

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 can make a point. Stories can be used to train, mentor, and coach others. Stories of how others have dealt with change can be useful to help organizations manage their own change or communicate complex facts or basic truths.

Program Goal:

To develop effective storytelling skills for enhancing leadership development opportunities.

Program Objectives:

- To examine the value of storytelling as an effective communication tool
- To contrast storytelling themes used to relate truths or personal experiences
- To practice storytelling skills to improve potential for influencing others in leadership development situations

Pre-Program Preparation:

- Read and make copies of "Influencing Others with the Stories You Tell" fact sheet.
- Prepare favorite childhood memory
- Secure paper and pencil for each participant
- Make copies of *My First Homemaker Club Meeting activity sheet*
- Secure flipchart & markers

Introduction:

Effective storytelling is a fine and beautiful 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, analogies, and metaphors are also one of the best ways to communicate complex facts and 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, enthusiastically share one of your favorite childhood stories, with animation. Ask one or two participants to share their personal memories; ask "Why do you enjoy the stories shared?"

Share that good stories connect each of us with our personal experiences.

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

Stories, analogies, and metaphors are often the best way to develop relationships, mentor or coach others. Share the quote "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 to remember.

This leadership curriculum was developed by Family & Consumer Science (FCS) agents with University of Kentucky specialists. Examples in the guide are geared toward an FCS audience such as Kentucky Extension Homemakers. This guide may be reproduced or modified for educational or training purposes and used with other audiences.

Learning Activity 1:

Extension Homemakers differ in age and length of time with the organization, but each can improve communications and build relationships by sharing personal experiences. What is your Extension Homemaker story? Take a moment and make notes on the following worksheet, My First Homemaker Club Meeting. Include who invited you to Homemakers, why you joined, 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 storytelling 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 all things that happen to us are good. We may have learned more from the bad things that have happened, and they are almost certainly imprinted more strongly in our brains.
- **Unexpected opportunities**— The unexpected can also be a good source of stories. Those “ah ha” moments can be a rich source of illustrations.
- **Risks and rewards**—The world 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 the hard way. But not all choices and consequences stories are bad.
- **Lessons learned**—Life and education are 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**—All of us can mention people who made a difference in our lives. They cared enough to offer advice. They changed the direction of our lives.

Learning Activity 2:

Let’s take a closer look at the notes from your “My First Homemaker Meeting” activity sheet. Would your notes indicate a potential story that would share specific truths from the storytelling themes? Think of discussing Extension Homemakers with a prospective member and using your Extension Homemaker story to influence them. Have participants answer all questions or pick and choose a few to focus on, depending on time. You may also want someone to write down answers for all to see.

- **Mistakes and failures**—Did anyone have a bad experience, from a mistake or failure, at their first Homemaker Club meeting that resulted in gaining more self-confidence through admitting the mistake or helped build stronger relationships?
- **Unexpected opportunities**—Did surprises or unexpected moments occur that led to an “ah ha” moment, resulting in more personal satisfaction?
- **Risk and rewards**—Can your story indicate taking a personal risk and receiving rewards? What rewards do you feel you have received after taking the risk of joining Homemakers?
- **Choices and consequences**—Do you feel that your story could show how a choice to join Homemakers was a decision with positive consequences that you could share with others to influence them to join?
- **Lessons learned**—Can your story share a lesson learned, with a specific truth to pass on? Is there is a lesson we could learn today from listening to the different experiences each of us had at our first Homemaker Club meeting?
- **Obstacles and challenges**—Can your story indicate obstacles that were overcome with a heartfelt result?
- **Someone who inspired me**—Can your story include a certain individual that inspired your choice to join Extension Homemakers and became a mentor who enhanced 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
- Use other's stories
- Have a beginning....a middle....and an end
- Make the story visual
- Use body language

Learning Activity 3:

Ask participants to work in small groups and use their notes from the My First Homemaker Club Meeting worksheet to develop their own personal story. Ask them to sketch out a beginning, middle and end. Then ask them to choose a partner and tell the story, using the major storytelling points of delivery. If desired, ask permission to print or use some of the personal stories in the local paper or in upcoming Homemaker newsletters or other media to influence others and build relationships.

Summary:

Remember to grab the audience's attention with your storytelling. When you have their attention, you will earn their trust, and then you will be able to communicate more effectively. Facts, figures, and ideas are easier to convey when constructed in the framework of a story.

References:

Kouzes, James M., and Barry Z. Posner (2007). *The Leadership Challenge* (4th ed.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Penn, Allisen. *Advocating for Extension: Storytelling. Strengthening Extension Advisory Leadership Training Curriculum*, 2009. <http://srpln.msstate.edu/seal/09curriculum/index.html>.

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My First Homemaker Meeting

1. What year did you attend your first homemaker meeting? _____
2. Who invited you to attend your first homemaker meeting? _____
3. Where was your first meeting held? _____
4. Who taught your first homemaker lesson? _____
5. What was your first homemaker lesson about? _____

6. Did you make a craft? And if so, what did you make? _____

7. Did you have refreshments? And if so, what was served? _____

8. Items of business discussed at your first meeting: _____

9. Did anything else unique happen at your meeting? _____

