



CONVENE & CONNECT

Convening is the art of bringing the community (of practice) and relevant stakeholders together to connect members and engage them in meaningful conversations. The diversity of a community and a risk-free and inclusive environment help develop conversations and engage members.

Start small, create the conducive environment to convene and network people.

Proper community management to ensure diversity of views, prioritize equity for access to opportunities and resource and where everyone feels they belong and can actively participate.

Diversified, equity and inclusiveness environment where there is diverse representation, fairness and everyone feel valued and heard.

Activities oriented to developing the practice - Storytelling

WHAT

Storytelling

Storytelling is often part of another activity, but it can be an activity on its own. It is such an important way for practitioners to recognize each other and learn together that we describe it on its own.

WHY

Practitioners love to hear each other's stories of practice. Stories convey learning through vicarious experience. Their experiential nature makes them real. Their dramatic element makes them interesting and memorable. The existence of a protagonist, especially someone who is a peer, invites identification, and therefore relevance. Some communities do most of their learning through such stories. Stories can be prompted by all sorts of triggers, and it is good to be attuned to occasions for storytelling. If a discussion is getting too abstract, a personal story can bring it back down to earth.

HOW

A good story conveys the challenges someone faced, what happened, who did what, how it felt, what worked and what did not, and how the issue was or was not resolved. It is often in the concrete details of a story that practitioners find most value.

Unlike more prescriptive instructions, like a best practice or a procedure, a story does not impose its learning. The implications are for the listeners to draw. But a story's ability to invite identification pulls listeners in and allows them to imagine the story in their own context and get from it just what has relevance to them.

Storytelling need not be a one-way communication. In a community of practice, it is often an interactive process with the group pulling out details and explanations that will increase the story's relevance to them. With large groups, we have sometimes used the fishbowl format for this interactive storytelling.

After a good story, it is useful to hear what others are getting from it. This can trigger the imagination of everyone.

Variations

Interview. A good way to tell a story, especially in a large group, is to have a member act as an interviewer, pulling out details, and pointing to some important elements that the storyteller alluded to without realizing their importance.

Use Case:

Storytelling and sense of community

The CCHN Community is first and foremost a social network. As participants share frontline stories, there is an immediate level of intimacy. Most of them have been exposed to traumatic experiences, several have lost colleagues. Members of the CCHN Community have lost their lives on the battlefield since its creation. There is always a close sense of interdependence and proximity among members of the CoP, even for those who are actually meeting for the very first time. Much like army veterans, this sense of shared experience is particularly true when participants recount stories from their context. The listeners understand the story at a different level than other lay persons would; the stories make them relive some of their own experiences that have marked them.

While the mutual recognition and empathy create immediate bonds, it is important in this environment to limit the risk of "re-traumatizing" participants in peer engagements. The workshops need to set limits to the storytelling and frame the conversation around the application of specific tools, giving it an educational purpose that contains to some extent the emotional discharge. The CCHN has also developed a series of five-day retreats tailored to the needs of members seeking support to manage post-traumatic stress. These retreats are offered in partnership and under the supervision of mental health professionals who help set the right background and limits for these exercises.

