

Portland VA Medical Center



**My Life, My Story
(MLMS)**

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OBJECTIVES



1. Explain the art and science of storytelling for better health outcomes.
2. Develop/implement and manage a storytelling program for your constituents at your workplace.
3. Design storytelling programs to suit your programming, organizational mission and goals.



LISTEN

TO A VETERAN'S – MY LIFE, MY STORY



VA



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Veterans Health Administration



WHY STORIES?

AUDIENCE FEEDBACK



VA



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Veterans Health Administration



HEALING POWER OF STORIES



VA



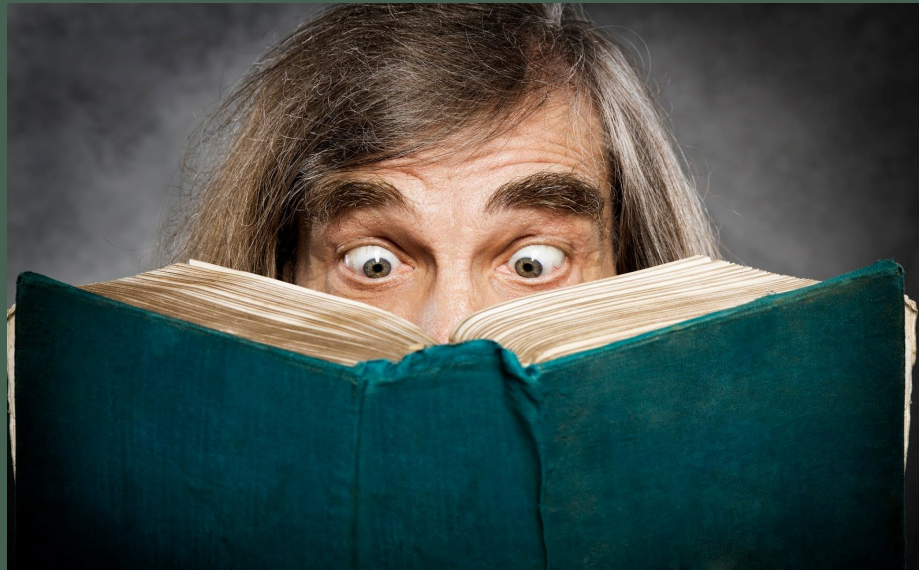
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Veterans Health Administration



Listening to the story helps the provider to deliver more humanistic health care.



When the patient re-tells their story they realize about their own resilience.



When the patient re-tells their story there is healing that takes place – in the mind, body and spirit.



My Life, My Story

Quotes from both sides of the aisle

- ❖ “The great thing with the stories is you have a little window into their lives” **A PROVIDER**
- ❖ “If anything were ever to happen to me, I would want my family to know there’s this free autobiography I’m leaving behind”
A VETERAN
- ❖ “It’s important to me to let them know that even though there were bad things that happened to me, there were also a lot of good, positive things I got out of the military.” **A VETERAN**
- ❖ “The things they said have changed how I look at things. It’s changed who I am.” **A PROVIDER**
- ❖ “Veterans talked about how they view life — that it’s not always the best ride, but [they say], ‘You know what? It’s my life. I own it. It’s who I am, and I wouldn’t change anything that happened.’ **A VETERAN**



RETHINKING OUR CURRENT MODEL.

WHO is the patient and what matters to them?



