

Story  
Corps®



# STORYCORPS

## Connect

TOOLKIT FOR ORGANIZATIONS  
SERVING OLDER ADULTS

2020

In collaboration with

LeadingAge™



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## WELCOME

This toolkit will introduce you to StoryCorps and explain how your organization can use the new [StoryCorps Connect](#) platform to engage with your residents, clients, and community.

Since 2003, StoryCorps has given over 600,000 people of all backgrounds and beliefs the chance to record interviews about their lives and preserve them in the Library of Congress. An important part of this effort has been connecting with individuals and community organizations to create a culture of listening across the United States with the simple concept of asking people to honor one another with an interview.

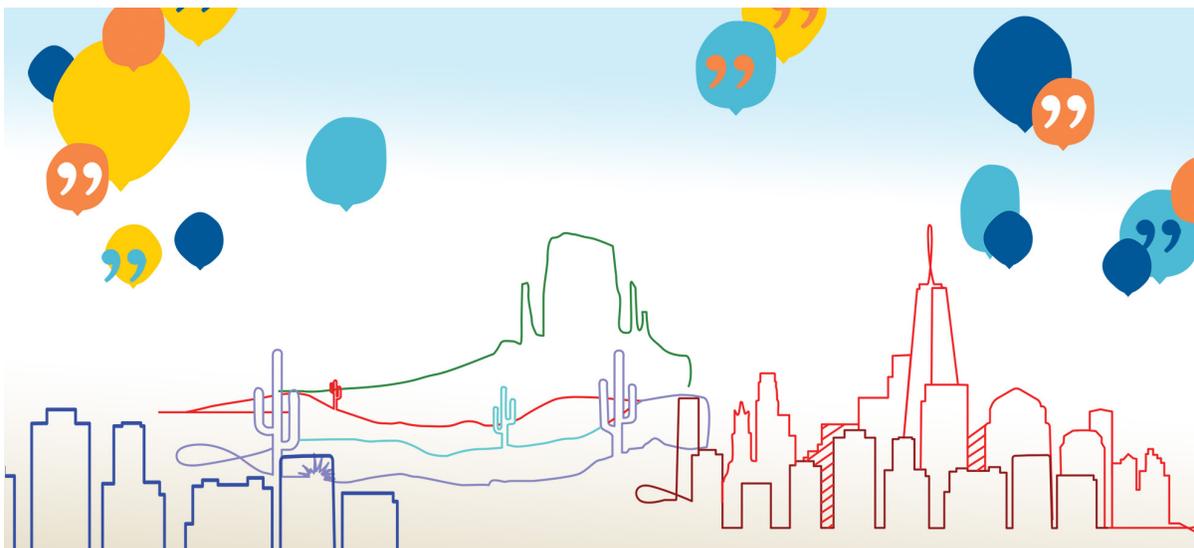
Until this time, StoryCorps interviews have been recorded face-to-face. But the largest global health crisis in a century is changing the way we live and interact with our friends, neighbors, and families.

With a fierce determination to honor the memories and experiences of our communities, we created a new technology that enables people to record remotely through a computer or a mobile device. Through StoryCorps Connect, participants can record conversations and instantly share them with the [StoryCorps Archive](#) and the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress.

We invite you to offer this platform to your residents, clients, staff, and community members so that they may have the opportunity to record, share and preserve their stories, and hope you will consider recording with your friends and family too!

*This toolkit was created in collaboration with [LeadingAge](#), the trusted voice for aging and the association representing nonprofit aging services providers.*

If you have technical questions or need assistance, visit <https://support.storycorps.me/>



## INTRODUCING STORYCORPS TO YOUR COMMUNITY

Introduce your residents, clients, staff and volunteers to StoryCorps and discuss the importance of sharing and listening to stories. Remind them that a StoryCorps interview is an opportunity to record an uninterrupted, intentional conversation with someone you know about anything you'd like, from favorite memories to important life questions. It's also a way to connect with family and friends in a time when visiting in person is extremely limited.

