

If you have endured and survived an adversity in your life, and would like to explore it further in a safe and healing way, then we invite you to create and share your story. By telling and re-telling our stories, not only will we benefit ourselves by recognising just how strong and unbroken we are, but we can also empower and inspire others.

## **The Power of Story**

Adverse life events - loss, trauma, abuse, emotional and psychological challenges - can have devastating and often life-long impacts on our lives. Despite the recent arrival of psychological therapy, there is no single "go-to" remedy to the damage caused by adversity, despite many interventions that served us well. In many cases though, psychology's medical model - seeing psychological pain as a *disease* that needs to be *diagnosed* and then *treated* until we are "*fixed*" has been unhelpful for many.

Throughout human history, well before psychology was a thing, humans had one universal and far-reaching practice: the story. Telling and hearing story has been, for millenia, a powerful method of teaching, learning, and cultural transmission, and we are only just discovering the evidence of its healing power for those who have endured adverse life events.

The most powerful stories evolve over time, involve complex, vulnerable characters with a compelling quest, and who overcome inevitable challenges and become transformed. Even if we are not aware, we tell ourselves stories about ourselves all the time; and we can recraft those stories until they serve us better.

By telling our story in a safe space, by seeing it anew, and by having it heard and validated by others, we can start to heal. Story can change how we think, how we feel, how we act, and how the world sees and treats us. In other words, story can spark a profound learning experience. After all, even the traditional therapeutic approach is but a special case of human learning.

Our hope is that by studying people's stories - of their adversity, how they dealt with it, what did and did not work, and how their lives are now, we can distil some essential, powerful and pragmatic responses to adversity that will ease the burden for others.

## **Your Invitation**

So, my colleagues and I are in the process of publishing a book on adversity, trauma and learning, and want to hear real stories of those who are 'still standing'. If you would like to contribute, please click below and you can download a guide to telling your story - complete with general questions and prompts to flesh out what's important.

## **Your Privacy**

If you choose, you can submit your story with no connection at all to your personal details. You can also of course opt to make yourself known to us, it is entirely your call. Whatever you choose, your privacy will be fiercely protected, and your personal details will never be made available to anyone without your informed consent.

## **Getting Started**

You are totally free of course to create your story in any way you wish. Below are some suggested prompts on how you may get started, how you can frame it.

To protect your privacy, there are several options on how to submit. First, you can click on the link below, and enter your story on this website. Doing this does not link your personal details to your story, **but** the website and thinkEd will be able to see your IP address. This means some that people in your ISP may link the two, but this is highly unlikely and most likely illegal.

Alternatively, you can download the pdf document below, and complete it electronically or in writing, and either email it (in which case we will have a link between your story and your identity, or simply snail-mail it to the address given). No matter what your choice, we will *never* disclose any identifying details to any person.

## **Narratives**

Generally, narratives are set in a time, and place, and include a number of central characters, along with others. The central character(s) will have a quest - a thing, a place, a state, a goal - which they pursue above all else, but are blocked in that quest by some type of obstacle. The story arc is then around how the character resolves that obstacle, overcomes that challenge, and finally what this resolution brings - what meaning does it have for all characters. There are many variations on this story arc, and yours can of course be entirely different, but one element has a powerful therapeutic effect: the ability to create new meaning, new outcomes.

## **Adversity**

What was the adverse experience that you had? Without providing information that may identify you or others, you can start by describing the event, the people, the place, your stage in life. It can be as detailed or as vague as you decide: this is **your** story.

### **What was it like for you?**

The 'facts' about the adverse events are one thing, but how you *experience* those events are something totally different. Helpful questions to ask in this regard include

- . what was this like for me?
- . what did the events mean to me?
- . how did I feel about the event at the time?
- . what did I think about the event at the time?
- . do I know what others thought or felt about the event?
- . how did I respond to the thoughts and feelings of others?

### **How did you respond?**

It may be helpful to view this question over a long time frame. For instance, your immediate response may have been very different from your response months or even years later. Reflecting on all your responses through a more distant lens will often give us deeper and more nuanced insights.

Responses often include emotional, behavioural and thought responses; they can also include attempts to find help and support, either from family and friends, professionals and others.

Again, this is your story, so your responses may be something totally different from those above, so there is no need to limit yourself to these prompting questions.

### **What helped? What hindered?**

Of all the things that happened after the experience, which of them helped you to overcome the adversity? Also, what things did not help? And were there any things that made it worse?

Were there particular people in your life who helped or hindered?

### **Where are you now?**

What is your perspective on where your life is now, having endured these adverse experiences? What, if anything might you have done differently? Is there anything more you need to do, or direction you need to follow?

Are there words to describe your place now? e.g. "healed", "resolved", "better" "recovered" "fixed" or "broken".

Is your life better than it was?

### **Insights**

Have you derived new meaning in your life as a result of the trauma and your journey through it? How do you now make sense of what happened? How 'recovered' would you say you are?

Have you told your story to others before? If so, did it help, or hinder your recovery? If so, in what ways?