

## **NUAA's AOD Peer Work Foundations Training: SHARE & BUILD - Participant Workbook Content**

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### **Acknowledgments**

*NUAA acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we work and live and pay my respects to their Elders both past and present. Always was, and always will be Aboriginal land.*

### **Community Safe Space**

We acknowledge that the well-being of all our attendees is at the centre of NUAA's work and any training/event/webinar held. We are also aware that safe spaces may look different for each of us. We understand that guaranteeing 100% safety within a space under the systems, structures and the society we live in is near impossible, however, NUAA strives to be safe enough for all where possible and incorporates the below values:

- Please be aware of your actions and words and always take responsibility for yourself.

- Everyone has the right to have their physical and emotional boundaries respected.
- Within a diverse group of people there will be a range of different opinions, beliefs and states of being as well as points of view, be mindful and respectful of those that differ from your own.
- Harassment of any kind (including intimidation) will not be tolerated within this space.
- It is likely that this space will be shared with a diverse range of people from different walks of life such as living and lived experience of drug use, sex workers, trans and gender diverse folks, Aboriginal and Torres strait islander people, people with varying disabilities and allies, please consider your positionality and proximity to power as well as who will be in this space if disclosing personal information, sharing viewpoints or asking questions etc. We would like everyone to feel safe enough in this space so please look out for each other and check-in with anyone who may look/be in distress.
- NUAA staff members have the responsibility to keep everyone safe and as such we reserve the right to remove someone from an event, training or webinar space if they cannot accept our above guidelines.

## About NUAA

The NSW Users and AIDS Association (NUAA) is a peer-based harm reduction organisation representing people with lived or living experience (LLE) of drug use in NSW. Our mission is to advance the health, human rights, and dignity of people with LLE of drug use. NUAA is primarily funded by the NSW Ministry of Health with additional project-specific funding from NSW Local Health Districts, research centres and donations.

NUAA provides a diverse range of harm reduction services including a fixed and postal needle and syringe program, a take home naloxone program; clinical services such as vein care, hepatitis C point of care testing and linkage to treatment; peer education, publications, and resources; DanceWize NSW – a peer education and harm reduction initiative operating at NSW music festivals and PeerLine a telephone peer support line.

## **The ConnectED Programs**

ConnectED is NUAA's free professional development network designed for people with LLE in the AOD workforce across NSW. The program offers specialist peer support and tailored professional development such as SHARE training opportunities for:

- Individuals currently working in the AOD sector
- Those seeking to enter the workforce
- Organisations looking to employ staff with LLE of AOD

ConnectED is committed to building stigma-free services and fostering supportive environments for people who use alcohol and/or other drugs. By empowering workers and organisations alike, it helps create meaningful change and positive impact within the AOD community.

## **What is SHARE and BUILD Training?**

This training is designed to empower people with LLE in the AOD field to share their stories with confidence, safety, and impact.

As part of this training, you'll explore:

- Craft Engaging Personal Narratives
- Develop Empowering Storytelling Practices
- Adapt Storytelling to Diverse Contexts
- Navigate Boundaries and Disclosure

SHARE is a key part of NUAA's ConnectED program. It champions storytelling that is purposeful, meaningful, intentional, and sustainable. Throughout the program, you'll be supported to shape and deliver your story in ways that are both safe and engaging. By the end, you'll be equipped to make thoughtful choices about what to share and how to present your experiences effectively in professional and advocacy settings.

## **Week 1**

### What You'll Learn:

- Storytelling Basics: Purpose, power, and practice in AOD contexts; what makes stories effective; pitfalls to avoid.
- Boundaries & Self-Care: Protect your wellbeing, manage disclosure risks, and share safely and sustainably.

### What You'll Create:

- Story Map: Organise key life events, emotions, and lessons to shape meaningful narratives.
- Boundary Framework: Define what feels safe to share, what needs caution, and what's off-limits for now.

### What You'll Practice:

- Story Opening: Begin crafting the introduction to one story, balancing audience engagement with personal boundaries.

## **Why Do We Tell Stories?**

Storytelling has many purposes, each adding depth and impact:

- **Education:** Makes complex AOD issues understandable, offering context and real-world insight beyond data.
- **Inspiration:** Shares recovery and resilience, providing hope and motivation for individuals and workers alike.
- **Advocacy:** Challenges misconceptions, humanises policy debates, and drives change by dismantling stigma.
- **Healing & Empathy:** Supports wellbeing for storytellers and builds understanding, connection, and validation for listeners.

Ultimately, storytelling shapes perspectives, fosters empathy, and inspires positive change within the AOD community and beyond.

## **What is Storytelling?**

Storytelling is timeless. It helps us share experiences, feelings, and connect across cultures and generations. In the AOD context, storytelling transforms data into

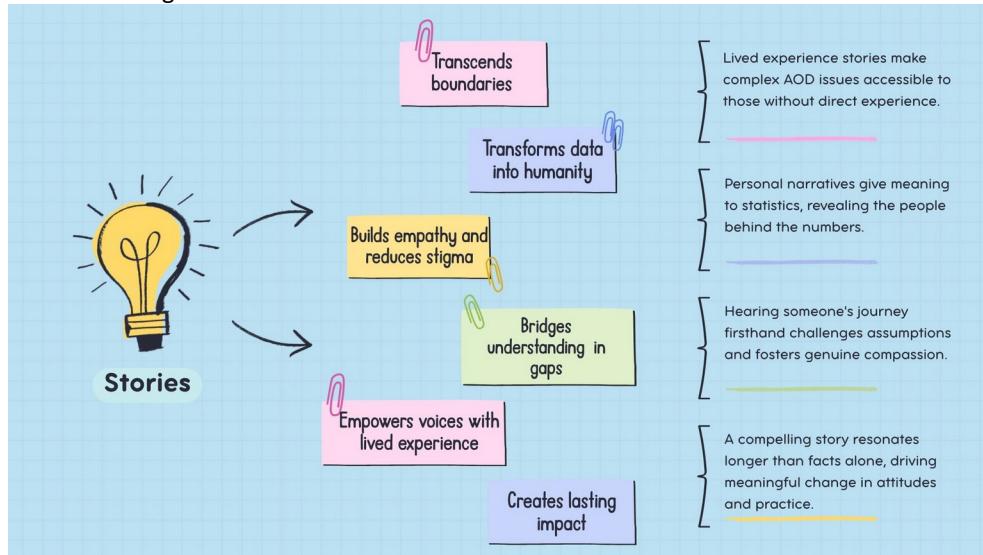
relatable narratives, making conversations more meaningful and easier to understand.

At its core, storytelling is a universal practice—an age-old way of sharing lived and living experiences to build understanding and connection.

