



Partners for Youth Empowerment

PYE Third Thursday Assembly

March 17, 2016

* [Nadia Chaney](#)

Dear 3rd Thursday Assemblers! Welcome back, or, if it's your first time WELCOME! This is a wild, wonderful format we have been developing where people contribute and discuss a topic on a specific question. Below you will find: A Check-in Question (please answer!), Goals and Agreements for today's session (please add anything you need/want to the agreements, and hit "like" to agree to uphold these agreements during the session), 3 discussion questions (answer in any order) and 3 case studies that we will use to design 3 new activities together. I will be facilitating this experience for 90 minutes. There will be a pdf transcript posted in a few days. Have fun!

This month we are discussing HOW AND WHEN TO SHARE YOUR PERSONAL STORY AS A FACILITATOR.

Your personal story, the story of your life, is an important part of your presence as a facilitator. It affects every aspect of your work, from your physical posture, to your fears hopes and beliefs, to the kinds of people and dynamics you find most challenging. It's also an important teaching tool; stories of your own experiences can be the best way to share your knowledge. Finally, your personal life story is a vital element in connecting with individuals. It helps build credibility and makes it easier for people to relate to you. OKAY, you might be saying, SO WHAT? Well, there is a little problem. Sometimes your personal story can cause problems in your groups, as well. Maybe it can make people feel uncomfortable, burdened, or confused. During this Assembly I hope to gather our collective wisdom about how and when we share our personal stories so we can all improve this aspect of our practice.

[Nadia Chaney](#) Hi Hussein Janmohamed!



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[Nadia Chaney](#) I just posted the check in question

[Hussein Janmohamed](#) Hi Nadia Chaney Loving your art work, and directions you are taking in your vocation and journey

[Nadia Chaney](#) ! Thank you!! I love reading your real life adventures of song and community!

[Hussein Janmohamed](#) Inspired by you and our colleagues in social justice, community, education and arts

[Hussein Janmohamed](#) Techno-neophyte wondering where I find the check in questions, agreements, etc?!?

[Nadia Chaney](#) oh my!! I forgot to post them! thank you!

[Hussein Janmohamed](#) I can only stay for about 20 or so minutes but wanted to chime in where I could

[Nadia Chaney](#) Hi Wild Flower Murals! Great to see you!

[Wild Flower Murals](#) Heck yes, love all the wonderful discussions and neat stuff you guys are up to!

[Nadia Chaney](#) Wild Flower Murals try the check in question...I'd love to hear the title of your autobiography!

[Nadia Chaney](#) Nilisha Mohapatra!!

[Nilisha Mohapatra](#) Right here! Hello 😊

[Nadia Chaney](#) Hey!! Great to see you!

[Nilisha Mohapatra](#) Likewise 😊 Glad I could make it.

[Hussein Janmohamed](#) HI Nilisha Mohapatra Hi Wild Flower Murals!

[Nadia Chaney](#) posting the first case study now...



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[Hussein Janmohamed](#) I am sorry to exit the room. I have a class soon. Thanks Nadia Chaney and storymakers/tellers/sounders for your insights. To be continued....This question about personal story and going beyond it, is a question I recently posed to my mentors. Timely! XO

[Nadia Chaney](#) Thanks for being here, Hussein Janmohamed. Hope to see you in person again soooooon ♥ We will post a transcript on pyeglobal.org if you want to see how it all turns out.

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[Nilisha Mohapatra](#) Great to connect with you Hussein Janmohamed! Have a great day ahead.

[Nadia Chaney](#) Oh! This is going so well! Thank you for sharing so much of your wisdom. I love how these Assemblies turn into such rich resources.

[Nadia Chaney](#) Hi Nesreen Ali! Welcome to our wild conversation!

[Nadia Chaney](#) Just posted another Case Study...

*[Nadia Chaney](#)

Check-in Question for March 17 2016: What is the title of your life story, your autobiography?

[Clarinda R. Laforteza](#) Perhaps?...Whoa Man

[Nadia Chaney](#) awesome! I love the pun!



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[Kitty Jackson](#) No such thing as de-feet x

[Sarah Cathrae](#) Print it now - I'll check it later

[Nadia Chaney](#) Love it!

[Clarinda R. Laforteza](#) Good question!

[Nadia Chaney](#) HAHA!! Another pun...

