




PRO•A

Pennsylvania Recovery
Organizations Alliance

**MOBILIZE
EDUCATE
ADVOCATE**

Together we can!



Story Telling From the Heart

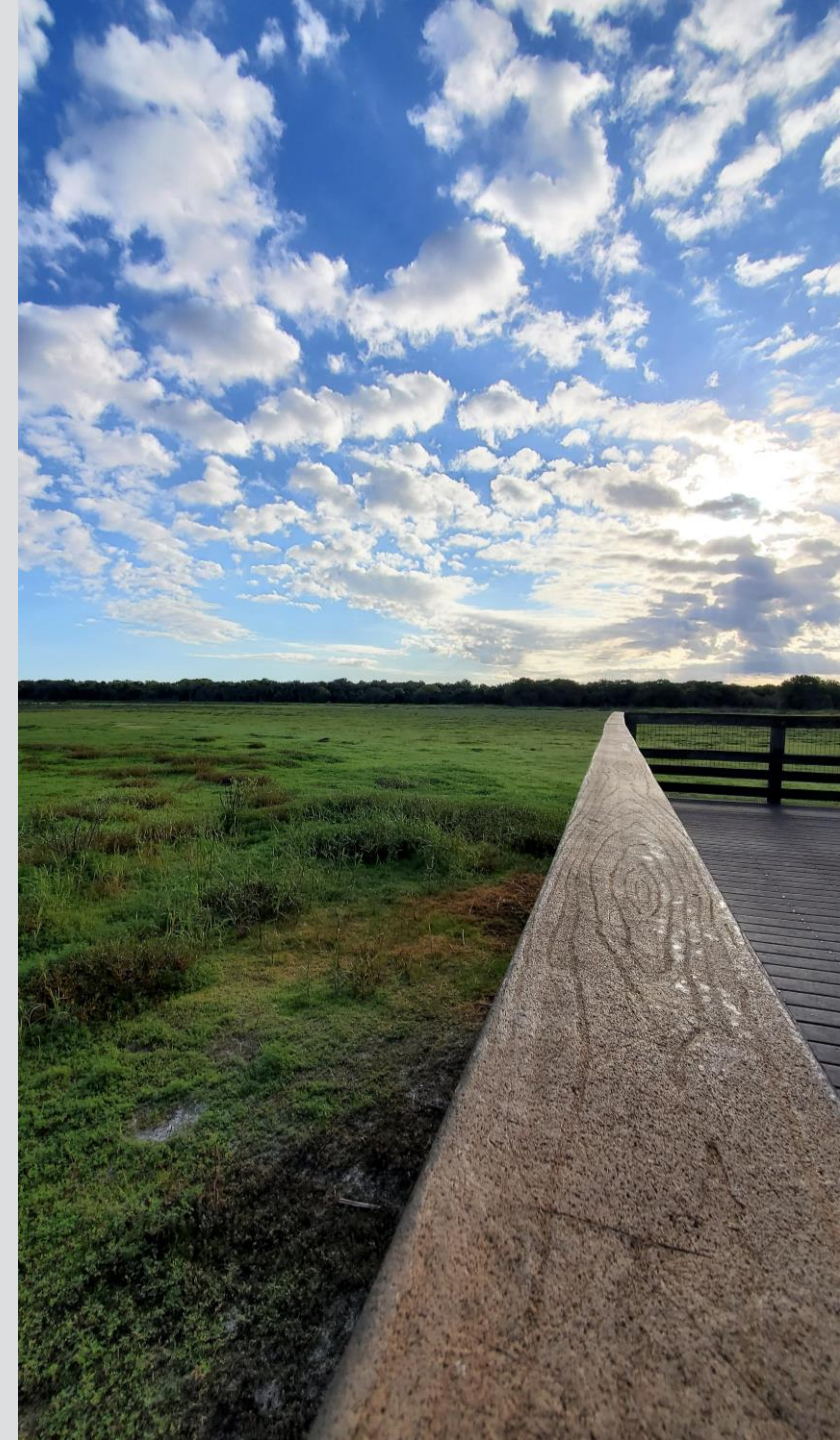
Storytelling to Inspire & Transform

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Training Objectives

Following this training, attendees will be able to:

- Summarize the **ethics** of storytelling.
- Describe how storytelling can **inspire** and **transform**.
- Assess the **audience**, their needs, and your **style** of storytelling.
- Construct a story and make it more **powerful**.
- Discuss how to **engage** and **inspire** others through the practice of storytelling.



