



## **Tips for Storytelling, Safety and Best Practice**

Thank you for your interest in the Moth Education Programs! We are overwhelmed by the positive response to the program.

We are growing slowly, and we don't yet have the capacity to bring an official Moth Program to your school, but we will be in touch as soon as we're able to do so. Nonetheless, we do encourage you to engage your students in storytelling work! *We just ask that you not call it The Moth, as we are not officially involved.*

Here are a few tricks of the trade that we've learned along the way. We'd love to hear how your project goes. Please stay in touch for future collaboration!

### **Storytelling tips**

Here are a few key ways that we guide students in shaping their stories:

- Stories have a *change*. The main character (you!) has to change in some way from beginning to end.
- Stories have *stakes*. Why did this moment matter to you?
- Know where your story is heading. Steer clear of meandering endings!
- Be YOURSELF. This is not a monologue, a standup routine, or a rant.

### **Creating a Safe Space**

Storytelling can be a vulnerable process. We aim to create a space where this process can occur safely.

- Encourage students to share only stories they are ready to share; welcome funny, light stories alongside emotionally intense ones.
- Model this by sharing example stories that illustrate a range of different emotional tones.
- Make sure the students know that they are in control in this situation- no one is forcing them to talk. Encourage them to know their own boundaries, and respect those boundaries.
- Encourage students to listen to one another respectfully.
- A reminder that as a mandated reporter, you are required to report any stories of ongoing abuse, self-harm, or suicidal thoughts to authorities as your school protocol requires.

### **Best practice when helping students shape their stories**

In the classroom, we are not the artists. Our goal is to be facilitators, giving students the tools to become artists themselves.

- We cannot tell a student what their story means to them. We can only guide them towards discovering that on their own terms.
- Avoid leading questions. (Think: “How did you feel when that happened?” instead of “Were you *so devastated* when that happened?”)
- Frame feedback as suggestions and not mandates.
- Model respectful feedback so that students can learn to give feedback to one another.

### **Special note if staging a storytelling show in your school**

- Students often tell stories about ongoing situations. Be aware and tread carefully when the act of sharing a story with the wider community might influence a student’s current social or family situation. We like to use the phrase: “Tell stories from your scars, not your wounds.”
- If a student is telling a story that involves people at school, he or she should get permission from those parties before sharing onstage. If that is impossible to do, it may be a clue that this is not an appropriate story for a storytelling show in the community.

If you have any questions about these tips, please get in touch at [education@themoth.org](mailto:education@themoth.org).