[Clarinda R. Laforteza](#) I luv punny stuff!

[Nadia Chaney](#) Posting the first discussion question now. Goals and Agreements are up, too

[Theophillus Booi](#) hunger breeds winners

[Nadia Chaney](#) HBW. NICE ONE, Theo!

[Hussein Janmohamed](#) As of this moment in time and place, my life story might be Receiving, Sounding, Liberating: Music as performance, Inquiry and Transformation

[Nadia Chaney](#) Gorgeous. That sounds like a heavy volume!

[Hussein Janmohamed](#) Tell me about it! That's what PHD programs and deciding not to consent to otherness does to you 😊

[Helena Hennighausen](#) A series of dreams

[Nadia Chaney](#) beautiful! thanks Helena!

[Hussein Janmohamed](#) Hopeful!

[Barb Applepieski](#) Bringing Our Stories To Life: a journey in community through food and screenprinting

[Nadia Chaney](#) Love it, Barb!

[Hussein Janmohamed](#) Delicious

[Nilisha Mohapatra](#) And then there was colour.



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[Nadia Chaney](#) Indeed there was, Nilisha Mohapatra! You know, you folks should share links to your webpages if you want to...you're all so brilliant. Hussein Janmohamed, Barb Applepieski, Wall Wild Flower Murals, Kitty Jackson...

[Hussein Janmohamed](#) I have a young man from the Ismaili community helping me shape up my web site and yes, I think this is a great ideas!!!

[Hussein Janmohamed](#) And always will be colour???

[Barb Applepieski](#) I want to read this book! Is it a book of poetry, non fiction, or fiction, or other....?

[Nadia Chaney](#) Poetry AND Non Fic, I'd venture! ;-)

[Nilisha Mohapatra](#) Hussein Janmohamed That'll be the sequel. :-)

[Lee Williams Boudakian](#) art-ing openings through closed doors or fuck the doors, I open portals

[Nadia Chaney](#) Love it. ... Especially the second one. And, I believe you!

[Barb Applepieski](#) Sweet, I wanna read this book too

[Robin Connolly](#) Affecting change through nonpredatory leadership!

[Robin Connolly](#) *tapping into the intelligence of the 2nd and 3rd mind (gut & heart)

[Nadia Chaney](#) Oh, I'd buy that!! Hi Robin Connolly!! Long time no see smile emoticon

[Nadia Chaney](#) Robin Connolly , is the second part your subtitle? love it.

[Robin Connolly](#) It's been WAY too long. Im back in toronto! YES to subtitles

[Clarinda R. Laforteza](#) What would predatory leadership be/look like?

[Wild Flower Murals](#) Life story title: "Maximizing positive impact and connection through public works of art and dynamic expression!" Or..."Finding ways to play like a kid and include others!"

[Nadia Chaney](#) Beautiful! I bet the cover of this one would be so colourful!



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[Wild Flower Murals](#) Totally colorful, colors we haven't even seen yet, I'm sure of it!

[Michael Schacherl](#) Teaching the pomegranate : The creative juice to change the world.

[Nadia Chaney](#) Stains for Change! ;D Hi, Michael Schacherl!

[Michael Schacherl](#) Things get messy

[Clarinda R. Laforteza](#) Very interested in what can be learned from the pomegranate! or any type of fruit for that matter - may be a great & glorious writing prompt...!!!

[Mery Miguez](#) I know this is over, but I'm just seeing all these wonderful conversations and I thought I'll dive in. The water feels still warm.

[Mery Miguez](#) My title will be, A long journey out, just to come back in. The power of see empowerment.

[Trevor Pfeffer](#) Adaptation

[Carina Costom](#) Growing onions in antarctica!

* [Nadia Chaney](#)

Goals:

- 1) To explore the potential, principles and practices of working with personal in facilitated groups.
- 2) To use case studies (examples) to examine some of the issues and complications regarding using personal story in groups
- 3) To share our experiences and best practices of using personal story in groups.
- 4) To connect, reinvigorate and have meaningful fun online



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In order to achieve the goals (posted below), here are some suggestions for agreements to make our time together flow really well. We are still experimenting with this form, so be sure to add what you need or want AT ANY TIME DURING THE PROCESS.