History and Background

Story Telling is Older than History

Oral history has been with us since we lived in caves

Before written words, the way that humans shared important information and traditions across generations and communities was through storytelling.

- From cave drawings to our era
- In all cultures across human existence
- We are wired for the sharing of stories to inform and inspire
- We remember a good story for a lifetime





NRAM

Our Stories Have Power

Through our history, events like Operation Understanding in the 70s and the rise of the New Recovery Advocacy Movement (NRAM), there has been recognition that our stories can help shape how we understand recovery.



Ethics & Recovery Storytelling

How are stories are told & used

- Pillars of Stigma & Recovery Storytelling
- The ethics of our stories & how they are used is an emerging issue not covered in-depth in the literature
- Five-part article and paper on the ethics of recovery stories and how they are used

Before Disclosing

Before disclosing our addiction/recovery experiences at a public level, consider:

- Is this the right time in my recovery to share my story at a public level?
- Are there negative effects for myself, my family, my community, from sharing?
- Could sharing it subject me to discrimination in housing, education, employment, health care, or social and business opportunities?
- Do I have a support system to help me manage if consequences arise?
- Will I be sharing my story alone or alongside other people in recovery?
- Who is controlling how my disclosure will be used and do I have the explicit right to edit my disclosure and what narrative it is used to support?

Our Boundaries

What do we include and why?

We are sharing our stories in recovery coaching and peer roles for specific reasons. Ask:

- What do I need to include & why am I including it?
- What kind of information would be oversharing?
- Are there facets of my story that if I discuss in detail may impact other people?



Effectiveness of Storytelling



The Power of Narrative

How do we use our stories?

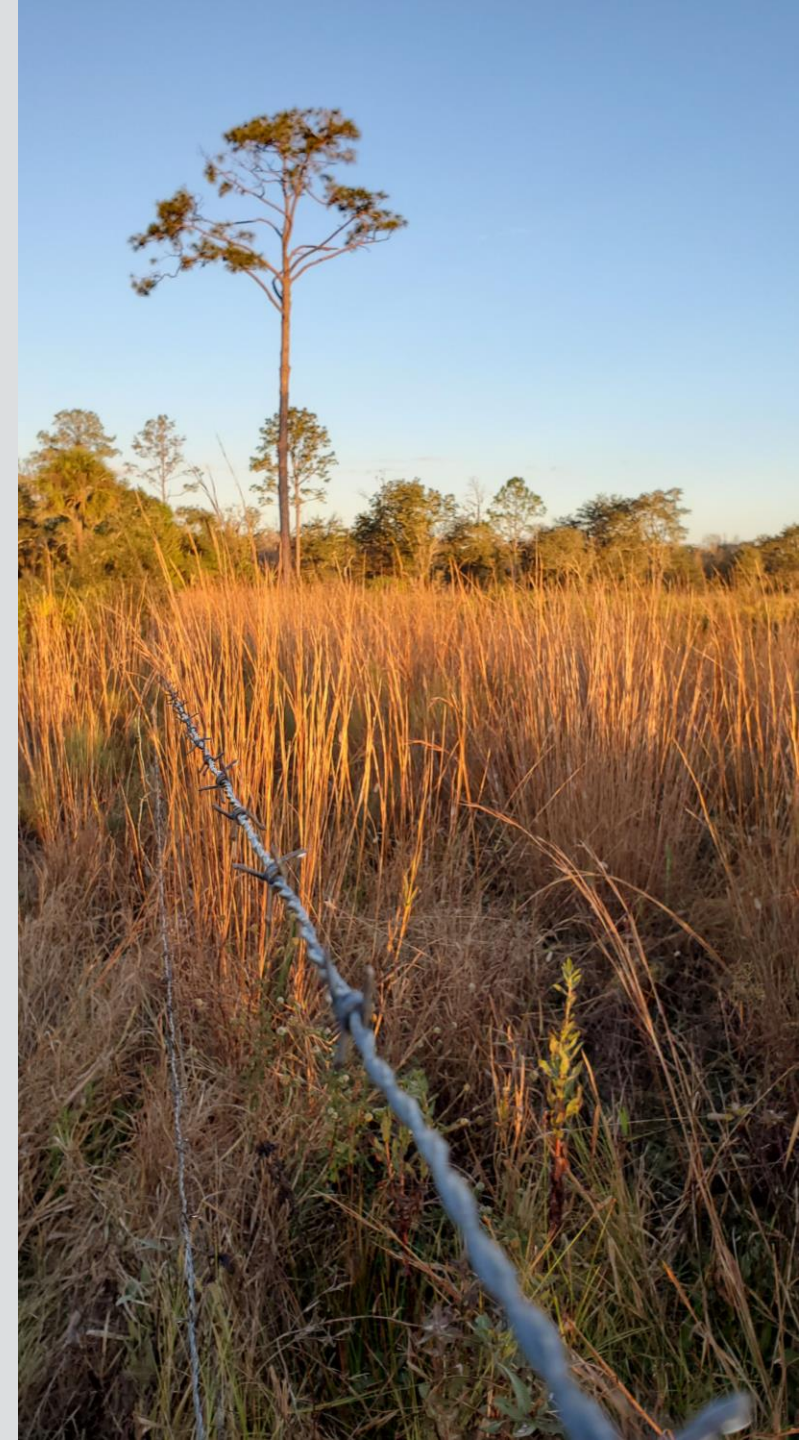
- Deepen understanding and empathy for our recovery community
- Use by Peers & Peer Coaches
- Empower and motivate others towards recovery
- Move us towards the end of Stigma

