

World YWCA's Storytelling Work Guides

# BLOOMING WILDFLOWERS

Weaving Stories of Activism



# PART 1: REVIEWING THE POWER OF STORYTELLING



# WORK GUIDE 1: SELF ASSESSMENT OF MINDSET, UNIQUENESS AND PURPOSE

Before working through this work guide, read through the corresponding section.

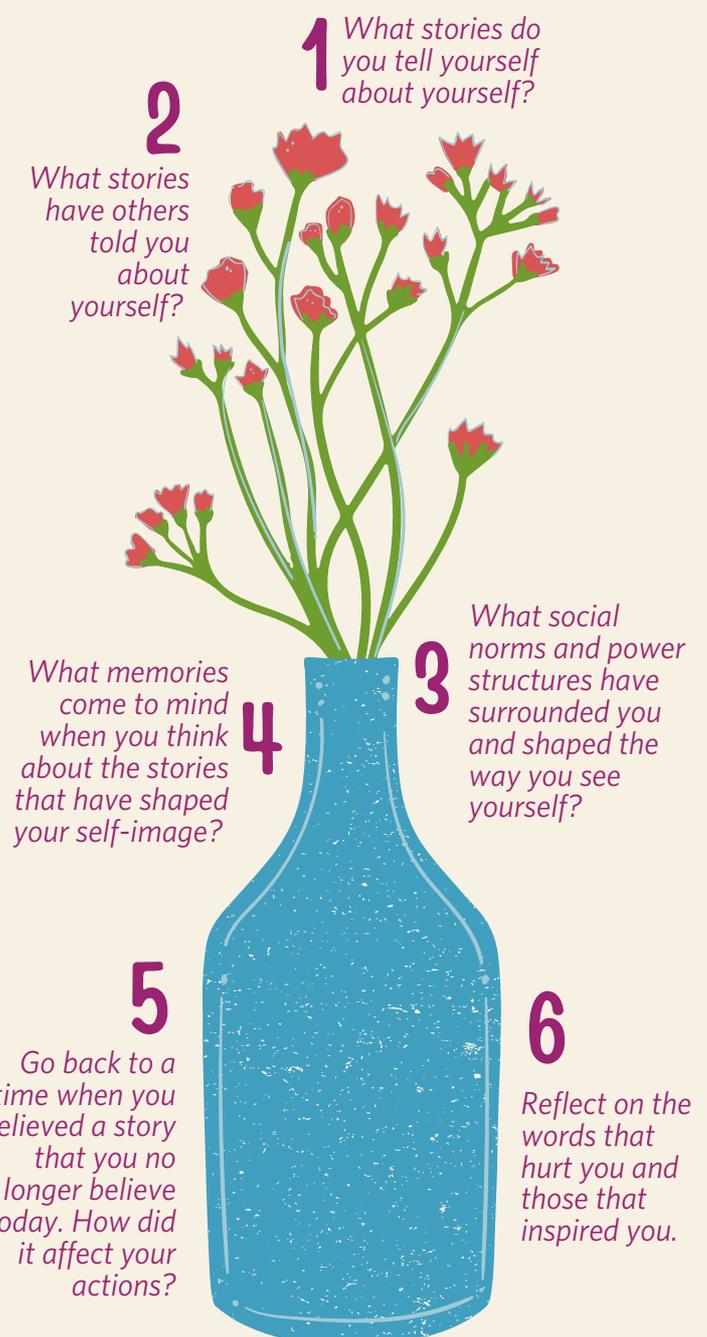
To complete this work guide, you will need:

→ A fresh journal, notebook or a digital document. Putting your thoughts and ideas into words will help you find clarity, which will strategically guide you forward in your work.

→ An open mind. See this as a gift to yourself and to the people you serve. The time you spend on this work is an investment in the impact you will make.

## NOTES

Take time to ask yourself the above questions and journaling your thoughts and answers. Try to practice unfiltered writing - write down anything that comes to mind without judgement. Write your responses like no one will ever read them.



Now that you've explored the stories that have shaped you, pinpoint the stories that are not serving you. Then ask yourself the following questions and journal your responses.

Are there people you need to forgive? Write down their names

Is there work for you to do to change your own narrative? What do you feel like you need to reshape these stories?

Now, write down how you truly want to be. How do you want to act and behave?

- *What do you want to feel?*
- *What do you want to think about yourself and others?*
- *Do you want to lead and inspire?*
- *Do you want to be calm and stress free?*
- *Do you want ease and flow in your life?*
- *Do you want success and freedom?*

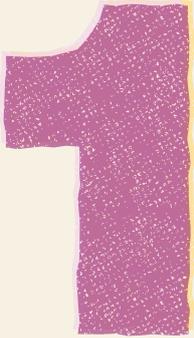
**WHATEVER IT MAY BE, WRITE DOWN EVERYTHING YOU CAN THINK OF!**

NOTES

What stories do you want to replace the negative narratives with? Write down a new narrative for each story that is not serving you.

## DEFINE YOUR STRENGTHS AND YOUR UNIQUENESS

When you harness all that is within YOU, you can go to places that seem impossible to reach. When you connect and understand your uniqueness, you will strengthen your confidence, build a more resilient mindset, and connect with people in an authentic way. Your uniqueness is so important to support people through your activism - and in essence to create the impact you're working towards.



## REFLECT ON YOUR UNIQUENESS

Your strengths come in different forms. On the one hand, you have your learned skills, acquired experience and knowledge. On the other hand, you have your innate strengths, passions and talents you were born with. Your personality and characteristics are incredibly important assets in your journey as a leader, changemaker or storyteller.

On a blank page, write down all of your learned skills, education and experience. This can include both your professional and your personal life skills - everything that you see as an asset.