VA

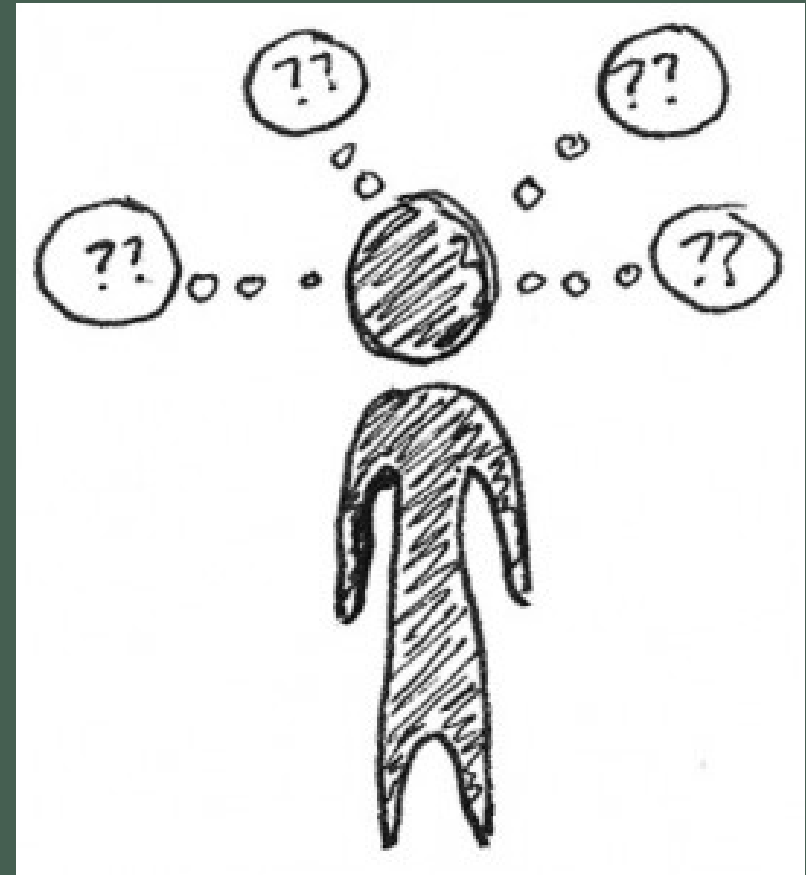


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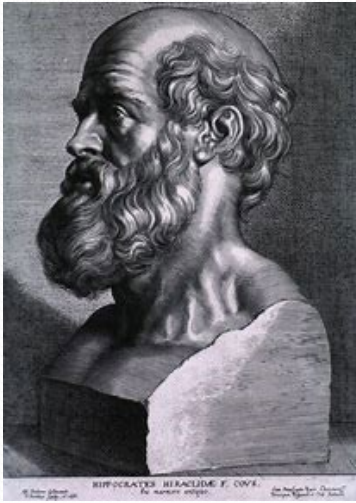
Who is the person in the chart?

Who is their family? Their support?

- Typical Description Social History
- Jane Doe, 45
 - Alcohol—3-4 drinks/week
 - Tobacco—1 PPD
 - Other Substances--none
 - Sexual history-one male partner
 - Hobbies/Work history/marital history—watching sports, retired, divorced

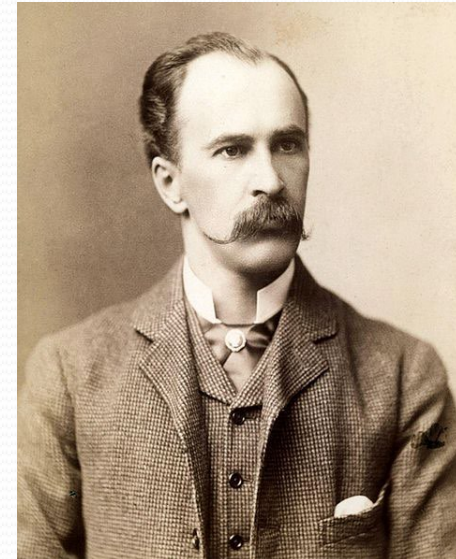


Why Do Stories Matter?



**It's far more important to know what person the disease has than what disease the person has.
– Hippocrates, 400 BCE**

The good physician treats the disease; the great physician treats the patient who has the disease. – Sir William Osler, 1848-1919



