



# **Effective, Ethical, and Equitable Storytelling:** How-To Tell Amazing Stories While Protecting Identity and Integrity

# Welcome



## Madison Gonzalez

Executive Director, Morning Light

# Agenda

1. How-To Share Stories for Impact
2. How-To Protect Anonymity and Identity
3. How-To Avoid Exploitative Storytelling
4. How-To Promote Equity and Inclusion Through Story
5. Q&A

# Why Story?

Human brains are hardwired to connect to story.

Story is evolutionary.

Human beings look to story to learn from other's successes and mistakes.

Human beings look to story to connect, to feel, and to grow.

Without story, we are reduced down to facts, data, figures, and timelines.

**Stories stick.**







# LOST THEIR HOMES

**LOST THEIR  
FAMILIES OR  
SUPPORT**

**LOST THEIR  
HEALTH**



**BUT THEY  
STILL  
HAD THEIR  
STORIES**

**Meet Richard.**



personal life.

Too many of us leave this world with our stories untold.



# The Structure of Storytelling

## **KEY INGREDIENTS & THE THREE ACTS**



# Key Ingredients

**Character:** Who?

**Conflict:** What?

**Goal:** Why?

**Change Over Time:** Result

# Character

- **Singularity Effect: Pick one face of your story!**
- **Think of most major stories - we typically follow ONE character/hero.**
- **Who is the story about? How can you make them relatable to your audience. Find common denominators.**
- **Communicate their likes/dislikes. What little details about them make them more *human*?**

# Conflict

- **What challenges is your character facing? Big and small?**
- **How did this conflict come to be? Give backstory. Give context.**



# Know the Struggle

**Struggle (and overcoming) is at the core of any good story.**

- character against nature
- character against another character (I.e. relationship)
- character against society
- character against self (self-sabotage)
- character against health
- character against technology
- and character against time

# Goal

**What are the character's hopes and motives?**

**Why is this important to them?**

**What would it mean if the character achieves their goal?**

**Why should it be important to the audience?**

# Change Over Time

**What is the result of the journey?**

**Physical change?**

**Emotional change?**

**Change in circumstance?**

**The audience is looking for a lesson learned or a takeaway.**

# ACT **1** : SET UP

- **WHO, WHAT, WHEN, WHERE, WHY**
- **INTRODUCE THE CHARACTER**
- **SET THE SCENE**
- **PAINT THE PICTURE OF NORMALCY**
- **INCITING INCIDENT A.K.A. THE HOOK**