Continue with a new list of all of your natural strengths, talents, passions and characteristics that make you unique. This can be anything from your humor, sensitivity, ideas, chill vibe or analytical mind.

**IF YOU'RE QUESTIONING WHETHER AN EXPERIENCE, SKILL OR CHARACTERISTIC IS A STRENGTH, ASK YOURSELF WHAT IT HAS TAUGHT YOU, OR WHY IT'S BEEN IMPORTANT IN YOUR LIFE.**

# 2

## ASK PEOPLE YOU KNOW AND TRUST

Many of us have a hard time writing down our strengths - or the little voice in our head puts us down before we recognize our amazingness. Many times, other people can identify our strengths more clearly than we can ourselves. This next challenge is incredibly important. Don't skip it!

List at least 10 people you know and trust. Connect with them. (YES, 10!)

Ask them what they feel are your top 3 strengths.

**THE VULNERABILITY IN DOING THIS EXERCISE IS GOING TO MASSIVELY HELP YOU TAKE TREMENDOUS LEAPS FORWARD TO BUILD A SUSTAINABLE FOUNDATION FOR YOUR JOURNEY AS A LEADER.**



# 3

## CONTINUE YOUR PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

So, there are a lot of different ways to continue to learn about and understand your innate strengths and uniqueness. Understanding more about who you are and how you work, will help you take action that's aligned with you as a person. You can say no to things that just don't feel like you. Read books, listen to podcasts, journal regularly, see a therapist or share with someone you trust, be open to learning and go explore!

Write down 3 things you will do to continue your personal development

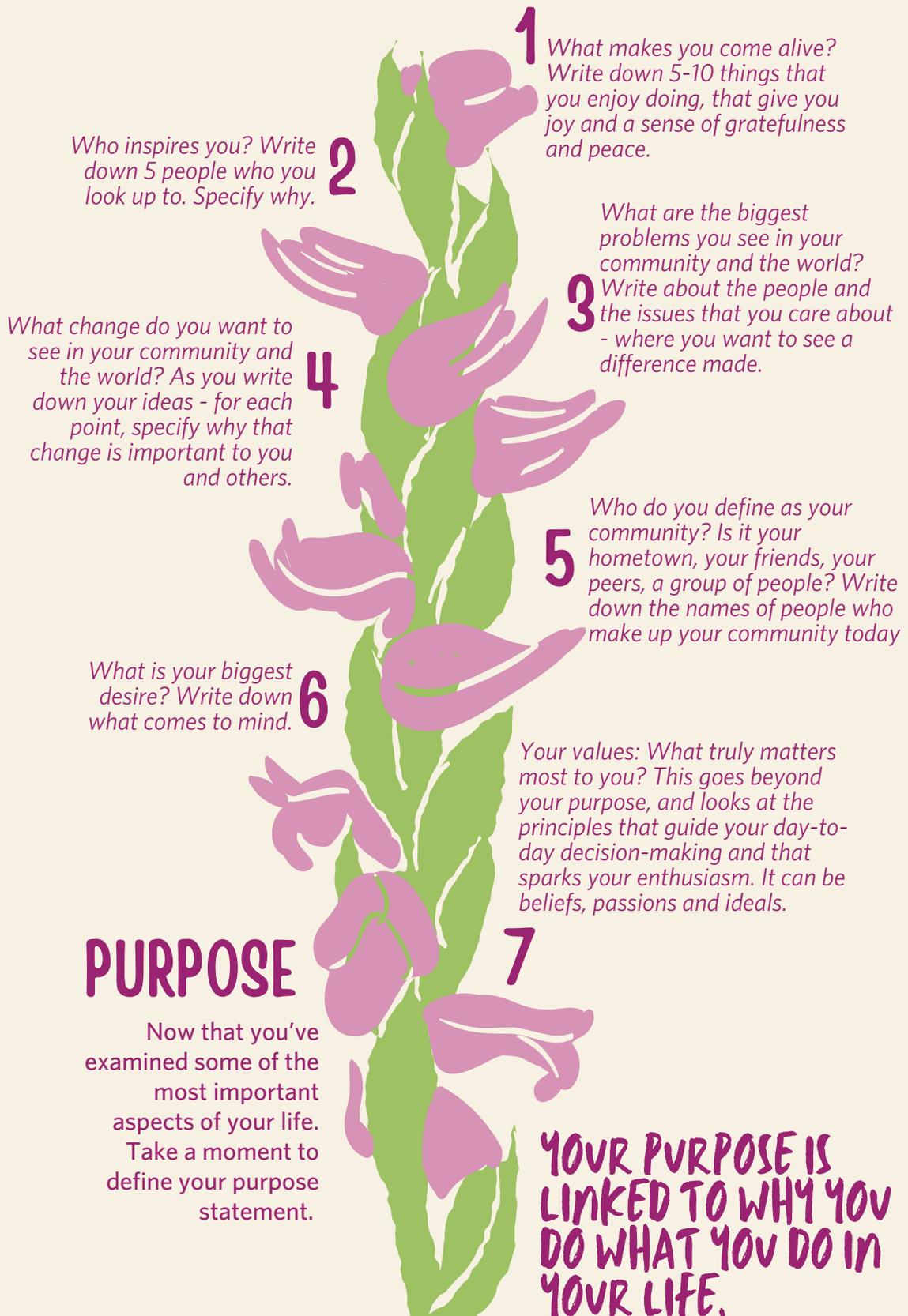


CONTINUE TO SEARCH FOR YOUR BEST SELF - BECAUSE THAT'S WHEN YOU WILL FEEL BEST ABOUT WHO YOU ARE AND WHAT YOU DO.



# CLARITY IN YOUR PURPOSE

In your journal, write down your thoughts following the prompts for each point below.



