

Story Telling

Story Telling for a Third Person

Sometimes it is hard to tell an emotional story about yourself as all the feelings can get in the way. It might be that telling it about someone in the 3rd person might make it easier.

In a consultation about respite care, one boy was very upset to be away from home and was overwhelmed with tears when asked to think about what it was like for him to be in respite because he missed his mum. This boy was very keen on Scooby Doo. He was asked to think about a Scooby Doo adventure when the Scooby Doo team were going to try to find out what was good or not so good about the respite care setting. Because he was answering for Scooby Doo and his gang, the emotion was not overwhelming and he was able to say what he liked or didn't like so much about the setting.

Activities Velma might like at the Orchard



trampoline!
football! watching
TV playing catch
the teddy!
making cakes and pizz

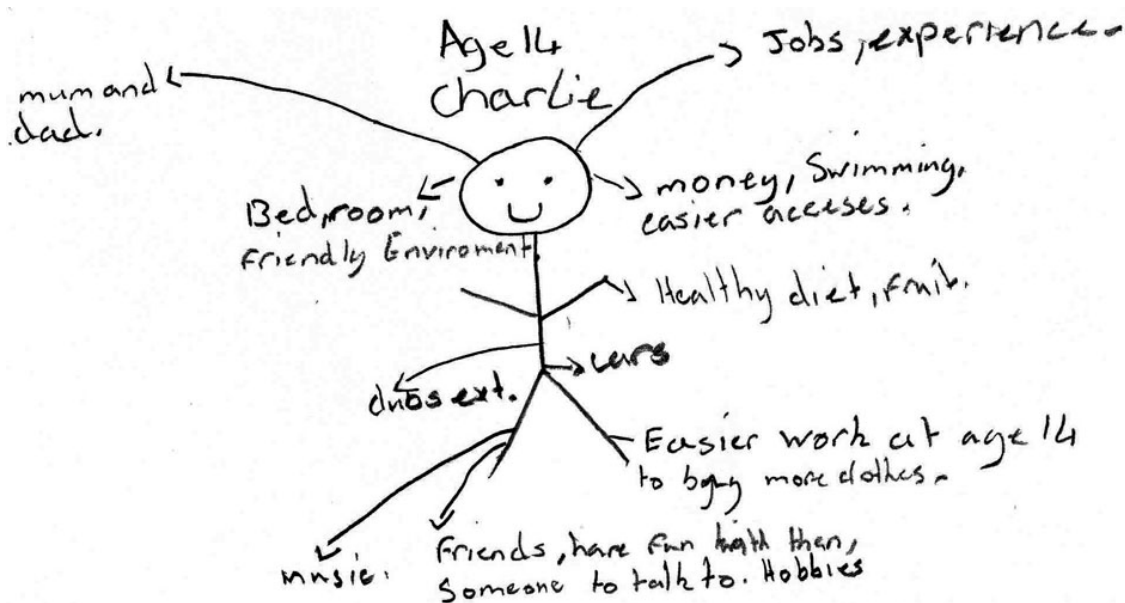
An imaginary child or young person

Sometimes if your life has many good and not so good things going on it is hard to talk about it. Or sometimes it is just easier to talk about only the good bits or only the not so good bits. It can be helpful in the first instance to make up an imaginary person and an ideal imaginary life for them. It is easier to prompt someone to think about a particular area of life when it is for an imaginary person and they can make up anything they like. Once that person's view of an ideal imaginary life is on paper, then it is easier to talk about how real life compares to this.

This method was used when asking children and young people about "What makes a good life?" (HCF 2011). In the first instance they were asked to imagine a young person, give them a name and an age and draw them if they liked. Then they were asked about what that young person would need to have a good life. Once the imaginary story had been told this became the template for the young person to tell their own story.

A shared imaginary person was used with children and young people who had experience of gender based violence (HCF 2010). They were able to describe both challenges and positives for the imaginary young person, which would be informed by their own experience, but not require them to revisit or share their personal story.

This method was also used in the report "Ideas about Sadness" report (HCF 2010) to get children and young people to describe sadness without reliving any sadness they had themselves experienced.



Story telling with disposable cameras

Some young people with learning difficulty find it hard to answer open questions about their lives. It is hard to narrow down the questions to make them easier to answer without making leading questions. Also, sometimes when asked a question some young people might think there is a 'correct' answer and will provide that whether or not it is true for them.