- **Transcends boundaries:** Connects across cultures, generations, and communities.
- **Humanises data:** Puts faces and meaning behind statistics.
- **Bridges gaps:** Makes complex AoD issues accessible to all.
- **Builds empathy:** Challenges stigma and fosters compassion.
- **Amplifies voices:** Centres lived experience in shaping services and policy.
- **Creates impact:** Resonates longer than facts, driving real change.

## The Power of Storytelling?

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- *Can you think of a time when someone told you a really good and interesting story?*
- *What made it memorable?*
- *What connected you to their story?*

## Principles of Storytelling

- **Intentional:** Every story is shared with conscious thought — why this story, why now, why this audience. It ensures motivations align with the storyteller's goals and wellbeing.
- **Purposeful:** Stories serve a clear purpose — to educate, heal, advocate, connect, or inspire. Purposeful storytelling means crafting and sharing in ways that achieve these aims effectively and ethically.
- **Meaningful:** Stories resonate and create genuine impact. They honour lived experience, avoid tokenism, and open space for real understanding and change — for the teller, the listener, and the community.

## **What Makes a Good Story?**

A good story is purposeful, structured, and meaningful to its audience. Key elements include:

- **Purpose:** A clear reason for sharing to educate, inspire, advocate, or heal.
- **Structure:** A beginning, middle, and end that keeps listeners engaged.
- **Audience Relevance:** Tailored to the needs and expectations of the audience.
- **Engaging Style:** Descriptive language, vivid details, and a style that resonates.

A well-crafted story captures attention, leaves a lasting impression, and communicates its message effectively.

## **What is LLE/Peer Work?**

LLE work recognises the unique expertise of people who have personally navigated drug use and AoD services. This knowledge comes from direct experience with the issues, systems, and communities that services aim to support.

- Lived experience: Past experiences with drug use or AoD services.
- Living experience: Current or ongoing experiences.

In LLE roles, experience is not incidental — it is the foundation of expertise and the reason for engagement.

## **Why LLE/Peer Work Matters?**

- Transforms services: Shapes design and delivery to reflect real lives, not just theory.
- Challenges stigma: Offers insights that break down assumptions and stereotypes.
- Builds trust: People are more likely to engage when they see themselves reflected in the workforce.
- Improves relevance: Ensures services are grounded in LLE of navigating stigma, accessing care, and making decisions about wellbeing.

### **LLE in a Multidisciplinary Sector**

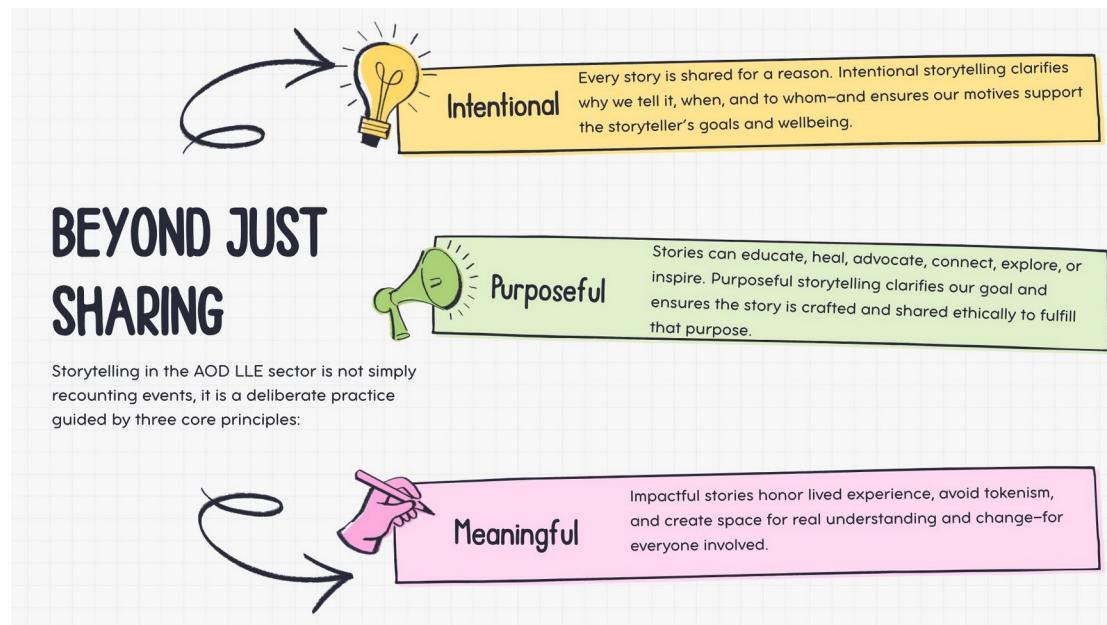
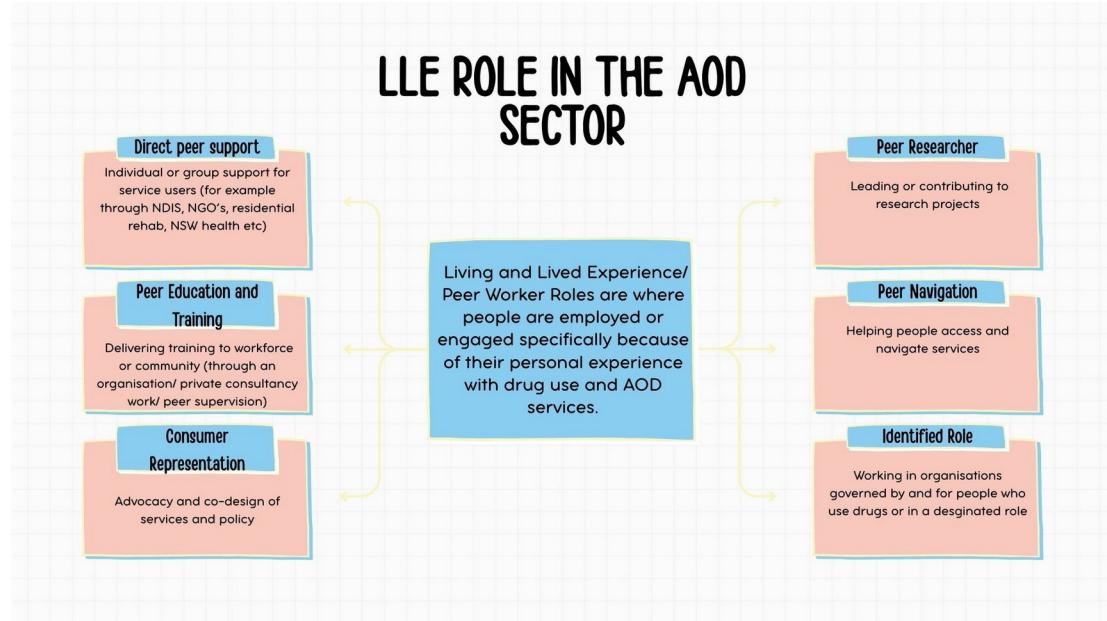
- The AOD sector includes doctors, nurses, social workers, psychologists, counsellors, researchers, policy makers, and educators. LLE work sits alongside these disciplines as its own form of expertise.
- The LLE workforce complements clinical knowledge, not replaces it. Together, clinical and LLE perspectives create more holistic, person-centred services.
- Clinical staff know treatment protocols; LLE workers know what it feels like to receive them, what helps, and what hinders engagement.