Here are some StoryCorps animations to help introduce your clients, residents, and staff to the interview process. All videos and content in this playlist can be found at [storycorps.org](https://storycorps.org).

- ▶ **"An Intro to StoryCorps from our Founder Dave Isay" (3 min.)**
- ▶ **"Eyes on the Stars" (3 min.)**
- ▶ **"Silvia's Legacy" (2.5 min.)**
- ▶ **"Chloe Longfellow" (2.5 min.)**
- ▶ **"Leading the Way" (2.5 min.)**
- ▶ **"New Tracks" (3 min.)**
- ▶ **"A Wonderful Life" (3.5 min.)**



## PREPARING FOR THE INTERVIEW

Once your residents, clients and staff have had an introduction to StoryCorps and the importance of storytelling, they can begin to plan for their recording. Here are some basic steps to prepare for a StoryCorps Connect recording:

→ **Choose a Partner:** Ask your residents, clients and staff whom they would like to record with and why. Participants should think about who they would want to honor with an interview.

Some helpful questions for them to consider:

- Who in your life might find this type of recording meaningful?
- Who is someone from your community that you want to connect with on a meaningful level?
- What stories or memories are important for you to preserve at this time?

→ **Make a Plan:** Participants should make a plan for their interview by identifying questions they'd like to ask using the Great Questions List in this toolkit. A standard StoryCorps interview is forty minutes long (though your interview can be shorter). Most participants have time to ask 6-8 questions over the course of an interview.

→ **Set a Time:** Participants will need to reach out to their recording partner in advance to plan a time for their interview.

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## INTERVIEW PAIRINGS

We encourage you to be creative with the potential pairings for these conversations. Some ideas include:

- ✓ Intergenerational recordings between residents or clients and a younger family member or volunteer.
- ✓ Pairing a resident or client with a staff member with whom they have a close relationship.
- ✓ Inviting residents or clients who are friends or neighbors to record a conversation together.



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## PREPARING FOR THE INTERVIEW

- **Discuss Sharing & Privacy Settings:** Each recording through StoryCorps Connect will go to the StoryCorps Archive and the Library of Congress. Participants should discuss this in advance and make sure they both are familiar with the privacy settings before they record. There are three settings they can choose:
  - **Public:** The interview and related information are available to anyone on the web.
  - **StoryCorps Community:** The interview and related information are available to anyone with an account on the StoryCorps Archive.
  - **Private:** The interview and related information are private, and only visible to the participant on the StoryCorps Archive website.
  
- **Create an Account & Practice:** Each participant will need to register for their own StoryCorps account at [archive.storycorps.org](https://archive.storycorps.org). We highly recommend that participants record a practice interview to familiarize themselves with the technology. Participants should take some time to learn how to log into and use StoryCorps Connect. They can refer to the participant toolkit for all the information they need to record.

In addition, you can refer to the following documents for helpful information, or find them at [storycorpsconnect.org](https://storycorpsconnect.org)

- [Getting Started](#)
- [Advanced Recording Tips](#)
- [Conversation Tips](#)



## WHAT YOU'LL NEED TO RECORD

Participants will need access to a smartphone, computer, or tablet with the latest device software as well as a Wi-Fi signal to upload interviews. You can access StoryCorps Connect through the current version of most internet browsers, however we recommend using Chrome.

StoryCorps Connect prompts users in English; however, participants may record in any language.



## RECORDING AN INTERVIEW STEP BY STEP

First, one participant will need to set up the recording by following these steps:

1. **Visit [storycorpsconnect.org](https://storycorpsconnect.org)** and select the button “Record Your Story Using StoryCorps Connect.”
2. **Log in.** Log into your existing StoryCorps Archive Account in order to access the recording page.
3. **Copy and send the recording link.** Once you are on the recording page, send the provided interview link to your partner. Once your partner follows the link, they will be prompted to log in to the StoryCorps Archive.