In these and other instances, and where ability and time allow, it can be useful to offer the use of disposable cameras. They are quite simple to operate and many children/young people enjoy using them. It is useful to work out with the child/young person what it is they are going to take photos of and to make a list for them to use to tick off the photos when taken. It is a good idea also to give them a note of what the photos are for and how they will be used for them to show to any person whose photo they want to take. The photos may only be used as a prompt to tell the story although sometimes young people might chose to make a slide show/album with their photos and comments to tell their story, so people would need to agree to their photo being used in that way.

Once the list is made the young person can have a time limit (2 weeks or whatever is appropriate) to take the photos. These can then be developed and the young person can chat through the photos and be asked questions about them. This has proved a very useful way of allowing some young people to tell their story.

The Forum has used this method in 3 studies, when asking young people about their experience of respite services, in the transitions project "It's My Journey" and in the study about "What makes a good life?"



"I like to create computer characters with my friend Zel."

Story Telling with Props Brave Bear

Brave Bear can be put in all sorts of places where children might want to go and are not sure of, up on the climbing frame, on the swing, balancing on the stepping stones. Children have to help Brave Bear by telling him what to do. They might want to show him or help him to do it. This will allow children to verbalise their fears but also their problem solving and risk assessment skills. It can build their confidence too, as they become enablers.



What If?

Bears, dolls, puppets, superheroes and others can be placed in different places and children asked to tell the story of what the bear or doll is up to and what is happening. The 'What If' game lets children problem solve for the bear/other character. It can be fun "What if he was met by aliens?" "What if he finds a hippo in his garden?" or other far fetched stories. In between some more serious possibilities can be considered: "What if he was lost at the shops?", "What if he was approached by a stranger?", or "What if people were not being nice to him?".

Talking Teddy

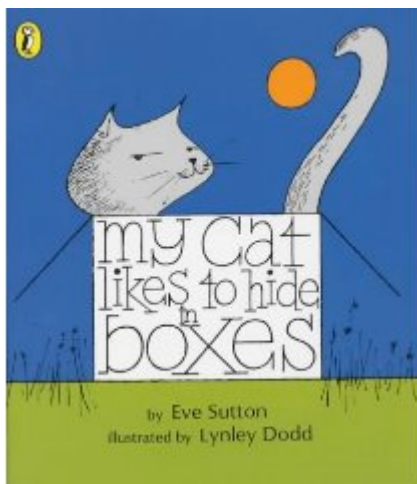


In a pre-school centre a talking teddy was special and was only brought out at circle time from his bed. Children who would normally not contribute to the circle time in front of the whole group were able to talk to teddy. Also it can encourage the children to listen as Talking Teddy can only hear the person who is holding him and others need to stay quiet so that he can hear.

Favourite Stories

Most children will have favourite storybooks, ones they love to hear over and over again. When these stories have repeating lines children can enjoy being able to anticipate what is coming next and jump in with the words.

This method was used to ask a girl with very limited communication about her experience of a respite care setting. Vicky was very fond of stories with repeating lines as she could use her "Switch" communication tool to take part in stories. The Switch could be set with the repeating line and Vicky loved knowing the right time to press the switch to join in telling the story. Many different stories were tried and 'My Cat Likes to Hide in Boxes' came out tops. The story was made of rhyming couplets.



My Cat Likes to Hide in Boxes by Eve Sutton, Published by Puffin

A story was written in rhyming couplets about Vicky as a Princess, a role she liked to adopt. This included lots of things Vicky was known to like (such as her brother getting in to trouble) and didn't like (such as bedtime). Rhyming couplets were used to put alternate answers on the switch in response to the question in the story "Does Vicky like this?"

"I like this, I like this, I like this you see, this is very nice for me"
or

"No, no, no, I don't like it, not one teeny tiny bit"

Once Vicky was able to consistently use her switch to alternately say what she did or did not like, part of her real story was offered in the same way. Vicky was being asked about her experience of a respite setting, so her daily routine was written with "Does Vicky like this?" at regular points. The Switch was set up alternately for the positive and negative rhyming couplets as before. The story was then repeated a few times in different settings to see if Vicky was consistent in what she said she did and didn't like.

Vicky was able to demonstrate consistent responses about her experience and therefore her preferences when at the respite setting.