

What does your company do?

“*She Speaks*” is an empowerment workshop that uses the transformative art of poetry and a variety of active learning strategies to open the door toward healing, restoration, and repair. By creating a non-judgmental space, “*She Speaks*” allows participants to address and assess their emotions, identify barriers that may be impeding their personal growth and most importantly, restore their voices and acknowledge their strengths. Through interactive educational activities, “*She Speaks*” uses poetry to help participants create a specific emotional response through intentional language, arrangements, sound, and rhythm. When put into action, “*She Speaks*” participants are able to use what they’ve learned as a catalyst for personal change. “*She Speaks*” provides a unique opportunity to promote personal power and self-awareness.

“Poetry can provide comfort and boost mood during periods of stress, trauma, and grief. Its powerful combination of words, metaphor, and meter help us better express ourselves, make sense of the world and our place in it.”¹

What is the Potential Problem?

Silence intensifies the impact of trauma and trauma that goes unspoken, un-witnessed, and unclaimed too often “outs itself” as more violence to self.²

After experiencing a traumatic event (in childhood or as an adult), it’s common for survivors to be propelled into a life of silence. A student resource document created by Priscilla Benites, LMFT, states that brain scans of the Broca’s area (left frontal lobe of the cortex) performed after a traumatic event show decreased brain activity. This is significant as the Broca’s area is responsible for motor functions involved with speech and language production³. Shame, guilt, and isolation make it difficult for survivors to articulate their emotions, wants, needs and feelings.

Why is this a potential problem? 70% of adults in the U.S. have experienced some type of traumatic event at least once in their lives. *Five out of ten women experience a traumatic event and tend to experience different traumas than men. While both men and women report the same symptoms of PTSD ((hyperarousal, reexperiencing, avoidance, and numbing), some symptoms are more common for women than men.⁴* In a society where girls and women are shunned for being too candid, expressive, or vocal, this causes a disconnect with self that desperately needs to be mended.

¹Sima, Richard. “More Than Words: Why Poetry Is Good for Our Health.” *International Arts + Mind Lab: The Center for Applied Neuroaesthetics*, 8 Apr. 2021, www.artsandmindlab.org/more-than-words-why-poetry-is-good-for-our-health/#:%7E:text=Poetry%20can%20i%20provide%20comfort%20and,and%20our%20place%20in%20it.

²Phillips SB. The dangerous role of silence in the relationship between trauma and violence: a group response. *Int J Group Psychother*. 2015 Jan;65(1):65-87. doi: 10.1521/ijgp.2015.65.1.64. PMID: 25513940.

³“College of the Canyons Home.” *Priscilla Benites, LMFT*, www.canyons.edu. Accessed 28 Mar. 2022.

⁴“VA.Gov | Veterans Affairs.” *US Dept. Of Veterans*, www.ptsd.va.gov/understand/common/common_women.asp. Accessed 28 Mar. 2022.

The Solution

*Empowering women is essential to the health and social development of families, communities, and countries. When women are living safe, fulfilled, and productive lives, they can reach their full potential.*⁵

The solution to the silent suffering of survivors of traumatic events is education and empowerment.

It is paramount that survivors are motivated to identify and vocalize their assets while acknowledging any barriers that are present in their lives. Empowering and educating survivors on how to use their voices (identify and express their wants, needs, and desires) in a group setting brings them out of isolation, allows them to feel increased compassion, and results in increased freedom of expression. Through establishing mutually empathetic relationships, survivors are able to alleviate the shame and increase levels of well-being thus being able to move toward becoming the woman she envisions herself to be. By creating a community that promotes transparency and healing, survivors are able to experience a sense of emotional safety. Emotional safety activates **the freedom to collaborate, dream, be wildly creative, and share bold ideas**. When survivors are able to engage in conversations that speak directly to their experiences, it provides invaluable assistance in their quest for healing, transformation, and restoration.

How will “She Speaks” implement the solution?

