

Our stories matter: A workbook for sharing your story of suicide

This workbook has been created to be used in conjunction with the [*Mindframe guidelines document for sharing lived and living experience of suicide*](#). It aims to provide an interactive space where you can apply the guidelines to your own story and consider some important questions before sharing your story publicly. Throughout this resource you will also see quotes from other people who have shared their stories publicly and some of the guidance they have provided.

Focusing on your story can be challenging and, at times, distressing. We encourage you to take your time going through this workbook and to take breaks for self-care activities. There are some activities in the workbook you can do, or you might have your own activities you prefer.

“My hat is off to anyone brave enough to go public with their story - myself included, I guess. It is incredibly difficult to do but it can make a huge impact if done properly. It is, for me, powerful medicine to think perhaps I have stopped one person from going through what I’m going through.”

Survey respondent: 46-55yrs

Pre-workbook check in

Use the emotion wheel to check in on how you are feeling before starting this workbook. How am I feeling now?



If you're not feeling your best - that's okay! Maybe consider completing this workbook another day. There is so much time to share your story and make an impact in the lives of others, so there's no need to rush the process.

You know yourself best, so please make a choice that is right for you about when you're ready to complete this workbook.

Thinking space

Part 1: Questions to start shaping your storytelling experience

Why do I want to share my story?

What are the key messages I want people to remember after hearing my story?

Am I ready to be sharing my story right now?

Remember this may change frequently depending on your personal circumstances.

“Remember this is your story to be told and each story is different for different reasons.”

Survey respondent: 56-65yrs

Part 2: Thinking about what parts of my story I am sharing

Who is the potential audience for my story?

What parts of my story am I going to share? Do these parts align with the key messages I want people to take away?

What parts of my story am I not sharing, or are off limits?

Part 2: Thinking about what parts of my story I am sharing (continued)

Do I need to get consent from anyone whose story I am also sharing in the process of sharing my own? How can I ensure this person, or these people are de-identified (e.g. referring to them as a family member or friend)?

Note: You still need to obtain consent when you de-identify people.

What elements of hope could I include in my story?

Remember: Hope is complex and looks different for everyone. Including hope in your story doesn't mean the ending always has to be 'happy'. Continuing to move through life regardless of its challenges may be the message of hope someone else needs to hear.

