



## Sophia's Challenge

*A collaboration where players solve challenges through storytelling.*

**About:** Talk the wisdom from the great sages. But, few listen to advice. Model the wisdom, some will observe, learn. Others will not. Rather, live the process, recognize the consequence, make the connections, and learn. Consequence, whether seen as success or as failure, provides learning and opportunity for growth as measured by change. We are created to survive mistake, change, adapt, and even thrive amidst chaos.

Storytelling is a social activity that provides a means for sharing and understanding experiences and values. Storytelling has a long oral tradition, predating written narrative, and may have even been used with cave art to bring drama and help preserve the accuracy of the story. Because it serves as a basis for learning, storytelling allows us to examine and resolve issues and challenges like those that we encounter as we deal with life. Storytelling thus complements leadership, where being able to share a vision with others is often essential to gain interest and support to better deal with challenges. So, let us consider such challenges.

The players, as a group, identify a challenge that can be real or made-up Or, each player anonymously writes a challenge. The players select a Challenge Holder. The Challenge Holder is identified as the person who will randomly select a challenge, is assumed to know the most about the challenge and can provide clarifying information to players when questioned about the challenge. The players' roles are to apply the skill set to solve the challenge through a process of questioning, problem solving and social engagement in the form of stories directed to the challenge. The story may be friendly and informal or very direct. It can be told using oral, written, multimedia, and theatrical methods or even take the form of a letter and several rough pencil sketches, like the example, [A Letter to Sophia](#) (*Download available at [OneTreeLearning.org](#)*).

How you elect to do the storytelling may be limited by the amount of time you have to develop the story. Oral storytelling may be the quickest method if time is limited. The story might briefly describe the challenge, the skills used to solve the challenge, and how you believe the story will resolve or finish. Stories can be presented individually or collectively as teams. The goal is to arrive at the most effective solution to the selected challenge in the form of a story. Learning is to recognize change. The practice of learning becomes mastery of skill. Here are skills of belief, persistence, strength, belief, trust, and adaptability. Some may label these skills resilience. Others will simply call them common sense. Are they of value? Practice them. Do you see change?

**How:** Each player anonymously writes a brief description of a challenge. The challenges are placed in a bowl. Players select a Challenge Holder. The Challenge Holder randomly selects a single challenge from the bowl. Any player may ask the Challenge Holder for more information to best determine which skill or skills might be used to best solve the challenge. Players work collaboratively to clarify and define the challenge and explore various solutions before arriving at the most attainable one. Several skills may be used to solve the challenge and the same skill may be used more than once to develop a solution in the form of a story. Stories can be presented individually or collectively as teams. Once all stories are presented, players can vote on what they believe to be (a) the best solution and why it is the best solution, and (b) the most creative story and why it

is the most creative.

**Recognize:** How you elect to do the storytelling may be limited by the amount of time you have to develop the story. While oral storytelling may be the quickest method if time is limited, providing more time will offer opportunity to explore different formats for storytelling, and more time to develop the solution and story conclusion.

**Variation:** An alternative and more ambitious game can be played by using all of the challenges rather than picking just one. In this version players randomly select challenges from the bowl. The Challenge Holder is assumed to know the most about any challenge and can answer questions posed by players. Players work collaboratively to clarify and define the challenge and explore various solutions before arriving at the most attainable one. Stories are presented individually. Once all stories are presented, players can then vote on what they believe to be (a) the best solution and why it is the best solution, (b) the most creative story and why it is the most creative, and (c) the most difficult challenge and why it appears to be so difficult.

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## Belief

*Perception is shaped by belief. Changing your belief changes your perception, giving you control, inner strength and courage to make change.*

**Why:** Recognize that your beliefs control your actions and the way you feel about something, your attitude. Belief may ask you to risk change and adjust your perception to better reflect reality.

**How:** Approach the challenge facing you with a realistic view. Can you change the challenge outcome so it is more controllable? If the outcome appears to be not changeable, a change of attitude is possible by changing a belief.