- 1) No put downs of self or others. Keep a positive, lift-up vibe.
- 2) Share at your level; Everyone is welcome, no matter their level of experience as a facilitator or community organizer. All questions are important, and all answers (or further questions) are valuable. It is also okay and important to respectfully disagree with each other.
- 3) Show your presence, by LIKING and by responding to keep the flow. Ask questions, make comments, connect. The technical trick for this format is to REFRESH your browser fairly often.
- 4) Answer any questions in the COMMENTS below the question to keep the conversation organized and readable. Only open NEW questions in new threads.
- 5) You can come and go as you please, take as long as you like to respond, and basically enjoy the text-format to make this work no matter whether you are just waking up, just going to bed, or on your lunch break (time zones unite!!) A pdf transcript of the conversation will be provided. Feel free to continue the conversation even after the 90 minute period has ended.

[Nadia Chaney](#) Hi Barb Applepieski! Great to see you here!

[Barb Applepieski](#) Hi Nadia! Just getting warmed up smile emoticon

[Hussein Janmohamed](#) Hi Barb!

[Barb Applepieski](#) ❤️

[Nadia Chaney](#) Hi Lee Williams Boudakian!!

[Lee Williams Boudakian](#) Hi!!!



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Discussion Question #1: In terms of the structure and design of a process WHEN are the times you have used your personal story during group facilitation? At what points in your designs could you include more personal story?

[Nadia Chaney](#) Clarinda R. Laforteza, Sarah Cathrae, Hussein Janmohamed, Theophillus Booi, Kitty Jackson, Helena Hennighausen...feel free to answer this question in the way that works best for your current work with groups...I know you aren't all working in formal facilitation settings...

[Nadia Chaney](#) Let me know if I can help reframe it...

[Kitty Jackson](#) I love this question. It's something I struggle with sometimes - I only really use my story if there is a reason for it- eg to help someone express their story or move the group energy

[Nadia Chaney](#) Thanks Kitty Jackson! What do you think are the costs and gains of using your personal story so sparingly?

[Barb Applepieski](#) Kitty Jackson - can you give me an example of how sharing your story helps someone express theirs? This is so interesting!

[Theophillus Booi](#) It would be to build credibility, in order for one to be able to take a group on a journey they need to understand your inspiration and your drive

[Nadia Chaney](#) Classic PYE, Theo!! Thank you! It's so true. Are there other ways you find yourself using your personal story? Other emotions that you might generate?

[Barb Applepieski](#) I've found great impact in sharing a personal story at the beginning of a screenprinting workshop series in order to frame the journey as a jointly personal one.. not just a productive one.



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[Nadia Chaney](#) Interesting, do you mean that you share your story to show the participants that screen printing is important to you personally?

[Barb Applepieski](#) More to show that expressing myself is important - and screenprinting is just one way to do that. Taking the emphasis off the product and placing it on the motivation.

[Nilisha Mohapatra](#) I have used personal stories for my facilitator introduction, and sometimes when there is a disagreement/conflict in the group.

[Nadia Chaney](#) how does your personal story help with conflict?

[Nadia Chaney](#) Actually, Nilisha Mohapatra, you might find your answer fits nicely into Case Study #1!

[Nilisha Mohapatra](#) In a few ways- to bring in another perspective to widen the spectrum of experiences.. Or even holding space by conveying how I hear the participants.. By meeting the group where they are at in terms of their vulnerability and sharing.

[Barb Applepieski](#) I also use it in side-coaching, when helping a small group move through creative blocks I might tell a story of a time I moved through a block. I also have used my stories as a way to connect more deeply with youth who I can tell are feeling alone in life. I want them to know that there is hope, so I will share a story of a time I felt alone at their age and how I moved into my own unique story instead of trying to fit myself into that of others!

[Nadia Chaney](#) Beautiful, Barb. You're going beyond building credibility and rapport to developing empathy and resonance with your personal story.

[Nadia Chaney](#) I also love this idea of deepening your side coaching. Especially in work like yours, visual artistry, this element of intentional sharing must be very valuable

[Nadia Chaney](#) Eva Michelle Adams-Hart! Great to see you!

[Eva Michelle Adams-Hart](#) Good to connect:)



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[Nesreen Ali](#) I have used it to gain credibility on a topic I would seemingly have no experience with. It is also really helpful if you are trying to motivate folks, and show an exemplar of success.