**1** What makes you come alive? Write down 5-10 things that you enjoy doing, that give you joy and a sense of gratefulness and peace.

**2** Who inspires you? Write down 5 people who you look up to. Specify why.

**3** What are the biggest problems you see in your community and the world? Write about the people and the issues that you care about - where you want to see a difference made.

**4** What change do you want to see in your community and the world? As you write down your ideas - for each point, specify why that change is important to you and others.

**5** Who do you define as your community? Is it your hometown, your friends, your peers, a group of people? Write down the names of people who make up your community today

**6** What is your biggest desire? Write down what comes to mind.

**7** Your values: What truly matters most to you? This goes beyond your purpose, and looks at the principles that guide your day-to-day decision-making and that sparks your enthusiasm. It can be beliefs, passions and ideals.

## PURPOSE

Now that you've examined some of the most important aspects of your life. Take a moment to define your purpose statement.

**YOUR PURPOSE IS LINKED TO WHY YOU DO WHAT YOU DO IN YOUR LIFE.**

## YOUR NEW AFFIRMATIONS

Based on your strengths, uniqueness and purpose you can begin to take charge of the stories that you tell yourself about yourself. One way to do this is through affirmations. An affirmation usually starts with the words- "I am..."

The more we can align ourselves with our strengths, uniqueness and purpose and really leverage them in our work every day, the more we can create progress towards our innermost purpose.

Be creative to really rewire your brain to FOCUS on YOUR mission, and the strengths that you already have to build amazing things!

Write down 5-10 affirmations that you can use every day.

I AM...

Use your affirmations in your morning journal. Put them up on post-its around your house.

## POWER STORIES THAT INSPIRE YOU

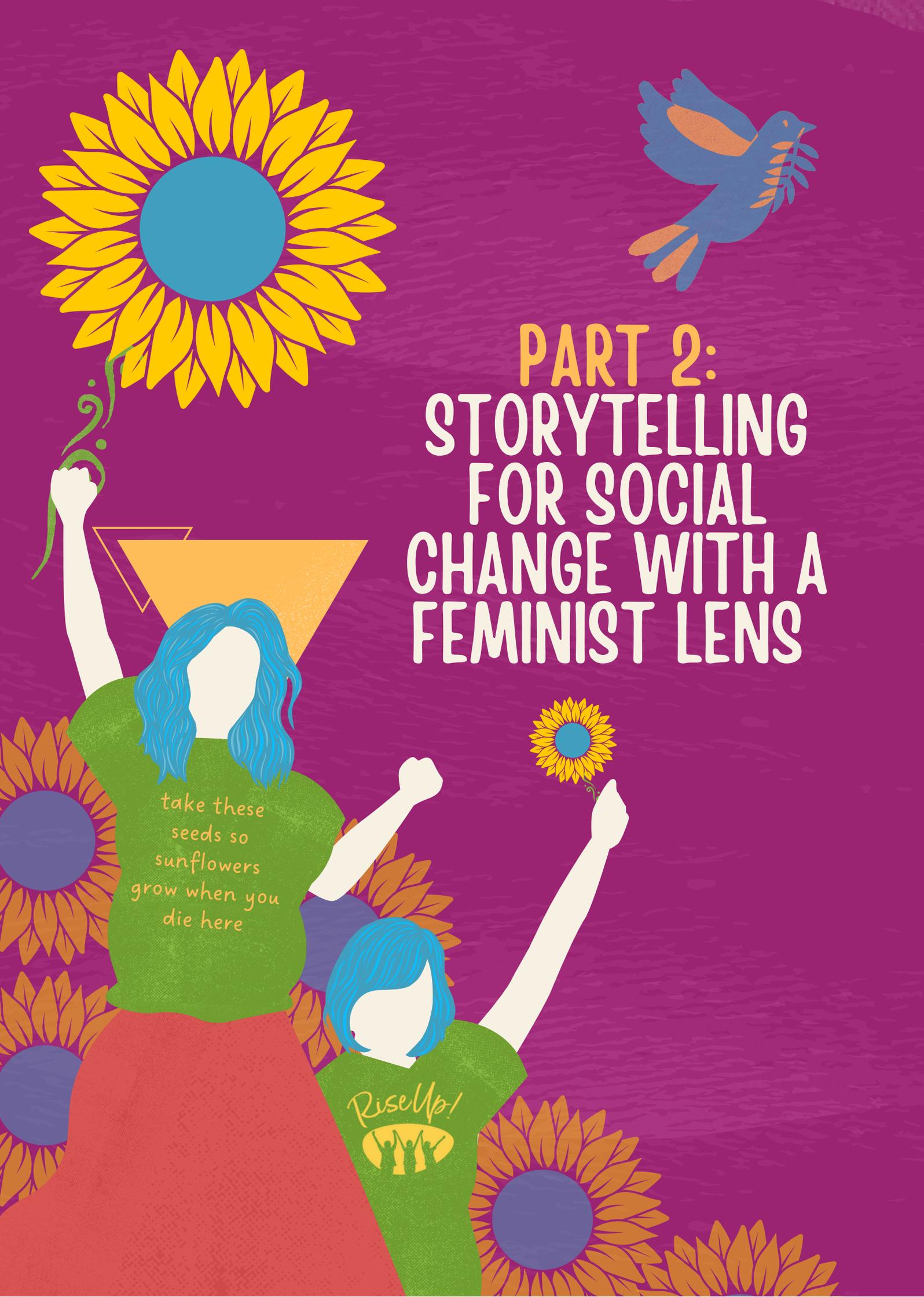
Stories can inspire us to keep moving forward. Use your journal to write down a few stories that remind you of the power of storytelling.

Which stories of impactful social change inspire you from your community?

What role models inspire you? What in their stories have created an impact?

