

Lights Up: Using Theater and Art to Tell Our Stories and Support Mental Health

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Workshop Overview

- Why storytelling matters
- The power of art and theater
- Inclusive creative tools
- Reflection and discussion

Independent Living Philosophy

- Our lives, our leadership, our stories.
- Each person is the expert in their own experience.
- Creative expression supports self-determination.

Storytelling Is Survival

- When we tell our stories our way, we create healing and leadership.
- Storytelling is not performance—it's empowerment.
- It builds connection and belonging.

Trauma-Informed Practices

- Safety: No one has to share what they create.
- Choice: All activities are optional.
- Empowerment: Participants define their own meaning.

Low-Barrier, No-Experience-Needed

Activity 1:
Story Circle – Exploring Strength and
Voice

Activity 2:
Improv for Connection – Saying
“Yes, And...” to Possibility

Activity 3:
Visual Expression – What Does Belonging
Look Like?

Reflection and Discussion

- How did it feel to create together?
- What moments of joy or surprise came up?
- How could this be used in your community?

Applying These Tools

- Use arts-based practices in:
 - Peer support groups
 - Independent living centers
 - Rural outreach
 - Mental health promotion
- Encourage local adaptation and creativity.

Key Takeaways

- Storytelling builds connection and belonging.
- Creativity supports mental wellness and leadership.
- Everyone's voice and story matter.

Thank You

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