

"WHO ARE OUR ANGELS?"
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Overview:

In this exercise, Participants will hear a story of an angel in disguise who gave a certain spiritual blessing that has become a part of the storyteller. Participants will spend time alone reflecting on their own angels or special people and the blessings that they have received. Then they will share a brief story with a partner about an angel. The partner will then share the story in the group. Finally, the teller will listen as other participants will share how they see the angel's blessing now reflected in the storyteller. (see note * at the end)

Objectives:

To remember the people who have given us special blessings

To experience feelings about these memories as we tell our own story and then hear our story told by another

To experience another person's story and to learn to be comfortable in telling it

To perceive storylistening as the building block of good telling

Procedure:

Leader tells a story of an unlikely angel and then reflects on this story and others if participants have already been exposed to similar stories.

Leader asks, "Who are your Angels and Who are your Heroes?"

Omitting parents, ask participants to look to those people who have passed on special blessings. These blessings can even be passed on by characters in movies and books whom we have adored or animals whom we have loved. Mention examples such as coaches, teachers, drill sergeants in the service, neighbors, famous people in history or present-day life, or someone we have known for just an hour or two. Drawing the chart seen below, ask participants to think in decades after the first two five-year periods. Fill in with examples such as those on the next page.

If one or two are having trouble, go work with them separately just asking questions to help their visual memory overcome blocks. Sometimes, asking simple questions about where they lived or their favorite "place" helps them to see their story. Emotional blocks often cut off the verbal memory including names, while the visual memory seems to remain. Ask other questions like "Who did you really love being with? Who did you feel safe with?"

The Chart:

My age	Angel in Disguise	Blessing I've Received
0-5		
6-10		
10-20		
Etc.		

Samples: (some groups may need many examples)

3	Hobb (Ms. Hobson)/neighbor	Predictable sweetness & sugar cookie at 4 p.m.
6-10	Bell our collie dog	A "Knowing" of when it was safe and when it was not
8	Grandfather's talks and demonstrations of how things work in nature	Curiosity and love of nature
10	"Davy Crockett"	Stubbornness
15	Mary Poppins	"Spoonful of Sugar" made teaching fun
28	Gang Member on S. Side/Chicago	Advice: "Go Help Your Own People"

Note:

This should last about 15 minutes. Playing soft instrumental music with an inspirational tone is helpful.

Follow up Exercise:

Participants will work in two's telling a story about one of the "angels" to their partner.

Storylistener's Task:

Listen to the story, and ask questions to draw out the teller. Give feedback about what you liked best, including images that are real clear. Ask about things you need to know more about. Remember that the storylistener is helping the teller uncover an Iceberg, for the Snippet of a story is just a tip of an iceberg. Part of it is remembered and not told. Part of it is just below the memory of the teller, but the listener's questions will help clear away more of the story. As the listener be sure and ask for a clear understanding of the Blessing that the Angel passed on to the Teller.

In a larger group (not more than 10) each listener tells their partner's story in the third person. For example here is a "snipit of a story of Bess's angel." Her partner (this listener) is telling it. "I'm going to tell you about my partner Bess's grandfather who used to take her out into the woods and show her the mysteries of this world. Once, they found a dead animal that had come to a natural death. The old man slit the animal open pointing out where the heart was, the kidneys, and all the wonders of the animal's body. My partner, Bess was not afraid, because she trusted her grandfather. Later she learned that he was Cherokee and that he had learned this special reverence for Nature from his people. Later Bess became a vet and credits her love of animals and Nature to her grandfather.

How is the blessing being passed along?

The leader then asks group members to feed back to the original teller how they see the blessings of the angel reflected in the teller's life. It is important that each person address their comments to the original storyteller using "you". Such as saying, "Bess I am grateful for the gift of reverence for nature you have passed on to me, like the time you showed me three new constellations." Finally, the Leader can ask the original teller how he/she feels upon hearing their own story.

This process can be repeated several times. People can work in the same dyads or find another partner to tell a story of another person on their list.

*Exercise adapted from a section in the book, THE TWELVE STEPS: A WAY OUT published by Recovery Publications, San Diego, CA