### **Storytelling in LLE/Peer Roles**

Storytelling makes peer work authentic, impactful, and deeply human — turning lived experience into a tool for change. LLE builds trust, connection, and understanding, transforming how AOD services engage with community.

- **Not just an add-on:** Storytelling is woven into peer work itself. Experience is the foundation, not a testimonial. Boundaries guide what, when, and how much is shared.
- **Professional practice:** Peer stories challenge stigma in real time, disrupt assumptions, and shift perspectives on recovery and support.

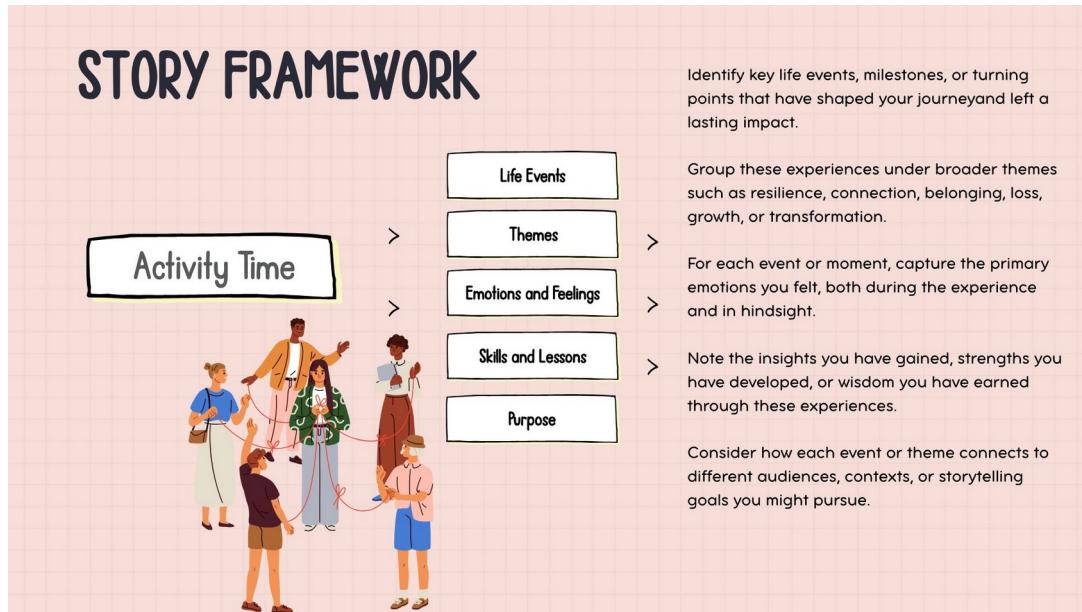
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## The Most Important Person in Storytelling

- **Audience:** Brings stories to life
- **Connection:** Resonance depends on engaging listeners
- **Listening:** Adapting to audience needs ensures impact

The audience is at the heart of storytelling, shaping its meaning and significance.



### Story Framework Exercise

Welcome to this brainstorming activity. Through this exercise, we seek to help you grow the depths of your personal experiences and weave them into stories that resonate.

For those in the AOD sector with LLE, the tales you tell can be both therapeutic and influential, shedding light on harm reduction and inspiring others on similar paths.

Find meaningful lessons and skills from your own experience:

#### Changing Use Behaviours

- Life Events: Recognising negative patterns, seeking strategies to change dosage/frequency of use, successfully changing use for a sustained period.
- Themes: Self-awareness, gradual transformation, and commitment to change.
- Emotions and Feelings: Ambivalence, determination, pride, moments of doubt.
- Skills and Lessons: Identifying triggers, implementing coping strategies, understanding the non-linear nature of behaviour change.

- Relevance: This narrative can deeply connect with people who are altering their drug or alcohol use behaviours.

## Helping a Friend in Need

- Life Events: Receiving a call late at night, guiding a friend through withdrawal, connecting them to a support network.
- Themes: Friendship, responsibility, the ripple effect of personal experience.
- Emotions and Feelings: Concern, urgency, gratitude, empathy.
- Skills and Lessons: The importance of active listening, leveraging personal experience to guide others, the significance of timely intervention.
- Relevance: Emphasising the critical role that individuals with lived experience play in supporting.

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## Disclosure, Boundaries & Self-Care

Think of your boundaries like the walls of a house, and let's break down what this means in simpler terms.

- **Protection:** Like a house shields you from the outside, boundaries protect you emotionally and physically.
- **Privacy:** Just as a house is your private space, boundaries safeguard your thoughts and feelings, allowing only trusted individuals in.
- **Self-Worth:** Maintaining boundaries reinforces your self-esteem, signaling that you deserve respect.
- **Maintenance:** Regularly assess and reinforce boundaries to keep them strong and resilient.

# MAINTAINING BOUNDARIES

Boundaries are not barriers. They are the foundation that makes meaningful, sustainable storytelling possible.

- Individualised Personal Boundaries
- Understanding Disclosure Risks
- Advanced Preparation

Physical boundaries protect your space, time, and energy, while emotional boundaries protect your feelings and wellbeing.

Know when to say no; it's an act of self-respect that safeguards your safety and recovery. Identify your triggers so you can prepare, adapt, or step away when needed.

Limit exposure to distressing stories to prevent vicarious trauma  
—you can be compassionate without absorbing others' pain.

Notice how your body reacts when boundaries are crossed; use that awareness to manage emotions and reinforce what you need.

## The Traffic Light System

### THE TRAFFIC LIGHT SYSTEM

Activity Time:



Red

Yellow

Green

**Not Today:** Topics, questions, or scenarios that feel unsafe, triggering, or simply not right to share at this time in your journey.

**Proceed with Caution:** Areas you might share depending on context, audience, your emotional state, or with proper preparation and support in place.

**Ready to Share:** Topics, questions, or scenarios you feel comfortable discussing openly right now without additional preparation or support.

## Strategies for Maintaining Boundaries/Risk of Disclosure:

Personal boundaries vary. Reflect on what you're comfortable sharing and what you'd prefer to keep private.