“She Speaks” aids in refurbishing the voices of all participants.

Over 4 2 ½ hour sessions, “She Speaks” employs a variety of tactics to implement the solution. These include (but are not limited to) spoken word poetry, education, empowerment, active learning strategies, utilizing the therapeutic method of self-disclosure, engaging in group work activities, and completing writing prompts.

Active Learning Strategies:

- **The Therapeutic Method of Self Disclosure:** The “She Speaks” Workshop begins with a human connection. To open the first session, I’ll share my unadulterated testimony. After highlighting the most painful points in my life that caused me to silence my voice, I share how I overcame and became the woman that I am today. Our ideal participants are survivors of trauma. Therefore, they have not lived a fairy tale life and won’t connect with someone who has. In being truly authentic, participants are able to feel emotionally safe in my care and given permission to drop any facade that’s often presented during healing sessions.
- **Spoken Word-** The facilitator will open the session with a powerful poem which is the foundation on which “She Speaks” was created. This is followed by an **open group discussion**

⁵ “Womens Empowerment - Facts, Stories and How To Help | World Vision Australia.” *World Vision*, www.worldvision.com.au/womens-empowerment. Accessed 28 Feb. 2022.

about the content of the poem. This open forum is intended to initiate the conversation about the subject matter while eliminating rigidity within the group.

- **Workshop** - Processing and Journaling- The “*She Speaks*” curriculum includes guided questions that are designed to provoke thought, improve emotional awareness and increase cognitive functions. Participants will have the options to share out loud or write their responses in a journal. We call this the (“*Spirit Hit*”) which is a head, heart, hand exercise.
- **Word Definitions**- In order to understand the power of words and their voice, participants will collaboratively unpack some of the most impactful words used in the spoken word poetry piece. Participants will then process their thoughts while answering the emotion-provoking questions that accompany each stanza. We often assume the meanings of words but there is value in reviewing definitions that often renews our mindsets which is a key factor in healing.
- **Writing Prompt**: They will recreate the poem from the workshop and personalize it to fit them.
- **Positive Affirmations**: We create a list of positive affirmations and the clients will decide which ones they would like to adopt for themselves.

“She Speaks” Learning objectives

- *Participants will learn the importance of using their voices.*
- *The participants will learn the difference between feeling, emotions, and mood.*
- *The participants will learn various ways to express themselves (creative writing, positive self-talk, affirmations, and journaling).*
 - *The participants will learn the importance of having a support system.*
- *The participants will learn how to use the coping strategies “1, 2 3 is this me?” and “Check it, Catch it, Change” to identify, evaluate, and redirect negative thoughts.*

Participant Testimonials

“I believe the workshop is inspiring. It also gives you a deeper understanding of the root of negative thinking and how to redirect. I feel it is great for any group of women inspired to grow. I highly recommend” - K.J

“Certain words that I thought meant one thing actually meant something different or were more in depth. I'm always willing to learn new things, especially that which is beneficial mentally, spiritually, & emotionally. You did just that and for that I'm eternally grateful.” -

N.B.

“I don’t know how I’m supposed to start this, but I just gotta say this workshop Tracy “T-Spirit” Stanton has going on is dope as hell! The topics, the education, the enlightenment...awww man, it’s needed! This is going to be great! I’m definitely down to be a part of it!” - P.D

“God is speaking elevation to me and seeing you, Tracy Stanton is like a breath of fresh air that pushes me. You are such a full presence that just speaks out loud every time I see you. Thanks also for being a great anchor for allowing my daughter to be around you and now feeling unapologetically better now when she speaks. Don't stop encouraging women of all age groups, to speak their truth. From the workshop: I'm a little less burdened than I was before, due to the nuggets I received from the entire workshop.” - S.M.

“The She Speaks workshop was dope Asf, I can’t wait until the next one !! So informative and meaningful.... Thanks for Blessing us with your knowledge & wisdom...Girl Talk, Real Talk Loves You” - Anonymous