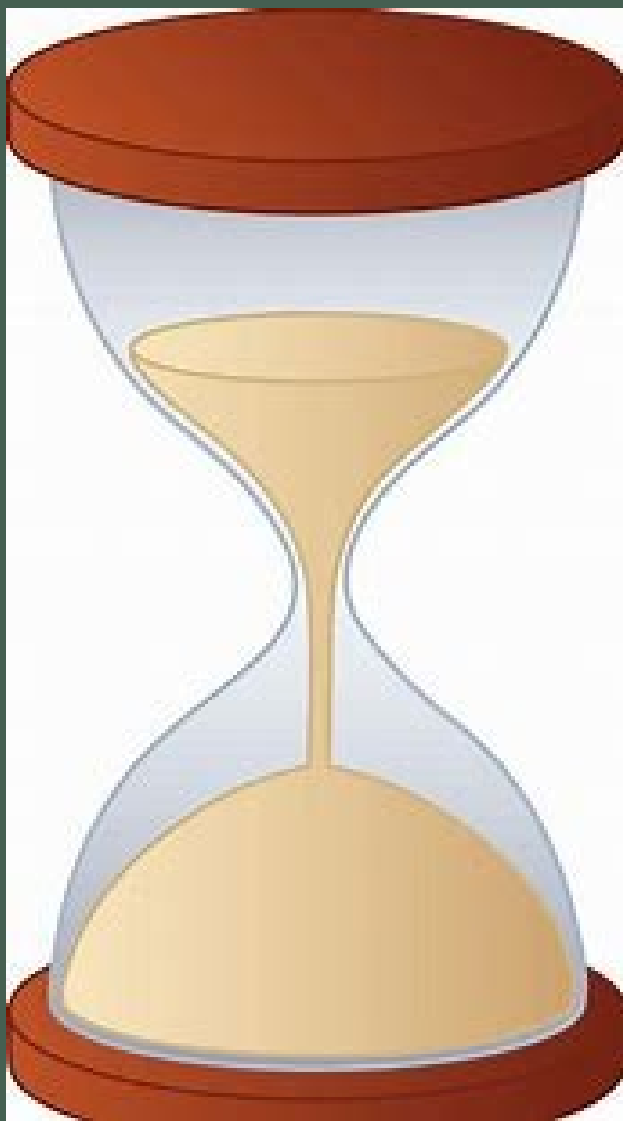
EXERCISE

What 
matters
to you?

EXERCISE

SIX-WORD MEMOIR







MY LIFE, MY STORY

WAS BORN IN 2013 @ THE MADISON WI
VA HOSPITAL

KEY ELEMENTS



Goals of the Program



The Interview – Start to Finish



Writing the Story



MY LIFE MY STORY PROCESS

**Read
back, edits**

Veteran

Permission

**Interview,
Write Up**

INTERVIEW

- ❖ Your role
- ❖ How to find participants
- ❖ Introducing the program
- ❖ Asking Permission

Permission to Record Story

- ❖ VA FORM 10- 3020 & 10-5345 – on file
- ❖ Verbal confirmation prior to recording interview
- ❖ Veteran states name and confirms consent

