

# Telling your Story

## **Thank you!**

Thank you so much for considering telling your story at a Touch storytelling celebration event. We hope this information is helpful to you, and would love to hear your story, if it feels the right thing for you.

## **What is Touch Network?**

We share and celebrate everyday stories of resilience. By doing so, we prevent struggles with mental wellbeing beginning, or getting worse. Through providing a platform to share and hear stories, we cheer each other on and learn from one another. We use these stories to enable positive change in our communities and the NHS and social care environment.

## **How does Touch Network enable this to happen?**

Our core work surrounds facilitating events. Our events are usually held in coffee shops/restaurants or bars. They are really relaxed and informal. We usually expect between 20 and 50 guests to attend, guests buy a ticket in advance or on the door. Each event has a 'host' who welcomes guests and speakers and helps to coordinate the event. When guests arrive, they are welcomed by a Touch team member, and are given a programme, and encouraged to make themselves at home.

Once everyone has arrived and is settled, usually 15 mins after the start time, the programme begins. Our host welcomes everyone from the front, and explains how the evening will run, then they introduce each of the speakers. There are usually four speakers. After the second speaker has finished, there is a break for guests and speakers to have refreshments and chat together. Speakers and guests sit together, there is no back-stage area! We do not offer an open question time, so when each story is finished, guests clap and the host thanks each speaker. We encourage guests and speakers to chat in the refreshment break.

After each of the speakers have shared their story, our host brings the night to a close, guests are told about upcoming events, speakers are thanked, and guests are asked to leave a little bit of feedback by answering three short questions on how they found the event.

### **What will other speakers talk about?**

All stories are true stories from real life experiences. In curating the event, we attempt to have a diverse range of speakers, telling stories about different issues they have overcome. This helps to ensure there is something for everyone at our events! You will be emailed a programme in advance of your event, outlining speakers and their stories, as well as receiving a programme on the night.

### **What are our stories about and how are they told?**

**Resilience:** At the core of all our stories is resilience, understood as the capacity to recover from difficulties or the ability to spring back into shape

**Many topics:** Stories are deliberately wide ranging and inclusive e.g. family life, education, mental ill health, career, physical problems, cultural challenges etc

**Pre-planned:** How stories are told and what part(s) are told, is carefully curated in advance

**Choice:** Stories shared are a choice and people can change their mind at any time, no questions asked

**In the first person:** Stories are told in the first person, no assumptions are made of others

**Truthfully:** All stories are real-life experiences, they are told honestly

**Positively:** Stories focus on positivity and hope that stems from getting through difficulties

**Without teaching:** Our stories are about experiences, they do not have teachings or 'top tips'

### **Is the event a public event?**

Yes, the event is a public event, in that everyone is welcome to book a ticket, much like the theatre or cinema. Therefore, you may/may not already know some of our guests. We ensure a private space however, it is not a 'drop in' event, guests and speakers will be there for the whole evening.

### **Will my story be kept confidential between those who attend the event?**

No, we cannot guarantee this. Our events are primarily with the aim of 'getting people talking' about struggles they face. This means that guests or other speakers may want to talk about what they've heard with others. The important thing to remember, is that those who have bought a ticket, more than likely want to be there! Which means they are on your side, and no doubt, will be inspired and encouraged by your story, so if your story is shared amongst other people, it is highly likely to be in a positive and respectful way!

### **Will the event be recorded in anyway?**

Sometimes, at our events, we take photographs for publicity purposes. By agreeing to share your story, you are agreeing for us to use photos of you. We also sometimes record stories on audio or film. This depends on the event itself and resources/team available. By agreeing to share your story, you are agreeing to have an audio

recording of what you say, and/or a film recorded at the event. However, if we would like to release these recordings, we will seek further permission from you, after the event, to release it.

### **What do you use for publicity prior/during and after the event, about me and my story?**

We use your first name only in all publicity. Prior to sharing your story, together we will write 1-2 sentences roughly summarising your story. We will use this in all publicity and the printed programmes. We do this because it is helpful to guests to know what they are coming to hear about, just in case there are any subjects they would prefer to avoid for some reason. As photos may be taken at the event, we may publicise after the event a photo of you, your first name, and your 2 sentence summary, as a way of celebrating the event and the shared stories.

### **How should my story be presented and how long should I talk for?**

The way you present your story is not important to us. You are welcome to present it in any way that works for you, and makes it as easy and comfortable as possible for you. We try to explain to all speakers that these events are not about 'public speaking' or 'performance skills'. Feel free to read it/use notes/talk freely/be interviewed or anything else! The most important thing is that you are honest and real (as far as feels comfortable to you). At most events, you have up to 20 minutes to share your story. We usually suggest aiming for 15 minutes, to give yourself space to go over if you need to.

### **What are the specific guidelines for sharing my story?**

Some basic guidelines are shown below. You will also be asked to have a chat via phone (most likely) with our storytelling coach. Please ask them questions and make use of their skills in working out what your story could be focused on and how best to express it. In addition, there are some basic guidelines below:

- **Hopeful not depressing**  
Your story should focus more on the positive aspects of coming through, than the struggle itself. As a guideline we often say, of a 15 minute talk, 5 minutes on the struggle and 10 mins on the positive learning and development that came from it.
- **Story not sermon**  
Please be sensitive to the audience with regard to faith/spirituality/politics. There will be people from different faiths/spirituality/political beliefs at the event. Please do not preach a particular message or use terms that others may not understand.
- **Sharing not teaching/ranting**  
Try to remember that your way of overcoming may be different to someone else's, so please be respectful of this and try not to tell people what to do or use it as a 'ranting' platform!
- **'I' not 'you'**  
Please describe your story in first person terms. This enables guests the space to reflect personally on what your story may mean to them.
- **Past not present**  
We know that often people haven't completely resolved issues in their life and that sometimes an issue hasn't and/or will never completely go away. We would ask though, that the overcoming story you tell

focuses on an issue that is primarily from the past and or/you feel 'at peace' about it and no longer hugely hindered by it.

**I'd like to share my story, what do I need to do next?**

Please complete the attached form and send to [debs@touch.network](mailto:debs@touch.network). Someone from the team will then be in contact to chat to you more about sharing your story at one of our events.



## Touch Storytelling Agreement Form

- I have read the 'Telling your Story' document
- I agree to adhere to all of the guidelines above
- I am happy for my name and my story to be shared publicly in the ways described
- I would like to share my story

OR

- Please could Touch Network contact me, as I have further questions

### STORY DESCRIPTION

Below are some examples of story descriptions we have used in the past:

*"Ian talks about the impact of being a father, how it both challenges and inspires. He explores how, as his sons grow older, he connects more with his own childhood."*

*"Lucy will talk about how she found light at the end of the borderline personality disorder tunnel. She will chat through how she navigated her way through the many twists and turns of the sometimes bumpy journey and still enjoy her life."*

Using the above examples as a guideline, please tell us what your story is about:

**My story is about .....**

First Name:

Last Name:

Prefer to be called:

Address (including postcode and county):

Telephone number:

Email:  I would like my email address to be added to Touch Network CIC mailing list

Please send to: [debs@touch.network](mailto:debs@touch.network)