[Sarah Cathrae](#) Sorry to have missed this. I had a meeting.

[Nadia Chaney](#) Transcript will be available soon 😊

[Trevor Pfeffer](#) Good question. It depends on the group and the goal. For project-based, often during the first break/check-in as a way to connect/share. In skills dev groups I've used them at the start to illustrate process and present a pro& con critique of my own process - to introduce & lead participants to think about/recognize/consider multiple methods/processes. I find it normalizes/equalize everyone and encourages both group and individual side discussions - it alleviates the groups fears of putting them self out there

*[Nadia Chaney](#)

Discussion Question #2: What are some best practices or tips that you have for sharing stories in a way that really works well? What are some important things to keep in mind?

[Hussein Janmohamed](#) 1. To set up an interactive experience with an audience, be it a short energizer or a longer session.

[Nadia Chaney](#) Do you mean you like to do your storytelling in an interactive way?

[Hussein Janmohamed](#) What I meant I suppose is to interweave your story throughout an activity. In leading many musical activities my story is somehow intrinsically linked to the musical exploration. So yes, it does become interactive because the process of making music together highlights themes of the story.

[Hussein Janmohamed](#) Do I need to clarify further?



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[Clarinda R. Laforteza](#) would luv to see more of this type of thing [INTERACTIVE EXPLORATION of STORY] in action

[Hussein Janmohamed](#) 2. To relay to classes how I came to understand and generate the pedagogies and methodologies

[Barb Applepieski](#) this is a great generative question to help me find more personal stories to share! Thanks Hussein Janmohamed.

[Robin Connolly](#) YES thank you that is really great. "generative question"... i love that intention when thinking of powerful questions in facilitation!

[Theophillus Booi](#) Being fully aware of your space and audience, that means reading the group's current state of mind and presence

[Nadia Chaney](#) Ah! You led me to Question #3! Posting it now!

[Hussein Janmohamed](#) 3. Keep it organic. If we are truly reflexive in facilitation, being part of the exploration in a classroom-session, then the stories not only mine but others start to emerge as one of many that weave into our collective

[Nadia Chaney](#) beautiful! Do you notice a pattern as to when your participants start to share their stories?

[Hussein Janmohamed](#) It does take a long time, Nadia. I often have very little time with the participants. Sometimes we go right into musical activities where they work in small groups and share stories that way. In large groups the story telling by words is less prevalent. But they do share their musical creations as a way of narrating I think. Also, I sometimes build into the process musical sharing, related to songs of important, for example, in the participants lives. Through the sharing and teaching of songs, stories emerge

[Nadia Chaney](#) Now THAT is fascinating, Hussein! Non-verbal personal storytelling. It's a key to arts empowerment, isn't it?

[Hussein Janmohamed](#) Could we call it storysounding?



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[Nadia Chaney](#) I think we must.

[Hussein Janmohamed](#) One strategy I use is asking participants to write reflective journals. Sometimes for public sharing, and sometimes personal. I ask the authors to choose inspiring phrases or words that speak to the heart of their story. From these phrases/words they create body rhythms (and melodies) that they share, combine and expand in pairs, groups of four, eight, etc. In the process, in a fun way, they get to share their phrases, intentions, and meanings attached to them. I don't often get to hear those in small groups. But you can see how the participants become very engaged in each other, listen, and respond empathetically.

[Barb Applepieski](#) I've found one of the hardest things is to keep it short. And to know when to keep it going a little bit longer. I've learned a formula with PYE, but when "improv"-ing a story, it's easy to over share. Any tips for self timing?

[Nadia Chaney](#) one tip is to start right at the heart of the story...don't give too much backstory

[Trevor Pfeffer](#) Big fan of 3's. Find 3 markers/.I lest ones to your story. Use whatever number you wish but keep it simple so it won't distract/detract from/during your telling - and it can help you Guage how to keep segments to reasonably similar times. It keeps me from going too far out on tangents too

[Nesreen Ali](#) Keeping in mind, your experience is unique to your own history and other people now even 'get it' so it might not have much resonance with those you are facilitating.

[Nadia Chaney](#) nice! What can you do to help people "get" your story?

*[Nadia Chaney](#)

Discussion Question #3: When can a facilitator's personal story disrupt a group's process? What can you do to resolve this?

[Nadia Chaney](#) Fawn Destiny Grep! Great to see you again!