- Consider your challenge. Is the outcome changeable? If so, identify a more positive, yet realistic outcome.
- Or, if the outcome is not changeable, then identify your worst fear and the self-defeating belief supporting that fear. Identify a more positive belief to replace the self-defeating belief.
- Recognize that a challenge may require a change of belief before a change of outcome can be made. Alternatively, changing the outcome of a challenge may be necessary before seeking the more positive belief.
- Consider the consequences of your challenge. What has changed for you and those around you?

**Yes, then change your outcome.** «

Identify a more positive but realistic outcome.

Reconsider a change of belief.

Consider your challenge.

*Is the outcome changeable?*

**Yes** «

Describe the conclusion of the story.

*Have you worked-out the challenge?*

**Example:** I have an irreversible medical condition. This condition is not going away and it seems I can't change it. I create a plan that becomes the outline for my story.

- The challenge is how to deal with an irreversible medical condition.
  - The outcome seems to be not changeable, so I will focus on a change of belief.
  - My worst fear is that I can't do everything I want to do.
  - I recognize that my belief is self-defeating because the belief appears to be "all or nothing" thinking.
  - I seek the more positive belief that there is still opportunity to do some of what I need and want to do.
  - I recognize now that I can also improve the outcome by creating a list of attainable goals to include a support group that will provide insight as to how I can best fulfill my goals.
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## Persistence

*Persistence is facing a challenge with the belief you will ultimately succeed.*

**Why:** Persistence encourages you to make change, mark progress, and build belief in yourself.

**How:** Persist by building belief. Consider creating a realistic goal and the steps needed to reach the goal so that when all of the steps are completed the goal has been attained.

- Consider your challenge and recognize the importance of believing you can meet the challenge.
- Creating a goal is way to build the belief you can meet the challenge. The goal must be reachable within a realistic time limit.
- The steps describe the actions that are needed to reach your goal.
- Remember to reward yourself as you persist, when your goal is met, but also as each step is completed.
- Consider the consequences of your challenge. What has changed for you and those around you?

Consider your challenge.

Recognize the importance of believing you can meet the challenge.

Create a goal statement.

Create as many steps as needed to reach your goal.

**Yes** «

*Have you worked-out the challenge?*

Describe the conclusion of the story.

**Example:** I have a work project to complete that seems to run on forever. I need to get this completed and submitted. I create a plan that becomes the outline for my story.

- The challenge is to complete a project.
- The goal is to "Create a Project Management Time Completion Plan for Submitting the Final Project."
- The steps begin with identifying the remaining parts of the project.
- Identify the order in which the project parts are to be completed.
- Identify how much time is needed to complete each project part.
- Assign a due date to each project part to include an opportunity to review the final work.
- My revised goal is to "Complete and Submit the Work Project by the End of the Month."

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# Strength

*Physical strength grows from proper nutrition, exercise, relaxation and sleep.*

**Why:** Practicing a good diet, physical exercise, relaxation, and good sleep improves physical, emotional, and mental well-being.

**How:** Create and practice plans for diet, exercise, relaxation, and sleep to fit your lifestyle while meeting the goals of proper nutrition, aerobic exercise, stress reduction and adequate sleep.

- Consider your challenge and how it relates to diet, exercise, relaxation and sleep.
- Find and practice a healthy diet that fits your lifestyle yet lowers your health risks. Consider researched plans such as MyPlate, Healthy Eating Plate, Mediterranean, and DASH (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension).
- Find and practice a physical exercise plan that fits your lifestyle and provides at least 2 hours and 30 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic physical activity ideally spread evenly throughout the week.
- Find and practice a relaxation exercise, such as slow diaphragmatic breathing, progressive muscle relaxation, positive imagery, social resilience, and mindfulness-based stress reduction.
- Practice good sleep hygiene by keeping a consistent sleep–wake schedule, exercising daily and eliminating long naps and naps within a few hours of bedtime.
- Consider the consequences of your challenge. What has changed for you and those around you?

Consider your challenge.

Create plans for diet, physical exercise, relaxation, and sleep.

Practice plans for diet, physical exercise, relaxation, and sleep.

*Have you worked-out the challenge?*

**Yes** «

Describe the conclusion of the story.

