

CLD1-4-4H



Facilitator's Guide

Influencing Others with the Stories You Tell

Tell me a fact and I'll learn. Tell me the truth and I'll believe. But tell me a story and it will live in my heart forever. — Indian Proverb

Rationale:

Effective leaders have learned that good illustrations make a point. Stories can be used to teach, mentor and coach others. Stories that illustrate how others have dealt with change can be useful to help individuals and organizations manage their own change or communicate complex facts or basic truths. Some of the best loved and most effective stories are Aesop's Fables. Each fable ends with a moral. Reading and discussing a fable could be an effective way to introduce the topic of influencing others with stories.

Program Goal:

To develop effective storytelling skills for enhancing leadership development opportunities

Program Objectives:

- Examine the value of storytelling as an effective communication tool.
- Contrast storytelling themes used to relate truths, morals or personal experiences.
- Practice storytelling skills to improve potential for influencing others in leadership development situations.

Pre-Program Preparation:

- Copy the "Influencing Others with the Stories You Tell" factsheet for each participant
- Prepare to share your favorite childhood memory
- Secure paper and pencil for each participant
- Make copies of "My First 4-H Club Meeting" activity sheet
- Secure flipchart and markers or dry erase board and markers

Introduction:

A poor storyteller can be painful (or at least boring) to listen to, but effective storytelling is an art. A well-developed and presented story can cut across age barriers and will capture the interest of its listeners. Good stories will be remembered long after they are told. Even folks who say they can never remember a joke will say, "Oh, I've heard that one," as soon as the storyteller gets started.

Stories, fables, analogies and metaphors are also one of the best ways to communicate complex facts. Stories are often used to communicate basic truths. Stories are a way for our minds to see and remember what our ears hear.

Introductory Activity:

Ask participants to think about a favorite childhood memory. While they reflect on their favorite childhood memory, share one of your childhood stories, speaking with animation. Ask one or two participants to share their personal memories; ask why participants enjoyed the stories that were shared.

Make the point that good stories connect each of us with our personal experiences.

Objective 1: Examine the value of storytelling as an effective communication tool

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Stories, fables, analogies, and metaphors are often the best way to develop relationships, mentor or coach others. Share the proverb:

Tell me a fact and I'll learn. Tell me the truth and I'll believe. But tell me a story and it will live in my heart forever. ~ Indian Proverb

Stories allow our minds to hear what our ears hear and make points easier for us to remember.

Learning Activity 1:

4-H members and 4-H volunteers differ in age and the length of time that they have belonged to or spent with the organization. However, 4-H members and volunteers alike can improve their communications skills and build relationships by sharing their personal experiences. What is your 4-H story? Take a moment and make notes on the worksheet called "My First 4-H Club Meeting." You might include who invited you to join (or volunteer for) 4-H, why you joined (or began volunteering), the year, people, place, program or memorable things that happened at the meeting.

Objective 2: Contrast storytelling themes used to relate truths or personal experiences

Good story telling comes from recalling events that use your experience to relate truths to others. Good stories can be built around common themes, which help structure and recall events for relating a specific truth. Write the following themes on a flip chart:

Mistakes and failures. Not everything that happens to us is good. However, we may learn or remember more from the bad things that have happened, and they are almost certainly imprinted more strongly in our brains.

Unexpected opportunities. The unexpected can be a good source of stories. Those "ah ha" moments can be a rich source of illustrations.

Risks and rewards. History is full of people who were willing to take a chance. The great explorers of history are often remembered as much for their struggle against the odds as for the things they discovered.

Choices and consequences. Children often learn from "if...then..." stories, even if they have to learn it the lesson the hard way. But not all choices and consequences stories are bad.

Lessons learned. Life and education are both ongoing experiences. The lessons can be a rich source of material for a storyteller, especially when the lessons illustrate a truth that can be passed on to others.

Obstacles and challenges. Some of the highest impact stories are those that tug at our heart strings.

Someone who inspired me. We all can recall people who made an impression and who made a difference. These are the people who cared enough to offer advice. Sometimes these people changed the direction of our lives.

Learning Activity 2:

Let's take a closer look at the notes from your "My First 4-H Meeting" activity sheet. Do your notes indicate a potential story that would share specific truths from the storytelling themes? Think of discussing 4-H with a prospective member or volunteer, using your 4-H story to influence them.

Ask participants to answer all questions or pick and choose a few to focus on, depending on the amount of time you have. You may also want someone to write down answers for all to see on a flip chart.

Mistakes and Failures – Did anyone have a bad experience, resulting from a mistake or failure, at their first 4-H club meeting? Did it result in developing more self-confidence through admitting or learning from the mistake or helping to build stronger relationships?

Unexpected Opportunities – Did surprises or unexpected events occur that led to an "ah ha" moment, resulting in more personal satisfaction?

Risk and Rewards – Did your story indicate taking a personal risk or leaving your own personal comfort zone? In your story, did you receive a reward? What rewards do you feel you have received by joining or volunteering for 4-H?

Choices and Consequences – Could your story show how making a choice to join or volunteer for 4-H was a decision with positive consequences? Could share your story with others to influence them to join or volunteer for 4-H?

Lesson Learned – Does your story share a lesson that was learned, with a specific truth or moral to pass on? Is there a lesson we could learn today from listening to the different experiences each of us had at our first 4-H club meeting?

Obstacles and Challenges – Does your story indicate obstacles or challenges that had to be overcome? Does your story conclude with a heartfelt result?

Someone Who Inspired Me – Does your story include a certain individual that inspired your decision to join or volunteer for 4-H? Did this person become a mentor to your personal development?

Objective 3: Practice storytelling skills to improve potential for influencing others in leadership development situations.

The key to telling stories is to have something interesting to say and to say it in an interesting way. Knowing and applying the basic tips of storytelling will strengthen your stories.

Write the following storytelling tips on the flipchart:

- Tell a personal story
- Be honest and sincere
- Share the stories of others
- Include an introduction, body and conclusion
- Make the story visual; illustrate!
- Use body language; animate!

Learning Activity 3:

Ask participants to work in small groups and use their notes from the “My First 4-H Club Meeting” worksheet to develop their own personal story. Ask them to outline an introduction, body and conclusion. When they have completed their outline, ask them to choose a partner and tell their story, using the major storytelling points of delivery. Ask permission to circulate or print some of their personal stories in the local newspaper or in an upcoming 4-H or Extension newsletter, or post to the website in order to influence others and build relationships.

Summary:

Remember: An engaging story will grab the audience’s attention. Once the storyteller has the attention of the listener, their trust has been earned and the storyteller is able to communicate more effectively. Facts, figures, and ideas are easier to convey when constructed in the framework of a story.

References:

- Kouzes, J.M. & Posner, B.Z. (2007). *The Leadership Challenge*, 4th Ed.
Penn, A. (2009). *Advocating for Extension: Storytelling. Strengthening Extension Advisory Leadership Training Curriculum*. Available at: <http://srpln.msstate.edu/seal/09curriculum/index.html>

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My First 4-H Club Meeting

1. What year did you attend your first 4-H meeting? _____

2. Who invited you to attend your first 4-H meeting? _____

3. Where was your first meeting held? _____

4. What do you remember most about your first 4-H meeting? _____

5. What activities were conducted at your first 4-H meeting? _____

6. What business was discussed at your first 4-H meeting? _____

7. Were refreshments served? _____ And if so, what was served? _____

8. Who took you to your first 4-H meeting? _____

Did that person stay at the meeting with you? _____

9. Were you excited to attend the meeting? _____

Were you nervous about attending? _____

What do you remember most? _____