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[Nilisha Mohapatra](#) Love this Q. Got me thinking. From the top of my head, when the facilitator is himself/herself overwhelmed by the emotions expressed in their story, and the group has to hold space for them. It impacts the facilitator's ability to share the story as a teaching moment. Also, when the story comes from a place of power, where the facilitator shares it to prove a point or teach a lesson.

[Nadia Chaney](#) Yes, I think both points are so true, Nilisha Mohapatra. The second one is interesting. What do you think are the costs and gains of using one's personal story to teach a lesson or prove a point?

[Nesreen Ali](#) Whenever the facilitator loses site of the purpose of why they are sharing the story, and sharing it just out of habit that's you're first time you have shared way too much. Boundaries are important.

[Nadia Chaney](#) Absolutely, Nesreen Ali! What are some tips you might share to help facilitators keep good story telling boundaries?

[Nilisha Mohapatra](#) Well, the cost I believe negates the essence of facilitation per say, by creating a hierarchy. It certainly is a put down for the group and their journey. The gain I imagine would be emphasis of a key message, and even reflecting back dysfunctional aspects of a group's process in a non-threatening manner.

[Nadia Chaney](#) Nice! I wonder if we can think of a way that story can be shared as a teaching moment that DOESN'T negate the facilitative quality of the group experience?

[Clarinda R. Laforteza](#) What known aspects cause a disruption? What "proper" re-actions would a facilitator be after?

*[Nadia Chaney](#)

Discussion Question #4: How do you prepare yourself to share your personal story? What parts do you share? Are there parts of your story that you hold back? How do you decide how much to share?



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[Hussein Janmohamed](#) I rarely share the queer story. Often share the 'race' and 'colour' story.

[Hussein Janmohamed](#) Because my story is so interwoven in my musical art practice, I feel like when I design musical activities, compose music, perform, that I am 'preparing' and 'telling' my story at the same time.

[Hussein Janmohamed](#) I end up sharing the parts of my story that have been 'quietened' or 'marginalized' - religion, faith in a secular society, race, queerness, etc

[Hussein Janmohamed](#) Sometimes I feel my ego kick in to share a story to a mundane end like quietening a group of youth before they go on stage, and realize that the moment was not the right one to share 😊

[Nadia Chaney](#) ha! Yes, I can relate to that. Sometimes a group would rather do, or even be silent...

[Nadia Chaney](#) Hussein, when you share the parts of your story that are quietened, how does your group respond?

[Nilisha Mohapatra](#) I usually pick a story that ties in with the goals or theme of the workshop, and say it out loud to myself a few times so that I don't start processing the story when I share it with the group. I ensure my stories define my learning moments. I am cautious about picking stories that play out privileges.

[Nadia Chaney](#) thanks for bringing this into the conversation Nilisha Mohapatra. Two very important points. Could you share a little more about how your personal story can play out your privilege?

[Nilisha Mohapatra](#) Sure.. As I understand it anything that is outside the realm of experience of the group, can seem like a privilege. I remember this one moment when a volunteer was speaking about a challenge he had faced, which was having to choose between pursuing his masters in USA or UK. This was a training being delivered in the rural areas of India. And the group's energy deflated completely, as they felt the volunteer was being snooty/ insensitive, because a lot of the participants barely got to complete their education.



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[Nadia Chaney](#) Thank you, that example is really clear! I wonder if any one else can weigh in here, too with other examples or inquiries? What are some tips to avoid this kind of insensitivity when sharing personal story?

[Barb Applepieski](#) I will connect with a participant (as many as I am able) before the workshop starts. That way I feel like I am in a circle of friends and it's easier for me to relate and share in a natural way. I think because I don't relate easily to my performing side, it's hard for me to be open in front of an "audience". however - it's super easy for me to be open in front of a group of friends!

[Nadia Chaney](#) Nice Barb! That is really helpful! Is there anything else you do so you don't feel like you're performing?

[Barb Applepieski](#) Still learning 😊

[Nadia Chaney](#) We'll work that aspect a lot in the kingston AOF, actually

[Nadia Chaney](#) shameless plug: <http://pyeglobal.org/kingston2016/>

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[Clarinda R. Laforteza](#) Pondered all these from Question#1

*[Nadia Chaney](#)

Case Study #1: You are working with a group of activists to help them prepare to make a presentation to get funding for a project that matters to them. They are



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having trouble working together, and there is a lot of bickering. How and when could you use your personal story to help the group's process?