Neuroscience of Storytelling

Listening connects us

People often unconsciously synchronize bodily functions like heartbeat and breathing when they share an experience, such as a live performance or have a personal conversation.

According to a recent study, subjects' heart rates synchronize even if they are just listening to a story by themselves, and this synchronization only occurs when the subjects are paying attention to the story.



Crafting Our Story

Different Styles

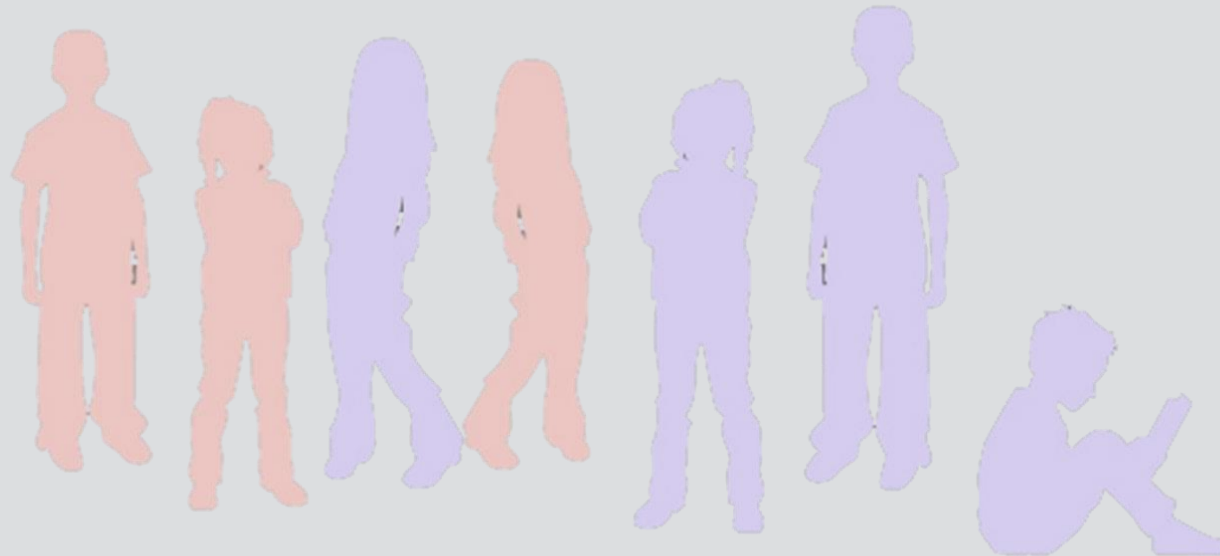
There are many ways to craft storytelling