**Example:** I need to focus on exercising consistently and to try a simple relaxation technique. But, I am not at all good about consistently eating well and unsure which diet plan will work for me. I create a plan that becomes the outline for my story.

- The challenge is to find plans, particularly diet, that meet needs and lifestyle.
- Try four different diet plans over four weeks.
- Compare likes and dislikes for each diet plan.
- Try a thirty-minute per day, five days a week aerobic exercise schedule.
- Jog or use stationary bike depending on weather and log results.
- Examine the exercise log to determine exercise consistency throughout the week.
- Do a breathing relaxation exercise before going to sleep.
- Adjust or change any of the plans that are not working and monitor the changes.
- Recognize the benefits.

# Trust

*Empathy develops by seeking to understand what another being is experiencing from their point of view.  
Trust develops by reaching out to engage and provide mutual support.*

**Why:** Social support is considered one of the best protections from the effects of stress, posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and suicide.

**How:** Develop a system of social support by identifying your personal needs, the other individuals and the roles they play, and the contributions you make to sustain the system.

- Consider your challenge with respect to empathy, reaching out to others, letting others reach out to you, and social support.
- Identify ways to improve empathy to aid communication and critical thinking.
- Identify your strengths and weaknesses to better identify your needs and the support you bring.
- Identify the individuals in your support system, roles they play, and how to contact them.
- Identify the contributions you make to sustain the support system.
- Consider the consequences of your challenge. What has changed for you and those around you?

Consider your challenge.  
Identify your strengths and weaknesses.  
Identify what you believe to be your needs.  
Identify individuals, the roles they play, and how to contact them.  
Identify the contributions you make to sustain the support.  
*Have you worked-out the challenge?*

**Yes** <<

Describe the conclusion of the story.

**Example:** I have been accepted into a demanding professional program. I will be separated from family for some time. I need to establish a support system to best assure I will successfully make it through the program. I create a plan that becomes the outline for my story.

- The challenge is reach out and develop a social support system.
- My strengths are perseverance and critical thinking.
- My weaknesses point to my immediate need for a study group and staying focused with the program.
- The people in my support system are two family members, who will stick with me and offer advice, I contact each week. In addition, I have study partners, from each of my difficult classes, who I meet at least weekly and a program advisor who I personally contact as needed.
- I expect to actively participate in the study groups and report interesting events and progress to family members.
- I expect to make adjustments to the support system as needs change and as I meet other people sharing common interests.

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# Adaptability

*Adaptability is the confidence and understanding to create and pursue a skillful outcome that best meets the challenge.*

**Why:** Those believing they have the ability to succeed are more likely to pursue a challenge as something to be mastered rather than as a threat to be avoided. Developing the skill to best adapt to a challenge gives you confidence and control. You own it.

**How:** Developing your skill can be a goal setting process that calls for planning, cooperation, persistence and control to fully define and develop.

- Consider your challenge and research the idea. Perhaps a skillful solution is already developed.
- Discuss the skill idea with others to be sure the idea is understood and can meet its intended purpose.
- Consider creating the skill as a goal that is reachable along with the steps necessary to reach the goal.
- Steps may include a definition About the skill, Why the skill meets the challenge, and How the skill meets the challenge.
- Consider the consequences of your challenge. What has changed for you and those around you?

Consider your challenge.

Research your idea and discuss it with others.

Create the goal and steps needed to meet the goal.

Create the About, Why, and How for the skill.

*Have you worked-out the challenge?*

**Yes** «

Describe the conclusion of the story.

**Example:** I have an uneasy feeling that one of my friends may be thinking about suicide. I am unsure how to handle this situation and need a plan on how to approach my friend. I need to develop a skill to provide some assistance. I create a plan that becomes the outline for my story.

- The challenge is to help a person who may be considering suicide. (About)
- Suicide is one of the leading causes of death for teens and young adults. (Why)
- Identify community resources. (How ...)
- Contact resources to determine the best way to handle the situation.
- Be prepared to reach out to the person and listen.
- Question the person about the possibility of suicide.
- Persuade the person to get help.
- Refer the person to the identified resources for specialized help. Offer to get the person to assistance or call 911 if critical.
- Do a personal welfare check to best encourage a positive outcome.