

## STORY STARTERS & RESPONSES

### Initial Discovery

Stories have many starting places. When you first meet a prospect, after the customary greetings and small talk, set up that first “get acquainted” conversation with this simple script.

*“I want to suggest we do two things today. First, I want to take a few minutes and share my background, how I got in this business, and the process we use. The rest of our time together will focus entirely on you—your story, family, work, investment history—and why you are asking us to come along side you as financial advisors. How does that feel?”*

Take 2-3 minutes and share a little about you, your family, background, and—most importantly—the process you use. Prospects are initially listening for process more than products, and performance. When you finish, ask, “Tell me about yourself. Where’s home? Education? Family? Work history? Places you have lived? Hobbies? Start anywhere.”

- Listen for words that suggest PLACE, TIME, PEOPLE, MEMORY, and EMOTION
- Incorporate phrases like, “You mentioned \_\_\_\_\_ (PLACE). I don’t think I know where that is.” Or, “When you said \_\_\_\_\_, I sensed memories. Please tell me more.” Lean in, listen, nod your head. Be engaged!
  - This same exchange can be used for TIME, PEOPLE, and MEMORY
  - With EMOTION, say, “When you mentioned \_\_\_\_\_, I sensed an emotion. Would you be comfortable telling me more about what you felt?”
- Ask for stories that will help you—the advisor—paint a better picture of the person’s need, longing, and the information you need to create a financial plan, manage their assets, or help them deal with risk.
  - “In your work as a \_\_\_\_\_, what was the role planning played in being successful?”
  - “You mentioned a time in your teenage years when your family had to move. How did you handle that change? Do you recall your feelings at the time? If so, what were they? How did that move work out?”
- Give the other person all the time, space, emotion, and energy they need to tell their story.
- Make mental notes on where their story and yours may have common ground. Emotional common ground is far more important than a specific experience, work history, or place.
  - No two lives are alike. Acknowledge that saying, “No two people have the same experience. Though I did not \_\_\_\_\_, I can and do know what it feels like to be disappointed, afraid, uprooted, successful—and dozens of other feelings.
  - Validate the other person’s feelings even if you cannot identify with them. “I can tell that was a very happy time in your life.” Or, “That set-back had to have been difficult.”
- The key to unlocking the power of stories is finding COMMON GROUND that reveals who you—the advisor—are and that in this moment, though you have just met, you are receiving and honoring their story. Validation of the other person’s feelings is vital.
- What now? Near the end of this get acquainted meeting, when you and the other person(s) have explored aspects of their story—and one or two of your own if appropriate—say “I know we have not talk much about planning, your current investments, and our services. Today’s conversation has helped us prepare for the next steps—planning, establishing goals, and the financial management of your assets now and going forward. If you are comfortable with our process, I want to take those next steps with you. To do so, we need information from a list we will use to prepare for our next meeting.”
  - Create a compliance approved document list you can attach to an email you will send them after the meeting. They can email the documents or bring them with them to the next meeting.
  - In that email, thank them for their time and the gift they gave you of learning more about them. Find one—just one—aspect of their story you can affirm. “I especially appreciate you telling me about . . . .”
  - Confirm your next appointment.