Have you been a part of sharing stories for social change? Write down any experience you may have had.

LET THESE STORIES BE A BASIS FOR INSPIRATION AS YOU CONTINUE YOUR JOURNEY AS AN ACTIVIST AND STORYTELLER.



**PART 2:**  
**STORYTELLING  
FOR SOCIAL  
CHANGE WITH A  
FEMINIST LENS**

take these  
seeds so  
sunflowers  
grow when you  
die here

RiseUp!



# WORK GUIDE 2: ASSESSING YOUR STORIES WITH A FEMINIST LENS

Before working through this work guide, read through the corresponding section.

To complete this work guide, you will need:

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## NOTES

## ASSESSING POWER DYNAMICS AND PRIVILEGE

1

What power and privilege do you hold in your community (with your work, social status, etc.)?

2

Which power structures do you need to be aware of in your activism?

3

How can you be more aware of your own privilege?

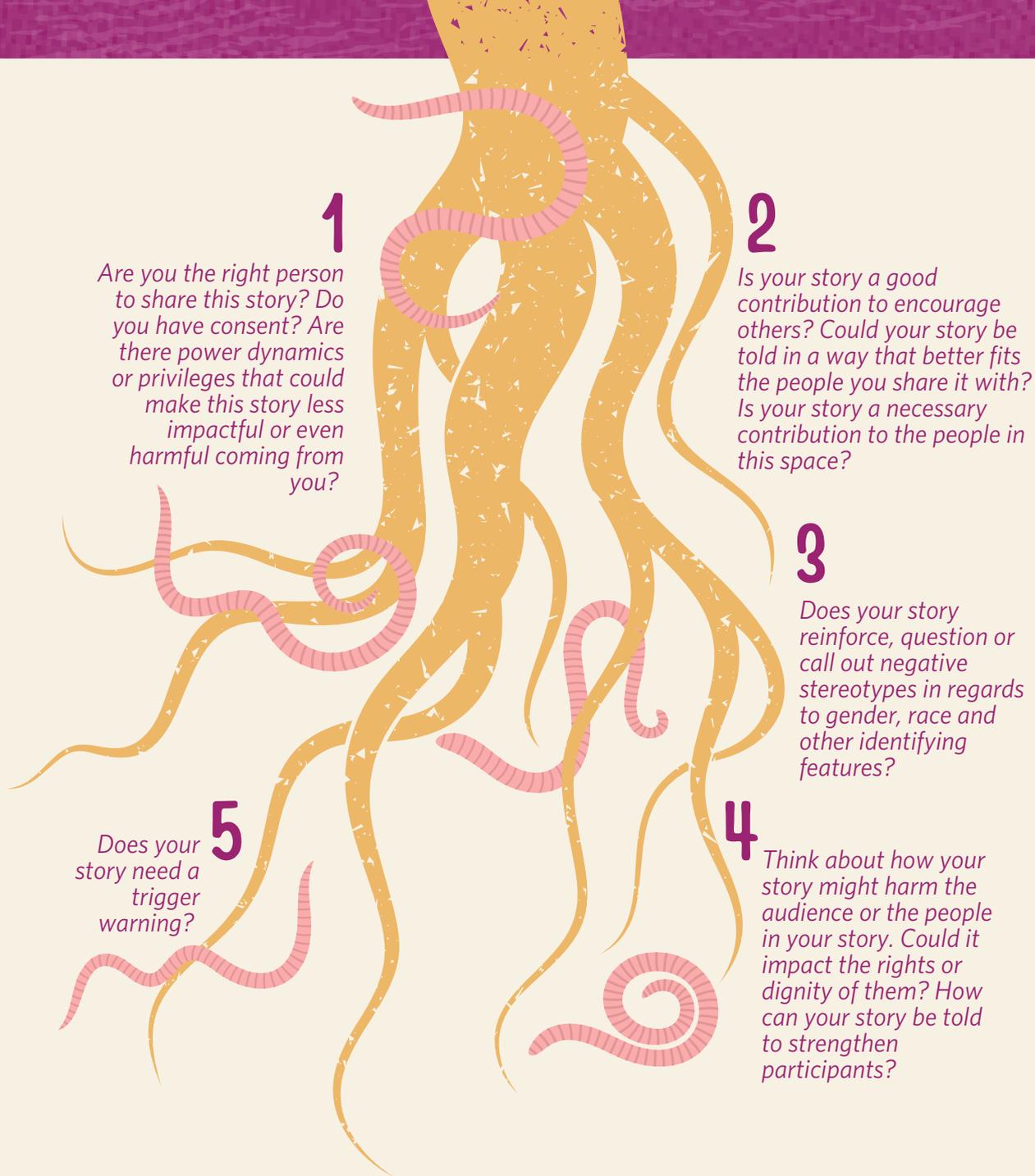
4

What are the needs of the people you serve? How can your work as an activist be more in tune with those needs?

5

How can you be more mindful of the language you use?

When you define your stories in Part 3, you will be able to then assess your stories with a feminist perspective using the following points.



1

*Are you the right person to share this story? Do you have consent? Are there power dynamics or privileges that could make this story less impactful or even harmful coming from you?*

2

*Is your story a good contribution to encourage others? Could your story be told in a way that better fits the people you share it with? Is your story a necessary contribution to the people in this space?*

3

*Does your story reinforce, question or call out negative stereotypes in regards to gender, race and other identifying features?*

4

*Think about how your story might harm the audience or the people in your story. Could it impact the rights or dignity of them? How can your story be told to strengthen participants?*

5

*Does your story need a trigger warning?*

## ASSESSING YOUR STORIES WITH A FEMINIST LENS

A large, empty rectangular box with a light purple background, intended for writing or reflection.

