



WORK STORIES (Paradigm-breaking methods)

The work stories method is a storytelling-based tool that allows health and care professionals to share their experiences, learn from each other and reflect on their work. Participants use the method to structure complex work situations, such as issues related to the green transition and sustainable development in their own unit of the health and care organisation.

What is required:

- A safe and open atmosphere where participants feel comfortable sharing their experiences.
- A clear theme or question to which the stories relate (e.g., successes, challenges, learning experiences).
- A facilitator who guides the discussion and ensures everyone is heard.

Level of difficulty: 3, requires experience from the facilitator and motivation from participants to share their experiences

Time required: 15-60 minutes, depending on the size of the group and the depth of the discussion

- **Short version (15-30 minutes):** Each participant shares one complex situation from their work and describes it using a theatrical image. Finally, the group collectively analyses the situations and discusses how they could be different by doing things differently.
- **In-depth version (30-60 minutes):** After sharing the stories, themes are analysed, for example, by outlining the process related to development of green transition related practices and policies and by identifying gaps or challenges in it. Finally, development ideas and related actions are considered and recorded. Additionally, the roles and ownership to take the matters forward within the organisation are discussed.

Materials:

- Post-it notes or writing tools if participants write down their stories first.
- [Work stories – Theatrical images – digital versions](#)
- [A set of questions](#)
- A flipchart or a digital platform (e.g., Miro) for visualising stories and themes

Participants: 3-20

- At least 3 participants to gain different perspectives.
- Optimal group size: 5-10, to ensure everyone can share their story and participate in the discussion.
- In larger groups (15+), participants can be divided into smaller groups and discussions can be summarised together at the end.



How to use:

1. Start and define the goal: The facilitator prints out theatrical images on high-quality paper and spreads them on a large table around which participants can gather. The facilitator instructs the participants: "Reminisce a complex situation from your work, look at the theatrical images, and choose an image that represents your situation. Trust your intuition when choosing the image."
2. Storytelling: The facilitator instructs: "Verbalise the complex work situation using the questions." The participants share the challenging situations in pairs (1-2 minutes per participant). Then, they switch pairs and repeat their situational description. This repetition is done at least 4 times to help the participants to structure the experiential knowledge related to the situation. The facilitator asks the participants to observe how the situational description changes and what kind of a story emerges.
3. Structuring the situations: The facilitator decides how to proceed in the next phase. The situational descriptions can be structured orally, in writing or by drawing in small groups and then shared with the whole group. The facilitator instructs on listening, reflecting and identifying themes: "What do you hear about this situation? What emotions, tensions, power relations and dynamics do you perceive? What do you recognise about the situation?" The facilitator helps the group to identify key themes using tools like concept maps, post-it notes, timelines (before-now-future) or road maps.
4. Agreeing on next steps and follow-up actions: The facilitator organises a discussion where the participants determine what issues need to be addressed, how, when, and who will solve the challenges that have emerged.

When to use:

- Identifying and making visible complex situations related to daily work and generating development ideas
- Increasing understanding and mutual agreement in change situations
- Outlining and understanding organisational culture and shared values

Why to use:

- Promotes discussion and participation
- Makes group dynamics visible
- Can reveal hidden problems
- Helps to plan better collaboration
- Stories are a central way to understand and structure experiences
- Stories can make visible various meanings, values and basic beliefs
- Stories told by employees help to understand the organisational culture and hidden practices



- Examining one's work through stories promotes professional growth and development
- Sharing common experiences promotes group learning and strengthens collaboration

How to document:

- Visual documentation: Create a shared thematic concept map, a list of development ideas or a road map based on the situations and the related stories.
- Notes: Write down key lessons, insights and follow-up actions.

The roots of the method can be found here: The work stories method is based on storytelling and dialogue. Its roots are in the research of Pässilä, Oikarinen and Kallio (2013; "Creating dialogue by storytelling") and of Pässilä, Oikarinen and Harmaakorpi (2013; "Collective Voicing as Reflexive Practice"). The method helps to identify challenging situations related to the green transition, which are collectively reflected upon. The organisation of collective reflection is based on the research of Vince (2002; "Organizing reflection") and Reynolds and Vince (2004; "Organizing Reflection").

Further information:

Pässilä, A., Oikarinen, T., & Kallio, A. (2013). Creating dialogue by storytelling. *Journal of Workplace Learning*, 25(3), 159-177.

Pässilä, A., Oikarinen, T., & Harmaakorpi, V. (2013). Collective voicing as reflexive practice. *Management Learning*, 44(5).

Vince, R. (2002). Organizing reflection. *Management Learning*, 33, 63-78.

Reynolds, M., & Vince, R. (2004). *Organizing reflection*. Aldershot: Ashgate.