

## CODE OF ETHICS

The Cassandra Project recognises the profound power of storytelling as a means to foster connection, understanding, and change. Story-sharing allows us to explore diverse perspectives, amplify unheard voices, and create a deeper sense of community and humanity. However, we also acknowledge that storytelling, if mishandled, carries risks — it may unintentionally cause harm, perpetuate stereotypes, or distort truths.

To ensure storytelling is used ethically and responsibly, we have collaboratively developed the following **Storytelling Code of Ethics** to guide our work.

### 1. Stories Will Be Gathered and Shared with Care

- **Respectful Handling:** The words and experiences shared by participants will be treated with the same care and respect as we treat the individuals who share them.
- **Voluntary Participation:** Participants must consciously and actively make the decision to share their stories. They should feel empowered and never pressured to do so.
- **Informed Consent:** Informed consent will be sought at all stages of the storytelling process — from gathering to editing to sharing. Participants will be made aware of the intent and potential future use of their stories and will retain ongoing control as far as is practical.
- **Impact Awareness:** Stories can live on beyond their tellers. We will consider the potential impact on others, including families, communities, and future generations, when sharing stories.
- **Purposeful Sharing:** Stories will be shared to illuminate the important work of the Cassandra Project, celebrate the storytellers' contributions, and inspire meaningful change.

### 2. Stories Will Be Gathered with Encouragement and Without Judgement

- **Prioritising the Storyteller:** The well-being and interests of the person sharing the story will always come first.
- **Safe Spaces:** Stories will be gathered in environments of mutual trust without judgement or coercion. Participants should feel safe to share their experiences in their own words, language, and way.
- **Recognising Complexity:** We will acknowledge that each story is multifaceted and that a single story does not define a person or their life.
- **Diverse Voices:** We are committed to reflecting a range of experiences and amplifying diverse voices, including those that are quieter or less likely to be heard.
- **Balanced Representation:** We will share stories of celebration as well as those of challenge, striving for a balanced and accurate portrayal of the issues we aim to address.
- **Active Listening:** We will practise attentive, empathetic listening and appreciate the evolving nature of personal stories. A story shared today may carry a different meaning tomorrow.

### 3. Stories Will Be Used with Transparency

- **Honesty and Clarity:** The storytelling process will be transparent. Participants will be informed of how their stories will be used and will have the opportunity to participate in their presentation.
- **Impact Feedback:** Those who shared their stories will be informed of the impact their stories have made, including any change or influence their words have contributed to.
- **Ethical Decision-Making:** We recognise the responsibility we hold as facilitators and representatives of the Cassandra Project. Decisions about which stories to share and how they are presented will be made thoughtfully and with integrity.
- **Creative Expression:** While storytelling may involve creative approaches (e.g., combining stories, using metaphor, or dramatisation), we will always be clear when creative techniques are used, ensuring that the intention and meaning of the stories remain authentic and respectful to the participants.

### 4. Ongoing Questions and Ethical Considerations

The Cassandra Project acknowledges that storytelling is a complex, dynamic process. As we navigate this journey, we remain committed to reflecting on and addressing ethical dilemmas that arise. Some of the questions we will continue to explore include:

- How can we provide empathetic listening without overstepping our role or becoming an ongoing source of emotional support?
- When is it appropriate to share or stop sharing stories, images, or videos — particularly in the event of a participant's death? How should we involve their families in these decisions?
- How do we prepare participants for the reality that, once shared publicly, their stories may take on new interpretations and uses beyond their control?
- What steps can we take to ensure that quieter voices are heard and understood, especially when these individuals may not see their stories as significant?
- How do we balance the ethical responsibility to storytellers with the need to raise awareness about difficult issues such as loneliness or isolation?

### Commitment to Ethical Storytelling

Through this code, the Cassandra Project reaffirms its commitment to ensuring that all storytelling practices are conducted ethically, responsibly, and with the utmost respect for the storytellers and their experiences. By adhering to these principles, we aim to foster an environment where stories can inspire, connect, and drive meaningful change without compromising the dignity or well-being of those who share them.



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