# PART 3: DEFINING YOUR POWER STORIES



# WORK GUIDE 3: DEFINING YOUR STORIES

Before working through this work guide, read through the corresponding section.

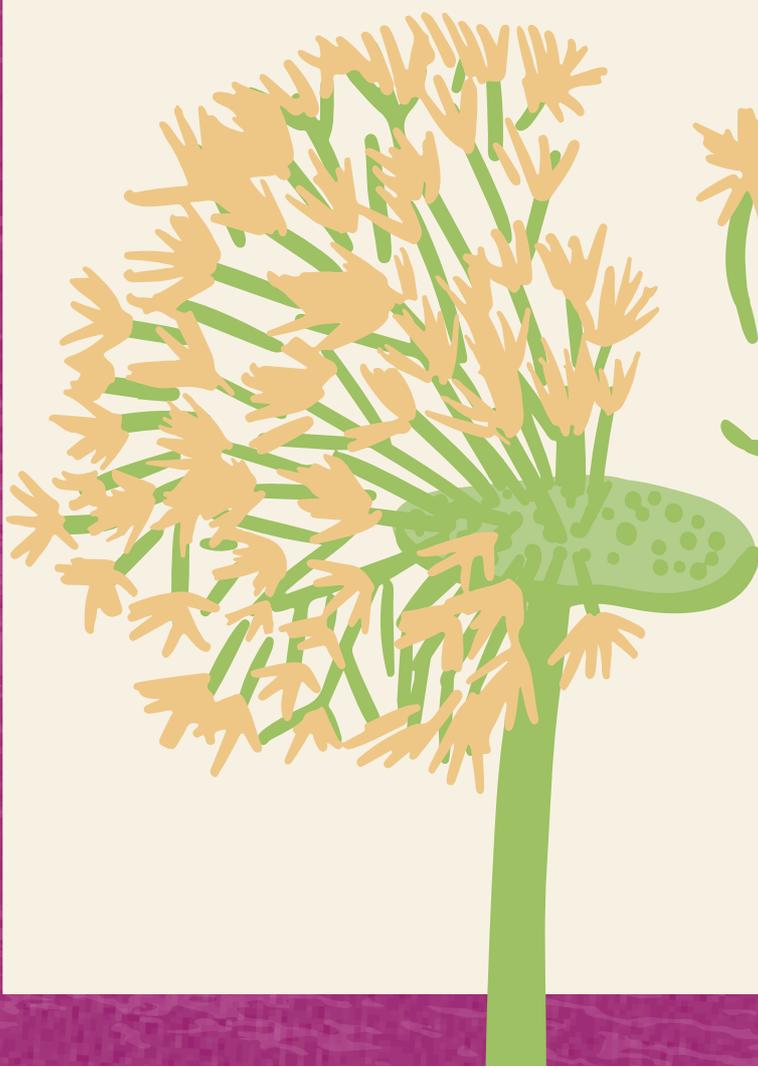
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## THE IMPACT YOU WANT TO MAKE

Based on the work you did in Part 1 to define your purpose, reflect on the following questions, to help define the impact you want to make with your storytelling. Will you tell stories to build civil society movements, create policy change or raise awareness to the public?



# DEFINING YOUR AUDIENCE

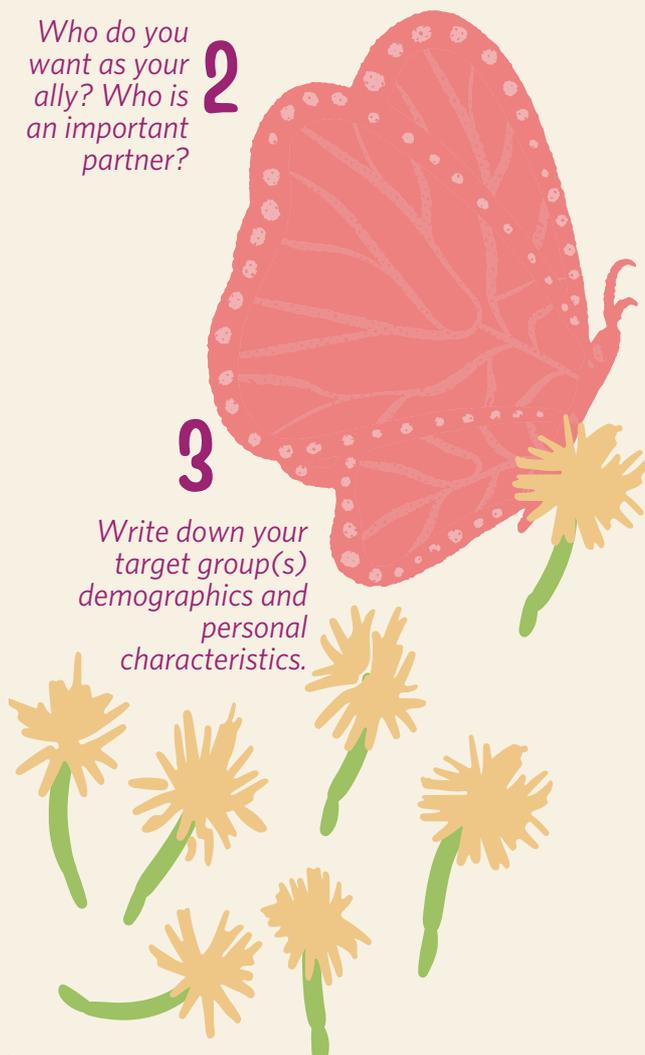
You need to know who you're speaking to (your audience) in order to actually have an impact. Are you trying to reach like minded supporters and followers for your cause, or do you want to gain new ground by reaching people in the opposition? To make sure you're clear and compassionate with the people you are communicating with, you need to understand them. Step into their shoes for a bit.

