

# *Faces of Help*

Resources  
for Leading a  
Digital Stories  
Discussion



## Discussion Leader's Guide

Compassionate Ottawa invites you to use this *Faces of Help* Leader's Guide. Enjoy the stories; tell your own story!



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## Introduction

Compassionate Ottawa is pleased that you are interested in leading a discussion about the *Faces of Help* stories. Thank you for taking this first step in sharing the stories. It is important to remember that they are to be used as **conversation starters**.

We are confident that you and the participants will be moved by the personal, from the heart, stories. Previous group members have used these single words to describe what they thought and felt:

*“endearing”*; *“warm”*; *“inspiring”*;  
*“hopeful”*; *“authentic”*; *intimate”*

You will find that participants are moved by the stories and immediately will want to share their own experiences. Additionally, they may wish to organize a viewing with family, friends, neighbours, or wherever they work, volunteer, learn, pray, or play. If so, our goal of sharing the stories broadly will have been achieved.

The stories, from start to finish, were created and produced by the storytellers themselves. Each one tells a personal experience of either giving or getting help related to caregiving, dying, or grieving. (The stories are also available in French on the Compassionate Ottawa website).

This Leader’s Guide has been prepared to help you have a successful, thoughtful, group conversation.

## How to use the stories with groups

Talking with others about caregiving, dying, and grieving can often be difficult. Providing opportunities for people to do so can be helpful. To encourage these conversations, Compassionate Ottawa invited 7 storytellers to share a personal experience which in turn can help others have meaningful conversations. The stories are best used for that purpose in small group discussion.

We want everyday people to have conversations about such important issues in their lives.

Stories invite a listener to think and feel what the storyteller has felt, and they often give the listener a chance to tell a story of their own. We see it often around a dining room table, a coffee shop, or a staff room. The exchange of stories brings them a bit closer together. In a group, members often hear of new ideas from others and realize that others have had similar experiences. And they remember the stories long afterwards. That is the beauty of a story.

## What is expected of you as the group leader?

In a nutshell (where does that term come from?), your role is to **organize** a viewing of the videos and **lead group members** in an enjoyable conversation. This is what you are essentially being invited to do. So, enjoy the stories and help each other have an important conversation.

## Tips to prepare for a successful discussion

Here are a few suggestions for having a positive discussion. In pilot groups recently conducted, leaders found these tips to be helpful:

- View each of the stories, become familiar with the storyteller’s message, and choose which 2-3 of the 7 stories you will use in a 90 minute session. (Our experience is that a 90-minute session viewing up to 3 videos and discussing each one separately works best, but you may have to adjust to the participants’ need.)
- Choose a comfortable location, arranging for participants to sit in a circle where they can all view the stories together on computer or TV monitor.
- Recruit 6-8 participants. (People often like to know someone who will be in the group.)
- Explain to potential participant what is being offered, why, and details on how the session will unfold.



- Prior to the session, choose 2-3 questions you may use to trigger the conversation. For example,

“What word or phrase best describes what you thought of, or felt, while watching the video?”

“Have any of you had an experience similar to that of the storyteller?” or “What message do you think the storyteller wished to convey?”

### **At the group session**

Welcome the participants and have them introduce themselves. You might ask each one why they decided to attend.

- Remind the participants of the purpose and the expectations of the session.
- Watch the time, and comfortably move the conversation along.
- Try to make sure that each person has a chance to talk.
- Offer support if someone becomes very emotional. Sometimes a moving video will bring a person to tears. Don't put any pressure on them to talk. Offer them an opportunity to take a time out to briefly leave the group, if they wish. (In pilot groups offered, participants were very kind and supportive of each other, and they reported feeling safe to share their personal story.)

**(Note: If you will be leading a virtual session, e.g., Zoom, insure that you and the participants each have an appropriate device (tablet, iPad, computer) and know how to use them for the session. In this case we assume that each person will be in their home.)**

Included in this Guide is a sample agenda. Please feel free to adapt it with the group you are leading.

A complete transcript of each story is also available on the website for anyone who would benefit from reading the stories.

We hope that this Guide will give you confidence in leading a successful conversation. If you would like to talk with someone who has already led a group, please contact [digitalstories@compassionateOttawa.ca](mailto:digitalstories@compassionateOttawa.ca)

Compassionate Ottawa would appreciate getting feedback from you and your participants on your experience of discussing the stories. Please invite everyone to go to the website's 'Resources' section and click on the Digital Stories Evaluation link to complete a short electronic survey.

### **Other Compassionate Ottawa Resources**

Participants may wish to learn of other resources available to them. Please invite them to check out other programs and materials under 'Resources' on Compassionate Ottawa's website, [www.compassionateottawa.ca](http://www.compassionateottawa.ca).

There are also opportunities to organize a Book Chat about “Talking About Death Won't Kill You” or to register for a workshop on Advanced Care Planning or Grief and Bereavement.

There is also information on about the Conversations with Leaders, and initiatives in Schools, Workplaces, and Faith Communities.



# Sample Agenda

## *Faces of Help Discussion*

- (10 min) 1. Welcome and Introductions
- (5 min) 2. Confirmation of the purpose and expectations of the session
- (5 min) 3. Story # 1 .....
- (15 min) 4. Discussion of story #1
- (5 min) 5. Story # 2 .....
- (15 min) 6. Discussion of story #2
- (5 min) 7. Story #3 .....
- (15 min) 8. Discussion of story #3
- (10 min) 9. Invite participants to comment on their overall experience of participating in the group discussion.
- (10 min) 10. Request that participants share feedback with Compassionate Ottawa

Thank you for attending!