

Tell me your story – a story telling workshop

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Abstract

This two-hour workshop is aimed at people who use AAC and their carers/assistants. The workshop will provide an opportunity for participants to develop and relate a personal experience using their own AAC system. Participants will be provided with techniques and strategies to structure a reusable story and to store this in their AAC device or in paper-based format. The participants will develop a story with the help of their carer/assistant and will be invited to relate their stories to the group. The workshop will conclude with a reflection on story telling and AAC. The presenters will not be able to provide support on the technical aspects of individual AAC devices and participants are advised to bring along carers/assistants who will be able to help with this aspect of the workshop. Participants are also requested to think of an interesting/funny experience which they may want to tell others.

Long Abstract

The bulk of interactive conversational is characterised by narrative (Cheepen 1988). People share their stories with one another. Stories consist of anecdotes, jokes and experiences, and are used to promote social acceptance, social closeness and the expression of personality (Schank 1990; Husain 1997). Stories are particularly important as past experience and the ability to relate events is an essential part of a person's make-up. Conversational narrative provides a way of forming experience and relating past experience and plays an important part in an individual's social and educational development (McCabe and Peterson 1991). In addition it provides form and meaning to life and is used to create one's self-concept.

However, people who use AAC seldom engage in interactive story telling (Waller 1992; Stuart 2000; Soto, Hartmann and Wilkins 2006; Waller 2006). Research (Waller 1992; Waller and Newell 1997; Waller, O'Mara, Tait, Booth and Brophy-Arnott 2001; Waller and O'Mara 2003; Waller 2006) suggests that AAC systems are designed to support needs-based (transactional) conversation rather than narrative-based (interactive) conversation. As a result, people who use AAC do not often experience successful story telling and seldom have the opportunity to develop personal story telling skills.

Although most AAC systems are designed for need-based conversation, they can be used for story telling (Waller 2006). This workshop aims to highlight the importance of story telling for people who use AAC and to provide participants with strategies and techniques which can be used for effective story telling. The workshop will also provide participants with an opportunity to use these to develop and tell a story within the workshop.

The workshop will be divided into three sections:

Part 1: What is personal story telling? The presenters will discuss:

- the importance of stories;
- what makes a 'good' story;
- how to structure a good story;
- techniques for storing a reusable story;
- updating a story;

- narrating a story, emphasising the difference between a monologue and an interactive story.

Part 2: Putting theory into practice.

Participants will be encouraged to think of two stories with their carer/facilitator – a favourite story and a second story on a theme decided upon by the group. Participants will decide what medium they will use to store (in their device, or on paper) and narrate (using their device or having their partner relate it for them). They will then store their story. The presenters may not be able to assist in the technical aspects of device storage but will provide support on aspects of structure where necessary.

Part 3: Telling your story.

Participants will be invited to tell their stories to the group. The workshop will conclude with a reflection of the workshop experience.

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