Now, both participants will be connected and ready to record:

1. **Click “Start Audio Recording.”** The site will keep track of time.
2. **Record!** You will have up to 40 minutes to record your conversation. The site will keep track of time for you. You won’t be able to pause the recording, but may record again if you didn’t get to everything you wanted to cover.
3. **Save your interview.** Click “Stop Recording,” and then, “Save Interview”.
4. **Add a title and keywords to your interview.** If you are the organizer of the interview. If you are the invitee, you won’t need to do anything!
5. **Share and archive your interview.** If you are the organizer of the interview, you’ll be prompted to input some basic details about the recording for the archive. You will also need to select privacy settings based on your interview partner’s wishes.

*NOTE: it might take up to 30 minutes for you to access your interview once you’ve archived it.*



### DEBRIEF

We encourage you to follow up with participants to hear more about their experience. You may like to ask about any challenges or surprises they encountered and if there were any memorable moments. If participants enjoyed the experience, encourage them to record again with a different partner.



## PRIVACY SETTINGS

After recording, participants will be prompted to publish their interview to the StoryCorps Archive, making the recording publicly available online at [archive.storycorps.org](https://archive.storycorps.org) and sharing it with the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress. They will have the option of choosing between three Privacy Settings:

- **Everyone:** Your interview and related information are available to anyone on the web.
- **StoryCorps Community:** Your interview and related information are available to anyone with an account on the StoryCorps Archive.
- **Private:** Your interview and related information are private.

Regardless of which setting you choose, StoryCorps has access to your recording and may still use your interview and other materials in the following ways, including but not limited to: broadcasts on public radio, animated and other audio-visual content, educational use, and any other StoryCorps programs. StoryCorps can also share your interviews with community and media organizations for use on their platforms and sites.

Please note: In order to access your recording later on, you must publish and share your interview with the StoryCorps Archive. Those who do not wish to preserve their recording online should not record using StoryCorps Connect.

## PARENTAL OR GUARDIAN CONSENT

Under StoryCorps Connect's terms of use: Children under the age of 13 may not participate in a StoryCorps Connect recording, and parental or guardian consent is required for people under the age of 18 to register for a StoryCorps Archive account. You can review StoryCorps' full terms of use at [archive.storycorps.org/terms-of-use](https://archive.storycorps.org/terms-of-use).

## USER-GENERATED CONTENT

StoryCorps Connect and the StoryCorps Archive contain user-generated content that is not reviewed before it is posted online. While we adhere to a strict set of Community Guidelines and work to maintain a culture of tolerance and acceptance, not all published content will be appropriate for all individuals. We also have a flagging mechanism in place to help further identify content that violates our Community Guidelines. We ask teachers, educators, and caregivers to familiarize themselves with the StoryCorps Archive, to review the Community Guidelines listed at [archive.storycorps.org](https://archive.storycorps.org), and to use discretion in adopting the project.



## GREAT QUESTIONS FOR YOUR STORYCORPS INTERVIEW

(Pick between 6 and 8 questions)

Most participants are able to get through about 6 questions during a 40-minute interview, so please select 6-8 questions from the lists below for your interview partner. Keep in mind that sometimes the best questions are the ones that you've always wanted to ask, so feel free to add a few of your own.

### GREAT QUESTIONS FOR ANYONE

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1. Can you tell me about a person who has been kindest to you in your life?
2. Can you tell me about one of your happiest memories?
3. Can you tell me about one of your most difficult memories?
4. Can you tell me about someone who has had a big influence on your life? What lessons did that person teach you?
5. What do you feel most grateful for in your life?
6. What are some of the most important lessons you've learned in life?
7. What is your favorite memory of me?
8. What are you proudest of in your life?
9. Can you remember a time in your life when you felt most alone?
10. How has your life been different than what you'd imagined?
11. How would you like to be remembered?
12. Do you have any regrets?
13. What are your hopes for me? For my children?
14. If this was to be our very last conversation, is there anything you'd want to say to me?
15. For future generations of your family listening to this years from now: is there any wisdom you'd want to pass on to them? What would you want them to know?
16. Is there anything that you've never told me but want to tell me now?
17. Are there things about me that you've always wanted to know but have never asked?
18. Turn the tables: tell the person you're interviewing what they've meant to you.
19. Add your own question(s) on a separate piece of paper.

