



## Story Collection & Elaboration

### Part I: Story Collection

This worksheet will help you start a Story Collection. The way we use the word “story” is different from other uses of the word. Sometimes people use “story” to mean general reflections about life. For example, “Well, I am 40-years-old. I am originally from Georgia, but I have lived in Florida for the past 15 years. I used to work as a corporate executive but about five years ago I decided to re-focus on my passion which is teaching...”

There is nothing wrong with that kind of narration but it is not what we mean by *storytelling*. In this context, “story” does not refer to general reflections, but rather specific events that you remember. They are “snapshots” of your life **as you remember them**. I encourage you to spend some time collecting stories that are significant to you. Start collecting stories that are particularly self-defining- the stories that have had the biggest impact on you, the stories that tell of your deepest wounds.

Here are 2 examples:

<b>1. Title:</b> <i>Ice Cream</i>
<b>Age:</b> <i>I am Five-years-old</i>
<b>Brief Description:</b> <i>My mom takes me out for ice cream. As I am eating it, I feel like I am doing something wrong.</i>
<b>2. Title:</b> <i>The Knife</i>
<b>Age:</b> <i>I am 12-years-old</i>
<b>Brief Description:</b> <i>My mother is away on a business trip. My dad is chopping vegetables. He cuts his finger and tells me to get something to bandage his wound. I’m not sure what he wants and I fumble. He yells at me, “You’re helpless!”</i>

As you see in the above examples, stories are not broad-stroke reflections about our past or current circumstances. They are also not fact-checked accounts of what happened. Rather, they are **specific events as we remember them**.

Please know, *wounding* is a very personal matter; an event is a wound if it has been significant, painful, and impactful to *you*. I have found that the most impactful stories are often those that might have you say, “Maybe I’m just being silly- maybe it’s not really such a big deal but...”

To start your Story Collection, gather your stories in the worksheet below. Give each story a title, identify your age in the story, and come up with a brief description (as above). Please **don’t ask others to fact-check your stories**; stick to what you remember. Whatever you come up with will be just fine.

## STORY COLLECTION WORKSHEET

<b>1. Title:</b>
<b>Age:</b>
<b>Brief Description:</b>
<b>2. Title:</b>
<b>Age:</b>
<b>Brief Description:</b>
<b>3. Title:</b>
<b>Age:</b>
<b>Brief Description:</b>
<b>4. Title:</b>
<b>Age:</b>
<b>Brief Description:</b>
<b>5. Title:</b>
<b>Age:</b>
<b>Brief Description:</b>
<b>6. Title:</b>
<b>Age:</b>
<b>Brief Description:</b>

## **Part II: Elaboration**

See if you can use the process below to elaborate one or two of your stories.

**Title:**

**Location in Time** (How old are you in the story?)

**Location in Place** (Where are you in the story?)

**What is happening in the story?** (Describe the events as you remember them. See if you can include a bit about what happened before. See how much detail you can remember/reconstruct. See if you can include a bit about what happened after.)

**What thoughts and feelings can you identify in the story?** (Describe the thoughts and feelings of you in the story. Try to do the same for the other characters in the story. In other words, what do you imagine they were thinking and feeling?)

**What thoughts and feelings are you aware of in the here-and-now as you tell your story?**

You may want to take this work further by uncovering the thoughts, feelings, and relationship patterns that connect your stories together. These patterns may have been going on for 10, 20, or 30 years or longer. They may even span back intergenerationally! In this way, your stories can be excavated to unearth all kinds of treasures.

We strongly recommend that you continue this process with a psychotherapist with a solid appreciation of the powerful influence the relational past has on our lifelong patterns of thinking, feeling, and relating to others. This work is not just about insight, but also about relationship. The type of relationship available to you with a therapist is the ideal context in which you can reap the rewards of storytelling.

We encourage you to attend an upcoming StoryQuest workshop (find an upcoming event at [www.storyquestworkshop.com](http://www.storyquestworkshop.com)). You can also find us at [www.bhnorthflorida.com](http://www.bhnorthflorida.com) to learn more about working one-on-one with Dr. Gross.