

BASIC TEXT PROJECT WORKSHOPS

Sharing our Experience, Strength, and Hope

What makes a “good” story? 90-minute workshop

We hope this 90-minute workshop will inspire people to write down their experience and submit it to the Basic Text project. When we tried this at world services, it helped us see what others found most interesting in our stories and in stories in general.

SET UP AND INTRODUCTIONS

5–10 MINUTES

Give an overview of the session and explain its purpose: This is a sharing session that should help us see what is most engaging about our experience and our “voices”—the way we describe our experience. Ideally, this session will help us understand that there are limitless ways to talk about or write our experience. When we write, we make choices (what to focus on, what language to use...), today’s session should help us make those choices more consciously.

You may want to pass out copies of the solicitation flier for the project—available online at www.na.org/conference/bt.

Begin by having everyone introduce themselves and share some (brief) thing about themselves that others may not know. If you have a large group, you will probably want to break into smaller groups after introductions. Groups of 8 to 10 should be fine.

SHARING OUR EXPERIENCE

40 MINUTES

In the small group, take turns sharing a focused piece of your story. Some of the ideas we’ve tried are:

- What was something you didn’t think you could get through clean, and how did you do it?
- Talk about the moment when you first really heard the message, when you first “got it.”
- What is the most significant thing that’s happened to you clean?
- Many of us felt different when we walked in the doors of NA—or even the whole time we were growing up—but we stayed. What made you stay? (What made you want to go?)

Have everyone share on the same topic with no cross-talk.



GROUP DISCUSSION ABOUT OUR SHARING

30 MINUTES

When everyone is finished sharing, talk about what struck you in the experiences shared.

Some questions you may want to give people to consider are:

- What was the most moving thing you heard and why?
- What did you want to hear more about?
- Was there anything that made you think about your own experiences a new way? If so, why?
- Did you have a favorite thing that was shared? If so, what made it your favorite?

When we did this exercise at world services, some of the things that stood out for us had to do with the language and expressions people used, the detail in their experiences, things that helped us to imagine ourselves in their spot, humor, things that made us think about ideas in a new way, and so on.

These are just some ideas to get the group started thinking about the experiences shared. Feel free to make up your own questions or, if everyone is already inspired to talk about the sharing session, to disregard the questions altogether.

CONCLUSION/WRAP-UP

10–15 MINUTES

Once again, you may want to reiterate the purpose of the session overall: to help each other hear what others hear—what really moves or interests others. You may want to bring up a couple of examples from the session’s sharing—creative ways to describe our experience or things that the group found particularly moving or interesting.

Alongside this purpose, to help hear our own story-telling as others hear it, is another focus; listening to others’ experiences can help inspire us to think about our own in new ways and—we hope—to write it down and send it in.

Encourage everyone to submit experience to the Basic Text project. Each submission needs to be accompanied by a copyright release form (which can be downloaded at www.na.org/conference/bt or requested from world services).

**Contributions can be emailed to WORLDBOARD@NA.ORG
or sent via post to:**

**World Board
19737 Nordhoff Place
Chatsworth, CA 91311 USA**

Writing Workshop

Full- or Half-Day

Depending on how much time you have, you can have a writing workshop for a full day or a half day (or even a weekend retreat).

SHARING OUR EXPERIENCE, STRENGTH, AND HOPE EXERCISE

90 MINUTES

You can begin the writing workshop with the previous session. That should warm people up, inspire them to think creatively, and help folks get to know one another.

BREAK

15 MINUTES

After the exercise above you'll probably want to take a break. Then you can come back together and get started writing.

INDIVIDUAL WRITING

30 MINUTES

After the break, let everyone know that you will take a half hour to write individually. Reassure everyone that no one expects a final "masterpiece" after this writing session, that you will be sharing these rough drafts with each other with the understanding that each piece of writing is just a starting place.

Urge everyone to be creative. Not everyone needs to tell their story from beginning to end. Some experience might start, "When I had 10 years clean, I lost everything I had..." or "Once I had a little time under my belt, I decided to go back to school." In other words, we are looking not just for traditionally structured contributions but also experience that may be focused around a theme, an event, a principle, and so on.

Encourage people to write about whatever they think would be their most significant contribution to the experience in the Basic Text. What in their experience might most help another addict?

Let everyone know when you'll be gathering back together to share each other's writing.

LUNCH

90 MINUTES

SHARING EACH OTHERS' WRITING

50 MINUTES

Gather in groups of four to share each other's writing. Each person will get a half hour for the reading and discussion of his or her piece. Each person should get a chance to read all the way through his or her writing before the group discusses it. Questions and comments should wait until the reading is finished.



After each person reads his or her piece, the group should discuss it. Some questions to think about might be:

- What did you like best about the piece?
- What did you want to hear more about?
- Was there anything that was confusing to you?
- Which parts seemed particularly well put—described really well?
- What seems like the “heart” of the piece (the “center of gravity” some writers call it)—the part of the writing that seems most important?

It may also help to talk some with the writer about his or her experiences in general—not necessarily what’s written down. What is the most significant gift he or she has received as a result of recovery? What’s the most important thing that has happened to him or her? What has been the biggest struggle or accomplishment? Are these things part of the writing? If they are, does the writing capture them as well as the discussion about them away from the writing? Is there anything from your conversation that could/should be captured in the writing? If these things are not part of the writing, do you think they should be?

BREAK

15 MINUTES

SHARING EACH OTHERS’ WRITING (CONTINUED)

60 MINUTES

Each group should have discussed two people’s writing in the first hour of group discussion. After a break, talk about the other two group members’ writing.

CONCLUSION/WRAP-UP

10–15 MINUTES

Come back together as a full group to conclude the day. See if anyone wants to share some things they learned today or ways the day was helpful. If it helped them to share their writing with others, remind them that they can take some time and make plans with one another to meet again. You may also want to schedule a follow-up writing session as a group to talk about your revised pieces.

Encourage everyone to use what they learned to complete a piece to submit the Basic Text project. Each submission needs to be accompanied by a copyright release form (you can make copies of the attached, or download it at www.na.org/conference/bt or requested from world services).

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**WORK-IN-PROGRESS SUBMISSION FORM
AND COPYRIGHT TRANSFER
INDIVIDUAL**

Work: _____

Submitting Individual: _____

With this document, I, the undersigned NA member, hereby submit the following input to be used in the above identified Work. The materials submitted herewith were prepared by myself as a member of the fellowship and working as a volunteer within the fellowship structure. I recognize that my contributions will be considered as input to NA World Services relating to the Work and will be used as appropriate. I agree that the Work is a "work made for hire" for Narcotics Anonymous World Services, Inc., the worldwide service entity of the fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous ("NAWS"), or if the Work does not technically qualify as such, then, for valuable sufficient consideration, receipt of which is hereby acknowledged, I hereby assign to NAWS all worldwide rights of copyright I may hold under any legal and/or equitable theories to the Work.

Please print and sign your full name date your signature.

NAME: _____

SIGNATURE: _____

Date: _____

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Address: _____

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Clean Date: _____