

Why

One of the problems with contemporary organizations is that people only bring a part of themselves into the workplace. Often they put on a mask to comply with the rules and expectations of a particular setting. By doing so they lose a lot of creativity and energy. So, there is a lot to gain by inviting and encouraging people to bring the whole self into the workplace (i.e. be genuine).

What

Moments where you give people the opportunity to share personal stories.

How

- ▶ Start a meeting with a short reading prepared by a team member. Invite reflections afterwards. The reading can be on any topic the team member wants to discuss. It can be personal, work-related or personal thoughts on work-related topics. It is important that a reflective or emotional tone prevails during the reading and that it is clear that the reading is not, for example, about solving an operational issue.
- ▶ Find moments (e.g. a teambuilding afternoon or evening) where you can allow people to share stories about who and what is important in their life: tell us about the first dollar you made, what your dreams are etc.
- ▶ When people leave the company invite others to tell a story about the person leaving.
- ▶ When new people join the company ask everyone to bring an object that symbolizes their wishes for their new colleague.
- ▶ Give them space to tell the story associated with the object.
- ▶ Give people a certain amount of money (e.g. \$100 to \$200) to do something good with. Let them exchange their stories about what they did.

When

When you feel that more personal connection is required and people being their true selves will bring added value.

Possible workshop exercise

Exchange stories about your personal life journey: what path have you been following, who were and are the most important people in your life and why, what is your dream, what are the 3 most important achievements you still want to realize etc.?

Critical success factors

Storytelling must be real and fresh. If it is seen as an obligation then it will not work. Nonetheless, beginning these kinds of activities often feels a bit awkward, so the key is to find an approach that works for your team.