- Traditional 12 step fellowship storytelling
- Public Narrative: Leadership, Storytelling, and Action: The work of Marshall Ganz
- Recovery Storytelling – the work of Meghann Perry
- Many others



Who are we using storytelling to influence

- Families
- Communities
- Co-workers
- Organizations
- Medical professionals
- The academic community
- Public officials
- The media



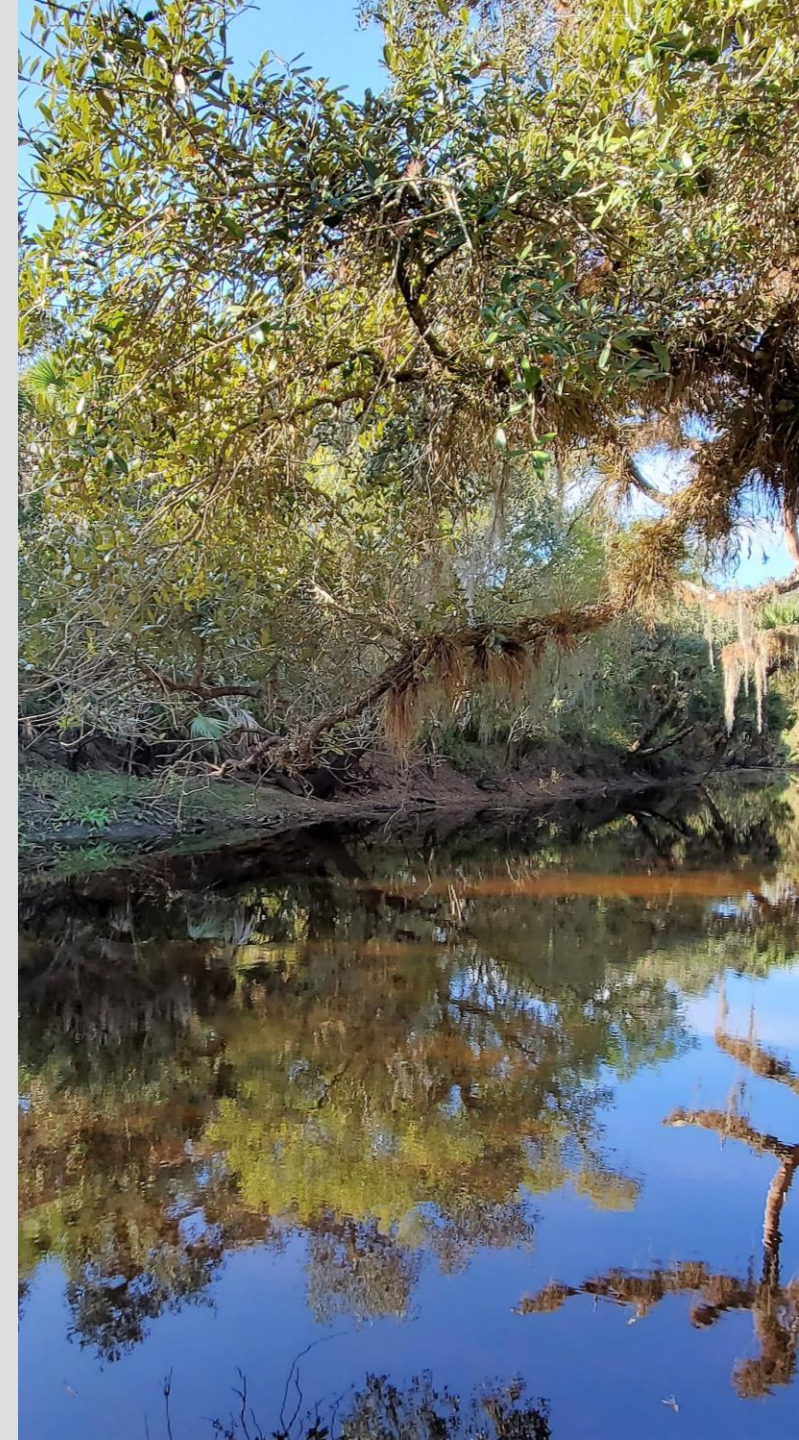
Talking About Recovery

When is it appropriate

This is a personal decision- disclosing about your recovery can help others, but it could open you up to discrimination

