

WHAT IS *LISTENING WELL*?

Using a strengths-based storytelling approach, *Listening Well for Mental Health* provides personal and professional development programs that enhance relationship with self and others to promote healing, healthcare, and recovery outcomes.



Listening Well works with mental health consumers, families, service providers, administrators, and community stakeholders to uncover and share the essence of our lived experiences. The power of story lies in deep listening and speaking our truth, which amplifies wellness and wholeness. As an organization of mental health consumers and family members, we are committed to replacing stigma and discrimination with respect and unity, increasing social inclusion, and supporting people in furthering their personal power and potential. Learn more at www.listeningwell.net.

WHY STORY?

Around the world and throughout time, stories have been used to educate, heal, and influence the expansion of cultures. For those in recovery, sharing stories enables us to “shed the shame” surrounding mental health issues—an important first step in personal and professional development. From a new-found place of personal power and self-respect, storytellers have the opportunity to step into their rightful place as leaders, employees, counselors, advocates, trainers or whatever it is they are called to be.

THE INVITATION

You are invited to participate in a *Listening Well Experience™* retreat. If shedding the old and creating a new life story is something you seek, this retreat offers you that possibility. This process has been a life-changing experience for all who have participated. It works because, as you uncover and develop your recovery story, you remember who you truly are, heal, and reclaim the life you were meant to have.

RETREAT DESCRIPTION

The *Listening Well Experience™ (LWE)* uncovers written, spoken, and/or filmed 6-8 minute recovery stories or mental health monologues. The discovery process consists of writing exercises, story sharing, artistic expression, and time to reflect and integrate learning. The *LWE* retreat is generally 2-3 days, preferably offsite, with a maximum of 12 participants. The only pre-requisites are that participants are willing to look honestly, fearlessly, and compassionately into their past and present, support others in that same endeavor, participate fully, and attend the entire program.

SOME STORYTELLER OUTCOMES:

1. Increased personal empowerment and self-esteem
2. Enhanced relationships and appreciation of diversity
3. Improved quality of life, work, and life/work balance
4. Shifted careers and/or completed education
5. Experienced improved health and reduced hospitalization
6. Enhanced ability to provide outreach and support others' recovery
7. Shared stories for mental health awareness and education (police, providers, schools, etc.)
8. Created a network of support with other story/truth-tellers

IS YOUR STORY READY TO BE TOLD?

WHAT OUR STORYTELLERS HAVE TO SAY:



Listening Well changed my life in ways I didn't think were possible. It is a great place to be real and get underneath the root of your life experience. The process will hold you and open you to yourself. I don't think I'd feel as free to live if I hadn't uncovered that part of me that wanted to be someone else. Now, I'm learning to love all of me.

—BJ North **Listening Well**, Consumer Provider & Storyteller

*I just wanted to let you know I am continuing to experience therapeutic benefits from the **Listening Well** retreat. I have noticed an improvement in my ability to distinguish between my authentic self and my mental illness, increased creativity and a reduction in social anxiety. Thanks!*

—Andrew Toddard, Consumer and Storyteller

Writing and sharing our stories with others and hearing their stories is extremely healing. It helped me to identify an important roadblock in my life. And I came away with a new motto: never say, "I can't"

—Sheryl Bush-Maciel Sessions, Consumer and Storyteller

I grew up hearing that "children should be seen and not heard," and that "we don't air our dirty laundry in public." In other words, keep quiet, don't tell, don't ask questions, don't talk about it at all. In order to find my voice, I HAD to tell my story. Today, I know that I am not what happened to me, and I've made some very sweeping changes in my life and work.

—Karin Albert, **Listening Well** Facilitator and Storyteller

My story was a stone covered in gray; I had no idea of the beauty of the gem until I uncovered it. The whole experience was life-changing.

—Ellen Jennings, Counselor and Storyteller

*The **LWE** opened me up to realize that today I could be a whole person and helped me to deal with past life's struggles. It is a gathering of people opening themselves up to the truth.*

— Ron Myers, Dual Diagnosis Educator and Storyteller

I faced some of my most daunting issues, and I did it successfully. I was able to move through some paralyzing fear. I felt loved and supported and safe. I have presented my story three times already. Writing this story led me to create some more poetry which I have been reading at a poetry "open mike" for the past two months.

—Joy Bright McCorkle, Advocate and Storyteller

My life is always changed by these storytellers and their stories. Every one is a mirror for me, and through their eyes I see a fuller version of myself. It's an honor and a privilege to witness and support people as they see beyond the drama and trauma to uncover their power and realize the beauty of who they truly are...

—Paula Comunelli, Founder and CEO, **Listening Well**