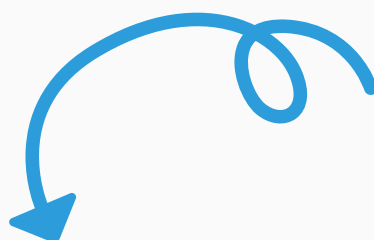


NARRATE Exercise

| Units In-House | Units In-Company | Skill cards |
|----------------|------------------|---|
| Knowledge | Knowledge | Ability to face and learn from failure Flexibility Perseverance Resilience Self-awareness |

Tell your own story

| Minimum number of participants | Average time length | Individual setting | Group setting | Special Equipment | Online |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------|---------------|-------------------|-----------------------|
| 3 | 1-2 hours depending on the group size | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes (not recommended) |



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1. Overview

This exercise is designed to help PoAS explore and share their personal story in a comfortable and supportive environment. The goal is to provide an opportunity for personal discovery through story elements, reflecting each participant's unique perspectives.

2. Aim / Benefits

Engaging in storytelling exercises can offer numerous benefits for PoAS, providing both a structured way to understand their own experiences and a supportive environment to express themselves. This exercise incorporates elements typical of stories, such as challenges, overcoming comfort zones, obstacles, adversaries, and allies. By doing so, it offers a clear and predictable structure that can facilitate understanding and participation.

One of the key benefits is the structured understanding of stories. By using familiar narrative elements, participants can more easily grasp the flow and components of a story. This structure helps them make sense of their own experiences within a clear framework, which can be particularly helpful for PoAS who often thrive on predictability and order.

The exercise also provides support in personal expression. Participants are encouraged to explore and identify the allies, adversaries, and other characters in their stories. This process not only fosters self-reflection but also promotes personal expression within a structured and supportive environment. It gives them the opportunity to name and acknowledge significant figures and events in their lives, thereby enhancing their ability to communicate their experiences and feelings.

Moreover, by participating in the activity, PoAS can learn social and narrative conventions. Understanding how stories are typically structured and told can improve their narrative skills and communication abilities. This learning process can help them navigate social interactions more effectively, as storytelling is a fundamental aspect of human communication.



To make the exercise more accessible and effective for PoAS, certain adaptations are necessary:

Visual support and accessible materials: providing clear visual aids and support materials, such as diagrams or cards, can help participants visualise and organise concepts more effectively. These tools make abstract ideas more concrete and understandable.

Structure and predictability: maintaining a clear and predictable structure during the exercise, with detailed instructions and defined timings, can reduce anxiety and encourage comfortable participation. Knowing what to expect at each stage of the exercise helps create a safe and supportive environment.

Empathetic and inclusive approach: using clear language that is directly relevant to the participants' personal experiences ensures that the exercise is accessible and meaningful. Creating a respectful and inclusive environment that supports diverse communication and learning styles is crucial. Encouraging empathy and understanding among participants helps foster a sense of community and mutual support.

3. Training tier and UNIT(s) related

This exercise can be related to Inhouse Training – Unit KNOWLEDGE because, by inviting PoAS to tell their own stories, it can be used as a means to support the personal and professional **re-authoring** of their own life stories.

This exercise can be related to In-Company Training – Unit KNOWLEDGE as it can be used to support PoAS in the process of **career construction**.

This exercise can be used to practise Ability to face and learn from failure, Flexibility, Perseverance, Resilience, and Self-awareness reflected in the skills cards to reflect on your own story and how it is told or experienced.

The ability to face and learn from failure plays a crucial role in this exercise. Reflecting on personal failures helps you see them not merely as setbacks but as valuable opportunities for growth. By understanding and accepting your failures, you can reshape your narrative to highlight how you have learned and evolved from these experiences. This shift in perspective can significantly change the way you perceive and tell your story, emphasising your resilience and personal development. It turns a tale of defeat into a powerful story of learning and adaptation.



Perseverance is vital for maintaining a long-term perspective on your story. Reflecting on your continuous effort and dedication to overcoming obstacles underscores the strength and determination that have driven you forward. Highlighting your perseverance in your narrative shows your unwavering commitment to your goals, even in the face of difficulties. This not only enhances your story by demonstrating your resolve but also inspires others with your persistent pursuit of success.