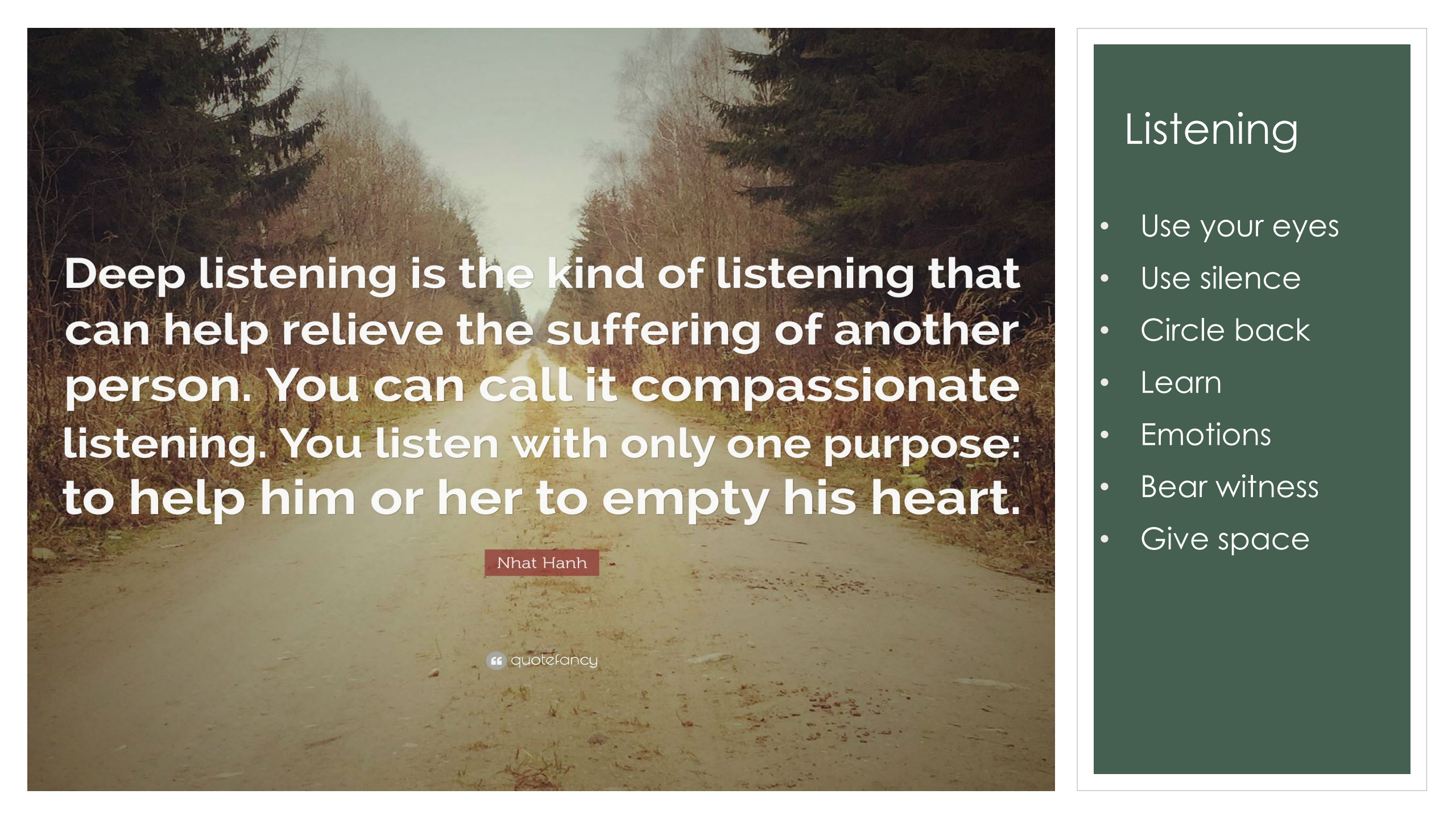
The Story

- The interview is where the story is born – it's first telling.
- Remember – it will be unique.
- Storytelling (both the telling and listening roles) is part of being human so relax and enjoy yourself. Whether you know it or not, you're a natural.



Suggested Questions

Available in:
“My Life, My
Story:
Interviewer
Guide”



Deep listening is the kind of listening that can help relieve the suffering of another person. You can call it compassionate listening. You listen with only one purpose: to help him or her to empty his heart.

Nhat Hanh

“ quote fancy

Listening

- Use your eyes
- Use silence
- Circle back
- Learn
- Emotions
- Bear witness
- Give space

Note taking

- No right or wrong way
- Techniques
 - Pacing
 - Mapping the interview
 - Circling back
 - Writing Guide

Guiding

- Create a comfortable and safe environment for the story
- Talkers
 - May need guidance, redirection
 - Listening to a good story ...
- Non-Talkers
- Details



What if?

- **Interruptions**

- When someone comes into the room to provide care for the Veteran, be sure to ask if you should leave. It is often best to leave and assure the Veteran that you will be back. Even if you are invited to stay in the room, read the situation.

