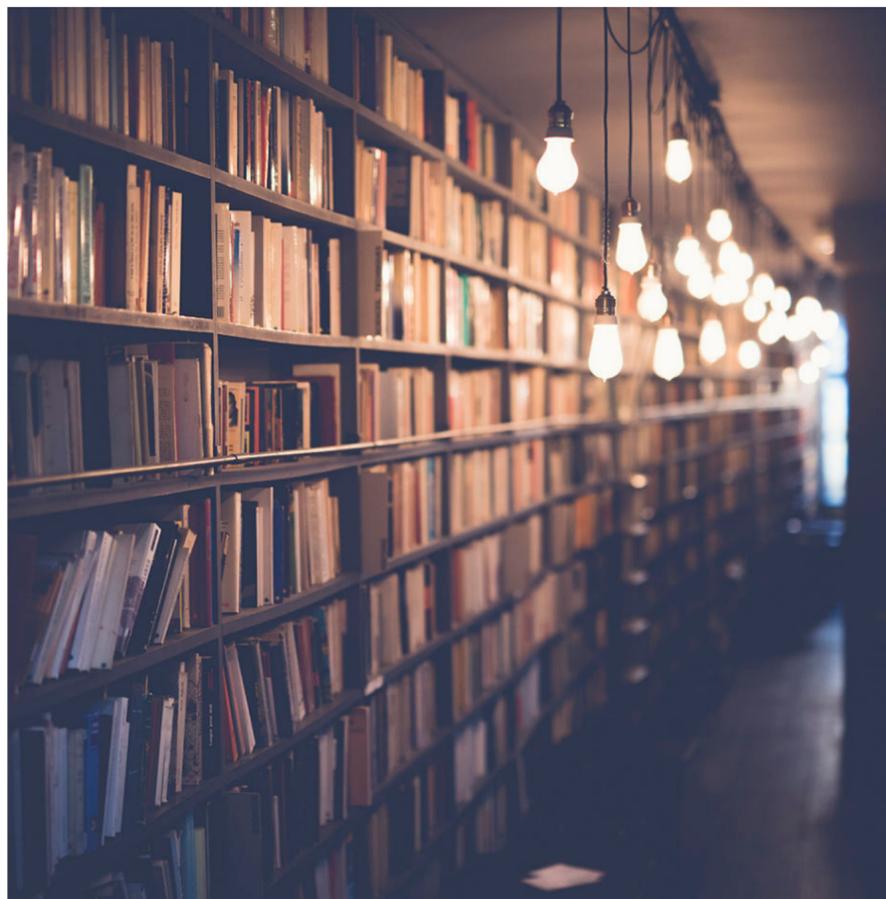


Using the power of literature to explore the potential of people



SHARED READING NSW

**Training for
organisations**

OUR
TRAINING
CHANGES
THINGS



2019

A message from our founder

Thank you for your interest in shared reading. It has been a passion of mine since I first saw its power to change peoples lives. I was trained in 2011, since then I have run hundreds of shared reading groups in many different settings in the UK and Australia. Each time the experience gives me something new. I have seen people in aged care facilities come alive as they recollect life experiences long since forgotten, I have seen people struggling with mental health issues develop life-sustaining and lasting connections with others, I have seen people who say they 'hate poetry' contribute to a discussion about poetry in a way that changes what they thought about themselves - as well as poetry - and I have seen people learn to relax, connect and begin to live in new and interesting ways - all by bringing them together to talk about great writing.

Great writing (if delivered correctly) touches us deeply, exactly where we are in life. We are often taught in school that there is one way to understand a piece of writing; that there is some truth to understand. If we do not understand it, it can make us feel like a failure, that we cannot read, and it locks us out of the benefits that reading great literature can provide.

It is my belief that there are as many truths to a piece of writing as there are readers. All we need is a way to unlock the thoughts, feelings and life experiences that will enable people to share their particular truth. I have seen shared reading do this.

Shared reading can build confidence, provide meaning and purpose and help develop connections that people sorely lack in today's world - deep and real connections, friendships really - that sustain and nurture us, fulfill our social needs and in many cases provide the motivation to get up and leave the house.

For people working everyday to provide such opportunities for others that have perhaps been disadvantaged in their lives, shared reading can be a unique and profound tool. It is the best way that I have found to overcome social isolation and to alleviate its debilitating effects.

My hope is that by reading this brochure and understanding a little more its impact and how it works, that you will be inspired to join this growing social movement and to give the gift of reading to people in the community that you work in.

Best wishes
Christopher Smith
Founding Director
Shared Reading NSW



About shared Reading

What is shared reading?