Resilience is about bouncing back from adversity stronger than before. Reflecting on how you have dealt with past challenges and how these experiences have fortified you emphasises your ability to recover and thrive despite hardships. By incorporating resilience into your story, you present a narrative of strength and continuous improvement. This perspective shows that you are not defined by the difficulties you face but by how you overcome them and grow from the experience.

Self-awareness helps you understand how your thoughts and emotions influence your actions and narrative. By reflecting on your personal journey, you gain insights into how your perception of events has shaped your life. This awareness allows you to consciously choose how to tell your story, highlighting the aspects that demonstrate your growth and self-discovery. Understanding your emotional responses and the reasons behind them gives you control over your narrative, making it a true reflection of your inner strength and personal development.

4. How to do the exercise

Step 1 / Preparation:

(MANDATORY to explain how to prepare and introduce the exercise to the participant)

Prepare the material so that it is easily accessible and comfortable for each PoAS participant. Be sure to include clear visual aids and sensory materials if necessary, such as coloured papers, different coloured pencils, pins and tape. Providing visual and tactile materials can help reduce sensory anxiety and improve attention and participation. Explain calmly and clearly that the goal of the exercise is to explore and tell your personal story. Offering detailed instructions and a structured environment can reduce stress and make the exercise easier to understand.



Step 2:

Introduce concepts using visual examples of familiar stories, such as films or books, that may interest participants. Ask what characters and roles they know and if they have similar personal experiences to share.

In most stories there are the following roles and elements:

- **Hero/Heroine:** The main character of the story, who can be interpreted in different ways depending on personal experiences.
- **Mentor:** Someone who provides guidance and support to the protagonist in his or her path of growth and change.
- **Allies:** People who support the hero/heroine during challenges and difficult times.
- **Obstacles, adversaries:** Situations or people that create difficulties or conflicts for the protagonist.
- **Setbacks:** Moments of difficulty that can lead to personal growth and new perspectives.
- **Problem solving:** Resolving challenges or achieving goals, which can be a happy ending or partial resolution of a problem.
- **Target group/audience:** Who the story is intended for, who can influence how the story is told and interpreted.

It is important to use concrete and visual examples that can facilitate understanding of the complex concepts of the stories, just as allowing participants to share personal experiences or answer structured questions can improve interaction and engagement.

Step 3:

Ask participants to write or draw their story on a sheet of paper, using the methods of expression they prefer. For those who struggle with writing, offer the opportunity to jot down key words or tell the story verbally to a facilitator. For PoAS it is appropriate to create an environment of positive sharing that can promote social support and inclusion.



Step 4:

Ask participants to share their stories with the group, making sure to create a welcoming and non-judgmental environment. If someone is having difficulty telling their story, use questions that encourage mutual support and empowerment. For PoAS it is important to create a supportive environment that allows them to choose whether or not to share their stories, promoting respect for autonomy and privacy.

Final step / Conclusion:

Conclude the exercise with a reflective discussion about the different ways the stories have been told and interpreted. Encourage participants to think about possible alternative stories and reflect on what they have learned from their personal experiences. It is important for PoAS to promote critical reflection, and considering alternative perspectives can improve self-awareness and the ability to manage future challenges. Additionally, structured and supported discussion can improve communication and social interaction skills.



5. Debrief

After sharing and reflecting on your stories, it's essential to highlight a few key insights that can help you understand and reshape your narratives effectively. This exercise can be particularly beneficial for PoAS, given their unique challenges and strengths.

When engaging in this exercise, the first critical point to understand is that you are not your story. Your story is just one part of your life; it does not define you entirely. This understanding can help create a healthy distance between yourself and any problems you face. For PoAS, who may often internalise their experiences deeply, this distinction can be incredibly empowering. It allows you to see your challenges and experiences as just one aspect of your multifaceted identity.

Another important insight is recognizing that there are many true ways to tell your story. Each version of your story can be equally valid, and you have the power to choose which version you want to emphasise. This means you can highlight the parts of your story that show your strengths and growth, rather than just focusing on the challenges. For PoAS, who may have experienced various forms of misunderstanding or underestimation, this empowerment to choose and focus on positive narratives can significantly boost self-esteem and confidence.

To effectively communicate these concepts, clear and direct communication is crucial. Use straightforward language to explain that their story is just one aspect of their life. For example, you might say, "Your story is a part of you, but it does not define you entirely." This kind of clear communication helps in avoiding any confusion and ensures that the message is understood correctly.