[Nilisha Mohapatra](#) Mmm I'm tempted to say when we revisit the norms and agreements of the group. To start by sharing a story of how I was probably in a situation when I didn't agree with my colleagues, and how that impacted me and the others? Or even share a moment of insight about how I was being with my colleagues.

[Nadia Chaney](#) interesting! This connects to what you were saying about using story to teach a lesson. It is tricky! What can you do specifically to soften the impact of your story so it doesn't come from a place of power-over?

[Nilisha Mohapatra](#) My thoughts exactly! Thanks for articulating that.

[Nadia Chaney](#) for me, this is where humour and gentleness become KEY

[Nilisha Mohapatra](#) Mmm I'm wondering if it would help to approach it from opening a discussion about what's working well and what's not? And finding a moment to say that I was reminded of an instance where xyz... And then follow up asking how that lands on the group? It would also be a good opportunity to validate the progress of the group and the strength in the bickering (people expressing themselves, wanting to contribute).

[Nilisha Mohapatra](#) Ah yes, the energy of gentleness. Being clear about the intent of why I'm conveying the story.

[Nadia Chaney](#) yes, I think you're really onto something, Nilisha Mohapatra. I think that a soft introduction where the story just emerges more naturally can help a lot. And hearing from the participants first, before launching into the story!

[Nilisha Mohapatra](#) Tricky!

[Barb Appleski](#) I wonder if sharing a story of a time you experienced something similar.. and asking the group to solve YOUR problem...how that would work. Then after the discussion ask if they want to hear how you did solve the problem in the end. If the resolution was imperfect, it's a nice time to share how you were gentle with yourself.



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[Nadia Chaney](#) YES! Love that "if they want to hear" that's a subtle but vital insertion.

[Barb Applepieski](#) I find in the end, it's nice to know that even though life is full of struggles, bickering, challenges, etc... we are not alone and we do learn and move through them. How to help people vision themselves BEYOND the blocks?

[Nadia Chaney](#) ah! so you might ask them to share THEIR stories about the issue?

[Barb Applepieski](#) I might just give them case studies to solve in smaller groups and ask them... what skills were useful for you? what did you appreciate in others? what was the core issue in your case study and how did you move through it?

* [Nadia Chaney](#)

Case Study #2: You are introducing yourself to a new group. They are from a sector vastly different than your own and seem quite skeptical of you. How and when can you use your personal story to build trust?

[Barb Applepieski](#) I do this with my work with homeowners learning about stormwater management... I am not an "authority" by any means. I use humour, surprise (I tell them I like reading plumbing books as bedtime reading!) and share how I built a learning journey for free. They can do what I did (reading, online research, hands on skillshares) or find their own path. I hope then they know I want to facilitate their own unique path to landscaping greatness, not just shove a formula in their face. I show them I trust THEM to make their own choices.

[Clarinda R. Laforteza](#) Ooo...I'd luv to hear/read more about others' experiences on this

* [Nadia Chaney](#)



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Case Study #3: You are working with the same group twice a week for three hours over the course of a year. How and when do you tell them about yourself? What do you share and what do you hold back?

[Nilisha Mohapatra](#) I think the disclosure of the facilitator here needs to be aligned with the disclosure of the group, and the depth of sharing that's already happening. Facilitators' story can introduce new depths or validate the current one, if it is not thoroughly held/processed.

[Nadia Chaney](#) Ah! Thanks Nilisha Mohapatra! in the last ten minutes! I thought this one might go unanswered 😊

[Nilisha Mohapatra](#) Glad I got here on time. These case studies are powerful!

[Nadia Chaney](#) For me, personally, it's a way that I really like to learn. I need APPLICATION for things to make sense to me!

[Barb Appleski](#) I would map my stories along the arc of change I hope to affect... balancing vulnerability, humour, relatability, credibility, etc. I'd also wonder... what do I want them to know about me *by the end*. What do they need to know about me to *trust me on this journey*?

*[Nadia Chaney](#)

Case Study #4: A participant asks you a direct question about an aspect of your story that is a bit shocking, and might throw your group off course, or affect your credibility. How do you react?

