

Activity idea for: *'Stories of Psychological Practice from Neonatal Care'*

Exploring Further Stories

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Stories are not just inert descriptions of things that have happened. They have real power to change our world. The stories that we tell become the stories that we live, day-to-day, through our coordinated action with others. In an influential 2009 TED talk, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie warns of the '[Dangers of a Single Story](#)'. When we reduce our perspective to one single story, that story becomes our reality. Other stories and perspectives get closed down. We can get stuck. It becomes harder to change. Other stories, experiences and people become marginalised. Our worlds become impoverished.

The following activity moves away from a 'single story' and aims to help you explore the many, diverse stories about neonatal care held by you and others. Our hope is that this will create space for new, flexible, respectful and responsive understandings to emerge from your interaction with this book.

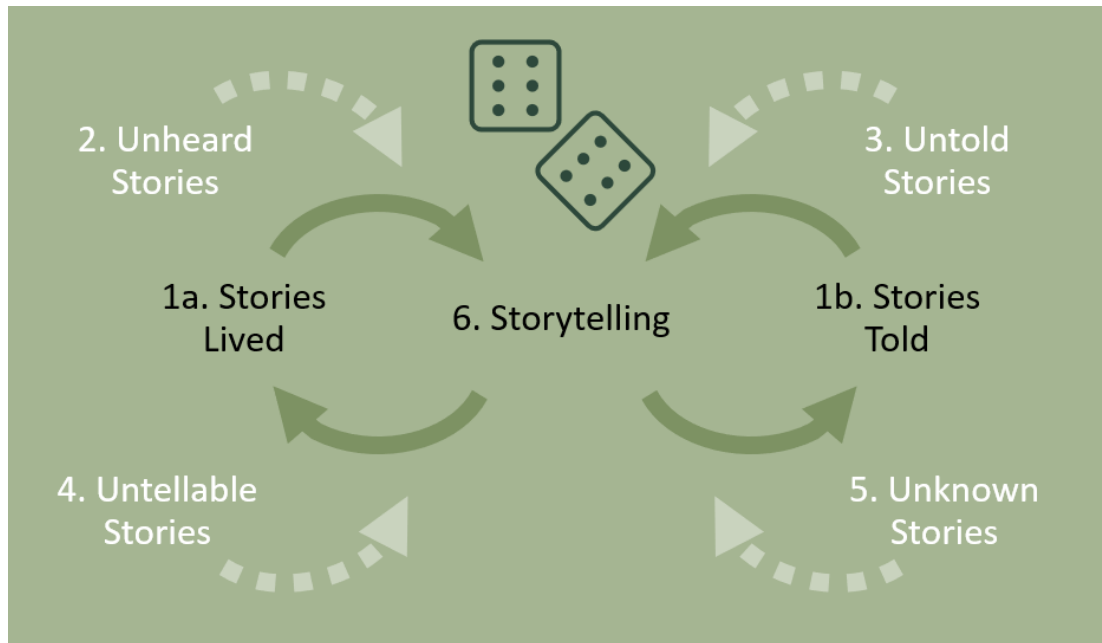
You will need:

- A single six-sided dice
- The instructions on the next page
- A healthy dose of curiosity and courage.
- Ideally a small group to work with (three – four people), though the activity can be adapted to support individual reflection, too.

This activity explores the stories we tell (and don't tell) about neonatal care, the stories we live through our day to day lives, and also how we go about telling and living these stories. There might be other stories, too, that sit around the margins of our experiences and are harder to notice. There are unheard stories, untold stories, untellable stories, and unknown stories.¹

¹ This activity is based on the LUUUTT model developed by W. Barnett Pearce and Kim Pearce originally outlined in: Pearce, W. B., and Pearce, K. (1998). Transcendent storytelling: Abilities for systemic practitioners and their clients. *Human systems*, 9(3-4), 167 – 184.





Instructions:

1. One person rolls the dice and identifies the corresponding type of story from the table on the next page.
2. Based on the number you've rolled, discuss a story of that type that exists about neonatal care. In the table on the next page, for each type of story, there are some prompts to help your exploration. You can also consider, for all types of story:
 - a) Where do these stories come from? What is their history? Have they always been this way?
 - b) How might our power or privilege be impacting on the stories that get told and heard, and those that don't?
 - c) What impact do these stories have on the world?
3. Try not to get caught up in the detail of 'which story fits where?' It's all a matter of perspective anyway. What matters here is that you explore and play with the ideas, rather than getting them in the 'correct' category.

On each turn, just focus on one story, in depth, rather than trying to list every story you can think of. Then, move onto the next person, who takes a turn from number 1. Timing for each turn will depend on how long you have, but try to spend at least ten minutes exploring each story you identify.





1. Stories told and stories lived

Stories Told

- What stories get told (by you, or by others) about babies', families' and professionals' experiences of neonatal care?
- If you were explaining to someone: "This is what neonatal care is all about," what story would you tell?

Stories Lived

('Stories Lived' are realities we create in our lives through coordinated action with others.)

- How does/did it feel to experience neonatal care, for you or others? Which parts stand out as most significant?
- If I was a fly on the wall of the unit, what would I notice?
- How do lived experiences of neonatal care differ from the stories that get told about it?



2. Unheard stories

- What stories about neonatal care get told, but are not heard?
- What stops people from hearing them?
- What might make space for more listening and hearing, and what might be the impact?



4. Untellable stories

- What stories about neonatal care do not feel permitted to tell? What feels taboo?
- If it felt safe enough for these stories to be told (and heard), what might be the impact?
- What might help to create that safety?



6. Storytelling

Storytelling is about how we tell the stories in our lives. The way that we tell stories shapes how they become established, change, and become people's reality.

- How do stories about neonatal care get told, when and by whom?
- Who gets to tell the stories? Who pays attention?
- When you witness some of these stories being told, how are they received? What kind of response are they met with?
- How could the power of storytelling be harnessed in service of creating safer, fairer, more effective and compassionate systems of neonatal care?



3. Untold stories

- What stories do you hold about neonatal care that you have not yet told?
- What gets in the way of these stories being told?
- If these stories were told (and heard), what might be the impact?



5. Unknown stories

- What might be missing in your stories of neonatal care?
- What story might someone with a completely different perspective tell?
- How might you proactively seek out these alternative perspectives?