



## Storytelling - Expressive Arts Programs

### Intended Audience

All members including people living with cancer, family members and significant caregivers.

### Program Description

Stories have always been a classic way to capture life experiences, impart wisdoms and share humour. At Wellspring Calgary, stories are a central part of every program, whether exchanged between friends at the kitchen table, or used as a tool for emotional exploration and release. Storytelling encourages members to tell their story in creative ways to unearth, embrace and share with friends and family, including verbal, visual, music, drama, writing and film-making genres.

### Benefits and Impact

Much has been written about the mental, emotional and spiritual benefits of storytelling. In whatever medium or measure it unfolds, storytelling is a healing art that connects people, expands views and promotes understanding, compassion and tolerance. In these extraordinary sessions of sharing and bearing witness to the experiences of fellow members, gifts of gratitude, grace and healing abound.

### What to Expect at a Session

In the various story-focused programs, facilitators understand the need for individual input, making a comfortable and safe space to share with others. In visual art forms, members tap into the imagination in a multi-dimensional, multi-media approach. In digital film media, members collect photos and music relevant to their lives and use storyboard techniques to organize the materials. In classic oral and harp storytelling, stories live on the breath, in the beat of the heart, in the rise and fall of the human voice with the chords of the harp as counterpoint. With music as a storytelling medium, members create playlists, identify key anchor songs to uplift and connect, and may write their own stories as songs. As individuals discover a genre that fits their style, they spend time growing and expanding and realizing the rich effects that storytelling has to offer. No previous experience is required in any of the Wellspring programs.

### Participant Comments

*"This class is a hospitable gathering of warm spirits."*

*"I felt my stress and fear melt away as I put my story out there."*

*"In this setting you are able to set the real world aside."*

### Related Programs:

Creative Journaling  
Digital Storytelling  
Improvisation  
Music is my Therapy  
Story in the Photo  
Telling Our Stories  
Writers' Studio  
...and more, within visual art, music and dramatic genres.

### What the Research Says:

A study of the benefits of a cancer related storytelling workshop examined the therapeutic effects it produced. A questionnaire determined the cognitive, affective, interpersonal and personal impact of storytelling. Findings showed 97% of participants felt storytelling helped them cope with cancer while 87% of respondents agreed that hearing others' stories of living with cancer gave them hope (Chelf J.H., Deshler A.M., Hillman S., Durazo-Arvizu R., 2000. Storytelling for Living and Coping With Cancer. Cancer Nursing 23(1):1-5).

FOR FURTHER RESEARCH LINK, CLICK HERE:  
<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/10673801>

### Program Frequency:

Variable, depending on program

Optimum class size:16