[Robin Connolly](#) hmmm... i would acknowledge the potential of the question to derail the discussion/intention of the moment, and let the participant know that i would be happy to



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share the answer with anyone afterwards. Happy to discuss with anyone who is interested in that conversation "offline" if you will?

[Nilisha Mohapatra](#) Yes! I'm with you on this one, Robin Connolly

[Nadia Chaney](#) How much will you share offline, Robin Connolly? The whole truth and nothing but....or....how do you make that decision?

[Robin Connolly](#) Thanks for asking!

I think it depends on why the person is asking. If it's something they feel would help them to gain a wider understanding of their own story or learning.... AND whether its within my personal boundaries of being able to engage with that part of my story without getting sucked into the vortex of emotion. If i've processed it.

[Nadia Chaney](#) IF it's unprocessed or crosses a boundary for you what might you say to the participant?

[Nesreen Ali](#) It depends on what you are sharing! If you are saying something that is a complete falsehood, or shocking because it's not been considered before could be a great learning opportunity. You as a the facilitator need to assess in what direction this topic can now best serve the group.

[Nadia Chaney](#) Very interesting! Sounds like a facilitator using personal story needs to stay very alert and aware of their impact

[Nesreen Ali](#) Yes! Always. You are changing the tone of the conversation and, you need to be very sensitive to where everyone is at in the meeting. What you say could trigger people unnecessarily, have people lose your trust or quite possibly make them stand up and pay attention.

[Nadia Chaney](#) I agree. Personal story is a very strong element in facilitation...and requires deep sensitivity

[Nesreen Ali](#) Side question: How do people navigate sharing personal stories of racism as a teaching tool?



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[Nadia Chaney](#) Great question! Nesreen Ali, I'm going to pull your question into another box so people will see it...

[Robin Connolly](#) In a recent experience I had with facilitating group discussion, one of my participants was sharing a personal story that was very similar to something I had experienced but not yet processed fully. The sharing was triggering for me and, because I was in a learning context (facilitator training), I was able to stay safe, although it made me realize that when sharing part of your story (unexpectedly or not).... we have to be aware of our own unprocessed "stuff"

[Nadia Chaney](#) Thank you, Robin Connolly. I think this happens relatively often...I know it has happened to me on a number of occasions. What tools do you have to deal with your triggers during facilitation?

[Robin Connolly](#) I am still investigating and learning about this one, Nadia Chaney. For me, breathwork is good, anything that brings me into the moment. Noticing things around me. Name (to myself) things that i can see, hear, feel, taste, smell

[Nadia Chaney](#) yes! Grounding and having techniques to self-soothe are so important

[Robin Connolly](#) Thanks Nadia! I have to sign off now, back to work. Thank you for engaging this topic and inviting us all to do the same! heart emoticon

[Nadia Chaney](#) Hope to see you in person soon, Robin!

[Clarinda R. Laforteza](#) I suppose nothing ought to shock us about our own stories - & so in a situation like this I think one would have to be well prepared [have come into a very comfortable confidence] that matters of credibility or detours in conversations keep us calm, cool & collected [embraced by ourselves when feelings of perhaps(?) indecent exposure arise]

[Carina Costom](#) I might re-direct to the break for a one on one.

[Trevor Pfeffer](#) Well I prefer to be direct myself, and nothing can be more frustrating than having a direct question deflected or muted. And the negative ripple that can cause can vary from disruptive to toxic. I agree that as facilitators we have to know & Gauge our part pants and



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group dynamics - relying on cold reading to start, then building - so it depends on the impact it will have on that group dynamic that determines whether you/we/I answer to the group or ask to answer person-to-person afterwards, but always answer a direct question

* [Nadia Chaney](#)

Question #5 comes from one of our Assemblers, Nesreen Ali: How do people navigate sharing personal stories of racism?

[Nadia Chaney](#) For me, one thing that is important is to issue a trigger warning to participants, that the story might bring up painful memories or defenses. I'm also careful not to share stories that I have not made peace with internally, since participants may need to question or challenge me.

[Nilisha Mohapatra](#) I'm stumped by this one. I am thinking on lines of how to own my experience, to avoid the victim/perpetrator dynamic?

[Nadia Chaney](#) Yes, Nilisha Mohapatra...maybe follow that train of thought a little further, even. How could you frame a story that could potentially bring up very strong emotion, but that you know will benefit the group's dynamic? What elements need to be in place?