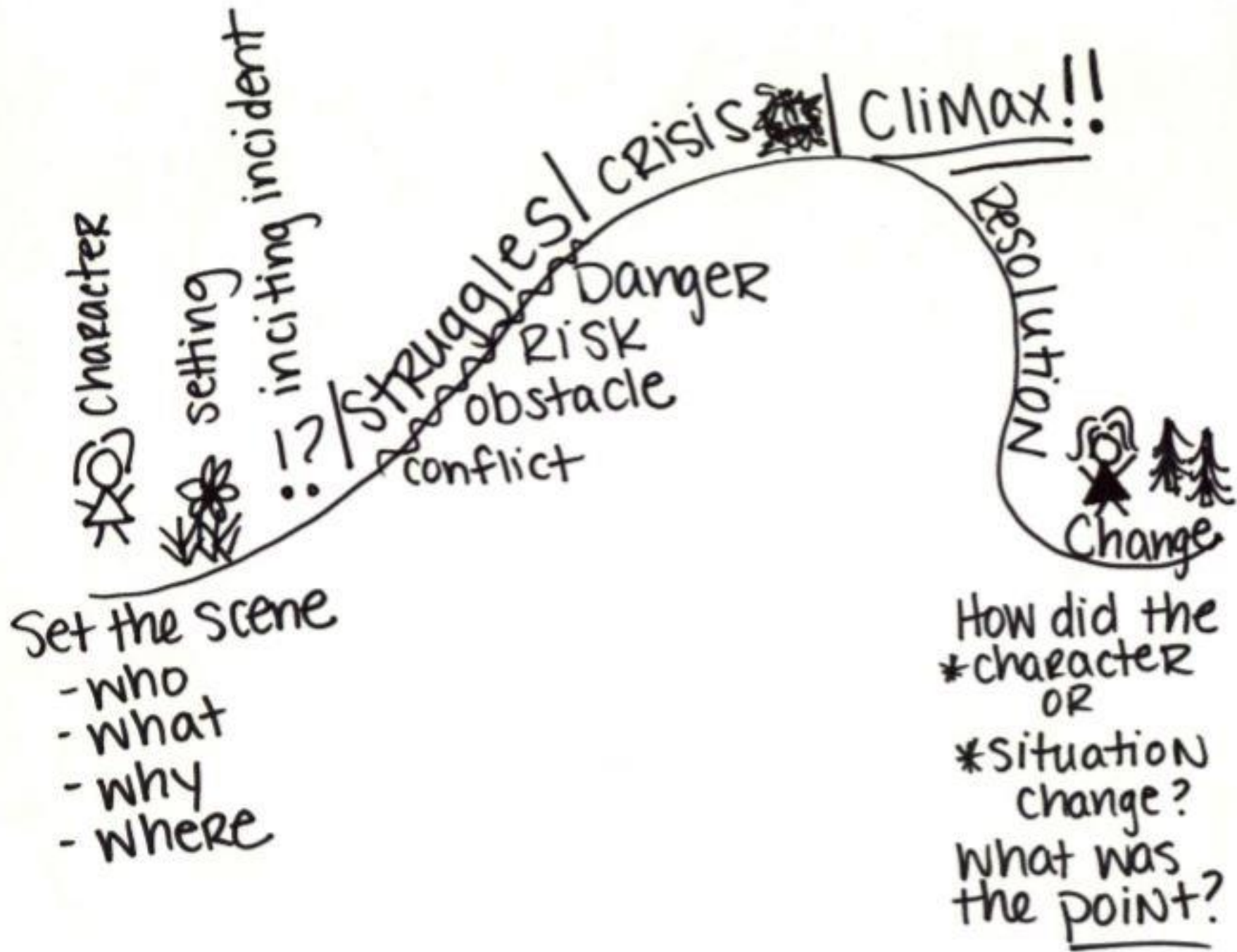
# ACT **2**: CONFRONTATION

- **RISING ACTION**
- **COMMUNICATE GOALS AND STRUGGLE**
- **CONFLICTS, OBSTACLES, RISKS, DANGERS**
- **HOW DOES THE TENSION BUILD?**

# ACT **3** : RESOLUTION

- CLIMAX - “AHA” MOMENT
- ANSWER THE QUESTIONS RAISED
- WHAT WAS THE POINT?!
- WHAT LESSONS WAS LEARNED AND WHAT CIRCUMSTANCES CHANGED?





A close-up photograph of a person's hand holding a silver pen and writing in a lined notebook. The background is blurred, showing a desk and a laptop. A blue semi-transparent rectangle is overlaid on the image, containing a quote and the name of the person who said it.

**“Great stories happen to those who can tell them.”**

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Three  
Secrets  
of  
Storytelling  
for  
Impact

# Secret #1: Know Your Audience

Repeat after me:

*I have to know my target audience if I want to be successful at storytelling.*

Some marketing truths stand the test of time.

Donors?

Investors?

The public?

Your brother?

Politicians?

Knowing your audience will help you know how to connect and relate to them through your storytelling.

# Secret #2: Storytelling Science

Combine all of these chemical reactions:

**DOPAMINE - the interesting stuff**

**(Stories with good hooks and twists)**

+

**CORTISOL - the stressful stuff**

**(Stories with struggle or intensity)**

+

**OXYTOCIN - the bonding stuff**

**(Stories with authenticity and emotion)**

+

**ENDORPHINS - the feel good stuff**

**(Stories with something comical or unexpected)**

=

a captive audience ready for action!

