

ALL ABOUT

WHAT'S STORY?

A simple approach to
promoting healthy
relationships in a
divided world: through
personal story-sharing



 WYS?

WHAT'S THE PROBLEM?

We live in a world where division, fear, prejudice and racism plague us daily. The predominant sentiment seems to be anti-black, anti-white, anti-rich, anti-poor, anti-migrant ... in fact, anti-everyone who is not like us.

These divisions undermine social and economic development, divide communities and families, and often lead to tension and violence.

For our collective futures we need to find simple ways for people of good will to actively bridge these divides.

WHAT'S  YOUR STORY?

An initiative of

HEARTLINES

THE CENTRE FOR VALUES PROMOTION



WHAT'S OUR SOLUTION?

What's Your Story? is a project to help ordinary South Africans tackle the divisions in our society and promote trust and understanding. Our approach was informed by the need for:

- A non-threatening way to start moving beyond stereotypes, as dealing head-on with issues such as race does not work.
- Scalability – large numbers of people engaging with each other enhances social cohesion and the common good.
- Long-term behaviour and culture change for both individuals and groups.
- An approach and tools that do not need costly facilitators.

With this in mind we developed What's Your Story? It is both simple and profound.

To inspire and support people to get to know a little more of each other's stories and make it a habit – by engaging with people who are the same as us, and those who are not. Particularly where we meet together, such as in our families, or places of work, study, play or worship.

WHAT'S YOUR STORY? WORKS IN:

- Workplaces, NGOs/NPOs and public sector organisations
- Faith-based communities
- Schools and tertiary educational institutions – for learners and for educators
- Sports and other clubs
- Families

We have also worked in a variety of leadership settings:

- Leaders in a particular industry/sector seeking to resolve complex issues and relational challenges.
- Peace-building initiatives in communities where tensions are high and relationships are damaged – particularly where there are marked differences of race, ethnicity, and income levels.



HOW DOES IT WORK?

What's Your Story? is the sharing of our personal stories and consists of three basic actions: Ask. Listen. Tell.



ASK

Asking someone to tell you some of their story. It can be anything from a simple question like “What is the origin of your name?” to putting aside time to hear their life story. Doing this sends the message that you “see” them as a fellow human being and that they are worthy of respect.



LISTEN

Truly listening to someone’s story extends the message of respect. In listening to another's story we see the human being behind the “other” and are often surprised by how much we have in common. This can help break down stereotypes and suspicions, and open up a path for understanding and reconciliation.



TELL

Being prepared to tell some of your story, when asked, can be a gift to others and yourself. To tell our stories, we need to take time to reflect on our own journeys. This can be a really positive experience as we might see how hard times have shaped us and led us to forgive ourselves and others.



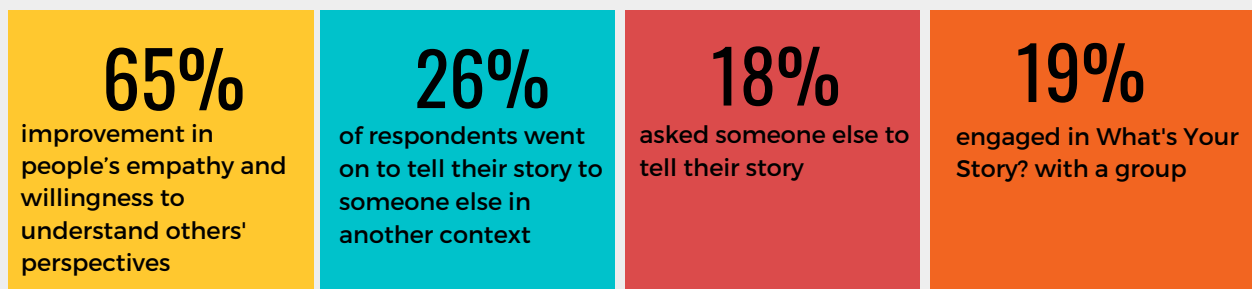
AND DOES IT WORK?

