



Considerations

when supporting people with lived experience sharing their story

- ▶ **Invest time to build relationships** within the community. Build trust, transparency and respect. Openly acknowledge your power and privileges, and take steps to mitigate any power-dynamics that may exist when asking people to share their stories.
- ▶ **Determine where they are in their healing journey.** Is it too soon for them to share their story? Could sharing their story do more harm than good? Pay close attention to body language and prioritize their well-being, health and safety.
- ▶ **Ensure they have ownership of their own story and agency in how it is shared.** They are the experts. They should choose what parts of their story to share. Respect their boundaries and do not push it. Allow for complexity within the story, and use **asset framing** to focus on their strengths. Respect the narrator's authentic voice, honoring their grammar, speech pattern and word choices.
- ▶ **Get informed, ongoing and enthusiastic consent.** Explain why you are asking them to share their story, and ensure they can help determine how and when their story will be shared. Check in regularly to confirm consent at each step of the story sharing process. Someone who says, "Yes," at the outset may change their mind as the process unfolds.
- ▶ **Practice empathy and flexibility.** Attentive and empathetic listening can be healing. Honor their story and experiences. Let them unfold their story in the way they choose. Avoid potential triggers, and be supportive and responsive. If they are showing signs of retraumatization, immediately stop and provide referrals for professional support or counseling services, like a local mental health provider or the national **988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline**.
- ▶ **Provide training, coaching and mentorship.** Many people will feel more comfortable telling their story and/or speaking publicly after receiving thoughtful training, guidance and peer support.
- ▶ **Offer equitable compensation**, including any time spent preparing or training. Be clear about the scope, timeline and expectations from the outset.
- ▶ **Seek feedback** for improvement and thank them for their time and vulnerability in sharing their stories.

Sources: BROKE: *Self-Care for Storytellers, or Your Story is Yours*
Center for Health Journalism: *Keep these seven lessons in mind when interviewing trauma survivors*
Memory Fox: *Marketing That Does No Harm: Trauma-Informed Storytelling in Action*
Voice of Witness: *Ethical Storytelling Principles*