Story Making
What we’re talking about today

- Why stories work
- Crafting your narrative
- Resources to build your story
Stories are for entertainment
Stories are for convincing
Science vs Stories
“Statistics are people with the tears wiped away.”

– Dr. Irving J. Selikoff
Science + Stories
Stories complement data

DATA GAP

You want to communicate the intangible and emotional

STORY BENEFIT

Stories capture nuance and feeling
Stories capture nuance and feeling

“It’s hard not to like someone once you know their story.”

– FRED ROGERS
Stories complement data

DATA GAP
You want to communicate the intangible and emotional
You don’t have results

STORY BENEFIT
Stories capture nuance and feeling
You can gather stories any time
You can gather stories any time

http://viaproject.org/ourwork/asthma.asp
Stories complement data

DATA GAP
You want to communicate the intangible and emotional
You don’t have results
You aren’t talking to academics

STORY BENEFIT
Stories capture nuance and feeling
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The language of stories is universal
The language of stories is universal

**NEURAL COUPLING**
A story activates parts in the brain allowing the listener to turn the story into their own ideas and experience thanks to a process called neural coupling.

**DOPAMINE**
The brain releases dopamine into the system when it experiences an emotionally-charged event, making it easier to remember and with greater accuracy.

**MIRRORING**
Listeners will not only experience the similar brain activity to each other, but also to the storyteller.

**CORTEX ACTIVITY**
When processing facts, two areas of the brain are activated. A well-told story can engage many additional areas including the motor cortex, sensory cortex and frontal cortex.
Stories complement data

DATA GAP
You want to communicate the intangible and emotional
You don’t have results
You aren’t talking to academics
You want to build enthusiasm

STORY BENEFIT
Stories capture nuance and feeling
You can gather stories any time
The language of stories is universal

Stories are sticky
Stories are sticky

“The origin of my interest in organizational storytelling was simple: nothing else worked... I gave people reasons why the idea was important but they didn’t listen. I showed them charts and they just looked dazed. In my desperation, I was willing to try anything and eventually I stumbled on the power of a story.”

– STEPHEN DENNING
Crafting your narrative
Collaborating with Patients

Jorge Interview from CHCF

This video addresses the core of self-management support: how to collaborate with patients and their families in their own care to put the patients’ needs first. A technique known as “motivational interviewing” is discussed as a tool for partnering with patients to map out a plan for managing their condition. The role of health coaches is also described.
Start with a plan

- Who is my audience?
- What is my purpose?
- Who’s my hero?
Why are you telling this story?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Audience</th>
<th>Hero</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>☐ To develop empathy for others</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ To describe what's possible</td>
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I want this story to help people feel...
A clear purpose yields easier editing

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I want this story to help people feel...

**Inspired by a different way of care that empowers the patient.**

I want them to feel optimistic that this is a solvable problem.

I want them to feel like innovators in new approaches so they’ll be patient as we learn.
## Prioritize your purpose

### Purpose

- [ ] To develop empathy for others
- [ ] To describe what’s possible
- [x] To build conviction in your mission
- [ ] Other

### Audience

I want this story to help people feel...

- I want them to feel like innovators in new approaches so they’ll be patient as we learn.
- I want them to feel optimistic that this is a solvable problem.
- Inspired by a different way of care that empowers the patient.

### Hero
Think about your audience

Purpose

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☐ To describe what’s possible
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Audience

Who are they?

What are they trying to achieve?

Hero

What do you think they should do differently?
Align your story with what matters

**Purpose**

- To develop empathy for others
- To describe what’s possible
- To build conviction in your mission
- Other

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**Audience**

Who are they?
gravitytank health funding grant
givers: Scott and Chris

What are they trying to achieve?
Make meaningful change in health outcomes through patient-centered interventions

National recognition

Ongoing funding

What do you think they should do differently?
Give us money!

Think about actionable learnings not just success metrics

**Hero**
Pick your point of view

Purpose

☐ To develop empathy for others
☐ To describe what's possible
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Hero

Who is your hero?

