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# The More Than One Story card game



## The More Than One Story card game

*More Than One Story* has proven to be a valuable tool for social workers, teachers, religious leaders, event coordinators and youth leaders. Wherever fears and prejudices tend to keep people isolated from those who seem different, *More Than One Story* is being used to facilitate the process of integration and inclusion, the opening of hearts and minds. Playing *More Than One Story* awakens empathy, compassion, understanding and appreciation for the unique experiences of each person; it brings strangers together and deepens communication amongst family and friends. The cards do not ask for opinions which can often lead to discussions. They ask for personal experiences and the

feelings connected to them, feelings we all have in common. *More Than One Story* empowers individuals and organizations who wish to work for a more harmonious world.

## How to Play

Thanks to the simplicity of the concept behind *More Than One Story*, our card game is being used in just about any setting where people have an opportunity to learn to know each other. Even if our method requires no specific training and everyone is able to lead the game after reading the simple instructions which are found on a card inside the deck, we offer here some advice regarding how to lead the game. The most important thing to remember is to read the instruction card very carefully for all who will be playing and to follow these simple instructions.

Usually it is best to sit in groups of four to eight people, but the game can be played by only two people who want to get to know each other, or in larger groups up to thirty people if everyone wants to practice the art of listening. Families and friends can play together, yet if the purpose is to help people learn to know others then attention needs to be paid to how the groups are created, so that people don't just sit with those they already know.

Begin with a short presentation of all the players. The presentation is very important if all the members

of the group do not already know each other very well. It is usually best to let everyone just say their name, and answer one question, like “Where do you go to school?” or “Where do you live?” or “What is your favorite hobby”, etc. Each time new groups are formed or new people enter the group, it is important to lead this short presentation. The quality of play is increased by this since it helps everyone feel safe and included.

The next step is to find out who is oldest so that this person can start. This is usually a moment which creates laughter and relaxation as people try to find out the answer to this question. The cards are placed on the table so the questions are facing down, and the oldest person picks the top card and reads it out loud. (If you don’t have a deck in your language, the card can be read by someone in English and then translated to the language you are playing in and then everyone can play in that language.) As long as a person holds the card in his or her hand, it is like a “talking stick”. Only that person is telling the story. Others can ask questions but may not interrupt or tell their own stories. The person keeps holding the card as long as he or she wants to keep telling the story or answering other people’s questions. When the player no longer wants attention, he or she puts the card down. This can also become funny because some people put it down quickly when the questions get sensitive and everyone usually laughs at this behavior, in a friendly way. If someone picks a card and cannot think of a story the leader or others can help by asking questions, and if the person still can’t think of a story, then let him or her pick another card, or two more until a good story pops up.

The leader can help in the beginning. First, by inviting people to play, and allowing some who are shy or hesitant to just sit and listen. Usually, after a round or two, the leader can ask if those who have just been listening want to tell a story, and usually most people will eventually want to take a turn. Yet it is not a problem if someone just wants to listen. The leader can also help by listening actively, asking some questions, and by telling personal stories. Usually, the first rounds, or sometimes even the entire first time a group plays, will remain a little superficial. But once someone tells a deeper story, people usually follow this example. So the leader can “deepen” the atmosphere by sharing feelings and personal experiences. Each group tends to control itself and goes as deep as everyone feels comfortable going. We have never had any negative experiences arising, nor have we ever heard of anyone having these problems. It is a very safe game and people comfort each other if the need arises.

The leader can also make it clear what time frame the group has to play. Usually we don’t time each turn because it creates stress, but a leader can sometimes say it is time to move on to the next player. Usually the group controls its own balance of time, and if everyone forgets to keep playing and is just having a great time talking, let go of the game and let people talk. If one or two are taking over the conversation and you feel someone is being left out, then you can suggest that the next player take a card.

People keep picking cards, taking turns clockwise. One important rule in the game is that each player picks a new card each time. This is because if you do not know what card you will get, then you will not be able to prepare your own story and you will instead be able to focus on the person telling the story. If everyone would tell the story around the same card then nobody would be listening completely.

It is always good to have some time to reflect on everyone’s experience after the game is over. We often

play in smaller groups but then ask everyone to gather in a large group to talk about the experience. If there is time left over then the larger group can be divided into new smaller groups so more people can get to know each other. 45 minutes is enough for a group to get a short introduction, play, and then reflect five minutes. Often people like to sit for hours and play. Sometimes we have put out cards at each table during dinners for large events and people have continued playing into the early morning hours.

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