

Instructions

The danger of a single story

Objective:

Students will understand the danger of having only one perspective and internalizing stereotypes. Also the way a story is told, is influencing the listener. Having an understanding that power lies in who sets the agenda and who gets to tell the story, and the way a student can recognize this. Students will self-reflect on their own internalized stories about others, and learn how these different stories together play a role in their own work and context.

Activity 1. the Danger of a Single Story video

Step 1: Presentation

Everybody introduces themselves to the group. Decide what you want to tell to the other students.

Important is to create a safe discussion environment: talk with the students shortly about how to create the safe environment. They may include: 1. Stay engaged (Remove distractions.) 2. Speak your truth (Talk about your own self, life, and story, rather than those of others.) 3. Experience discomfort (Stay in the conversation, even when you are uncomfortable.) 4. Expect/accept non-closure (Some things will remain unclear.) 5. Ouch! (We may feel hurt by what we hear – please speak up when this happens.) If students find this very difficult agree on non-verbal signals to set borders.

Step 2: What is a single story?

Everybody has his/her own individual story to tell and all had differing life experiences which have shaped our core values and beliefs. In order to keep the world understandable, we must see the world in patterns. In this way the human brain can make sense of it; we wouldn't be able to deal with the daily life and objects if we couldn't predict a lot about them. And the sense of knowing who and what they are, is a way of structuring the world. But this natural and useful ability to see patterns of similarity has unfortunate consequences. It is offensive to reduce an individual to a category, and it is also misleading. It makes that we create simplistic and sometimes false perceptions about individuals, groups, or countries.

Activity 2: Watch the video

In this TED talk, novelist Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie reflects on how she found her authentic cultural voice – and warns that if we carry only a single story about another person or group, we risk a critical misunderstanding. After watching the video, students will discuss the video and the stories you carry and encounter too.

Video: https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_ngozi_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story

Video (French subtitles): https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_ngozi_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story?language=fr#t-187495

Activity 2. Story of Oneself – Us - Now

Every person tells a story about himself. By this story you'll influence the other person. But what is your own story? And how are single perspectives influencing your own story? You will focus on your story and how it's influenced by the perspectives of others (f.e. a prejudice about another country).

- The power in a Story of Oneself is to reveal something of yourself and your values – not your deepest darkest secrets, but the key shaping moments in your life. Consider when you first started to care about the issue you have chosen. Why is it important to you? Why do you feel you have to do something about it?
- Tell in couples your story to another student.
- In what ways do “single stories” impact our own identities, how we view others, and the choices we make? Look at the story of Oneself and discuss which perspectives, ideas or values are there because of others.

Step 5: Story of Us

Tell the group why the community that your part of is in particular called to act, and why you as a group have the capacities to lead. Just as above in the story of self, the key is to focus on telling a story about specific people and specific moments that have organized your community.

Step 6: Story of Now

Each of us has a compelling story to tell and each of us has a story that can move others to action. As a social worker you will communicate about challenges and important issues. To get others involved it important that the story you are telling includes a description of the path to take to achieve goals relative to the mission. The story of Now is a unique strategy or set of ideas that will help you to overcome any challenges. The story also invites your listeners to

make a commitment at that moment and help you achieve the goals. It is critical to highlight what exactly they can do, in clear concrete terms, to take action today. Make it specific and make it achievable. In this way you make the story of all. Include all perspectives.

With the story of Now you will encourage others to create change.

The Story of Now represents the final stage. Whereas the Story of Self and Story of Us are used to connect others with the 'heart' of your story, the Story of Now is all about adding in the 'head'. It is where you set out in clear, concrete terms exactly what they can do to help you to reach your goal and it is about telling them why now is important, and not later.

Before you get started with writing your Story of Now, it's important to think about the underlying morals and values you are trying to inspire in your listeners. What are the common value threads apparent in all three of your stories; Self, Us and Now?

In the final exercise you are combining the story of Oneself, how it can become a story of Us and how you can put in change by telling the story of Now.

Step 7: Combining story of Oneself, Us and Now

- Take one aspect of your own story which is very important to you.
- Ask the other student their perspective on this aspect and make it into one story with different perspectives.
- Create a story of Now: how are you going to involve others in the story of Us in such a way they take action.

Activity 2. the 1-2-4-All model for reflection

Students receive a shared challenge or question. It can be one of the internship or the context.

Step 1: A silent self-reflection

A silent self-reflection is made by the individual student for 2 minutes. Write down the reflection.

- a. What are "single-stories" others have believed about you?
- b. What are "single stories" you have believed about others?

Step 2: Generate ideas

Make pairs and share which stories both students wrote down. Choose one story and generate ideas for addressing single stories. (4 min)

Step 3: Sharing

Two pairs get together and share their stories.

- Make a mindmap of the different ideas, similarities and differences. (5 min)
- Show in the mindmap the one idea that stood out in the conversation. Each small group shares that idea with all. (5 min)

Step 4: Discussion about dangers of these single stories

Answer the following questions with the group:

- What is the “danger” in these single stories?
- How are these stories perpetuated?
- Who has the power to set the agenda and tell the story in the places where you work/ serve/learn?
- What can you do to interrupt single stories?

Going around the circle, ask each participant to share one commitment to action and/or one word reflecting how they are feeling now.

Step 5: Summarize

Make a summary of step 4 in your own words and images.

Process the following points

- What dangers do you see
- How can you influence the single stories
- Which actions can you take to influence them