Good stories can produce all four. (More soon.)

# Secret #3: Have a Call to Action

**INVITE YOUR AUDIENCE ON THE JOURNEY AND  
MAKE THE AUDIENCE THE HERO OF THE STORY!**

IMPORTANT:

Don't assume your audience will know what you want them to do and don't give them too many options – one or two clear calls-to-action only.

A confused mind won't make a decision.

End your story with **a question, a next step, or an ask.**

Give tangible results.



# Ethical Storytelling

Protecting  
Anonymity and  
Equity and  
Avoiding  
Exploiting





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**“It's like everyone tells a story about themselves inside their own head. Always. All the time. That story makes you what you are. We build ourselves out of that story.”**

**Patrick Rothfuss, The Name of the Wind**

# Avoid Exploitation

**Many organizations are posed with these common concerns:**

*“I don’t want to seem like I’m using someone we serve.”*

*“Isn’t it too personal to ask someone about their life?”*

# Avoid Exploitation

## **Step 1: Make sure to get written permission or consent!**

Nobody wants a lawsuit! Err on the side of caution when:

- Posting on social media
- Posting on website
- Sending out newsletters

Did you get permission to share a story?

This goes for visual storytelling too (i.e. photos and videos)

Google “Photo Consent/Release Form” and keep them handy at events/interviews and on file for after.

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# Avoid Exploitation

## **Step 1: Make sure to get written permission or consent!**

- Use your own photos
- Use free stock photos
- Repost/Share “tagged” photos
- Event photos are typically fair game



# Avoid Exploitation

## Step 2: Paradigm Shift!

Psychology tells us that storytelling can be incredibly therapeutic.

Telling one's story can help them:

1. Find their voice and gain confidence
2. Learn that their experience could help another
3. Making sense of their life's events and experiences
4. Make peace with their story

*Ultimately, when someone shares their story and knows it could help raise awareness, increase donations, or inspire others, suddenly their struggle has meaning. Give them the opportunity. Give them the chance.*

# Avoid Exploitation

## **Step 3: Preserve Integrity!**

You can preserve the integrity of a story by using *quotes, facts, and testimonials* as much as possible.

Get their story first-hand. Are they willing to share on stage or in person at your next event? If not, can you record a video?

If first-hand isn't possible and it your job to write or share the story, try to tell it as it was told to you. As the storyteller, it is not our job to try to doctor the story to better serve our mission. Take good notes during the interview!



# Avoid Exploitation

**Do the test:**

**Ask yourself, “Would I be happy listening to the story while sitting next to the person it is about?”**

# Protecting Anonymity

**Many organizations are posed with these common concerns:**

*“How can I tell stories if I work for an organization that requires anonymity for those we serve?”*

*How can you connect donors and supporters to your mission if you can't say names and show faces?*

# Protecting Anonymity

## 1. Tell “Inspired by A True Story” Stories

Changing names, dates, locations, and details that could give away someone’s identity won’t strip the storyline. You can still tell the audience about common experiences of those you serve.

What was the common **struggle**? What did they **overcome**? How did your organization help?

# Protecting Anonymity

## 2. **Share stories of other people** in the organization!

- Volunteers
- Staff
- Board members

This can also boost morale internally as it helps people within the organization feel seen and appreciated.

Why did they get involved in the first place? What is their backstory?

How has the organization helped fulfill *their* goals?

# Protecting Anonymity

3. Do you have a **physical space**? Such as a clinic center, shelter, or school?

Share “behind the scenes photos” of the physical place.

People want to feel connected and informed about your organization. If you can't share stories of **people**, show them **where** the magic happens.

Tours, before and after photos, “stills with stories.”