- Avoiding Vicarious Trauma: Shield yourself from absorbing emotional trauma by limiting exposure to sensitive content.
- Knowing When to Say "No": Recognise when to decline requests or opportunities that may compromise your well-being.
- Being Mindful of Triggers and Vulnerabilities: Identify emotional triggers and vulnerabilities to protect yourself when sharing or engaging with sensitive content.

**Please note:** Boundaries equal self-care in storytelling - they ensure you can share your lived experience sustainably without compromising your safety or recovery.

## Mapping Your Traffic Lights

### Gather Your Materials

- Get three different coloured pens, highlighters, or markers (green, amber/orange/yellow, red)
- Or create three columns on a page labelled Green, Amber, and Red
- Find a quiet space where you can reflect honestly

### Consider Different Categories

- Think about your boundaries across these areas:
- Specific topics (childhood experiences, family relationships, drug use, mental health experiences, trauma or violence, legal issues etc.)
- Type of questions (personal questions, questions about other people in your story, questions about specific traumatic events etc)
- Audience context (large group presentations, 1 on 1 conversations, media interviews, professional conferences etc)
- Speaking formats (live events, recorded video, written stories etc)

### Map Your Boundaries

- For each category above, write down or mark which traffic light applies. Be honest with yourself as this is your private map, and you don't need to share it with anyone unless you choose to.

### Reflect on Your Boundaries Map

- How does what you have learnt from your boundary map help inform your preparation and reflective practice.

## Self-Care

Now, consider storytelling and self care. It is a powerful way to connect with others, share experiences, and express emotions. Yet, in the midst of weaving tales and connecting with your audience, it's easy to forget about looking after yourself.

Self-care covers a wide range of activities and habits that aim to keep you well-rounded and in good spirits. It's about taking care of your mind, emotions, and body which is something everyone needs. Below are some strategical examples which may be helpful depending on your needs and accessibility:

- **Physical:** Move your body or enjoy a hobby that brings relaxation.
- **Emotional:** Reflect, journal, or express creatively to process feelings.
- **Spiritual:** Practice mindfulness or rituals that give calm and purpose.
- **Professional:** Set boundaries, balance workload, and protect personal time.
- **Psychological:** Seek support like counselling to strengthen mental health.
- **Social:** Build meaningful connections with supportive friends and family.
- **Financial:** Plan and manage resources to reduce stress and feel secure.
- **Cultural:** Celebrate heritage, traditions, and activities that enrich identity.

What are some things that might work for you:

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## Week 2

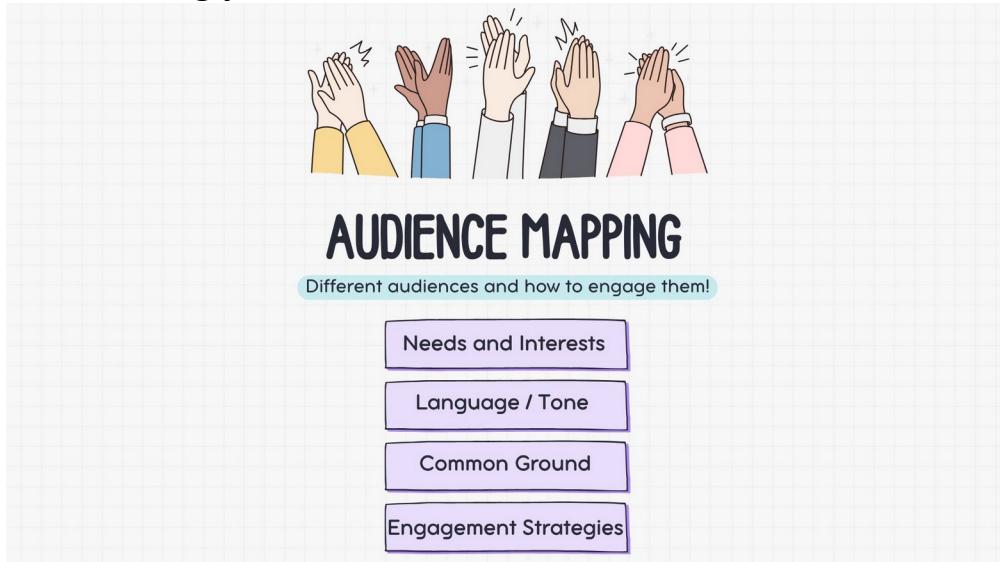
### What You'll Learn:

Audiences: Explore and articulate the multiple audiences, enabling a deeper understanding of the practice and how it informs your storytelling.

### What You'll Practice:

Starting a Story: Present the beginning of a story. You will build upon the story map created in the first session, incorporating storytelling techniques, audience mapping and boundaries.

### **Understanding your Audience**



Effective storytelling depends on understanding who you're speaking to.

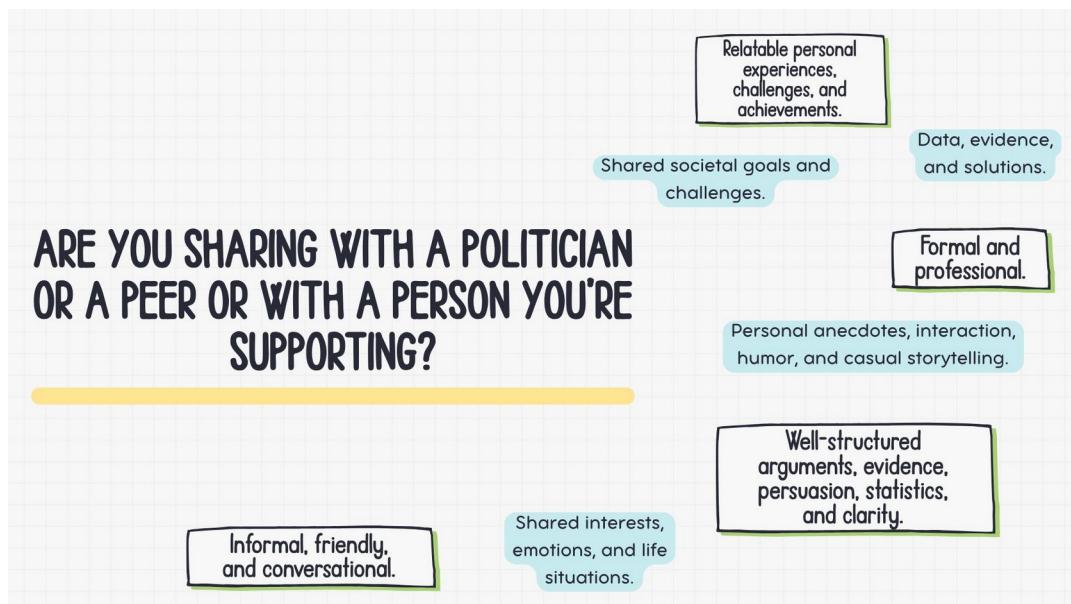
- Casual: A yarn with mates which might be relaxed, relatable, conversational.
- Formal: A presentation that is structured, purposeful, tailored.

