

VSA Texas

Opening Minds, Opening Doors: Promoting Self-Advocates as Speakers



6-Session Workshop Preparing a Powerful Story for Presentation

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Introduction To OMOD

Opening Minds, Opening Doors (OMOD) is a six-week (or six session) workshop designed to enable adults with developmental and other disabilities to write personal stories and develop the public speaking skills to present those stories in a variety of venues (conferences, civic group meetings, schools, legislative sessions, etc.). Each OMOD workshop ends with a Showcase where participants make presentations to an audience of friends, family and interested members of their local communities.

For Participants

- OMOD encourages adults with disabilities to imagine themselves as belonging in, and contributing to the larger community and builds skills for active engagement with a diverse social group.
- OMOD uses a 3-part process to help participants produce and deliver their personal stories as presentations:
 - **Writing:** Participants write and share their stories during the workshop
 - **Editing:** Participants select one main story from their writings, and develop/edit it for use in a public presentation with help from staff and volunteers and/or other participants.
 - **Coaching:** Each participant receives individual coaching for performance before an OMOD Showcase of family, friends and others.

Benefits of participating in an OMOD Workshop:

- Opportunity to write and share personal stories during the workshop, and later in a public forum
- Experience a sense of community among the participants – this happens organically because as we share our stories, we learn about each other
- Each writer-participant receives support in every stage of the process
- Learn basics of public speaking: using voice and body, movement, using microphones, the importance of timing and many other basic tools for delivering a great story.
- Telling your story is self-advocacy at its best!
- Explore possible venues/forums that could offer speaking opportunities to OMOD participants when the workshop is over.

For Potential Audiences

- When OMOD participants share a story about their lives, they have the chance to open the minds of those who hear. And that can open doors for participants and their audiences.
- Once people become more familiar with what life with a disability is like, many find it easier to include people with disabilities in:
 - Art, music, theatre
 - Community projects
 - Social and sporting events
 - And so many more daily events that we all share!

FACILITATOR RESPONSIBILITIES

- **Orient and prepare OMOD volunteers to assist as needed in the workshop.**
 - You will find a volunteer training guide in the Resource Section of this manual.
- **Follow the OMOD schedule as closely as possible.**
 - Tasks for each week are outlined in this guide. Please follow the schedule as closely as possible so that Weeks 5 and 6 will yield the best story presentations possible.
 - At the end of every session there are notes for Facilitators (Facilitator Homework). These notes will explain what you need to do in order to prepare for the coming week's workshop.
- **Right from the start, pay attention to the stories:**
 - Look for stories with common themes. Ask yourself if these stories could easily be transformed into ensemble pieces, or if the themes might be ones that resonate with others in the group.
 - Pay attention to conversations that take place during breaks. Sometimes, in these off-the-cuff conversations, interesting stories emerge.
 - Ensure that participants write about their own lives, making their experiences the focus of the story. OMOD's goal is to promote self-advocates who use stories based on their personal experience to create

new visibility in their communities. The stories should reflect that goal whenever possible.

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- **Create a safe environment where everyone's level of participation is equally valued, and personal information is treated with respect.**
 - Accept all attempts to write during the workshop. Modify if needed.
 - Make sure that participants stay positive in their feedback to each other.
 - During Session 1, establish that the information that is shared in the workshop stays within the workshop context so that privacy does not become an issue.
 - Be Playful whenever possible. People participate more if the environment is upbeat and cheerful.
- **Practice OMOD's "ethic of accommodation," by modifying the writing, editing or coaching process to maximize success.**
 - Specific strategies for modifying or accommodating to address strengths and/or areas of individual need during the writing, editing and coaching tasks of the workshop are included in "OMOD and the Ethic of Accommodation" located in OMOD TEACHING RESOURCES section at the end of this guide.
 - **Be mindful to accommodate anyone who faces challenges related to the delivery of their story.** Some options are:
 - Cue cards for participants who need to read, or say, passages that are short and concise.
 - Use photos to enhance delivery.
 - iPad can be used to speak, or to play back other media to enhance story delivery.
 - Smart phones can also be used for playback of a story.
 - Arrange for a peer partner to help.
 - Participant can delegate a person to speak in his or her place.
 - Be creative! Every workshop presents its own opportunity to explore what inclusion and accommodation really mean.