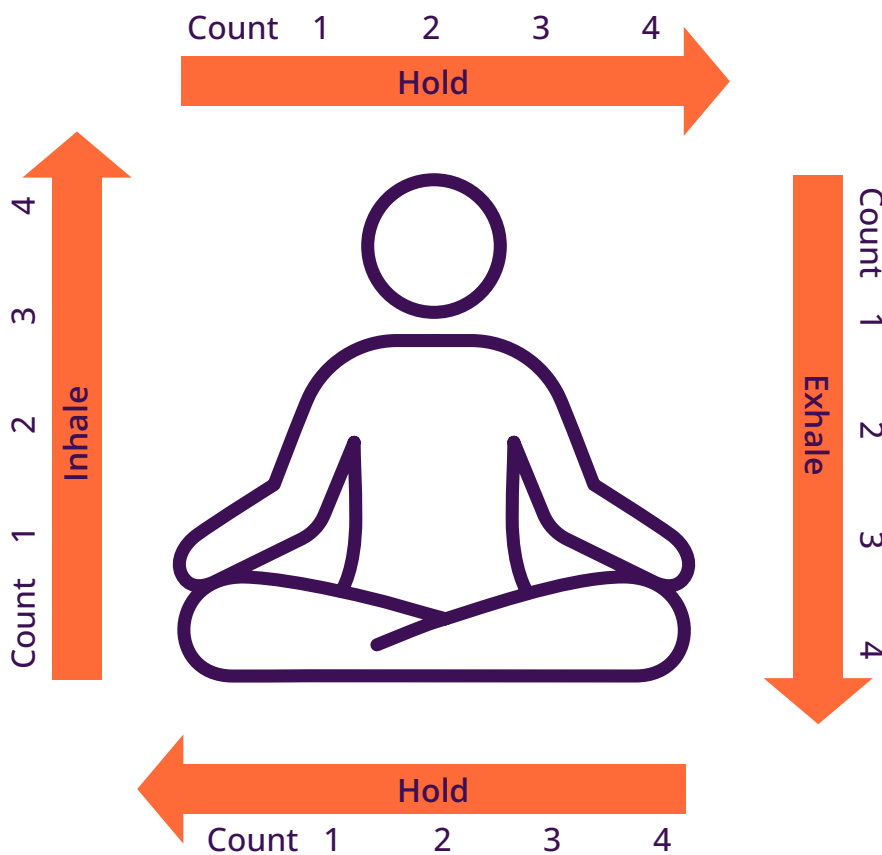
Optional workbook break

Breathing exercises can help us relax and help us focus on the present moment. If you want to have a go, try this box breathing activity.

Following the image below use the following steps for this activity.

1. Breathe in through your nose for four seconds.
2. Hold the breath for four seconds.
3. Breathe out for four seconds.
4. Hold for four seconds.
5. Start step 1 again.

Note: If four seconds is too long or too short you can adjust the time to what works for you.



If you have another self-care activity you would like to do, please do this. You may also like to go for a walk, make a warm drink or have a stretch, whatever feels right for you.

Part 3: Thinking about the media

Where am I sharing my story? What considerations do I need to make for where I am sharing my story?

E.g. news interview, radio, podcast, community event, social media, public campaign.

Am I being recorded and where is this recording being shared? Am I comfortable with how permanent a digital recording of my story may be?

Part 3: Thinking about the media (continued)

What angle are the media taking? Is this a genuine opportunity to share my experience, or a superficial/tokenistic one?

Who is benefitting from me sharing my experience?

Part 3: Thinking about the media (continued)

Do I want to ask to see the questions I will be asked prior to the interview?

Note: this may not always be an option.

What help seeking information do I want the media or public communicators to provide when they share my story?

E.g. Lifeline, 1800RESPECT, MensLine Australia, Kids Helpline.

Is there anything in your past that you aren't comfortable with the media finding and sharing to the public if a background check is performed?

Part 4: Thinking about the audience experience

**Are my language choices inclusive and challenging stigma?
How might my language impact my audience?**

**Does my story include information about suicide method or location?
If yes, why am I choosing to share the details, are they necessary and do I
understand the risk involved in sharing these details with my audience?
Is this risk something I am willing to take responsibility for?**

**Do I need to tell anyone in my life that my story is being shared publicly
so they aren't surprised?**

Part 5: Thinking about how I can manage other people (continued)

What is my plan for answering questions people may ask me about my story?
What can I say to turn down or address questions I don't feel comfortable answering?

What is my plan if people in distress reach out to me?
E.g. having information about a support service they can contact.

“Be explicit about which parts of your story are off limits and articulate what you, the person offering up your story wants the key messages to be - make sure you prepare, hone your story and tailor it to suit the event purpose.”

Survey respondent: 56-65yrs, LGBTQ+

Thinking space

Part 6: Thinking about self-care

How am I going to maintain my wellbeing throughout the storytelling process?

What is my plan if I become distressed while sharing my story?

Part 6: Thinking about self-care (continued)

Is there a support person I want to debrief with after sharing my story? Who are they?

Have I scheduled time for rest and self-care after sharing my story? Are there any barriers for me engaging in self-care activities after sharing my story that I need to address e.g. away from your home environment?

“Be kind to yourself - being that open takes strength and conviction.
Be proud in your journey and achievements.”

Survey respondent: 56-65yrs

This is the end of the guided workbook activities. We hope it has helped you work through some important questions for you to consider about how and when you want to share your story publicly. There is a final wellbeing activity on the next page for you to complete if you would like, or you can go and do one of your own activities. There are also blank pages for you to start writing your story if this is something you want to do. Please remember that sharing your story is courageous and it is a privilege for people to hear it. Access more resources to support you in sharing your story here: mindframe.org.au/our-stories-matter

Thinking space

Optional workbook break: Colour me



