

Storytelling for Change: Understanding Yourself

OVERVIEW & PURPOSE

This module helps scientists reflect upon who they are and where they come from, where they want to go in the sciences, and why. They are asked to think about and share their own interests, goals and motivations, and map out their personal pathway into the field. Scientists listen to and compare pathway stories, and identify unique and common story elements, including barriers, catalyzing events, and surprising misconceptions. Identify supporting, supportive communities, and communities of identity.

OBJECTIVES

1. Develop maps and stories that reveal and communicate meaning and values in the way that participants become scientists.
2. Begin to identify aspects of and elements within their own experience that participants can use to assemble narratives that can change the field.
3. Build familiarity, trust and community in the group of participants by sharing personal stories.

EXAMPLE RESOURCES

1. [Slides](#)
2. Worksheet: [Narrative Elements](#)

EXAMPLE ACTIVITY: PATHWAY MAPPING

Introductory presentation

1. Introduce pathway mapping as a way of making sense of where we are coming from and where we want to go. Emphasize that it is a low stakes activity for thinking and processing our experience, and that pathway maps do not need to be perfect, polished, comprehensive.

2. Show examples of pathway maps.
3. Introduce participants to the worksheet elements of a pathway story to help them think about the kinds of things they might consider and include in their maps.

Pathway mapping

4. Ask participants to draw their maps, reminding them that they will have the opportunity to present them and communicate their story. Remind them that they can share whatever they feel comfortable sharing.

Sharing and reflection

5. Break into small groups for sharing and reflection. Example instructions:
 - a. Brief introductions
 - b. Tell the story of your pathway map. (Or, choose to tell one story from your map.)
 - c. Small group discussion prompts:
 - i. Within your pathway map, can you find one episode that is surprising, counterintuitive, or that challenges dominant assumptions about, for instance, what your field is, why it is important, how one becomes a scientist or professional in your field, or who gets to be a scientist or professional?
 - ii. How might your pathway or particular stories in your pathway connect with or influence certain audiences or communities in terms of their perceptions of the field or their ability to become a part of its work?
6. As a whole group, ask participants to report on (1) shared experiences, (2) differences and (3) things that they thought were surprising, important or urgent, making notes of the diversity of perspectives on a whiteboard or equivalent.
7. Finish by discussing their important role as changemakers in the field, and in particular how their personal stories and connections to different communities can help them make an impact.

EXAMPLE ASSESSMENT

Please rate how strongly you agree or disagree: (Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, Strongly Agree)

- I enjoyed participating in this activity.
- I would recommend this to a friend or colleague.

Please rate your gains in the following areas: (No gain, Little gain, Moderate gain, Great gain, Not applicable)

- A sense that I belong in my field.

- An understanding of where I have come from, where I am going via my field and why.
- An understanding of how my pathway is similar to and different from the pathway maps of others.
- An understanding of how certain stories in my pathway might be important for others to hear.
- An understanding for how my pathway might provide narratives that influence or change norms about my field, its goals, the way it works and/or who is included.

Relative to before your participation in this activity, how likely are you now to: (Much less likely, Somewhat less likely, The same, More likely, Much more likely)

- To use the story of your own experience to influence who is included in your field.
- To use the story of your own experience to influence what your field does.
- Learn more about my field and how it can and should be changed.

What did you learn in this activity? Did anything surprise you?

What was most useful to you about this activity?

What recommendations do you have for improving this activity?

How can we support you in your activities going forward?

ADAPT AND REUSE THIS RESOURCE

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