

START WITH **WHY!**

How to be a Good Partner

In this class you'll partner with someone to help one another find and articulate your Why.

Why do I need a partner?

We benefit from the objective perspective of another.

Your Why is an origin story. It's who you are and who you are comes from your past. This is the reason we gather and share our stories. The challenging part is decoding the information you hear – finding the themes, patterns and language that form our Why. This is where a partner comes in.

We cannot be objective with ourselves. Our own perception is always subjective. A partner provides us with a mirror – someone to reflect back the themes and words that form our Why.

How can I be a good partner?

You don't need to be an expert. You simply need a genuine desire to help.

The role of a partner is to listen to each story and ask thoughtful questions to dig deeper and find the underlying meaning of each story. As you listen, you'll write down notes and identify themes – recurring ideas, words or phrases. These themes will weave together into a golden thread, defining who your storyteller is at their natural best.

Here are some tips on how to be a good partner:

1. Practice active and objective listening:

- **Acknowledge, verbally and nonverbally, what your storyteller is sharing.** Invite them to say more about what happened and how they felt about it. Pay particular attention to facial expressions, long pauses, changes in tone of voice and emotional state (getting excited; getting choked up). Take note of those moments.
- **This is a one way interview.** The storyteller should be speaking at least 90% of the time. You are essentially interviewing them, asking clarifying questions to understand what this story says about who they are and what matters to them.

2. Ask these kinds of questions:

- **Open-ended questions** (i.e., the kind that needs more than a “yes” or “no” answer). Open-ended questions allow the storyteller to share more and help you get to their themes. For example, an open-ended question: How did that make you feel? A close-ended question would be: Did that make you feel happy?
- **Avoid questions that start with “why.”** It’s ironic though it’s easier to answer a question that starts with “what.” Questions that start with “why” can make someone feel like they’re being judged and can close down a storyteller. Instead of: why did that matter? ask: what is it about that story that really matters to you?
- **Dig deeper.** Ask questions to dig deeper and uncover the meaning in each story. Here are some effective questions:
 - When that happened, how did it make you feel?
 - Who else was involved in this story and how did they make a difference to you?
 - What is it about this experience that you absolutely loved?
 - You’ve probably felt this same feeling before. What is it about this particular story that makes it special?
 - How did this experience affect you and who you’ve become?
 - What was the lesson you learned from that experience that you still carry with you today?
 - Tell me what you meant when you said, “I really felt fulfilled.” (Or whatever general statement the storyteller might make.)

3. Embrace silence.

If someone is struggling to answer your question, don’t fill the silence with another question or a suggested answer. Just wait. Emotions are hard to articulate and it may take your storyteller a little time to find the right words.

4. Look for silver linings.

A story you hear may be sad or even tragic, yet it still sheds light on what your storyteller values. If you hear one of these types of stories, still look for the meaning behind what’s being shared. You may be able to see something positive or meaningful that your storyteller may not be able to see.

5. **Write down notes:**

- **Take note of the facts, though focus most on the feelings.** In the stories, what happened is less important than how the person felt about what happened. Facts are bookmarks. Writing down some of the facts will help you explain the themes you find to your storyteller later on in the process. You can trace back to the specific moments those themes occurred.
- **Notice and write down the words your storyteller uses.** Their own words have great meaning to them and will be useful when it's time to capture their themes and draft their WHY statement.

One more thought.

Serving as someone's partner for their Why Discovery is a truly special experience and we hope you cherish it. You'll get to hear some of the life stories that define who this person is at their natural best. We hope you enjoy and revel in the opportunity to serve another and we're so glad you get a partner for your stories too.

See you at the Start with Why class soon!