

Your Story of Opportunity Interview Guide

This Interview Guide is designed to help you and a learning partner (colleague, family member, spouse, etc.) “interview” each other about your stories of opportunity.

Try This.

- First.** Take a few moments to look over the questions that follow. These questions are only a guide. Choose and/or adapt questions that seem most relevant to you and your partner.
- Next.** Interview your partner about their story of opportunity. Use your intuition to probe for more detail when it seems appropriate. Ask your partner to consider not only what happened, but:
- What decisions did you make about yourself, your abilities, and about others?
 - How did you feel?
 - What role did you play in the situation?
- Then.** Switch with your partner, and let them interview you.

Interview Questions

Overall, would you describe yourself to others as a creative person? What evidence supports your assessment?

As a young person, what person or profession did you associate with the term ‘creativity’? How has that changed over the years?

Which times in your life would you say you were most aware of the power of your creativity? What was happening?

In general, how have others typically responded to your ideas?

- Describe a time when the opinion of others inspired and motivated you.
- Describe a time when the opinion of others had a powerful, negative impact on your motivation.

Who supported and encouraged you to take risks, challenge the status quo, and experiment?

What is your earliest memory of doing something against the “rules,” bold, and/or unique? What happened?

What stories do/did your parents tell about you when you were a child—when you did something they were proud of, or which surprised them?

Describe a situation where you failed at something important to you.

- Looking back, what would you do differently?
- What did you learn?
 - What were the consequences of mistakes and failure?

Overall, do you remember being encouraged to be creative—or did you have to express your creativity in spite of circumstances? What are some examples?

Describe a situation where serendipity or advantageous timing played a role in a creative “success.”



Interview Questions (continued)

Describe a time when you got in trouble for being rebellious and/or breaking the rules. Who was involved? How did you feel? What were the consequences?

Were you compared to other people at home? At school? If so, what was your sense of how you measured up?

Were you encouraged to collaborate with others, or was there more of a sense of competition with siblings? At school? In work situations?

When were you most aware of your creativity: in a group situation or on your own?

Describe a time when you “got creative” together with others? What worked well—and what was challenging? How did you share accountability and credit, and support each other?

How much change did you experience while you were growing up? What effect do you think that had on how you spot and take advantage of opportunity?

What would you call your greatest creative accomplishment(s)? What about it was creative?

What is the most valuable thing you learned from the experiences and opportunities you had?

Describe the most challenging event in your history of opportunity that still impacts you today.

What strategies do you use to manage the influence of your past experiences?

If you were more fully realizing your potential, what would you be doing differently today? Tomorrow?

Tips for managing your Story of Opportunity

Here are some suggestions for managing the effect your past has on current activities:

- The decisions you have made about yourself and others based on your history provide some of the most fertile ground for self-improvement. Identify these beliefs, values, assumptions and rules, and check to make sure they still make sense today. Are you applying old thinking to new situations?
- Become more aware of times when you believe the past is restricting or inhibiting your current performance. Rather than letting the past direct your behavior, consciously choose your actions—whatever they may be. Acknowledge the choice to yourself.
- Identify inhibitions that have developed over the years. When you notice these inhibitions, try something different—if you believe that doing so would open up channels for creative expression. Remember, however, that this is not an invitation to behave irresponsibly.
- If possible, talk with people who played a role in your past. Tell them about your experiences, and listen to their perspective. Exchange “interviews” with each other. Look at past events—particularly troubling ones—from as many perspectives as possible to gain insight.

Steven Kowalski, Ph.D., is the author of *Creative Together*, and founder of Creative License™ Consulting Services. As a coach, speaker, and consultant-partner, he works with clients to reclaim creative potential and reinvigorate how teams co-create new value. Contact Steven at stevenkowalski.com