Thing to consider:

- Are you in stable recovery?
- How may others may react to your disclosure?
- Will you face discrimination by disclosing?
- Could it place additional strain on your family?





Anonymity

12 Step Fellowships

Talking about YOUR OWN recovery is not a violation of any 12-stepfellowship traditions

We recommend NOT identifying yourself or others as members of a particular 12-step fellowship as it may be a violation of these traditions.

When in doubt — stick with your own story!

Things to Consider

Keep your messaging concise!

DO NOT:

- Focus on your addiction or what causes addiction
- Say "I am an addict"
- Talk about yourself as a victim of a life situation you found yourself in
- Promote a particular fellowship, program, or pathway of recovery
- Share intimate details —



DO!
Focus on
your
RECOVERY

“Loaded” words

Some words have negative connotations

ABUSE
ADDICT
CLEAN
DIRTY
JUNKIE
USER

We need to get away from language that depicts us as victims, that seems to blame the individual and begin to use language that emphasizes recovery, empowerment, and relate addiction as a medical condition that people can talk about without blame, shame, or stigma.

Words Matter – Choose Wisely

Delivering the Message



Stay Focused

Consider Your Message & Delivery It

Stay focused on what you want to communicate –

- Keep your message to 2 to 3 main points
- Don't get distracted from what you want to say
- If you get off track “pivot” back to your main points
- Keep it short – say what you are going to say, say it and tell them what you said....

