

Integration Nine

STORYCORPS INTERVIEW

“Listening is an act of love.”

- Dave Isay

The search for your heart’s desire can sometimes slip into an excessive focus on the self: your values, desires, and weaknesses. While this self-exploration is important, it needs to be coupled with a broader awareness of and attention to the needs and wisdom of others. This week, we are flipping the format so that you listen and bear witness to someone else’s story and wisdom.

Your Integration this week is to record a meaningful conversation with a loved one, preferably an elder such as a parent, mentor, or grandparent. You can interview a family member, teacher, or anyone who has been a significant influence on your life. Ask them for their story, what they’ve learned in life, and how they want to be remembered. One way to think of this is as if this will be the last conversation you will have with this person. What would you want to ask of and tell this person who means so much to you?

Examples

StoryCorps has many excellent examples that showcase the power of the interview process, including [animated clips](#), [staff picks](#), and their larger [archive](#) and [podcasts](#).

StoryCorps Interview Tips

- **StoryCorps Method:** We recommend closely following the [StoryCorps method](#) given their years of experience, though you can adapt it however best suits your needs.
- **Popular Questions:** You can use the [app](#), which has a great list of the most popular [questions](#) and practical tips.
- **Remote Recording:** In the time of COVID-19, you can use [StoryCorps Connect](#) to record a conversation remotely.
- **Privacy:** You do NOT need to upload the interview to them or show it to anyone else unless you want to do so.
- **Average Length:** Interviews are usually between 30-45 minutes.



“He who can no longer listen to his brother will soon be no longer listening to God either. This is the beginning of the death of the spiritual life.”

- Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Scientific Foundations

- The act of passing down wisdom through listening and telling stories is probably as old as the human race itself.
- Listening to someone tell a story causes a cascade of brain activity that can connect you to others, shift your perspective, and spark new behaviors.¹
- StoryCorps participants report increased empathy, self-esteem, and social connection following their interviews and/or listening to interviews.²

Theological Foundations

- Jesus taught primarily through stories and questions.
 - He asked 307 questions.
 - Of the 187 questions asked of Jesus, He only answered 3 directly.
 - So for every question He answers, He asks a hundred questions.
 - He told stories to allow the listener to experience and discover the answers for and within themselves.
- Pope Francis has articulated the journey of faith as a three-step process:
 - **Listening**,
 - Being a neighbor, and
 - Bearing witness³

¹ Renken, Elena, “How Stories Connect And Persuade Us: Unleashing The Brain Power Of Narrative”, *NPR*, 11 Apr. 2020.

² Isay, Dave, and Robin Sparkman, “[StoryCorps 2019 Annual Report](#)”, *StoryCorps*, 2020. You can view their recent reports, financial audits, and further explanations at [their website](#).

³ O’Connell, Gerard, “[Closing Youth Synod, Pope Francis Highlights ‘the Three Fundamental Steps on the Journey of Faith’](#)”, *America Magazine*, 29 Oct. 2018.

