

METROWEST STORIES

Center for Arts and Wellness, 125 Turnpike Rd #10, Westborough, MA
2nd Thursday of every month at 7:00 pm. Doors open at 6:45 pm.

We believe that everyone has a story. Our goal is to create a forum for individual self-expression to cultivate self-awareness, foster human connection, and inspire each other to become our best selves through the art of storytelling.

Throughout history, storytelling has served to inspire and connect human hearts and minds. Storytelling as an ancient art form has the ability to build bridges and forge connections by fostering compassion, understanding and empathy. A well-crafted story has the potential to open our minds to new possibilities, ignite our spirit and inspire us to continue on the journey of becoming the best version of ourselves (as individuals and as a community), to encourage anyone who ever doubted they had a story worth telling.

Metro West Stories provides a stage, a microphone, a timekeeper and a theme to inspire and shape the evening. A lively and *supportive* audience is an active part of making this event special. Interested storytellers drop their name in a hat, 10 names get pulled at random and are heard. Storytellers are chosen at random, limited to five minutes. After all the stories are told the audience picks their favorite of the evening.

RULES

What to do / *not do*

Embrace your inner fearless storyteller. Leave your fear, self-doubt and uncertainty at the door. Storytelling requires expressing yourself by connecting directly with the audience; therefore stories are *told* not read – no notes, paper, or cheat sheets allowed.

Connect with the audience by knowing your story well (i.e., “by heart”) Stories must be true, factual events that occurred in real life. *How* you tell your story is just as important as *what* you say. In other words, while knowing your story well is imperative, rote memorization of factual data or presenting a timeline of events is not on the agenda. Speak from the heart, share a part of yourself & enjoy the process!

Be brave!

Allowing yourself to be vulnerable / share a part of yourself is essential in live storytelling. Are you taking a calculated risk? Explain *why* this story is important to *you*. If you can't explain, you should consider telling a different story. Ask yourself – are you stretching yourself even slightly outside your comfort zone? If not, what you are considering presenting might be more of an essay that is best expressed “on the page, not the stage.”

Have an engaging “hook”

Have a great first line that grabs attention and gets the audience invested in hearing more.

No. “So I’ve always wanted to drive across country. But then I got hooked on the latest episode of _____, ate dinner, took a nap and my sister called and vented about her job, then I did some laundry (a whites load) (I hate laundry, but I am proud of myself for overcoming my aversion to it...) and then I thought about it again and made a commitment to plan my cross country adventure.”

Yes. “I felt a rush of adrenaline as I navigated the dark, winding road that led to my AirBnB rental. For the first time in my life, I felt a deep sense of exhilaration with my newfound freedom. My feelings of personal empowerment were slowly being washed away by waves of anxiety as I carefully monitored my spotty cell phone coverage and rapidly draining cell phone battery...the thought of being alone, stuck in the middle of nowhere with no ability to communicate with the outside world started to become more of a reality.

Know your story well and have fun!

No pressure! Imagine you are telling a story to friends or family members at a social gathering. Think: relaxed dinner party vs. formal presentation. Create an outline, memorize the main points, use your imagination to make the details engaging and have fun!

Have a clear destination in mind with a solid ending

Going off on a tangent will kill a story! Start with a clear end in mind. Bring the audience along with you, but remember, you are navigating the journey and must know the final destination. Keep your eyes on the road!

Stay true to storytelling format – this is not a forum for standup comedy routines

Metro West Stories enjoys humor and requires that all participants tell funny *stories*. (No standup comedy routines please).

Angry outbursts without a clear point and without following the guidelines listed below * will be interrupted.

If you're experiencing unresolved anger issues, speak to a trained therapist, or channel your anger into a story with specific point. (Stories can be therapeutic!)

Essays vs. Storytelling: Know the difference between what is more appropriate for the “page vs. the stage”.

Cultivating your authentic “voice” can be accomplished via the written word (essay) or channeled into a gripping story better suited for an oral presentation – it is important to know the difference.

Remember this is not a rant, a comedy performance or a therapy session.

No fake accents

Your story should be presented in your own voice, or that of your culture of origin. If your story does not meet these criteria, please consider another story. Imitating accents from another culture or race is often offensive and rarely serves to foster connection, understanding and empathy.

Please use this forum to practice civility and respect. Speech that is considered that has any hint of racist, homophobic or misogynistic undertones or any form of hate speech is not welcome.

Who are we?

Jennifer Lauretti-Robbins, host of Metrowest Stories, is a clinical health psychologist who has been fascinated with the art of storytelling from a very young age. She would sit for hours, listening with rapt attention to her beloved grandmother and distant family members exchange stories about life growing up in rural Italy and how they navigated their journey to living in the United States. She is a fan of the Moth Radio Hour and This American Life. She believes in the fundamental power of developing self-awareness and fostering human connection, understanding and empathy through the power of storytelling.

THEME:

Each month’s theme will be listed on the Center for Arts and Wellness website and Facebook pages.