The audience shapes how you communicate, connect, and make your story meaningful.

### **Key Considerations for Audience Engagement**

When preparing to share your story, consider:

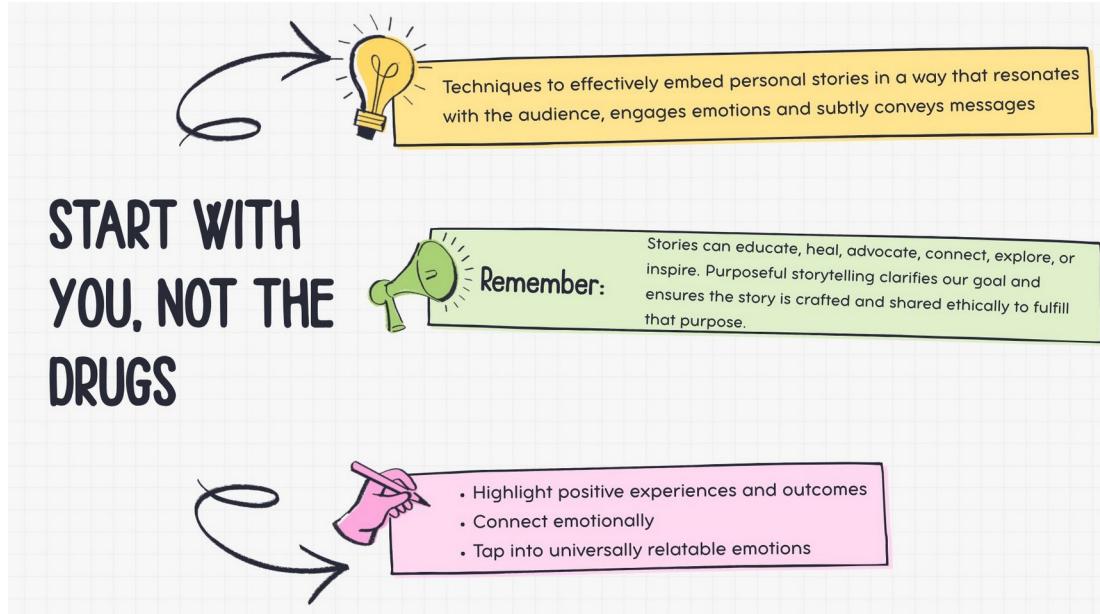
- The needs and interests of your audience
- How to adapt your language and tone appropriately
- Strategies for creating meaningful engagement
- Common ground you share with your listeners



Audience	Needs & Interests	Tone	Common Ground	Effective Strategies
<b>Peers</b>	Personal experiences, relatable issues	Informal, friendly	Shared hobbies, feelings, life events	Anecdotes, humour, casual conversation
<b>Politicians</b>	Facts, evidence, public solutions	Formal, professional	Community or policy goals	Clear structure, data, logical arguments

### Applying This to Your Storytelling

When preparing to share your story with any audience, reflect on these same elements: what matters to them, how they communicate, what you have in common, and how best to engage them authentically whilst maintaining your boundaries.



## Why This Matters

When you centre yourself rather than substances, you invite your audience to see the person first. This approach reduces stigma, builds empathy, and creates space for genuine connection. It also protects you by maintaining boundaries around potentially triggering or explicit content.

Your story is powerful not because of what you used, but because of who you are and what you've learnt along the way.

## Crafting the Beginning of Your Story

**Objective:** Utilise the story map you've created during the first session to prepare the beginning of a story. This will help you explore storytelling techniques and the concept of boundaries further.

### 1. Review Your Story Map

Look back at the story map you created in the first session and refresh your memory.

### 2. Pick One Story Experience

Choose one specific experience from your map that you want to explore further.

### **3. Choose an Audience**

Decide who you want to tell this story to. This will shape your tone, language, and level of detail.

### **4. Create an Engaging Opening**

Write the first few sentences that will hook your audience and draw them in.

### **5. Incorporate Boundary Lessons**

Think about what you learned about setting boundaries in Session 1. Decide what parts of the experience you feel comfortable sharing and what you'd prefer to keep private.

### **6. Add Storytelling Elements**

Use elements like suspense, emotion, surprise, or vivid imagery to make your opening more compelling.

### **7. Keep It Short**

Aim for an opening that lasts about 1–2 minutes.

### **8. Practice for Success**

Rehearse your beginning several times. Record yourself if possible to check timing and flow. Adjust as needed, and think about how you would want to be engaged if you were the audience.

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## **Week 3**

### What You'll Learn:

- Understanding Context
- Adapting Storytelling Elements

- Nature of AOD from a Political, Environmental, Historical and Social Lens

What You'll Practice:

- Narrative Reframing: Build stronger reframing skills while keeping clear, appropriate boundaries.
- Messaging Principles: Learn to counter common stigmatising narratives about drug use to promote a more informed, accurate, and compassionate understanding.
- Sharing your finished Story

### **AOD: The Historical, Political, Environmental, and Social Factors**

Understanding AOD use requires us to look beyond individual choices to the broader systems and contexts that shape them. Historical events, political decisions, and social environments all profoundly influence how drug use is understood, responded to, and experienced. Linking personal narratives to these structural forces strengthens our storytelling and highlights the complexity of LLE.

**Historical Context:** The way we respond to drug use today has been profoundly shaped by past events and policy decisions.

- Colonial legacies: AOD use was introduced through colonisation, disrupting traditional practices and creating cycles of dependency.
- HIV epidemic reshaped drug policy and community responses, underscoring the life-saving importance of harm reduction.
- Royal Commissions investigating drug trafficking and corruption exposed the complexity of drug markets and enforcement.
- Abstinence models dominated rehabilitation and funding structures for decades, often excluding people who weren't ready or able to stop using.
- “Just Say No” campaigns and criminalisation became primary approaches, prioritising punishment over support.
- Prohibition became deeply embedded in law and social attitudes, creating lasting stigma and barriers to care.

