STORY SHARING is one of the most powerful ways we connect to the world, to ourselves, and to the human experience. During a Story Swap, we tell our stories and listen to the stories of others. We imagine what it might be like to walk in another's shoes. Story Swap is a laboratory for empathy in which we explore the role of narrative in our work and in our lives. By crafting meaningful narratives together, we deepen our understanding of ourselves and the humanity and the necessity of facing difficult conversations and cultural divisions with kindness and empathy.

An escape from the jail of the self, leading to the ultimate adventure – seeing life through the eyes of another.

—TOBIAS WOLFF

2015 National Medal of Arts award-winner

Deeply moving, informative, and touching to the human spirit in ways which are not so easily achieved via other routes.

—DIPESH NAVSARIA

Aspen Institute Ascend Fellow, 2015

The experience starts when a group comes together with a desire to connect, deepen understanding, and build bridges across differences. A series of simple exercises creates a safe space for vulnerability and confidentiality.

Participants are paired up and invited to share personal stories with their partners about a life experience that was particularly meaningful or transformative.

Participants then write their partners’ stories using the first-person narrative voice, the very powerful "I," adopting that story as their own. The group explores writing techniques that will maximize a story's impact and power.

These written stories are shared back to the entire group, with each person telling their partner's story as if it were their own.

What's the take-away?

- Methods for listening deeply to the stories of others
- Tools to help craft meaningful narratives
- A connection with those who shared the Story Swap experience, leading to deeper understanding and thoughtful communications
- An escape from the jail of the self, leading to the ultimate adventure – seeing life through the eyes of another.

Learn more

- Visit aspenwords.org/programs/story-swap/ to view a brief video
- Email aspenwords@aspeninstitute.org
- Call 970 925 3122

What does it take?

- An Aspen Words facilitator
- 8–30 participants
- At least 5 hours, depending on the size of the group
- A conference room or classroom
- A space to talk about difficult subjects and conflicts

An Aspen Words facilitator is required for Story Swap. More information can be found at aspenwords.org/programs/story-swap/.