Write down who you want to reach with your activism and communications initiatives. Answering these questions can help you out.

Who needs to hear your story? **1**

Who do you want as your ally? Who is an important partner? **2**

Write down your target group(s) demographics and personal characteristics. **3**



For each target group, step into the shoes of one person in that group. Get personal. If this exercise is triggering in some way, journal about what support you need to share stories with this audience, and perhaps reach out to a colleague or friend to help.



If you don't know the responses to these questions, do your research. Connect with people in your target group and have sincere conversations.

Remember, you have important stories to make a change in the world. Your audience is not here to support you for any reason, but to be part of the larger impact you want to have.

The following questions will help you determine the importance of your stories for your particular audience.

- Why is your cause important for your audience?
- In what way would they be interested in supporting your work?
- How can this cause become personal and important for your audience?

These questions are important to have answered as you move on to creating your strategy and building your communications plan.

# YOUR POWER STORIES

Storytelling is impactful to attract people to a cause, and to encourage people to take action. It is your clarity in vision and unique perspectives that can help you tell more relevant stories for the impact you want to see. These are the stories that people can identify with, empathise with and share with others.

## DEFINING YOUR PERSONAL STORIES

Sharing your own story is an important tool to build community and support. Pull in your why and your strengths from Part 1. Pick out the elements that are essential to share with others. Use these questions to guide you in writing your story down. Choose one of the below stories to start off with.

### → Your Purpose Story

This story is also known as your WHY story. What drew you to the work you're doing? Why do you care? Why do you do the work you do? What sparked you to start your activism? What passion drives you?

### → Your Value Story

What are the values that guide you? How were they shaped in your life?

### → Overcoming Obstacles

What obstacles have you overcome that are relevant to your cause? How did you overcome them and what was the final outcome?

You don't have to share intimate details with the world, but you do want your personal story to have the power to establish personal connections, relatability and inspiration.

# GET YOUR STORY READY

Write your story down in 3 versions.

## ELEVATOR PITCH SHORT

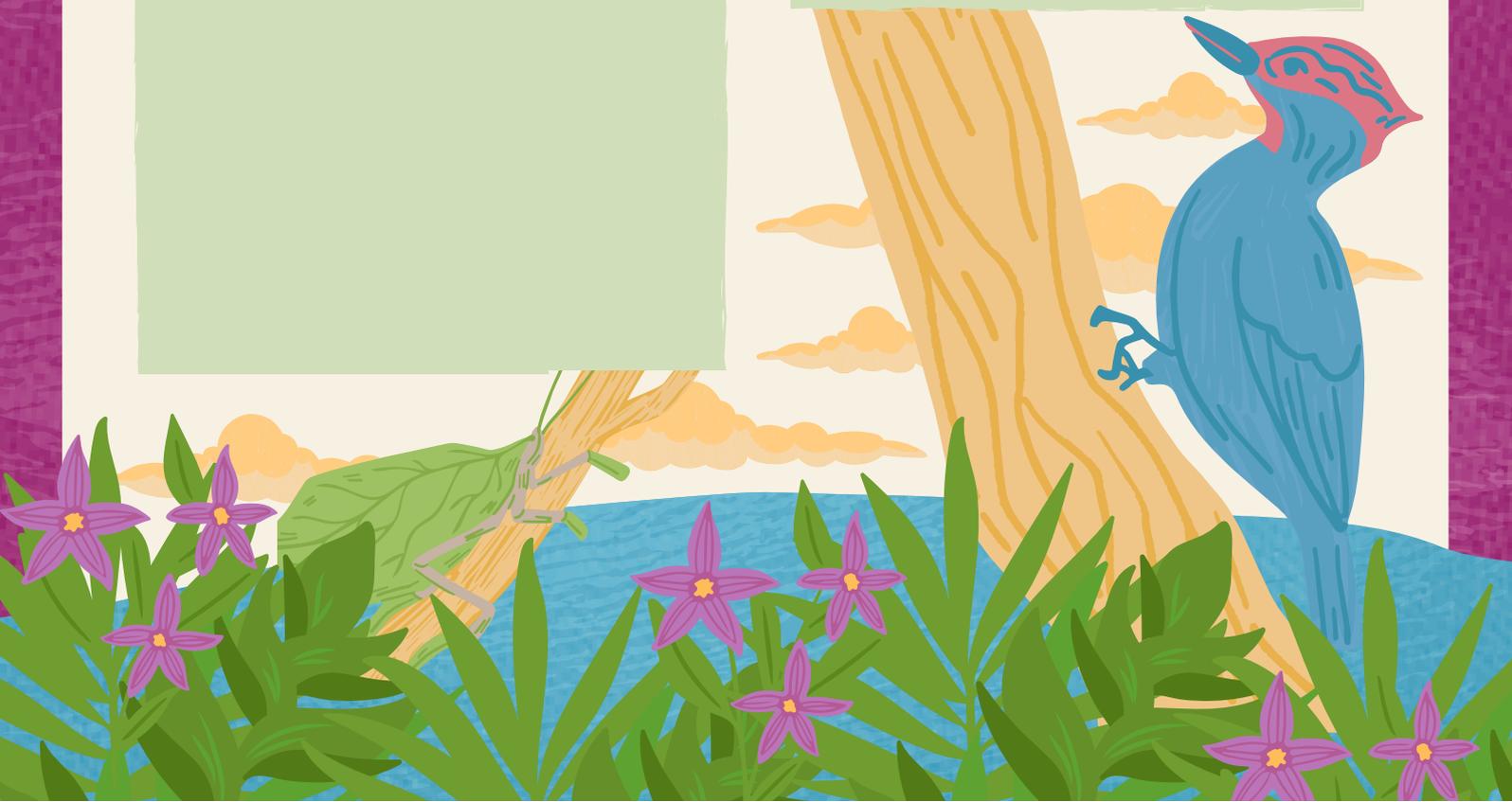
Your story told in less than a minute.

