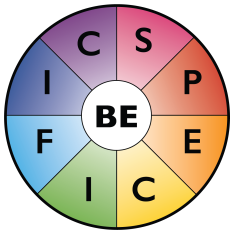
Laurie Heyl, LCSW Story Coach
Story Groups
847.456.1880
laurieheyl.com

BE SPECIFIC

A Guide to Writing Your Story



An Invitation

Our stories of heartache and hope shape our lives and our relationships.

Why Engage Stories from the Past?

It takes courage to acknowledge our stories of heartache and harm.

As we engage our stories with compassion and curiosity, we begin to understand how experiences from the past shape our relationships in the present.

Engaging Our Stories Is an Invitation to Greater Freedom

Engaging our stories—and ourselves—with kindness invites us to imagine new possibilities for the future, with greater freedom to be the people we were created to be and to experience the relationships we were meant for.

What might faith, hope, and love look like if our stories no longer determined what is possible?

"You are more than one story."
— Lee Warren

BE SPECIFIC offers gentle guidance as you begin to write a story about a childhood experience with kindness and curiosity. You do not need to respond to every prompt or move through the letters in order. Allow yourself to notice the sensations, feelings and thoughts that come to mind as you write and reflect.

BE — Be Present

Pause to breathe and be present as you begin to write and reflect upon your story.

S — Specific Moments

Choose a particular event or specific moments of heartache or harm as the focus of your story.

Pause to reflect upon what happened, and how this story has shaped your life and your relationships.

P — Physical Sensations

Notice what's happening in your body with kindness and curiosity as you write and reflect.

- What sensations do you remember noticing in your body when the story took place?
- What sensations are you noticing now as you remember your story?

E — Emotions

Notice your emotions with kindness and curiosity as you write and reflect.

- What emotions did you notice when the story took place?
- What emotions are you experiencing now as you remember your story?

C — Cognitive Beliefs

Reflect upon how this story shaped your beliefs about yourself, others, your cultural context, and God.

- Are there beliefs you still carry that you might want to explore with kindness and curiosity?

I – Imagine the scene / Include sensory information / Inquire with curiosity

- Pause to *Imagine the scene* in your story as you remember it.
- *Include sensory information* by recalling what you saw, heard, tasted, touched or smelled.
- *Inquire with curiosity:* consider who, what, when, where, why and how questions as you write.

You don't need to fill in details you can't remember.

F — Find Patterns / Follow Connections

Notice recurring patterns in your story. Follow any connections that you notice as you write and reflect.

I — Imagine Redemption

Without minimizing what happened or forcing a hopeful ending, begin to consider what restoration might look like.

- What might greater compassion, connection, or freedom look like for you now?

C — Create a More Coherent Story

A *coherent story* helps us make sense of our experiences.

Consider how you understand this story today, including what remains confusing or unresolved.

- What would you want a person you trust to understand about your story?
- Is there anything you understand differently now than you did then?

How to Write your Story

Feel free to include some of your reflections as you write your story in your own words, including what you remember about the experience and what it meant to you.

You do not need to address every letter of BE SPECIFIC in your written story. Let the story unfold naturally and in your own voice.

Your story does not need to be polished or complete. You can acknowledge uncertainty, leave something unwritten, or pause whenever you need to.

Preparing Your Story for Story Group

- **Length:** 600–1,000 words.
- **Focus:** Choose a significant childhood experience connected to a moment of heartache or harm.
- **Writing:** Use the BE SPECIFIC framework as a guide for reflection rather than a formula to follow.
- **Submission:** Please email your written story to laurie@compassionatefamilies.com one week before our Story Group begins so I can read and prepare to engage your story with care.

Thank you for the courage you bring to engaging your story. I look forward to receiving your story and engaging your story with compassion in our group.

© 2026 Laurie Heyl, LCSW. All rights reserved.