**Political Factors:** Today's political environment reflects both progress and ongoing challenges.

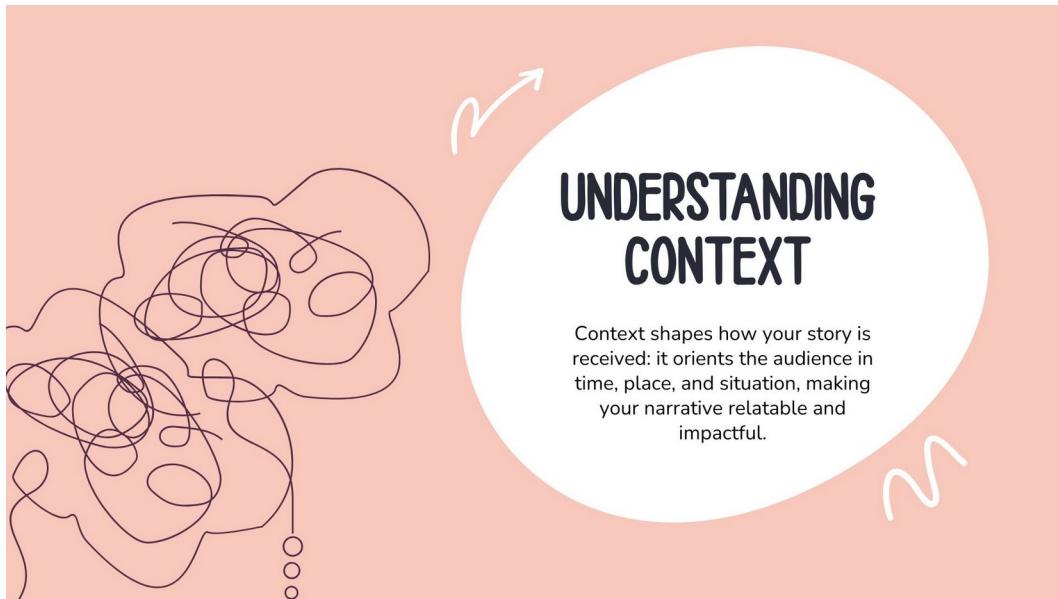
- War on drugs: Political campaigns framed AOD use as criminal rather than health-related, disproportionately impacting marginalized communities.
- Public health vs. criminal justice: Global political debates shape whether AOD use is treated as a health issue or a crime.
- Government laws remain largely shaped by prohibition and criminalisation frameworks.
- Substance use is still predominantly viewed through a “problem lens,” overlooking the complexity of people’s relationships with drugs.
- Harm reduction initiatives are gradually introduced alongside abstinence frameworks, creating a contradictory policy landscape.
- Naloxone programmes save lives from overdose, demonstrating the effectiveness of evidence-based interventions.
- Opioid treatment programmes provide medical alternatives, offering stability and dignity to people who use drugs.
- Supervised injecting facilities prevent overdose deaths and connect people to care.
- Drug checking services at music festivals prioritise safety over punishment.
- Needle and syringe programmes continue preventing blood-borne viruses and supporting community health.

**Social Factors:** The social environment profoundly impacts how people who use drugs are treated and what support they can access.

- Marginalised communities face compounded disadvantage from criminalisation and prohibition.
- Abstinence is often seen as the only acceptable outcome, sidelining harm reduction.
- Stigma and discriminations are barriers to accessing support services such as health, housing, and employment.
- Positive or non-problematic drug use is rarely acknowledged, reinforcing narrow narratives.
- Peer-led//LLE advocacy and leadership challenges traditional power structures.

- Public awareness of harm reduction is growing, though resistance remains.

## Understanding Context



Context is the intricate web of circumstances, surroundings, and conditions that shape how stories about substance-related experiences are told and received. It includes:

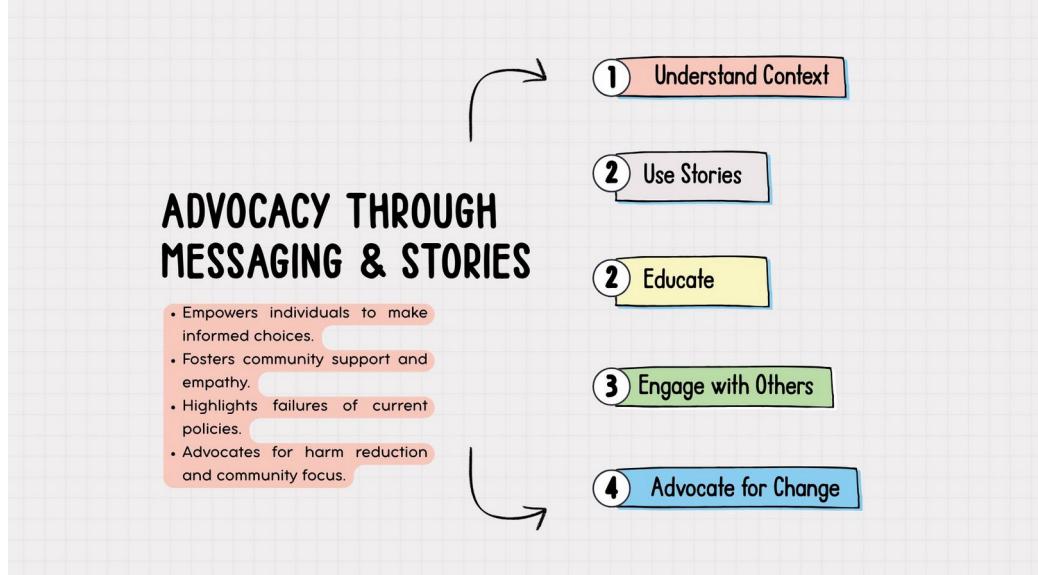
- Audience factors: Beliefs, values, and prior experiences that influence interpretation.
- Social environment: Cultural norms, stigma, and community attitudes.
- Political and policy settings: Laws, regulations, and dominant narratives that frame drug use.
- Historical legacies: Past events and decisions that continue to shape perceptions.
- Broader landscape: Media, advocacy movements, and public discourse that set the tone for storytelling.

Together, these elements determine whether stories are understood with empathy, dismissed, or acted upon. Recognising context ensures that storytelling is not only authentic but also strategically aligned with the environment in which it circulates.

## Strategic Communication Points

To challenge these stories, communication must bring nuance and empathy into the conversation:

- Diverse people with LLE of AOD: Drug use spans all backgrounds, ages, and social classes.
- Recreational Use: Many people use drugs without major disruption in their lives.
- Trauma and Dependency: Dependency often stems from unresolved emotional or psychological issues.
- Stigma and Prohibition: Punitive laws and stigma worsen challenges instead of solving them.
- Social Inequities: Drug laws disproportionately harm disadvantaged communities, exposing systemic bias.



- Understand the Context: Know the current drug policies in your area.
- Use Stories: Share personal experiences that show the harm of existing policies.
- Engage with Others: Collaborate with allies and organisations to amplify your message.
- Educate and Mobilise: Raise awareness and build support for policy alternatives.

- Advocate for Change: Work with policymakers to push for compassionate, effective drug policies.