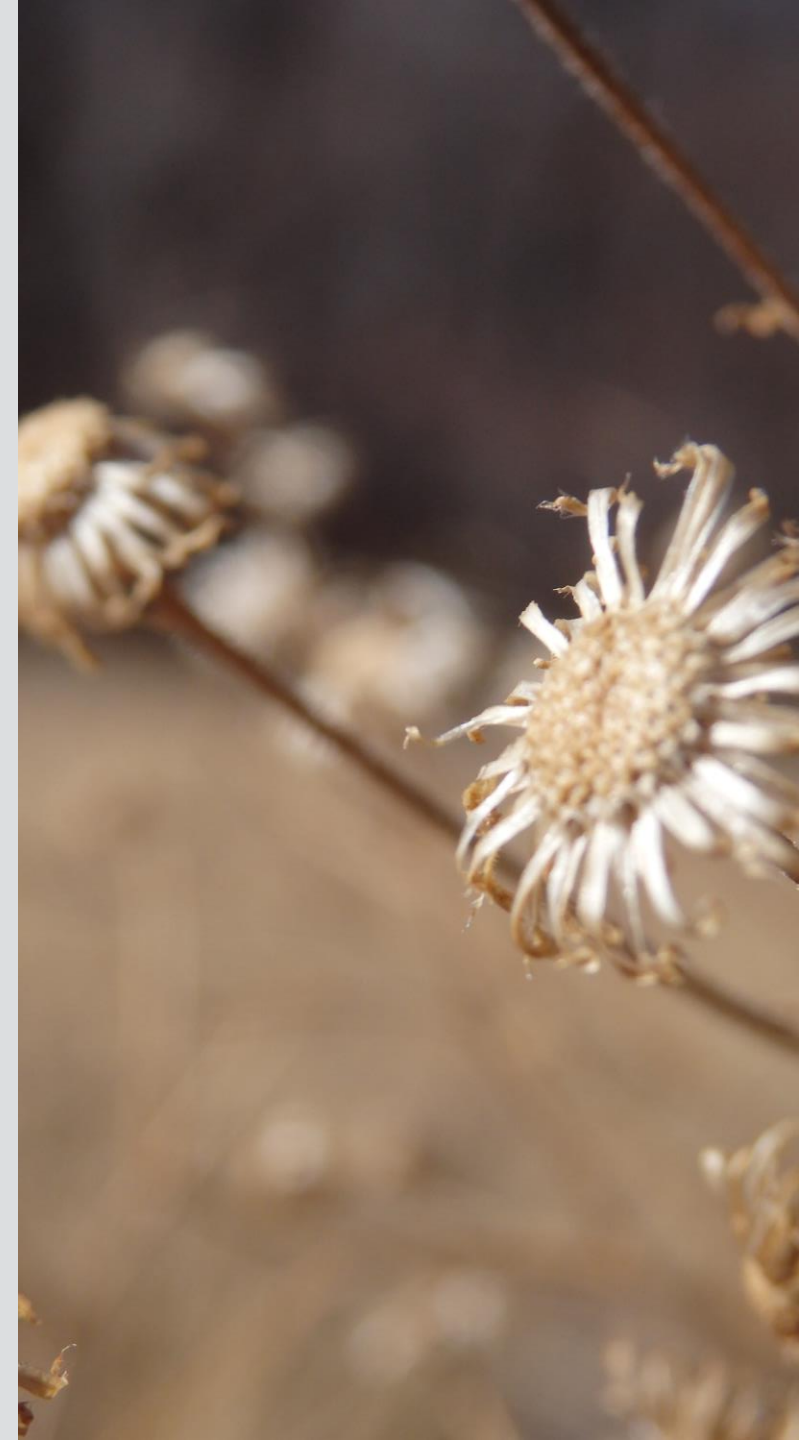
Staying On Message

Use of Pivot Technique

A technique to move the dialogue BACK to your talking points. Example:

Q: What was the worst thing you did when you were on drugs?

A: I understand people can be curious about that kind of thing, but I am here to talk about the power that recovery can have to change lives, and in my life it has meant that...





Common Themes

Things to Consider

- Tell your own truth
- Speak simply and with conviction
- Use examples from your audience's perspective
- Use analogy & imagery to make your points
- Have a point and craft an arc to get there
- Stay relaxed / have fun — you are helping to change the conversation!

Your Story

Your narrative, that you have used in recovery fellowships or to share at a recovery event.

Personal Narrative Storytelling

Short story that you do not script out or memorize that tells a thread that illuminates and inspires