Shared Reading is a social activity that brings people together to read aloud and discuss great literature and poetry. Groups are facilitated by trained individuals who lead the reading and the ensuing discussion. Participants in a shared reading group are invited to contribute to the reading or discussion at regular intervals, and the facilitator works to create a safe space for this to happen. The group uses the reading as a stimulus for a conversation. The conversation then creates the meaning that the reading has for the group. Unlike school, there is nothing to learn or know, so no experience with reading is needed by the participants. In fact, as the material is read aloud, even people who struggle with reading/concentrating or who are functionally illiterate can participate. The group process aims to open a space whereby people feel empowered to share thoughts, feelings and life experiences.

Who comes to a shared reading group?

Anyone can attend a shared reading group. It is an inclusion-based model. The shared reading facilitator works to ensure that group members can contribute as much or as little as they wish. Our groups can be particularly powerful for people who face barriers to reading and/or difficulties with social participation. Often a shared reading group is a mixture of readers and non-readers and people come from all different walks of life to read together. The vibrancy of the activity relies upon this diversity.

Where do groups take place?

Shared reading groups can take place anywhere a group can come together. Groups occur in aged care facilities, hospitals, libraries, neighbourhood centres, mental health recovery centres, schools and in general community spaces such as cafe's.

Who can facilitate a group?

Anyone who has attended and attained the fundamental skills through our course *An introduction to shared reading facilitation* can run their own group. Our training equips participants with the basics, we then assist trainees to establish groups and develop their practice in their place of work/community.



What are the benefits?

The benefits of shared reading are many and varied. To a large extent it depends on where and with whom it is delivered. Some general benefits that occur in most groups are outlined below:

- **It is very pleasurable** - the one thing most people agree on is that it is enjoyable. Being read to often has associations for people about being cared for.
- **It develops deep connections** - Through the conversations people begin to learn about each other in a way that nurtures good will and enables sharing
- **It helps people to relax** - reading is proven to help with stress reduction and relaxation, shared reading has been said to be 'like mindfulness'
- **It can change the way people think** - exposure to wisdom from great writing and alternative points of view about it can give people vital new perspectives that can help them in their lives.
- **It provides cognitive stimulation** - Experiments have shown that reading connects and uses the whole brain. These effects can be observed long after the reading has taken place.
- **It can improve mood** - Group evaluations show consistently that participants feel better after having attended groups
- **It builds confidence** - As people begin to read out loud, open up and voice their opinions in a group, they can start to see ripple effects in their lives
- **It can help foster independence** - When people find purpose and meaning, motivation can emerge that helps them to help themselves in other ways
- **It can help people open up** - For people who are emotionally blocked, shared reading can create a freer movement of feeling.
- **It builds social skills** - People learn to talk, listen, take turns, resolve differences and see similarities in a way that can help them become more socially aware, emphatic and assertive.
- **It fosters a love of reading** - When people begin to read with freedom, joy and for the simple pleasure of it, they open a door into a world of opportunity which they can then explore for themselves

One of the most rewarding aspects of facilitating a shared reading group is that you will get to hear and see how the group is changing the lives of participants. Often they will talk about their own experiences in the group and how interactions within the group have had profound impacts on their lives.



How shared reading can add value

Why should organisations be interested in shared reading ?

Establishing shared reading can build capacity for organisations to meet outcomes around reported well-being, community connectedness, mental stimulation, quality of life, learning (and life long learning), independence, creativity, relaxation and many more. Shared reading has many different applications and can work in a number of different settings, enabling organisations to apply it on their own terms, meeting the needs of their communities.

How shared reading can have an impact

Aged care

Shared reading training can offer aged care staff the opportunity to provide a regular social activity that uses and develops the capacity and potential of older people. Older people are ideal for shared reading groups as they have wonderful life experiences to draw on and work with. Shared reading can help aged care facilities build meaning/purpose, improve cognitive stimulation, connect and engage isolated participants, and offer the gift of reading to people who may have enjoyed it in the past but stopped due to physical illness/disability.

Mental health

Shared reading is a natural fit for organisations working to a recovery-focused, strengths-based framework in mental health. Our groups appeal to the healthy aspects of a person and work from the basis of what they can contribute to a group. We recognize the capacity of each person to respond to a piece of literature, and shared reading often empowers people to find their voice/expression within a group. It can also aid concentration, provide an outward focus, challenge and change cyclic thinking patterns, enable people to develop relationships and aid relaxation.

Schools

For children who struggle with literacy or are at risk of falling behind with English skills, shared reading can provide time and space to comprehend and catch up. The pace at which we read and the inclusion that our groups are founded on, can provide an effective environment for struggling students to learn. Shared Reading can also help more generally. It can help bring students energy levels down and put them in a mindset to learn.

Disability

Shared reading offers a unique opportunity for people living with disability and those living without to engage on a level playing field. Diversity of life experience creates the vibrancy of a group and everybody's contribution makes up a piece of the overall picture. Shared reading can help people working in the disability sector to create opportunities based on human dignity, where all experience is valued and where people can connect with others across lines that can sometimes divide us.