## Narrative Reframing



## Why This Matters

By reframing the conversation, we move away from fear-based narratives and toward evidence-based, compassionate approaches. This shift strengthens advocacy, empowers lived experience voices, and opens space for more effective policy and community responses.

### The Power of Effective Advocacy Stories

- Stories must be carefully crafted and framed to capture the complexity of social issues.
- Human decision-making is shaped by frames, narratives, and worldviews that influence beliefs and interpretations.
- New information is most effective when aligned with people's values and existing narratives.
- Framing statements guide how audiences perceive and respond, ensuring stories are understood and not dismissed.

### Emphasising Authenticity in Reframing

- Reframing is not about being inauthentic or deceitful.

- It equips advocates with language skills to navigate conversations strategically.
- The goal is to communicate perspectives, values, and goals clearly, while fostering empathy and understanding.

## Framing for Impact (examples)

### The Dominant Prohibitionist Frame

The prohibitionist lens perpetuates negative stereotypes about drug use, reinforcing stigma and limiting compassionate responses. It relies on several recurring narratives:

- The Peril of Drugs: Frames all substances as inherently dangerous.
- Society in Crisis: Portrays drug use as an uncontrollable epidemic.
- Users as Threats: Demonises people who use drugs as corrupt or unstable.
- Inevitable Tragedy: Suggests drug use always leads to overdose or crime.

Traditional communications often start with the problem and end without a clear solution. A more impactful approach is to reorder the frame:

- Principle: Lead with an aspirational value that resonates with shared beliefs.
- Process: Use examples or metaphors to explain how the issue works.
- Problem: Present the challenge, stressing its importance without making it feel overwhelming.
- Proposal: End with a solution, highlighting collective approaches that are promising or proven.

This framing builds lasting public understanding and support. By mastering reframing and storytelling, advocates can shape perspectives, clarify complex issues, and inspire meaningful change.

Question	Reframing Response	Purpose
Will federal budget giveaways lead to higher interest rates?	<i>"These payments will help families around Australia cope with higher petrol prices and the disruption of the pandemic."</i>	Focuses on immediate family benefits rather than economic risk.
Why should the people of Australia give your government another term?	<i>"The Labor Party just can't be trusted to keep interest rates low."</i>	Shifts attention to opposition credibility.
Is pill testing a responsible strategy for dealing with drug use at festivals?	<i>"Pill testing is one of the harm reduction strategies that can save lives and provide crucial information to festivalgoers."</i>	Frames pill testing as life-saving harm reduction.
Why are festivalgoers still dying from drug overdoses despite warnings?	<i>"It's essential to update our approaches to health and safety at festivals, including exploring proven methods like pill testing, to adapt to changing conditions like hotter summers."</i>	Moves focus to evolving safety methods instead of blaming individuals.

## Contextual Elements in Storytelling

### Legal and Ethical Considerations

Sensitive narratives require attention to confidentiality and consent.

Example: Public campaigns can anonymise stories to balance authenticity with privacy.

### Social and Cultural Norms

Norms shape both content and reception. Respecting them is vital for effective communication.

Example: In stigmatised cultures, framing stories around harm reduction and resilience helps destigmatise.

### Constraints and Opportunities

Every context has limits (time, ethics, demographics) and openings (reach, focus).

Example: A brief recovery story in a campaign must be concise yet relatable.

### Situational Dynamics

Audience mood, timing, and current events influence how stories land.

Example: Sharing hope during a prevention event can inspire positive change.

### Environmental Factors

Physical conditions — lighting, sound, atmosphere — affect engagement.

Example: Workshops in supportive settings encourage openness and sharing.

### Why Context Mapping Matters

By mapping these dimensions, storytellers can anticipate challenges, leverage opportunities, and adapt their narratives to ensure they are heard with empathy and impact.

## **Storytelling in Various Mediums**

Storytelling is not confined to a single form, it spans a wide spectrum of mediums, each offering unique ways to express and connect. Exploring these outlets helps us appreciate the diverse power of stories to inform, inspire, and transform.



### Medium-Specific Arcs

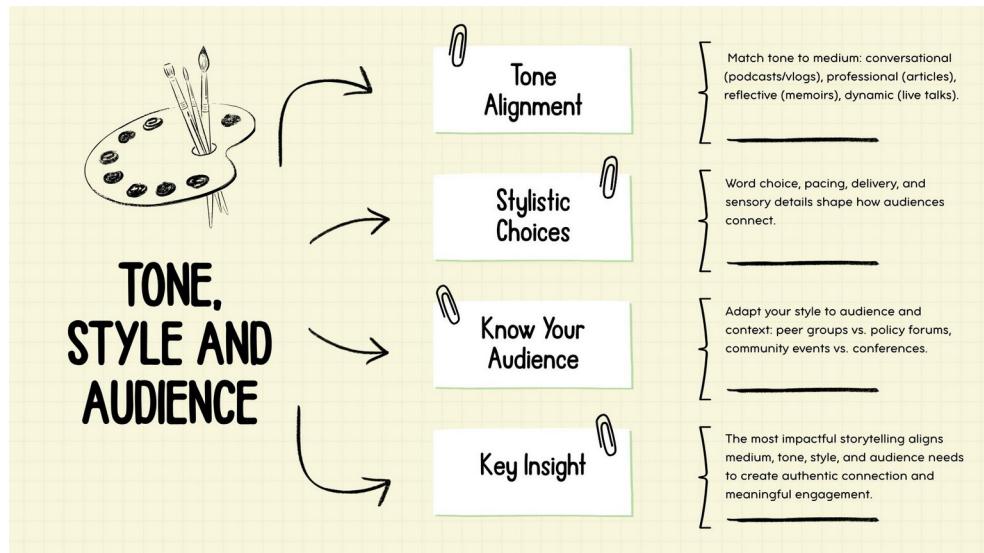
Different mediums carry unique storytelling expectations. Essays often follow a linear structure, while interactive video games use nonlinear paths with multiple

outcomes. Classic arcs like the hero's journey can be reshaped to fit each format, ensuring stories remain engaging and suited to their medium.

### Maintaining Narrative Flow

Across all mediums, a seamless flow is essential. Strong beginnings, clear transitions, and purposeful conclusions keep audiences engaged. Techniques such as pacing, foreshadowing, and thematic consistency help guide the audience, whether the story is a short piece, a screenplay, or digital content. The goal is always a narrative that feels cohesive and compelling.

### Connecting with the Audience



### Tone and Style in Storytelling

Your tone and style are the bridge between your story and your audience. To build a strong connection, you need to understand who you're speaking to and what they expect.

- For readers: Use clear, engaging language that matches the depth they're looking for.
- For listeners: Focus on rhythm, pauses, and emphasis to keep attention.

- For viewers: Combine words with visuals, body language, and energy to make the message memorable.