[Nilisha Mohapatra](#) Thanks for the follow up Q. I'm gonna sit on this one for a while. But I do think the personal impact of the incident is an element that needs to be there- thoughts, feelings etc.

[Nadia Chaney](#) Here's a thought to add to your sitting: the way a story lands on a group is deeply affected by the room itself...so when we tell stories in heart circle or river of life it's very different than sensitivity line...

[Michael Schacherl](#) I also struggle with how to share stories about privilege in ways that don't feel like I am telling people that they are oppressed.



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[Nadia Chaney](#) Yes, Michael Schacherl, that can get extremely tricky. For me, using personal story is important...if my personal story doesn't include the point we're talking about then I will sometimes avoid the storytelling aspect and use arts based dialogue to find safe ways to generate stories from teh room...

[Michael Schacherl](#) Right, so maybe I prioritize that and let go of the idea that I need to name or talk about privilege with the whole group?

[Nadia Chaney](#) I think so...I mean...sometimes in agreements I will MENTION systemic oppression but not dig for emotional stories...and then be super sensitive to where the group really is....some groups aren't safe enough to bring stories to light...and some just need more time...

[Nadia Chaney](#) but using arts modalities sometime you can get under defenses and into the heart of it all...

[Nadia Chaney](#) Like the Hope and Fear Basket...do you know that activity, Michael Schacherl?

[Michael Schacherl](#) Nope

[Michael Schacherl](#) Is there a link to it?

[Nadia Chaney](#) It's simple, but a great way to get some deeper opinions into the space...you give everyone a card, then have them write a hope on one side and a fear on teh other, as legibly as possible with NO NAME. (you can give them a topic...like racism or group dynamics, too) then you put them in a hat and give each person one. the key instruction: they have to READ IT LIKE THEY WROTE IT. do the hopes first, then the fears. It creates a strong feeling of solidarity.

[Nadia Chaney](#) remind them to reread the card carefully first, and make up any words they can't read. So they can read it like they wrote it. That's where the magic comes from. We hold each other's concern together. Maintain anonymity, but still give voice to issues and concerns



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[Michael Schacherl](#) Nice. Sounds like a great activity. I should ask them to write from the first person "I'm afraid..."?

[Nadia Chaney](#) I just use "I hope" and "I fear", yes

[Barb Applepieski](#) Identify the relatable elements and focus on those first?

[Melissa Rae](#) Following - not sure if since the 90 minutes pass I can still add. Will post separate comment so it can be deleted before transcript if necessary.

[Nadia Chaney](#) You're welcome to add! Thanks for asking!

[Melissa Rae](#) I tend to share what I've done as a white female to become aware of my own racist actions. Maybe it was when I thought misogyny and racism were same but different, or examples of my own white fragility. My own experience rather than "you (or they) did this" type scene. I don't have a lot of peace around this, so good point about personal resolution. I am still figuring out ways to talk about this besides sharing blogs that resonate with me.

* [Nadia Chaney](#)

Okay good people, our official time has come to an end. This has honestly been one of the richest assemblies I've seen. Thank you for your vulnerability, wisdom, experience, compassion and all your hard work and big love in the world. PYE will soon post the transcript, and this page stays open if you would like to add anything to any of the posts. We are seeking new topics for the upcoming sessions. If you have any ideas please feel free to post them on this page. If you enjoyed today's session please tell your facilitator, teacher, manager, social worker, group therapist activist and social artist friends! Also, if anything has come up here that you would like to check in about, feel free to PM me.

[Nadia Chaney](#) You all brought so much amazing insight!! I love 3rd Thursdays! ❤️



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[Nilisha Mohapatra](#) Loved the questions and case-studies, and thoroughly enjoyed the gentle nudge of your follow-up questions. Thank you so so much Nadia 😊 This was energizing!

[Wild Flower Murals](#) Super stoked for next Thursday!

[Wild Flower Murals](#) Or 3rd thursday's rather.

[Nadia Chaney](#) well...all Thursday ARE awesome in their own right...but we only do this on the 3rd Thursday 😊

[Lee Williams Boudakian](#) I had to get back to work shortly after joining in. Loving reading all the things that folks shared and excited to participate again (and more fully) in future. Thanks so much.