

Soulful Songs and Stories

With a song and your stories, we co-create a soft place for hard conversations and a brave space for personal and spiritual growth.



My soul friend Annie O'Shaughnessy has shared more of herself and her story with more people more often than any person I know. —SM

Hi Soulful Song Lovers and Story Tellers,

#37: Songs and Stories about the downside of not telling our story.

“Tell Me I’m Okay,” Jess Locke (h/t Bob Boilen, NPR’s *All Songs Considered*)

<https://youtu.be/4kP9AIHNVik> 4:17

*Tell me I’m real / Tell me I’m good / Tell me / I’ll never ever be misunderstood
I know I’m weak / Tell me I’m strong / Because you know that / I’ve been faking all along*

Full lyrics: <https://www.musixmatch.com/lyrics/Jess-Locke/Tell-Me-I-m-Okay>

*The song is about how we are all so vulnerable at the heart of it. We all crave love and validation. We want to be told we are doing an okay job of things. So the lyrics of the song are asking, “am I doing okay? I think I fucked this all up” and the music is there to answer, “you’re doing fine. Trust yourself. The mistakes are beautiful.” —**Jess Locke***

(More quotes plus album review: <http://pilerats.com/music/bands/album-walkthrough-jess-locke-dont-ask-yourself-why>)

Most people love you for who you pretend to be. To keep their love, you keep pretending—performing. You get to love your pretense. It’s true, we’re locked in an image, an act—and the sad thing is, people get so used to their image, they grow attached to their masks. They love their chains. They forget all about who they really are. And if you try to remind them, they hate you for it, they feel like you’re trying to steal their most precious possession.



—**Jim Morrison** (full interview: https://goldengalaxies.net/Quasar/?page_id=250)

By not telling our story, we live in fear of having our mask ripped off.

Shame hates it when we reach out and tell our story. It hates having words wrapped around it—it can’t survive being shared. Shame loves secrecy. When we bury our story, the shame metastasizes.

—**Brené Brown**, *The Gifts of Imperfection*

By not telling our story, we hold on to blame, shame, and victimhood.

“The Great Pretender,” Buck Ram

The Platters <https://youtu.be/IEzfhclKO8Q> 2:43

Freddie Mercury <https://youtu.be/mLRjFWDGsig> 3:32

Lyrics: <https://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/platters/thegreatpretender.html>

The central paradox of our condition is that what we hunger for, perhaps more than anything else, is to be known in our full humanness and yet that is often just what we also fear more than anything else. It is important to tell, at least from time to time, the secret of who we truly and fully are because otherwise we run the risk of losing track, and little by little come to accept instead the highly edited version which we put forth in hope that the world will find it more acceptable than the real thing.

—**Frederick Buechner**, [pronounced Beekner], *Telling Secrets*

By not telling our story, we forget our inherent worth and dignity and who we are.

Your silence will not protect you. What are the words you do not yet have? What do you need to say? What are the tyrannies you swallow day by day and attempt to make your own, until you will sicken and die of them, still in silence? We have been socialized to respect fear more than our own needs for language and definition, and while we wait in silence for that final luxury of fearlessness, the weight of that silence will choke us. —**Audré Lorde**, *The Cancer Journals* **Not telling our story will not protect us, and we will choke on it.**



“Black Masks & Gasoline,” Rise Against

*I don't understand where you got this idea / So deeply ingrained in your head
(That this world) is something that you must impress / Because I couldn't care less*

Studio: <https://youtu.be/pJfPVQcAdQo> 2:59 with lyrics

Live: <https://youtu.be/cc2wyqgYIVg?t=13> 3:12 phenomenal energy, unintelligible lyrics

See no stranger has become a practice that defines my relationships. Seeing no stranger begins in wonder. It is to look upon the face of anyone and choose to say: You are a part of me I do not yet know. Wonder is the wellspring for love. Who we wonder about determines whose stories we hear and whose joy and pain we share. Those we grieve with, those we sit with and weep with, are ultimately those we organize with and advocate for. When a critical mass of people come together to wonder about one another, grieve with one another, and fight with and for one another, we begin to build the solidarity needed for collective liberation and transformation—a solidarity rooted in love. —**Valarie Kaur**, *See No Stranger: A Memoir and Manifesto of Revolutionary Love* **By not telling our story, we may lose a potential ally.**



Expose yourself to your deepest fear; after that, fear has no power, and the fear of freedom shrinks and vanishes. You are free. —**Jim Morrison**

Not telling our story keeps us from being free.

“Brilliant Disguise,” Bruce Springsteen

Bruce Springsteen, Patti Scialfa

<https://youtu.be/6WWPQktp2rM> 4:22 <https://youtu.be/ZI622KkUHdI> 4:10

*So tell me who I see / When I look in your eyes
Is that you, baby / Or just a brilliant disguise?
So when you look at me / You better look hard and look twice
Is that me, baby / Or just a brilliant disguise?*

You do not have to be good.