## LONG VERSION

About 10 minutes, for a longer form speaking opportunity.

## MEDIUM VERSION

A couple of minutes, like when you're on a panel.



# BUILDING YOUR STORY BANK

Having a number of go-to stories makes communications, including public speaking and casual conversations so much easier. Here are a few types of stories to consider adding to your story bank:

## 1 THE CASE STUDY

What problems were present before? What changes were made? How have those changes created an impact? How were you a part of creating this change and impact? — this story can be put together as an interview with clients or community members.

## 2 THE MONOMYTH STORY

What are some of the obstacles you or your organization has overcome? What state were you in prior to overcoming the obstacle? What made it possible for you to overcome the obstacle? Why did you keep going? What parts of this story can be inspiring for your ideal audience?

## 3 "WHY SHOULD PEOPLE CARE?" STORY

Define the purpose of your activism - what problems do you want to solve? What other problems are you a part of solving through your work, involvement in the community? Why do you believe people should care about the cause you're working for and the problems that you're solving? How can people become engaged to be part of the solution too? (This may include working with or supporting you, but shouldn't be limited to it, this is bigger than YOU)

## 4 THE FAILURE STORY

When have you failed? What struggles led up to that failure? What were the consequences of failing in that instance? How did you dust yourself/your organization off and move forward? What was your biggest learning from that failure? How is this relevant for your ideal audience?

## 5 YOUR TEAM STORY

Here are some questions that you can ask your team members to define Your Team Story. What brought you to the organization/cause? What is your purpose and mission as a part of our team (and beyond)? What is your role in our team? What do you enjoy the most about our work/team?

Here are some questions for you as a leader/member of the team: What are the most important aspects of your team culture? What's the most important aspects of your team? How do you show your team members that you value them?

## 6 "BEHIND THE SCENES" STORY

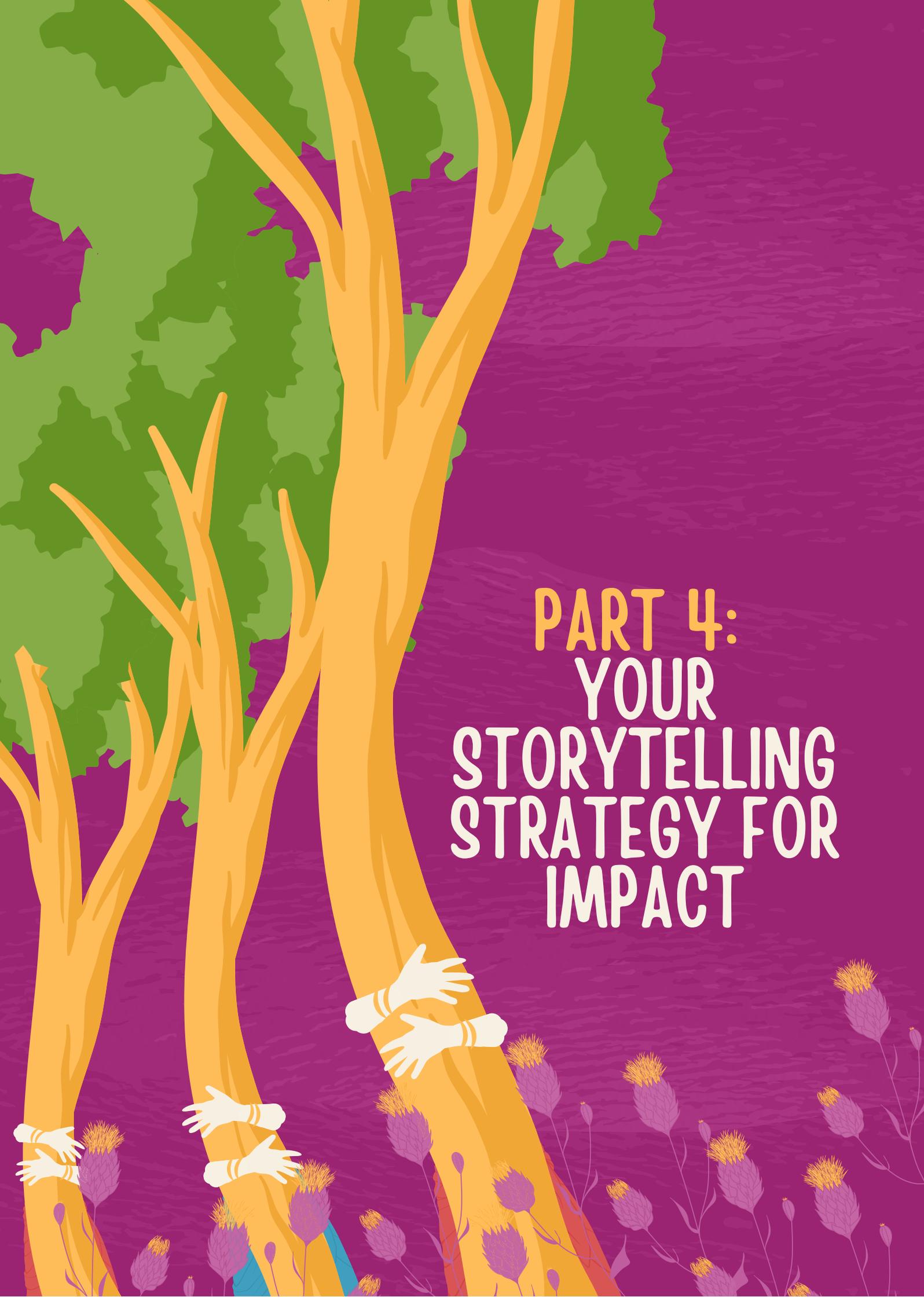
What's your most fun/boring task in your activism? Where do you do your work? How do you get to work? How do you feel after a day's work? What's the most important part of your day? How do you prepare for your activism activities? What's the process you go through to create change? Do you have any events coming up that could be fun to document? Do you have any specific advice to share in the behind-the-scenes of your business. Define a few different scenes for you to document with photos/videos that you can share as stories for your business.