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## COVID-19 PANDEMIC QUESTIONS

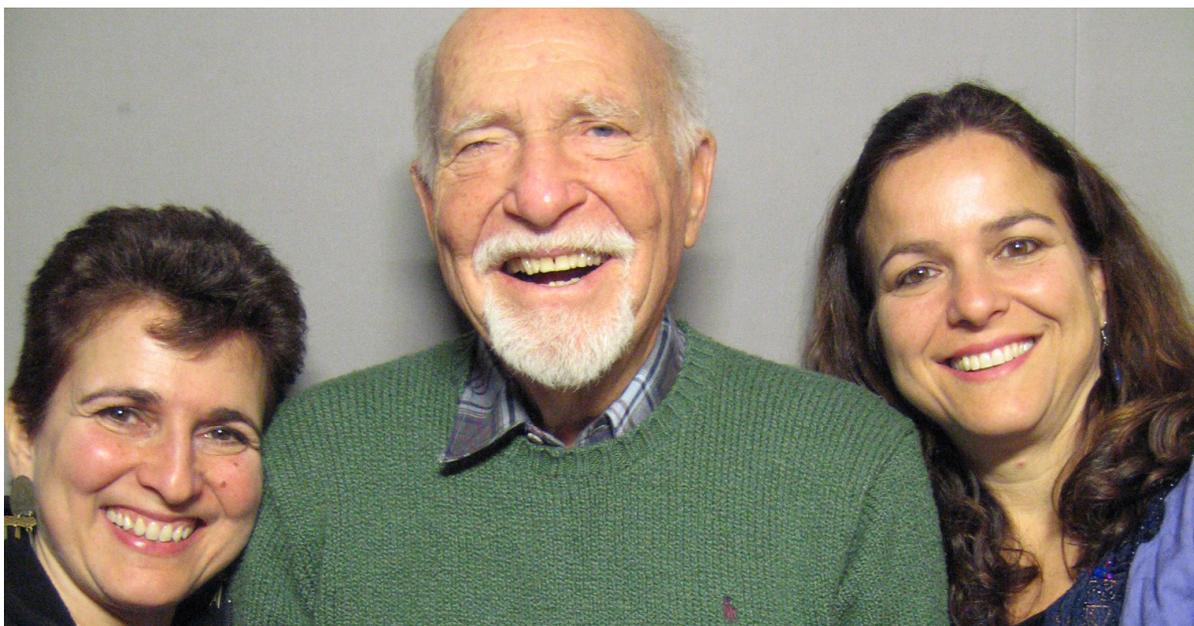
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1. How has living through this experience made you feel?
2. Are you afraid? What frightens you?
3. What has given you comfort and hope during this time?
4. What has been the most challenging part of this experience?
5. What is the toughest part of your days right now? the best?
6. What's the biggest way your life has changed because of the pandemic?
7. Is there someone you can't see right now who you really wish you could?
8. How is this experience different from other historical events you've lived through?
9. If you could ask anyone from your life, living or dead, for advice on getting through this, who would it be and what would you ask them?
10. Do you or have you had COVID-19? What is/was that experience like for you?
11. What memory of this time do you think will stay with you?
12. Has this experience changed you? If so, how?
13. What have you learned from this experience?
14. Who do you most worry about in your family or circle of friends right now?
15. If the quarantine ended tomorrow, what's the first thing you'd do?
16. Is there anything you want to say to me given what we're living through at this moment?

## GREAT QUESTIONS FOR PARENTS OR GRANDPARENTS

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1. Where did you grow up?
2. What was your childhood like?
3. Who were your favorite relatives?
4. What was my mom/dad like growing up?
5. Do you remember any songs that you used to sing to her/him? Can you sing them now?
6. What is the worst thing she/he ever did?
7. What were your parents or guardians like?
8. What were your grandparents like?
9. Are you proud of me?



