20 Ways to Start Trauma Narratives

1. Start somewhere other than on the trauma (introductory chapter about child, life before the trauma)
2. Ask for just one detail about the trauma ("just tell me one thing")
3. Bargain for a certain amount of time to spend on the TN ("only 5 minutes)
4. Give praise or a prize for every sentence/page/episode written about the trauma
5. Offer a fun activity or reward after working on TN
6. Encourage positive self-talk (e.g. "I can do this")
7. Joke ("You don't remember anything? You must think I'm pretty easy to fool!")
8. Make a fool of yourself ('I'll stand on my head if you do one page")
9. Empathize with the child how difficult it is ONLY if child has expressed this; don't assume it is difficult if the child hasn't said so
10. Praise ("You are so brave to overcome your fears and talk about this")
11. Refer back to characters in stories and how they were able to talk about the trauma even though it was hard
12. Use funky art techniques (writing it on a scarf, using glitter glue etc)
13. Create the TN with songs, colors (let the child pick a song, color, animal, or smell that describes each part of the experience and have the child explain the representation)
14. Use a computer (i.e. Story Weaver) to create TN and agree to 5-10 minutes of a computer game if child works on TN for the rest of the time
15. For young kids: let them play or act out what happened with dolls, puppets etc. while you write it down, then read it back to them and allow them to correct/change what you wrote
16. Use "riding the bike" analogy: it's hard at first but it gets easier as you practice
17. Do a "life narrative" for children with multiple traumas, including positive events as well as traumas
18. Ask the child what his/her worst fear is about writing the TN. Develop a plan with the child for how to do some part of the TN without the fear coming true. Ask the child to try the plan with you for 1 minute. If it works, negotiate again.
19. Let the child use window markers, sparkle paint, or other rewards for completing a page/sentence/paragraph of the TN
20. Have the child create a public services announcement about the trauma.