# REVIEW YOUR STORIES FROM THE LENS OF YOUR IDEAL AUDIENCE

Whenever you share any kind of story, put yourself in the shoes of your ideal audience. Make your content valuable, relatable or engaging for them. It's not about YOU it's about the people you serve, the people you want to connect with. What do they actually get out of the content that you're creating?

You may not feel like you have something to share for all of these types of stories - but do consider 2-3 of them to add to your communications story bank. In the next pages we will support you to brainstorm story ideas for each story type.



An illustration of a large tree with a thick, textured trunk in shades of orange and yellow. The tree's branches are also in these warm tones, reaching upwards. The background is a deep purple with a subtle, wavy texture. At the base of the tree, several hands are shown hugging the trunk, symbolizing care and support. The hands are white with yellow cuffs. In the foreground, there are several purple flowers with yellow centers, resembling thistles or similar wildflowers. The overall style is modern and artistic.

# PART 4: YOUR STORYTELLING STRATEGY FOR IMPACT

# WORK GUIDE 4: DEFINE YOUR STRATEGIC STORYTELLING

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## HOW AND WHERE WILL YOU SHARE YOUR POWER STORIES?

Now that you've defined your stories, take time to strategize around how you will share these stories.

### WHAT TYPE OF STORYTELLING WORKS FOR YOU AND YOUR AUDIENCE?

→ Is there a specific method or style of storytelling that feels best for you? Why? Would this method resonate with your ideal audience too?

→ Think about developing your 'story schedule/calendar/plan'. This will help you plan out the type or style of stories you want to develop and when. Incorporate details or information outlined below in your story schedule/plan or calendar.

→ Think about the different audiences that you want to reach - how will you engage with them best?

→ What method of storytelling would be the most fun for you to consistently use?

→ What type of storytelling works best with your purpose and uniqueness?

→ What type of content do you enjoy creating or being a part of (e.g. blogs, video, podcasts)? What type of content/communication do you enjoy consuming?

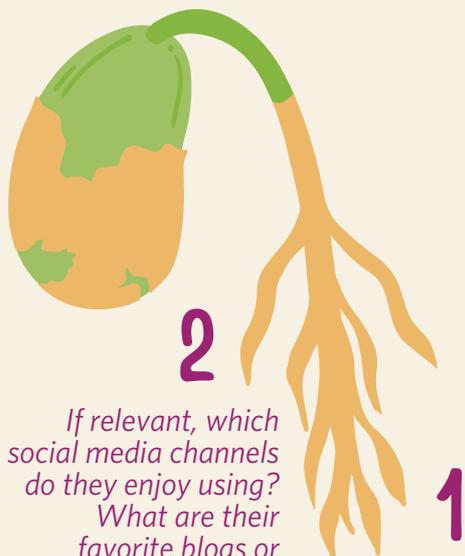
→ Do you use social media? Which social media channels do you enjoy the most? Why? What are your favorite online spaces? What makes them so good?

→ What special skills do you or your team have?

→ What resources do you have to support your storytelling work?

## NOTES

**TAKE SOME TIME TO INVESTIGATE WHAT WORKS FOR YOUR IDEAL AUDIENCE**



**2** If relevant, which social media channels do they enjoy using? What are their favorite blogs or industry-related websites? What times do they spend time online? Why do they use social media?

**1** How will you connect with your audience? Is it in person, at events, through traditional media or online?

**NOW TAKE A LOOK AT OTHER ACTIVISTS AND ORGANIZATIONS**



**2** How do they engage with their ideal audiences?

**1** Where do your like-minded organizations gather or share stories? Where are their voices heard?

**3** What do they do well?

**4** Are they present on any local/industry-specific websites or at specific events?

**NOTES**

**GIVEN THE ABOVE RESPONSES, PINPOINT THE METHODS AND SPACES OF STORYTELLING THAT YOU WILL USE TO SUPPORT YOUR ACTIVISM.**

# A GREATER IMPACT

As you plan your storytelling initiative, here are a few things to determine.

## CALL TO ACTION

What is your call to action?  
Will you ask something of  
your audience?

How can they easily engage  
with you in support of the  
impact you want to have?

What obstacles may be in  
the way for them to take  
action? How can you  
eliminate those obstacles?



## PARTNERSHIPS

**1** What partnerships would you like to have in place to make a greater impact with your storytelling?

Are there actors already using storytelling in this space that you could partner with?

**2**

**3** Are there actors already working with your ideal audience that you could partner with?

What do you need to have in place for eventual partnerships?

**4**

## NOTES

## SET UP MEL FOR YOUR STORIES

Following the steps outlined about M&E&L, evaluate how you will use this to monitor, evaluate and learn from your storytelling initiatives.

[Dig Deeper → Storytelling in Practice](#)

# DIG DEEPER



CASE STUDIES



DIGITAL STORYTELLING  
FOR ACTIVISTS



GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES  
ON STORYTELLING



STORYTELLING IN  
PRACTICE



FEMINIST CONSULTATION  
METHODOLOGY GUIDE

NOTES

## NOTES

## NOTES



## CONTACT

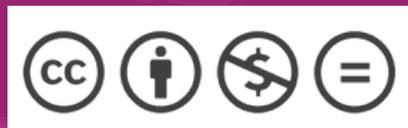
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