My Basement Ceiling

A Short Story from the Heart





Personal Narrative Stories

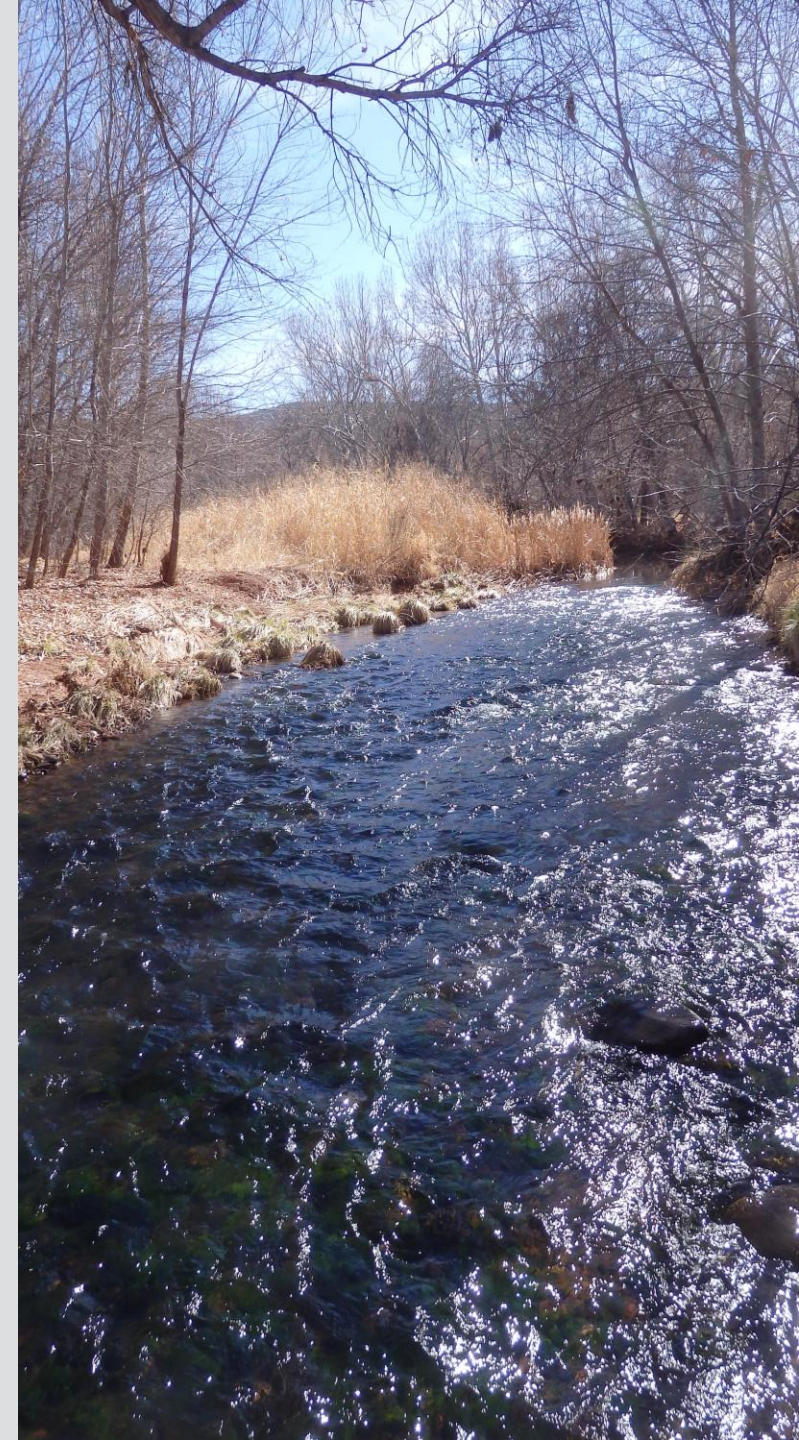
The Moth Podcast & Recovery Storytelling

The Moth Story Hour Podcast - a weekly podcast of free audio of curated stories from live events downloaded over 61 million times.

CCAR Recovery Storytelling – Role of a Recovery Coach and how storytelling holds tremendous promise for our recovery movement.

