in this way, with dignity, and with agency, would be significant for bringing their voices or perspectives to the forefront.

Recommendations for adult educators

Educators and humanitarian actors should be wary of the tendencies of "positive" representations to oversimplify and gloss over suffering. Such oversimplification can lead towards a misrecognition of the action, needs and realities on the ground, and in turn, to inaction and a suspicion where everything seems as if taken care of.

A further factor to be wary of is the risk of compassion fatigue for repeated stories centred on suffering, from among Western audiences, who would usually contribute towards humanitarian causes. Within the current climate, there is a possibility that this fatigue would be further

worsened, given the economic impacts of the pandemic on audiences themselves. Therefore, in telling the post-pandemic stories, portraying "need with dignity" will be even more important, where there is a balance between showcasing successes, ensuring the dignity of the vulnerable, and highlighting their needs.

Case 3: Building resilience of young adults during pandemic

Participants: Young adults (students 18 – 23 years old)

Goals:

- Non-formal learning about resilience and pandemic situation
- Discuss and analyse how youth was dealing with psychological pressure, the meaning of life, and changing the understanding of joyful life.

Format: In person small group session (5 participants)

Structure of the session

The most important objective of this storytelling was a participatory experience – to express feelings, share experiences, and connect with others. To talk about the feelings during the pandemic and the feelings about the war in Ukraine.

Introduction: each participant was introduced to the project idea, participants introduced themselves, and discussion topics were presented.

Resilience – how do you manage it?

Wellbeing importance and steps to be fit.

How did you feel during the pandemic and what would you suggest for yourself and others on how to overcome difficult situations?

Plan – one participant (adult educator) was responsible for discussion guides and each participant has the opportunity to express feelings.

The discussion duration was around 60 min.

Ensuring the safety of participants

Adult educators ensured the safety and psychological comfort of participants with rules and norms (confidentiality, non-judgmental comments, acceptance of opinion). After an introduction, the facilitator asked questions and participants shared their own experience.

Didactic tools to encourage storytelling

Participants were introduced to the topic and main goal in advance. We encouraged openness by explaining the meaning of a participatory workshop and the benefits of personal expression to analyse discussed situations as supervision.

Supervision tool was used to help youth to manage and analyse situations, to put exact attention to the most important points.

Non-formal learning methods used during the session:

- Participatory workshop
- Supervision tool
- Reflection
- Analysis

Learning outcomes: the possibility to share experiences, to tell and hear their own story, to listen to other experiences, and to be in a moment of self-reflection.

Listening and empathy

Adult educators and other participants didn't evaluate stories, they just listened to the story and let the participants reflect and analyse it. Responses to the stories of participants were supportive. During the participatory workshop, participant's stories were embraced with understanding and encouragement to be open and to talk. Negative experiences were expressed as lessons that have to be learned and solved. Special emphasis was made on the importance of self-reflection and being more focused on our own dreams and wishes.

All participants were encouraged and supported with understanding and sharing similar stories and discussing how to avoid negative consequences in the future. This participatory workshop was focused on expressing negative feelings, emotions, and stories and emphasizing how these emotions could be helpful for a constructive bright future.

Recommendations

Adult educators and facilitators of the participatory workshop should be familiar with supervision techniques, guiding storytellers, and empathy to listen and supervise during reflections and analysis. The adult educator has to create an environment for successful storytelling, to ensure a supportive atmosphere to be open to storytelling. Participants are mostly interested in personal, emotional components of stories. It is important to guide storytellers to tell their stories, but also to protect their privacy.

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