

CORNERSTONE 2022 RESOURCE

Campfire Stories for the Cure *Wind Down Your Day*

AUTHOR(S):	Josh Sterling Friedman
SUMMARY:	In this session we will: re-appraise our day in healthy and adaptive ways by sharing it with others through story-telling.
ABC GOALS:	<p>Affective: Participants will feel...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflective & Pensive • Calm & Enchanted • Warm & Held <p>Behavior: Participants will be able to...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share their day without ruminating on it • Practice reappraisal in an evidence-based way for stable mental living • Notice the differences in their campers likely to bring themselves down, and how to help pull them out of it <p>Cognitive: Participants will know...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to spot the difference between 1st person and 3rd person, and action-based vs. causal-based language • That how we tell our stories matters not just for others, but for our own learning as well. • That campfires have the power to heal, as well as dazzle
AUDIENCE:	A bit more advanced of a camper session (ages 13+), perfect for counselors, interesting for leadership staff
TIMING:	45 minutes
APPENDICES:	None
MATERIALS NEEDED:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A campfire, or indoor equivalent - S'mores supplies would be nice but are optional - If S'moring, a light and nearby table will likely be helpful
SET-UP DETAILS:	<p>Around a campfire, or some indoor equivalent</p> <p>Light the fire before the G arrives, to save time and add to the separation of a special space. <i>If S'moring have supplies available on a nearby table, organized and ready to interact with</i></p>

SESSION TIMELINE

- 00:00-00:05 – Purpose & Norms for the Fire
- 00:05-00:20 – Sharing Your Day(s)
- 00:20-00:30 – Lighting the Fire: What the Research Says
- 00:30-00:45 – Campfire Stories for the Cure

SESSION OUTLINE:

[Learning Facilitator (LF); Group (G); Small Group's (SGs); Partners (Ps); Individuals (I's)]

00:00-00:05 – Purpose & Norms for the Fire

LF will ask the I's to consider (without answering, out loud or in their head):

What does being here mean to me?

LF will then ask the I's to answer: Why am I here?

Then (after a few moments) invite anyone who would like to share their answer to do so. With a minute or so left, LF will introduce the norms for the space:

The Five Finger Contract:

- Thumb – Positive Outlook
- Pointer – Consider oneself (three fingers pointing back) before judging another
- Middle – Choose Respect
- Ring – Commit to Being Here
- Pinkie – Look out for the Little One

LF will then invite I's to 'sign' the contract by high fiving their neighbors (or air-fiving as appropriate).

At this stage, if something similar has not yet been added or shared as a purpose, LF will add: to learn how cure ourselves through the stories we tell

00:05-00:20 – Sharing Your Day(s)

LF will then ask I's to find the last person they high-fived to be their partner (and tie up any loose ends or forming a group of three as needed / desired), and then give each individual 6 minutes to tell the story of their day. The idea here is that each partner talks for 6 minutes, and the other doesn't interrupt (outside of active listening behaviors), then they switch (if there is a group of 3, 4-5 minutes each). P's should be spread around the campfire enough to feel the warmth and still be able to hear each other.

With about 2 minutes left in this period, LF will gather the attention of the group, and ask them to consider (without answering aloud):

- 1) How did your partner tell their story? From what perspective?

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- 2) What sorts of things did your partner mention? Were they concrete actions, like a laundry list of their day? Did your partner tell you about any 'how' or 'why' elements, such as how something occurred, or the reasons why it did? What were they?
- 3) Who was in charge of the structure of your partner's story? Who was responsible for it?
- 4) What about your story? Do you remember how you saw yourself in your own story? What you talked about, or focused on?

00:20-00:30 – Lighting the Fire: What the Research Says

LF will then announce that they are going to tell the group what some research from psychology has shown about the way we tell our stories, and how it impacts us:

There are essentially 4 ways of telling a narrative of our day that have been studied, and they fit into a 2x2 table: stories are told from the 1st person 'immersed' perspective, where we visually, audibly, or other imagine ourselves in the story and 'relive' the experience, or we tell the story from a 3rd person 'distanced' perspective, telling the story as if we were a fly on the wall watching it happen in front of us. To get a sense of this difference, consider the statement 'I walked into the store' while picturing the sliding glass doors in front of you and going through them compared to standing by the shopping carts just outside the doors and watching yourself walk in. One may consider this difference to be the 'parallel' vs. 'perpendicular' perspective on oneself. The other difference often studied in combination with this is telling a story through the concrete actions that occurred in the story, such as, "I walked into the store", as compared to telling the story as a series of causes, such as "I needed some eggs and milk for breakfast". This difference is referred to as the action-oriented vs. the causal viewpoint. If you consider these 4 ways to tell a story: 1st person-action-oriented, 1st person-causal, 3rd person-action-oriented, and 3rd person-causal, which would you expect to be most effective and helping you to emotionally regulate yourself after a long hard day? Why do you think so?

After a few answers and reasons have been given, if the right answer hasn't been given, LF will inform the G that the most effective style in study after study has been the 3rd person-causal: telling your story as if you were a fly on the wall watching yourself and focusing on the reasons behind your actions rather than only the actions themselves. It is also often the case that this is exactly the sort of thinking journaling activity inspires in us.

00:30-00:45 – Campfire Stories for the Cure

LF will now provide the opportunity for anyone who would like to retell the story of their day from a 3rd person-causal point of view to the whole group.

S'mores Option: During this time (and warn both the story tellers and the s'morers), LF will select 2-3 individuals at a time (or as many needed for the time available, leaving enough story-listeners to maintain the main focus and energy of the group on them) to go get S'mores equipment and ingredients and make their S'more. Make sure the selection process is decided ahead of time so that I's know when and how to get up as to not distract the story-teller or listeners, or make the sign subtle enough for the same purpose.

References:

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BRINGING IT TO YOUR CAMP:

- Don't have a campfire? No worries! How about a dimly lit rim and some soft crackling campfire sounds on YouTube? No ambiance is also fine! This program can be done anywhere there are stories to share (which is everywhere!)
- Sometimes people are not into sharing their stories out loud or with a partner, in these cases, you can do the program as a solo journaling activity with all of the same steps, just writing and then rewriting your story on the page!
- Want to repeat the program later on in the session? How about telling stories in the 3rd person-causal through art, song, dance, theatre, or prayer? How about making TikToks?