## INTERVIEWING SOMEONE WITH MEMORY LOSS

Included here are some best practices and considerations for recording with a client or loved one who is experiencing memory loss.

### → PREPARE FOR YOUR INTERVIEW

- Bring photographs, memorabilia, or other objects to your interview session that can inspire memories and stories.
- Consider asking your partner to tell some stories she has frequently recounted in the past. Familiar stories can help Storytellers feel confident as they retell them. These “Greatest Hits” are probably the stories you’ll treasure the most too.
- Prepare for the possibility that this will be an emotional experience for both you and your interview partner.

### → ASKING QUESTIONS

- Prepare a list of questions in advance but be flexible with your question list. Interviews can take unexpected and interesting turns.
- **What** and **where** questions are good places to start. Consider using these before moving on to bigger-picture **why** and **how** questions. Remember that when questions are likely the most difficult for your interview partner to answer.

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## INTERVIEWING SOMEONE WITH MEMORY LOSS

- Avoid asking your interview partner to focus on a specific memory. Instead of asking about the person’s first memory or happiest moment, ask him or her to talk about a favorite memory or happy moments.
- When writing questions, it’s useful to provide context. For example, “I know you met Dad at a dance when you were both in Chicago. How did you feel when you first met him?”
- It’s likely that memories of early life will be easier to recall than more recent ones. Ask about different periods in your partner’s life so you can focus on memories that are easiest to talk about.
- If at first your partner does not seem to understand a question, consider rephrasing it, offering more context or asking something different. If your partner gets anxious, ask about something familiar, such as favorite activities, friends, or pets.
- When you get a good response to a question, consider saying, “Tell me more.” Doing so can provoke longer, richer stories.
- Consider asking your partner to tell stories that he or she has frequently recounted in the past. These stories will be familiar to the Storyteller and can make the person feel confident retelling them.
- Be patient. It can take longer for people with memory loss to retrieve their memories and share them. Don’t rush onto the next question just because it’s taking a little time to get the story out.

### → NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION

- Your body language is just as important as what you say. If you look relaxed and happy, it will be easier for your partner to relax as well. Provide encouragement during the interview. Smile and laugh when appropriate.

### → TELL YOUR OWN STORIES

- Feel free to tell stories about your interview partner. These can provide excellent jumping-off points and allow you to do a bit of the remembering for the person.

### → EXPRESS GRATITUDE

- Take a few minutes at the end of your conversation to tell your partner how much you care about him or her and thank the person for the conversation you just had.



## ABOUT STORYCORPS

Founded in 2003 by Dave Isay, StoryCorps has given over 600,000 people of all backgrounds and beliefs the chance to record interviews about their lives. The organization preserves the recordings in its archive and with the Library of Congress and shares select stories with the public through StoryCorps' weekly podcast, NPR broadcasts, animated shorts, digital platforms, and best-selling books. These powerful human stories reflect the vast range of experiences from across the United States; engender empathy and connection; and remind us of our shared humanity.

## ABOUT THE STORYCORPS ARCHIVE

The StoryCorps Archive is the largest single collection of human voices, featuring conversations recorded in all 50 states and Puerto Rico. The full collection of interviews is housed at the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C.

Visit [archive.storycorps.org](https://archive.storycorps.org) to access a selection of the interviews shared by people who have recorded a conversation with StoryCorps since 2003. This site represents a growing archive: new interviews are added every day by StoryCorps and by people from across the country and around the world. It was developed as a resource for the public, as well as students, educators, researchers, noncommercial media makers, community partner organizations, and others involved in scholarly or cultural work.

## ABOUT LEADING AGE

LeadingAge represents more than 5,000 aging-focused organizations that touch millions of lives every day. Alongside their members and 38 state partners, they address critical issues by blending applied research, advocacy, education, and community-building. They bring together the most inventive minds in the field to support older adults as they age wherever they call home. We make America a better place to grow old. For more information: [www.leadingage.org](https://www.leadingage.org).