*You do not have to walk on your knees / for a hundred miles through the desert repenting.
You only have to let the soft animal of your body / love what it loves.
Tell me about despair, yours, and I will tell you mine. / Meanwhile the world goes on.
Meanwhile the sun and the clear pebbles of the rain / are moving across the landscapes,
over the prairies and the deep trees, the mountains and the rivers.
Meanwhile the wild geese, high in the clean blue air, / are heading home again.
Whoever you are, no matter how lonely, / the world offers itself to your imagination,
calls to you like the wild geese, harsh and exciting—
over and over announcing your place / in the family of things.*

—**Mary Oliver**, “Wild Geese”

By not telling our story, we denounce our place in the family of things.

You have heard that it was said, “Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.” But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? —**Jesus**, Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5:43, 44, 46, 47, *The Message*)

Some of us don't even tell loved ones our story because we'd rather have conditional love than risk no love. If we tell our story only to our own people, what's the big deal? Everybody does that. Either way, we will still live in fear of being discovered.

“You Don't Know Me,” Norah Jones with Wynton Marsalis

https://youtu.be/T2_9Rkk4f_g 4:44

If we don't tell our story, will we never know if our relationships are real.

Everybody is identical in their secret unspoken belief that way deep down they are different from everyone else. —**David Foster Wallace**, *Infinite Jest* **By not telling our story, we keep others from fully knowing us, and we keep others from knowing they have kindred spirits.**



We're all strangers connected by what we reveal, what we share, what we take away—our stories. —**Libba Bray**

By not telling our story, we stay disconnected.

“Hear My Voice,” Celeste Waite, Daniel Pemberton/Celeste

*Hear my voice / Hear my dreams / Let us make a world / In which I believe
Hear my words / Hear my cries / Let me see a change / Through these eyes*

<https://youtu.be/mrmLIEl9pvQ> 3:26 (Oscar nominee, Best Original Song, *The Trial of the Chicago 7*)

Causes have effects, and if we lie to ourselves and to others,

then we cannot expect to find truth and reality whenever we happen to want them. If we have chosen the way of falsity we must not be surprised that truth eludes us when we finally come to need it! —Thomas Merton, New Seeds of Contemplation

If we don't sow our stories, we will not reap the music.

“Everlasting Arms,” Luke Winslow-King/

Playing for Change <https://youtu.be/i9YvB9FmR3E> 4:55

Steve's Short Annie Story. *I first got to know Annie O'Shaugnessy through two iterations of her newsletters, where she revealed her quests and questions, her hopes and aspirations, her personal, spiritual, and sensual explorations and journeys. I read quite a few books in which women dared to be vulnerable and shared their inner selves, but Annie was the first one I personally knew who did so on an ongoing basis. We traded spiritual journeys and personal stories (and comments on each other's stories) first via email, and then phone, before we actually met face to face.*

She was a restorative circle facilitator for adults for 15 years, and she started Vermont's first Certification Program in Holistic Restorative Education. She offers custom professional development support in five interdependent aspects of a vital and restorative learning community—Mindfulness, Social Emotional Learning, Healing Centered (Trauma Informed) Practices, Equity, and Restorative Practices.

Because of storytelling, story-listening, and unfettered conversation, we are better persons for knowing each other. Annie informs almost everything I do, especially things like Soulful Songs and Stories. Annie lives in Vermont with her husband.

Most people live their entire lives with their clothes on,

and even if they wanted to, couldn't take them off. Then there are those who cannot put them on. They are the ones who live their lives not just as people but as examples of people. They are destined to expose every part of themselves, so the rest of us can know what it means to be a human. —Sheila Heti, How Should a Person Be? (h/t Jesse David Fox)

Decompress and relax with these delightful pieces:

“Combat Breathing,” Vijay Iyer (h/t Jazz Times)

Vijay Iyer Trio: Vijay Iyer, Linda May Han Oh,

Tyshawn Sorey <https://youtu.be/6lzgOHbdGWs> 7:50



“Leaning on the Everlasting Arms,”
A.J. Showalter & Elisha Hoffman
The Bridge, Arr. Kiwook Kim

<https://youtu.be/BuYGvdNnZDw> 4:47

International Children’s Choir

https://youtu.be/ICYNHTo8_mo 2:35



“Margareta,” Christine Jensen/Christine and
Ingrid Jensen w/ Ben Monder, Fraser Hollins,
and John Wikan <https://youtu.be/ROUQdD2zLPY?t=5> 8:07



“Variations on a Theme by Mozart, Op.9,” Fernando Sor/
Alexandra Whittingham <https://youtu.be/TvMrtOPphjE>

6:00