☐ You
☐ Parent
☐ Patient
☐ Tool
☐ Grant giver
☐ Other

What is their name?

Who else is involved?
Build out the cast of characters

Purpose

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Hero

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☐ You
☐ Parent
☒ Patient
☐ Tool
☐ Grant giver
☐ Other

What is their name? Antonio

Who else is involved?

Elaine (mom/side kick)
Dr. X (mentor)
Amazing tool (weapon)
Rescue inhaler (villain)
You’ve got your plan, so now what do you say?
There are a lot of stories about stories
THE ART OF SCIENTIFIC STORYTELLING
Transform Your Research Manuscript with a Step-By-Step Formula

RAFAEL E. LUNA, PH.D.

lunascientificstorytelling.com
Deconstructing the stories we tell provides common story templates

**FREYTAG’S DRAMATIC ARC**

- Exposition
- Rising action
- Climax
- Falling action
- Denouement

**CAMPBELL’S HEROES JOURNEY**

1. Ordinary World
2. Call to Adventure
3. Refusal of the Call
4. Meeting the Mentor
5. Crossing the Threshold
6. Tests, Allies, Enemies
7. Approach
8. Ordeal, Death & Rebirth
9. Reward, Seizing the Sword
10. The Road Back
11. Resurrection
12. Return with Elixir
We can simplify the structure

context
who, where, what's up?

conflict
what is the challenge?

action
what did they do?

climax
what is the defining moment?

closure
how is the situation resolved?
There are often multiple challenges to face

context
who, where, what’s up?

conflict
what is the challenge?

action
what did they do?

climax
what is the defining moment?

closure
how is the situation resolved?
## Let’s build out some of the moments

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<td>• Raphael Luna</td>
<td>• working with 5 professors for 2 years on research manuscript</td>
<td>• decides science may not be the right field for him</td>
<td>• inspired by the courses to rewrite the manuscript and resubmit for publication</td>
<td>• professors love it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• postdoctoral research fellow in biochemistry and molecular pharmacology</td>
<td>• continually rejected journal</td>
<td>• enrolls in creative writing courses</td>
<td>• edits mercilessly</td>
<td>• top journal publishes it</td>
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<tr>
<td>• at Harvard Medical School</td>
<td>• exhausted by hard work + rejection</td>
<td>• prioritizes human narrative</td>
<td>• writes The Art of Scientific Storytelling</td>
<td>• launches Luna Scientific Storytelling to help other researchers</td>
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The two parts of a compelling story

1. **The Anecdote** ties together the series of moments

2. **The Reflection** tells people why it’s important
Anecdotes with reflections make effective stories

Anecdote

No anecdote

Reflection

boring but true

memorable + effective

boring and useless

interesting but useless

No reflection

No reflection
Tips to crafting your story
Share universal “life” moments.
Rough it out and pitch it to others
Details help the moments stick

"Jack sustained fatal injuries in an auto accident."

less vivid

"Jack was killed by a semi trailer that rolled over on his car and crushed his skull."

more vivid

Details help the moments stick

less vivid

“Jack had an asthma attack on the way to school.”

more vivid

“Jack was walking to school with his little brother when he felt his chest get tight. He didn’t want his little brother to worry so he tried to ignore it, but before reaching the elementary school he was wheezing and struggling to breath.”
Edit mercilessly

[3]

Trying for theme is important, but you won't see what the story is actually about until you're at the end of it. Now rewrite.
Let’s take a moment to chat
Resources to build your story
Storytelling with Data
at Boston University

SUMMER 2015
June 8 - 12
June 15 – 19
June 22 – 27 evenings & Saturday

Every dataset tells a story; the challenge is how to capture and present the most compelling information for the narrative you need to tell. Our weeklong intensive workshop is designed to equip you with cutting-edge tools and techniques to become a master data storyteller – no matter your profession or level of skill.

Join our mailing list for workshop news and updates.

SIGN UP

bu.edu/com/data-storytelling/
Thank you

—

gavitytank.com
@gravitytankinc