Visual aids can also be incredibly helpful. Using diagrams or visual stories to illustrate the concept of separating oneself from their story can make the idea more concrete and easier to grasp. Visual representations can bridge the gap between abstract concepts and concrete understanding, making it easier for PoAS to internalise these insights.



Encouraging structured reflection through specific, guided questions can further aid in this process. Questions like *“What did you learn from your experience?”* or *“Can you think of a positive way to tell your story?”* can prompt deeper thinking and help in reframing their narrative in a more positive light. This kind of guided reflection ensures that the individual stays focused on constructive aspects of their story.

Lastly, reinforcement of positive narratives is vital. Highlighting and reinforcing the positive aspects of their stories helps in building a positive self-image and self-esteem. Consistent encouragement and validation of their strengths and achievements can make a significant difference in how they view themselves and their abilities.

Through this exercise, participants shared their stories and reflected on the different ways these stories could be told. This reflection helps in understanding that their story is just one part of their identity and that they have the power to choose how they want to narrate it. By recognizing that they are not solely defined by their story, they can create a healthy distance from their challenges, allowing them to see these challenges more objectively and to focus on their strengths and growth.

6. Specific materials

- Paper
- Pens
- Hand-out



7. Tips and Tricks for use Inhouse

- **Create a comfortable environment:** ensure the physical space is quiet, well-organised, and free from sudden changes or distractions. Use comfortable seating arrangements and ensure all necessary materials are within easy reach.
- **Use visual supports:** provide visual aids such as storyboards, diagrams, and example stories to help participants visualise and structure their narratives. Use colour-coded materials to represent different elements of the story, making it easier to differentiate and organise thoughts.
- **Provide clear instructions:** use simple, direct language to explain the exercise, breaking down each step into manageable parts. Offer written instructions alongside verbal explanations to reinforce understanding.
- **Incorporate sensory tools:** include sensory-friendly materials like textured paper, fidget tools, or calming objects to help manage anxiety and maintain focus. Ensure the environment has low sensory input, such as soft lighting and minimal noise.
- **Encourage self-paced participation:** allow participants to take breaks as needed and to work at their own pace. Offer multiple methods of expression, such as drawing, writing, or verbally telling their story to a facilitator.
- **Foster a supportive atmosphere:** emphasise respect, empathy, and understanding among all participants. Encourage positive feedback and celebrate each participant's effort and contribution.
- **Use role-playing and examples:** provide familiar stories or role-playing scenarios to illustrate the elements of a story and how to structure their own narratives. Relate the storytelling elements to real-life examples that participants can easily understand and relate to.

8. Tips and Tricks for use In-Company

- **Promote understanding and inclusion:** educate staff about autism and the importance of creating a supportive environment. Encourage an inclusive approach that respects diverse communication and learning styles.
- **Integrate into team-building activities:** incorporate the storytelling exercise into regular team-building sessions to enhance empathy and collaboration among employees. Use the exercise to highlight the importance of understanding and respecting each other's experiences and perspectives.
- **Adapt the work environment:** ensure the workspace is conducive to the exercise, with quiet areas and minimal distractions. Provide private spaces for those who may feel uncomfortable sharing their stories in a group setting.
- **Offer flexible participation:** allow employees to participate in ways that feel comfortable, whether through writing, drawing, or verbal sharing. Ensure that participation is voluntary and that employees feel safe to share at their own comfort level.
- **Provide clear and consistent communication:** use clear and straightforward language to explain the exercise and its objectives. Provide written materials and visual aids to support understanding and participation.
- **Encourage reflective practice:** facilitate discussions that allow employees to reflect on their experiences and learn from each other. Use guided questions to help employees think critically about their narratives and how they can apply these insights in their work and personal lives.
- **Recognize and celebrate efforts:** acknowledge and celebrate the efforts and contributions of each participant, reinforcing a positive and supportive work culture. Highlight stories of resilience and growth to inspire and motivate the team.

9. On-line version

You can do this exercise online. Instead of the handout, you can view it on screen or share it on the platform you are working with.

10. Bibliography – Sitography

On the Hero's Journey:

<https://www.audinoeditore.it/libro/9788875271916>

The inspiration for this exercise and the "Tell your alternative story" exercise:

<https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/project-result-content/56b4cdbc-3587-4279-bb98-300090b9ccae/EN-Training-Methodology.pdf> [checked: 12.02.2022]