- **Refusal or maybe**

- **Visitors in the room**

- **Long Interviews**

- *I've got quite a bit of information here. Please remember, we want people to read this story so we try to limit it to one or two pages. After I write the story, you will have a chance to add more if you wish.*

Writing

- As a writer of the story, you are more than a transcriptionist. You are bringing with you the experience of the interview, how it struck you, how it seemed to strike the Veteran.
- Features of a good story
 - Written in the first person
 - Nonjudgmental
 - Captures the voice of the Veteran
 - Accurately reflects the content
 - Non diagnostic (not labeling)



Writing Guidelines

- **First person. The Veteran is always the narrator.**
- **Voice of the Veteran.**
 - Make the writing sound as if the Veteran were talking to the reader, (speech & thought patterns)
- **Point of view** of the Veteran
- **Ask the question, “What do I include and what do I omit?”**
- **Quotes**
- **Avoid certain descriptions**
- **Accuracy & importance (to Veteran)**
- **Keep the story short.** 1-2 pages / 1000-1200 words maximum

Writing – other considerations

Source material

Notes
Recording
Mixing it up
Dialogue
Family

What to leave out

- Figures of speech
- Names of providers
- Meaningless details
- Contradictions
- Repetition
- Politics
- HIPAA identifiers (date of birth, full name, full location of birth/residence)

What to tone down

- Swears and cussing
- Racist and sexist language
- Asides and anecdotes

Reviewing the Story

✓ **Goal: Review story with Veteran as soon as possible**

- Review in person or virtually to read and validate for accuracy and any edits.
- Final copy mailed to Veteran for approval prior to posting in EMR.
- If unable to review, contact MLMS local team

We have a story. What next?

- Final approved story will be entered into CPRS by My Story team.

Resources

1. Ringler, T., Ahearn, E.P., Wise, M., Lee, E.R., & Krahn, D. (2015). Using Life Stories to Connect Veterans and Providers. Federal Practitioner. 32(6), 8-14. <http://www.fedprac-digital.com/federalpractitioner/june2015?pg=17#pg17>
2. Roberts, T. J., Ringler, T., Krahn, D., Ahearn, E. (2021). The My Life, My Story program: Sustained impact of veterans' personal narratives on healthcare providers 5 years after implementation. Health Communication, 36(7), 829-836.DOI: [10.1080/10410236.2020.1719316](https://doi.org/10.1080/10410236.2020.1719316)
3. Susan Nathan, Laura L. Fiore, Stephanie Saunders, Sandra O. Vilbrun-Bruno PA-C, Kate LM Hinrichs, Marcus D. Ruopp, Andrea Wershof Schwartz & Jennifer Moye (2019) My life, my story: Teaching patient centered care competencies for older adults through life story work, Gerontology & Geriatrics Education, DOI: [10.1080/02701960.2019.1665038](https://doi.org/10.1080/02701960.2019.1665038)
4. Roberts TJ, Ringler T, Jovaag S. The VA Storybook Program: Humanizing Care With Nurse Stories. Nursing Science Quarterly. 2021;34(4):398-404. DOI: [10.1177/08943184211031575](https://doi.org/10.1177/08943184211031575)
5. Megan E. Gately, Sarah Muccini, Brady A. Eggleston & Jaye E. McLaren (2021) Program Evaluation of My Life, My Story: Virtual Storytelling in the COVID-19 Age, Clinical Gerontologist, DOI: [10.1080/07317115.2021.1931610](https://doi.org/10.1080/07317115.2021.1931610)

MLMS VA & Media websites

- [My Life, My Story - Whole Health \(va.gov\)](#)
- [Diffusion Marketplace \(va.gov\)](#)
- [My Life, My Story | VA Boston Health Care | Veterans Affairs](#)
- [Medical Storytelling at the VA Bridges Gap Between Patients And Caregivers : Shots - Health News : NPR](#)
- [Story Time | On Wisconsin Magazine \(uwalumni.com\)](#)

Podcasts

- VA Presents: My Life, My Story <https://www.spreaker.com/show/the-va-presents-my-life-my-story>
- Storytelling Helps Hospital Staff Discover The Person Within The Patient <https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2019/06/08/729351842/storytelling-helps-hospital-staff-discover-the-person-within-the-patient>

In the media

- https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/health-science/doctors-are-taught-early-about-patient-histories-is-it-time-for-different-questions/2018/04/27/145deeb8-4251-11e8-8569-26fda6b404c7_story.html
- <https://www.wsj.com/articles/to-improve-care-veterans-affairs-asks-patients-their-life-stories-11562146202>



QUESTIONS, COMMENTS, REFLECTIONS?

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