Libraries /Generalist community services

Shared reading provides a space where people from all backgrounds can come together and share profound experiences/interactions - it is an excellent tool for community engagement and for the promotion of reading.

Do you have ideas for how shared reading could be used?

Shared reading is an extremely versatile activity and we are always keen to innovate. If you have an idea for how shared reading can fit in to the work you do, then give us a call. We would be happy to chat about how to set up a project and our team enjoy the challenge of establishing shared reading groups in new environments.



About our training

An
introduction to
shared reading
facilitation

What do trainees learn?

This course equips training participants with the fundamental skills needed to facilitate a shared reading group, enabling them to use it in their place of work. The training examines the theory behind shared reading and allows people to experience and practice the elements necessary for effective group facilitation.

The specific learning outcomes participants will attain are:

- How to read out loud in a group setting in a way that enables people to participate (particularly if they face barriers to reading or community participation)
- How to create a safe, inclusive and welcoming atmosphere
- How to evaluate, select and prepare materials for use in a shared reading group
- How to facilitate a group using a text
- How to deal with issues that emerge in the course of a shared reading group
- How to develop a community of practice within the work setting
- How Shared Reading NSW can support the establishment and maintenance of groups.

How long does it take?

The learning is built up over 24 hours. Delivery can be tailored to suit the needs of the organisation. We have previously run the course over consecutive days (3 and a half days) and over a number of weeks (6 weeks - 4 hours for each session). We are happy to negotiate the delivery of the course.

We also offer continued support for the establishment of groups. This involves debriefing and support for individual facilitators *and* structured professional development (as part of the establishment of a community of practice).

Can training be done in-house?

Yes, it is preferable for training to be delivered within the organisation, although if this is not possible alternatives can be explored.

Who should attend shared reading training?

Training is open to anyone who has the capacity and willingness to use the shared reading model. People that attend our training are often people who are working, or would like to work towards creating positive outcomes for others. Attendees at previous training sessions have included: Aged care staff, diversional therapists, social workers, psychologists/counsellors, youth workers, community development workers, teachers, occupational therapists, employment consultants, disability workers, nurses and community volunteers.

People attending shared reading training should have a personal interest in reading (expertise not necessary) and an openness to working with people in group settings.



What people say

About our groups

"This is the highlight of my week. I can't wait until Tuesday"

"It has helped me resolve conflicts within myself in a really gentle way".

"I feel like I have grown as a person"

"I have made friends, which I never really had before"

"In this group we are all philosophers"

"Shared reading has helped me be near people"

"I feel whole after attending a session"

"I listen better and like myself more in the group"

"I talk about things that are not related to my illness"



"It helps us keep using the old grey matter"

"The best thing that has happened to me in years"

"I feel connected, alert and alive after each group"

"I used to hate reading poetry, now it gives me so much joy"

"This group has given me courage"

"It has made me rethink group facilitation"

"Utterly profound, shared reading has changed my life."

About our training

"It has helped me engage with hard to reach people"

"It has brought joy to my job"



"Very professional and inspiring".

"I think it will impact my clients in a beautiful way"

"It is beautiful, Life changing"

"It gives you a sense of hope for the world"

"It has made me better at my job"

"It helped me to listen and reflect more"

"It gave me a way to help my clients much quicker"

"It has given me a new lease of life in my role"

"The best training I have ever attended"

"It stimulated a passion in me that I never knew was there"

"It helped me as a worker. I now put my hand up to run groups"

"It gave me some great techniques to use in my work"

For more information

After reading this brochure you may have more questions relating to how shared reading can work with your organisation or your clients. We would be delighted to have a more detailed conversation with you and can offer a few options for you to explore shared reading further including:

- **Free telephone consultation** - we can explore together how shared reading can fit into the work of your organisation. Here we can discuss special requirements you might have relating to the community you work with.
- **Free taster session for staff teams** - This is particularly effective as it gives people the opportunity to experience shared reading first hand, and then to ask questions pertaining to its implementation.
- **Developing a partnership** - We work with organisations within the community/health sector and so we recognize that there are often budgetary limitations. Therefore we are happy to work with organisations to develop funding proposals. There is a growing body of research behind biblio-therapy and shared reading that we would be happy to share with you in developing a funding/project proposal. We also have expertise in how to communicate the value of shared reading to a variety of stakeholders.

We are here to help

However you would like to explore shared reading, we are here to help and support you. Our mission as an organisation is to bring the life-enhancing benefits of shared reading to as many people as possible throughout NSW.

If you are serious about creating social change and individual well being then give us a call or send us an email to see how we can help.

P: 0468346834

E: info@sharedreadingnsw.com

www.sharedreadingnsw.com