The key is to adapt your delivery, so it resonates with your audience's values, preferences, and expectations.

## Reframing Practice

Goal: Learn how to respond to stigmatising statements about people who use drugs by reframing them into compassionate, evidence-based messages.

**Step 1:** Choose Your Challenge. Pick one of these statements:

- “People who use drugs don’t care about their health.”
- “If you really wanted to stop, you’d just quit.”
- “Needle and syringe programs just encourage drug use.”

**Step 2:** Spot the Harmful Frame. Write down the hidden assumption in the statement.

- Example: “People don’t care about their health.”

**Step 3:** Check Your Boundaries. Think about what lived experience you can safely share.

- Green, orange and red zone

**Step 4:** Craft Your Reframe. Use this formula: Name the frame → Reframe → Add LLE → End with key message

- Example:
  - Frame: “People don’t care about their health.”
  - Reframe: “Actually, people care a lot—but judgmental services make it harder to stay healthy.”

- LLE: “I’ve seen how respectful care makes a huge difference.”
- Key message: “Accessible, respectful services help people stay healthy.”

**Step 5:** Practice and Refine. Share your reframe with 3–4 people.

- Ask: Did it challenge the harmful assumption?
- Ask: Did it stay within safe boundaries?
- Adjust your response based on feedback.

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## **Week 4**

What You’ll Learn: Revisit the principles of boundaries and self-care, focusing on how to protect yourself while sharing stories.

What You’ll Practice: Bring everything together by presenting the 5–10 minute story you’ve crafted. This story should draw on your Story Map, Audience Map, and Context Map. Sharing it with peers gives you the chance to show your refined narrative skills and receive constructive feedback in a supportive setting.

### **The End of SHARE & BUILD Training**

This workbook is designed to strengthen your skills in reframing stigmatising narratives and using storytelling effectively in the alcohol and other drugs context. You’ll learn how to challenge harmful assumptions, honour boundaries, and connect with audiences through universal human experiences.

### How Connection Happens

In peer work, connection grows from shared emotion and understanding. Your lived experience becomes a natural bridge when you highlight the feelings and turning points you’ve navigated. Storytelling is most effective when it centres on universal emotions and relatable moments rather than explicit details. This allows others to see themselves in your story while you maintain safe boundaries.

## Universal Experiences

Although every journey is unique, certain emotions are widely shared:

- The desire for relief, escape, or connection
- Feelings of shame, isolation, or being misunderstood
- The tension between wanting change and feeling unable to
- Moments of hope, resilience, or determination
- The challenge of navigating judgment from others

By focusing on these shared experiences, you create space for others to recognise themselves in your narrative and build authentic connection.

## Why This Approach Protects and Connects

Emphasising emotions instead of explicit details protects both you and your audience. Even people who haven't used drugs can relate to fear, hope, or resilience. This approach reduces stigma by highlighting your humanity and inviting others to see you as a whole person.

## **The Final Activity**

### Objective

Craft a 5-minute story that integrates insights from your Story Map, Audience Map, and Context Map. This narrative will be your presentation piece for peer review and discussion in the group. We are going to be bringing it All Together session.

### Success Criteria

- Your story is tailored to your chosen audience and context.
- You feel prepared to handle challenging questions.
- The final story clearly integrates all elements from your three maps.

### What You Need to Prepare

#### 1. Revisit Your Maps

Review your Story, Audience, and Context maps. Refresh your memory on the key elements you've outlined.

## 2. Draft Your Story

Write an initial draft guided by your maps. Make sure it aligns with your chosen audience and context. Aim for a clear beginning, middle, and end that flows naturally.

## 3. Predict Questions

Look at your Audience Map and brainstorm possible challenging questions.

- Example: “Why should this story matter to me?”
- Example: “How does this connect to evidence or policy?” Prepare thoughtful answers that keep you within safe boundaries.

### Reflection Prompt:

- What is the single most important message you want your audience to take away?
- How will you adapt your tone and style to make sure it resonates?

## Tip's & Tricks for Story Refinement

### Iterative Refinements

Use your self-review notes to polish your story. Focus on areas that need clearer integration or stronger emphasis.

### Conduct a Self-Review

After drafting your story and preparing answers to questions, review it carefully. Check how well your story, audience, and context are woven together. Make notes on what to adjust.

### Revisit Your Maps

Keep your Story, Audience, and Context maps nearby. Use them as a guide to stay aligned with your original insights.

### Audience Empathy

Step into your audience's shoes. Ask yourself: How will they hear this story? How will they respond to my answers?

### Checkpoints

Pause during drafting to evaluate progress. Note any deviations from your maps and decide if adjustments are needed.

### Balancing Act

Avoid leaning too heavily on one aspect (story, audience, or context). Aim for a balanced integration of all three.

### Use Iteration

Don't aim for perfection in your first draft. Write freely, then refine through multiple passes.

### Dry Run

Read your story aloud. Practice answering the challenging questions you've prepared to simulate a real presentation.

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## **Reflective Practice**

Reflective practice is a core competency in peer support and lived experience work. It's what separates simply sharing stories from professional peer practice. Storytelling is powerful, but reflection ensures it remains purposeful, sustainable, and beneficial—for both the storyteller and the audience.

Unlike clinical supervision, which is expert-driven and focused on performance, peer reflective practice is mutual and collaborative. It is grounded in the belief that we are all teachers and learners. Reflection focuses on how lived experience informs our work and how each storytelling moment can help us learn and grow.



## Reflective Practice - Why it Matters?

Reflection keeps peer work authentic, safe, and effective. It helps us balance the power of storytelling with the responsibility of care for ourselves and for those who listen.

### For Peer Support, Storytelling, and Lived Experience Work

Reflective practice is essential for sustainable peer support. It's not about perfection, it's about learning, growth, and care.

#### Protect Wellness

Sharing personal or traumatic stories can be draining. Reflection helps process emotions, recognise limits, and maintain boundaries.

*Ask yourself:* How am I feeling? Am I keeping boundaries? Do I need support or self-care?

#### Learn and Grow

Every storytelling moment offers lessons. Reflection shows what resonates, how to handle challenges, and how to refine your craft.

*Ask yourself:* What worked well? How did the audience respond? What would I change next time?

### Stay Authentic

Pressure to tell stories a certain way can pull us off track. Reflection keeps us aligned with our values and purpose.

*Ask yourself:* Does this feel true to me? Is it aligned with my “why”?

### Build Connection

Reflection helps us notice what creates genuine relationships with audiences. *Ask yourself:* Did I connect? What helped? Was the audience engaged?

### Maintain Quality

Reflection ensures ongoing improvement and prevents repeating unhelpful patterns.

*Ask yourself:* How can I strengthen my practice? What feedback can I use? Where do I need support?

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