

## Your Story – Our Story

### A Learning Resource for Teachers & Practitioners

The following activities have been put together to accompany the four videos made by Storyopolis as part of the creative journaling project, Your Story - Our Story.



## Resources Sheet 1:

### *Introduction to Your Story – Our Story & Creative Journaling*

#### Exercise 1: What's on your mind?

Ask students to take 3 minutes to write down what's on their mind at this moment in time. They could use the brain template (attached), or they could draw their own brain and fill it in, or they could make a 'mind map'. They can write words, phrases, sentences, doodles, draw pictures; whatever they prefer.

Take a few minutes to see if anybody is happy to share / show what's on their mind.

A famous artist called Anthony Gormley said "Art is the means by which we communicate what it feels like to be alive."

*Discuss:*

**What does he mean? How does it feel to be alive?**

He also said 'Art is not necessarily ... about communicating "good things".'

**What do you think he meant?**

Touch on the idea of art being a way of sharing what is inside our minds; of getting the 'inside' onto the 'outside'. Make the point that this could be through other things than visual art. Art can also include writing, music, dance, film... Ask students to think of examples of artists communicating how it feels to be alive, e.g. through the lyrics of a song

**Creative Activity:** *Required materials: paper, pen, scissors, glue, any art materials to hand*

Ask students to make a portrait using the material they have created in the 'What's on your mind?' activity. They can cut out and rearrange what they have done. They can rip up and scrunch up things, they can re-write things bigger or smaller. Encourage students to think about the inside / outside concept and communicating 'what it feels like to be alive.'



## Exercise 2: Writing Our Fears

As a group, choose a topic that concerns everybody e.g. climate change; isolation, Covid. Ask students to spend 3 minutes writing about how the chosen topic makes them feel. Explain that they will not have to show anybody this piece of writing. They are writing for themselves.

**Next:** imagine somebody you care about comes to them and says- 'I'm worried about (the chosen topic)'. It could be a younger sibling. A friend. Just someone they care about.

What would the student say to them?  
Spend another 3 minutes writing it down. Again, no one will see this.

*"Because paper has more patience than people"*  
- Anne Frank

Ask students to compare the two pieces of writing. Are they different? If so, how? Why?

The point of this exercise is to remind ourselves that the voice we use to speak to ourselves can be powerful, but that we can try to influence it. We can be kind and caring to ourselves in the words that we use to talk to ourselves, and this can help to improve our wellbeing.

**Further discussion:** Is there anything discussed **in terms of the topic chosen** that could be considered a way forward – something that offers hope?

- as an individual
- as a community

(I.e. if you are discussing climate change, try and leave the exercise with a sense of hope. Look at what is working. Do any of the students' assumptions need to be challenged? What are the positives we can focus on?)

## Notes for Practitioners: Journaling and wellbeing

Keeping a journal can help us to:

- manage stress
- clarify thoughts
- prioritise
- track our mental health by helping us to recognise triggers and unhealthy patterns
- identify automatic negative thoughts that we might have

*"In the journal ... I do not just express myself more openly than I could to any person; I create myself"* - Susan Sontag

*When encouraging young people to keep a diary or journal or even just with the 'What's on your mind' exercise above, it may be worth considering how as a practitioner you can help students to identify and address any of these issues if they are brought up in conversation.*

*If students are keeping their diaries private, it's really important that they are actually able to do so. Discuss with students how they might do this.*



## Links & info for Practitioners:

Automatic Thoughts: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UMIU-Uo8cZU> Dan Siegel: The Purpose of the Teenage Brain: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gw9GrgNcYcg>

### Diaries:

*The Diary of a Young Girl* - Anne Frank

*Diary of a Young Naturalist* - Dara McAnulty: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RouNh5qt0\\_g](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RouNh5qt0_g)

*Diary of a Syrian Refugee*: <https://muslimyouthmusings.com/diary-of-a-syrian-refugee/>

*Your Mood Journal* – Fearne Cotton

*Wreck This Journal* – Keri Smith

*Diary of a Wimpy Kid* – Jeff Kinney

*“In the diary you find proof that in situations which today would seem unbearable, you lived, looked around and wrote down observations, that this right hand moved then as it does today” - Franz Kafka.*