CCAR Story Slams

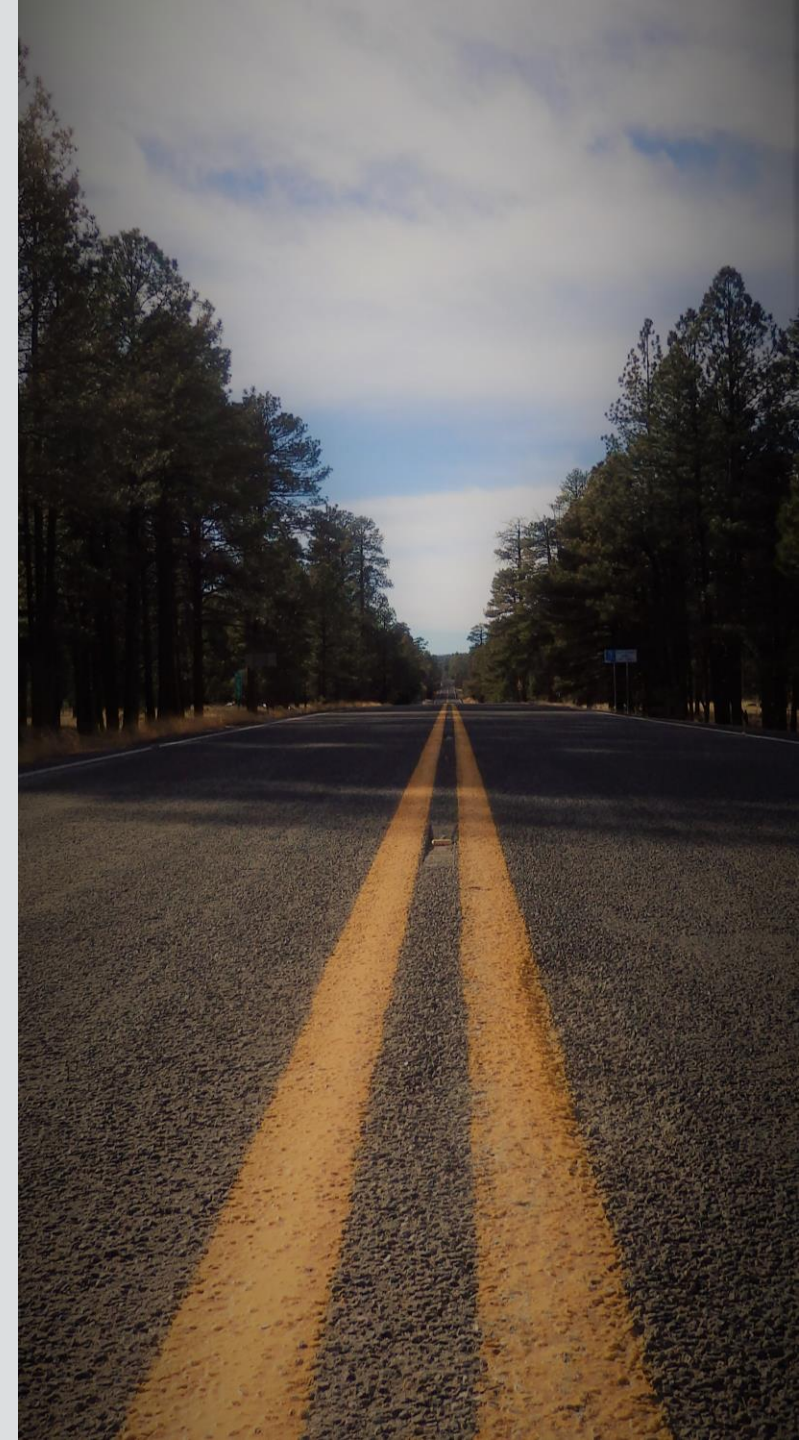
Example of how CCAR (Connecticut Communities of Recovery) Executive Director Phil Valentine and professional story coach Meghann Perry use storytelling to create a recovery community event of sharing stories in a contest from



Use of the Recovery Narrative

How can we use our stories moving forward

- Inspiring those we work with in their pathways of recovery.
- Improving public perceptions about addiction and recovery.
- Increase community willingness to seek help and to recognize the benefits of recovery in our society.



Sources

- Slide 5** - Facing Addiction with NCADD (2018). YouTube clip from the Movie The Anonymous People. Posted at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N7ERi-VSPVw>
- Slides 6&7** - White, W., Stauffer, B., & Torino, D. (2021). Personal privacy and public recovery advocacy. Posted at http://www.williamwhitepapers.com/pr/dlm_uploads/Privacy-Paper-Final.pdf
- Slide 10** - Neuroscience News. (2021). People Synchronize Heart Rates While Listening Attentively to Stories. <https://neurosciencenews-com.cdn.ampproject.org/c/s/neurosciencenews.com/story-attention-19216/amp/>
- Slide 11** – Harvard Kennedy School Public Narrative: Leadership, Storytelling, and Action: Curriculum. Posted at: <https://www.hks.harvard.edu/educational-programs/executive-education/public-narrative-leadership-storytelling-and-action> Recovery Storytelling. Posted at: <https://www.meghannperry.com/about-meghann>
- Slide 14** - Alcoholics Anonymous Pamphlet on Understanding Anonymity. Posted at: <https://www.aa.org/understanding-anonymity>.
- Slide 22** - The Moth Story website posted at <https://themoth.org/>
Valentine, P. (2019). CCAR Recovery Coaching Role 11 posted at: <https://ccar.us/storyteller-recovery-coach-role-11/>
- Slide 23** – People Expressing Addiction, Recovery, & Life Stories. CCAR Story Slams posted at <https://ccar.us/events/p-e-a-r-l-s-story-slams/>



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