# Protecting Anonymity

4. **Share quotes.** You can interview those you serve and get quality, insightful quotes and testimonials without sharing who they came from.

“This place is like home, they treat you like whole people. More than a number.” - Terminally- Ill Resident of the Abbie Hunt Bryce Home

# Promote Equity

**Equity: Justice according to natural law or right, specifically: freedom from bias or favoritism**

Remember, people are looking for how they fit in with your organization. People want to be able to see themselves in your organization.

Make sure you are doing your part in getting stories from a wide variety of voices within your organization and from those you serve. Make sure different ages, genders, cultures, races, incomes, and backgrounds are being represented in your storytelling.

# Promote Equity

Help enable others to share their stories! Ask for help. Give prompts!

Can others write, share, post their stories on your behalf?

Nobody knows everything.

Diversity helps open minds, shift paradigms, and change hearts.

Remain humble and honest.



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QUESTIONS?

Now's my time to  
hear from you!



# Welcome



What did you get out of today's talk?

Let's talk story!

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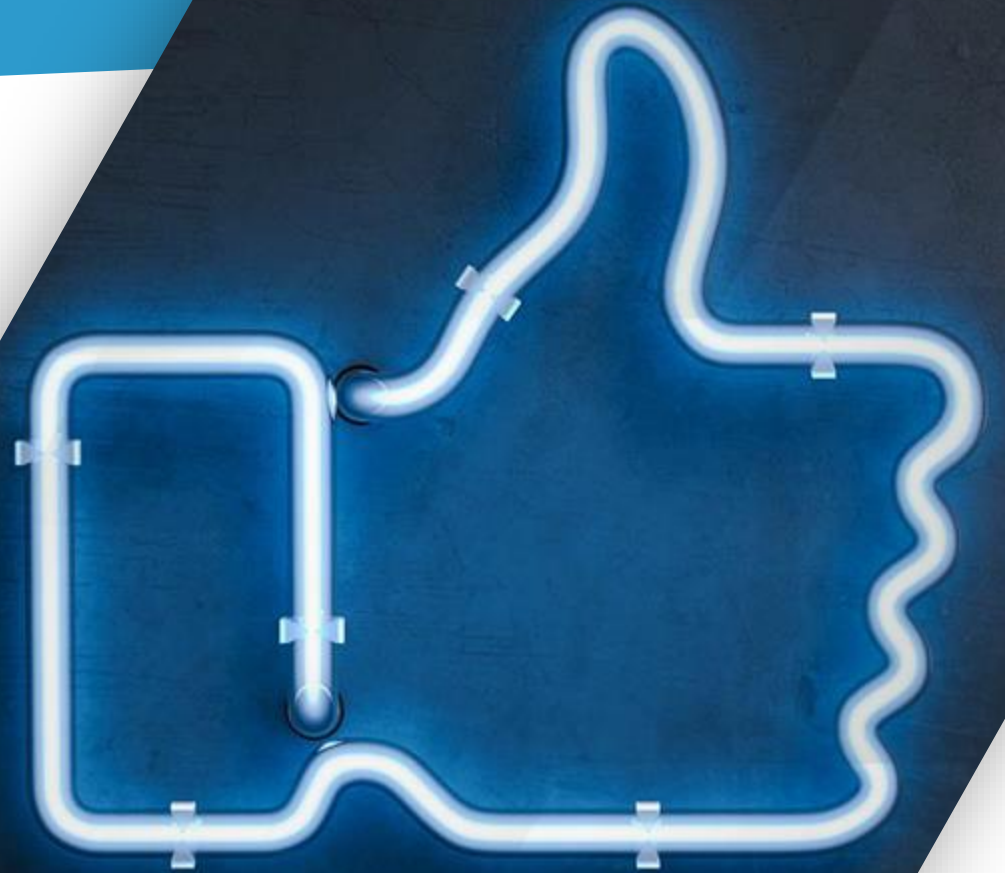
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