What's Your Story? has been the subject of a number of independent evaluations. You can view these at heartlines.org.za/wys/impact.

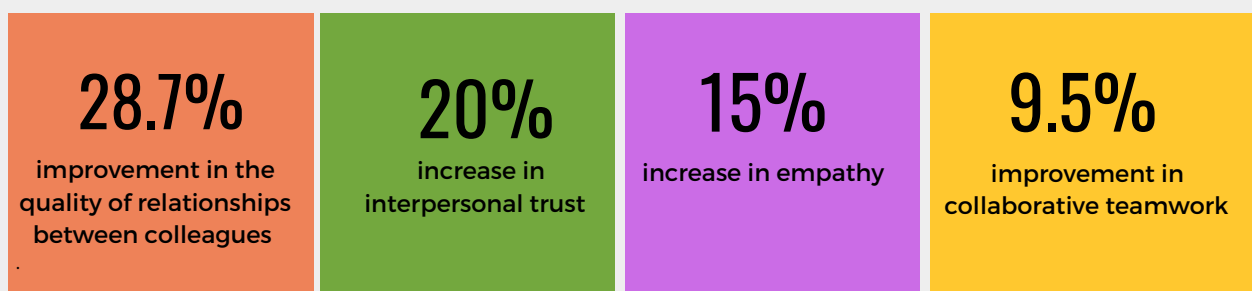
One of the most important findings from these evaluations was that most people who participated in What's Your Story? used the approach again in their broader communities (including churches, families, community-based organisations, schools and workplaces).

Other findings showed that the programme supports greater levels of understanding, helps to resolve negative emotions, improves relationships at work, increases levels of empathy, and breaks stereotypes.

An independent evaluation of a group of church leaders found that:



In a medium-size insurance company there was:



SOME PARTICIPANT COMMENTS

Telling our stories built trust, brought deeper learning, vulnerability and toughness ...

People are more tolerant, and I have noticed that there is more openness. I feel that the church is becoming more diverse, as people are made to feel more welcome and people from all backgrounds are feeling comfortable to come.

I definitely think that What's Your Story? has had an impact on me as an individual, now I listen and also hear. Before, I listened but did not hear. Our staff are now more vulnerable with each other and there is an element of trust emerging between staff.

What's Your Story? helped me to learn not to judge other people. I have learned that whoever or whatever the person is, there is a story behind it. I am more interested to hear the story behind the behaviour, attitude, character or looks. I want to know how they got to be where they are before judging or making conclusions about them.

OUR ROLLOUT TO DATE

We have worked with **over 50 companies** including BMW, Google, Lloyds Bank, S&P, Hollard, Ogilvy and Mather, the Banking Association of South Africa, the Advertising Association of South Africa, Alexander Forbes and Lombard Insurance.

Over **2 000 congregations** have adopted What's Your Story? and have customised the process according to their context.

At least **20 schools** have used the Beyond the River film and What's Your Story? concept to date.

We have done over **50 Bridge Leadership** events – with amazing results.

AVAILABLE RESOURCES

A range of resources are available for different contexts, many of which can be downloaded free from the What's Your Story? website at whatsyourstory.org.za



Our award-winning film, **Beyond the River**, has been widely used to inspire people to get to know the stories of others and to confront prejudice.

Church resources

A myriad of resources for small groups and youth groups, plus sermon outlines and guides for other activities.

Workplace resources

A range of options that can be tailored to suit a particular workplace.

School and campus resources

Our resources for schools integrate What's Your Story? into subjects such as English, History, Life Orientation and Visual Arts. Our campus resource is aimed at students navigating the complexities of student life.



WE ALSO OFFER

A **network of trainers** around the country who can support the marketing and implementation of What's Your Story?

Bridge Leadership Engagements taking leaders through a process of solving complex cohesion issues through personal story-sharing tools.

KEEN TO FIND OUT MORE?

Check out our website and sign up to get access to various resources, videos and story-based ideas for your family, workplace, church, faith group, school or campus.

whatsyourstory.org.za

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Made possible with a grant from