- **Respectfully coach participants to prepare for conference and other presentations.**
 - Facilitators, and all volunteers will be needed for the coaching segments of the workshop (Session 5 and 6) in order to ensure individual coaching.
 - Coaching instructions and materials are included in the Session 5 section of this guide.

Using the Facilitator Guide

This guide is divided into 6 sessions that address what you need to do and know each week in order to facilitate the OMOD process. It also provides step-by-step instructions for selected activities. Each session uses the same basic framework:

- **Prior to the Session:** This section identifies equipment, materials, and additional support you will require. Use it as a checklist to ensure you have everything ready for the session.
- **Learning Objectives:** These will help you keep the group on track. If questions or suggestions from the participants move off into unexpected directions, use the learning objectives to redirect the focus of the group.
- **Session Schedule:** Each week's schedule of activities is provided. Each weekly schedule of tasks (bulleted list) corresponds to the workshop description that follows. This Workshop Description is the fully developed information you will need in order to conduct the workshop.
 - *Suggested Times:* The times shown in the section notes are meant to be suggestions only, although following them will ensure that the session is completed within the allotted time.
 - *Remember, some of the participants may be relying on other people or services to provide their transportation, so adhering to the start and stop times for the sessions is important.*
- **Workshop Description:** Each week's workshop tasks are fully explained.
 - **Warm Up:** This section offers suggestions on exercises to put participants at ease, both physically and socially. Feel free to modify the exercises to correspond with the abilities of the group.
 - **Weekly Activities:** Each week's goals and tasks are clearly explained.

- **Break:** Ensure participants are clear about physical boundaries for break, smoking areas, bathroom facilities, etc. Ensuring that the session starts up again promptly after the break will keep the weekly sessions within the desired time limits.
- **Participant Homework:** The handout(s) you need to distribute are provided in each week's section of the Facilitator Guide. Review the contents with the group to ensure that participants understand the assignment and what they are meant to do with it.
- **Facilitator Homework:** This section will remind Facilitators what they need to do in preparation for the following week's session.
- **Detailed Activity Instructions:** Step-by-step instructions for each week's activities.

OMOD Facilitator Guide

Quick Contents List

WEEK 1: GETTING STARTED WITH STORIES

Participant Homework: *Listen to Your World*

Facilitator Instructions

Facilitator Homework

WEEK 2: DESCRIPTION AND POINT OF VIEW

Participant Handouts:

- *Point of View*
- *Show versus Tell*
- *OMOD Peer Performance Questions*

Participant Homework: *Photographic Stories: Learning to Describe*

Facilitator Homework

WEEK 3: WORDS, VOICE, BODY, AND KNOWING THE AUDIENCE

Participant Handouts:

- *During the Presentation*
- *Presentation Warm-up Exercises*

Participant Homework: Continue developing, revising showcase story

Facilitator Homework

WEEK 4: COMMITTING TO YOUR STORY

Participant Handouts:

- *Finding the Power Punches*
- *Prepare, Prepare, Prepare*

Participant Homework:

- *Mirror, Mirror, On the Wall*
- Continue revising Showcase story

FACILITATOR Instructions: *Complete these after Session 4*

- Ensure that you have a readable final copy of each piece by end of session so that you can generate Showcase Lineup (see *Generating Draft of Showcase Lineup*)
- Make coaching packets for each participant (see “*Coaching Performance for OMOD Participants*”), including:
 - 1 Readable copy of final story draft for participant, 1 for Session 5 coach
 - Coaching sample form, as a reference
 - Coaching template (complete one per participant)

WEEK 5: One-on-One Coaching and Practice

Participant Handouts:

- *Individual* coaching notes

Facilitator Homework:

- Finalize script
- Print copies as needed (discussed in Session 5 section of this guide)
- Meet/confer with any participant who still needs work on their piece
- Offer rehearsal for ensemble pieces if possible during the week

WEEK 6: Rehearsal and Delivery of Showcase

Materials needed:

- Print out of Showcase Lineup for the cast as needed
- Up to 6 copies of the full script
- All AV equipment and person to run it
- Emcee

OMOD Teaching Resources

Materials included:

- OMOD and the Ethic of Accommodation
- Generating Draft of Showcase Lineup
- Who’s My Audience?
- Video Coaching
- OMOD Volunteer Training Guide