

# Introduction to Personal Storytelling

with Terry Wolfisch Cole



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# Agenda

- INTRODUCTIONS
- WHY STORYTELLING?
- LISTEN TO A STORY
- EXAMINING OUR LIVES FOR STORIES
- TECHNIQUES
- PRACTICE
- REFLECTION

# Introductions

WHO ARE YOU?

WHAT DO YOU HOPE  
TO GET OUT OF THIS TRAINING?

# Terry Wolfisch Cole

STORYTELLER



Storytelling is a *learned skill*.  
You can do it and I will teach you how.



# Why Storytelling?

HOW CAN AN EFFECTIVE STORY,  
WELL TOLD, IMPACT YOUR  
**PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL SUCCESS?**



# WHEN MIGHT YOU TELL YOUR STORY?

- PROFESSIONAL GATHERINGS
- INTERVIEWS
- SPEECHES AND PRESENTATIONS
- FAMILY EVENTS
- SOCIAL SITUATIONS
- ON STAGE
- OTHER IDEAS?



Story Time





# Choosing a Story to Tell







# YES...INTERESTING THINGS HAVE HAPPENED TO YOU!

- LEARN TO LOOK AT YOUR LIFE  
LIKE A STORYTELLER
- WHERE TO START
- WHAT TO AVOID

# ANECDOTE VS. STORY

- BEGINNING, MIDDLE, END
- STAKES
- **UNIQUE** EXPERIENCE
- **UNIVERSAL** EMOTIONS
- TRANSFORMATION



# What makes a story great?

TECHNIQUES YOU CAN USE





# THE FIVE BEATS OF EFFECTIVE STORYTELLING

1. INTRODUCTION
2. STAKES
3. RISING ACTION
4. RESOLUTION
5. REFLECTION

# INTRODUCTION

- **WHO** ARE YOU?
- **WHERE** ARE WE?
- **WHEN** IS THIS HAPPENING?

# STAKES

- WHAT DO YOU **WANT, NEED, DESIRE, HOPE FOR?**
- WHAT MIGHT YOU **GAIN OR LOSE** AS THE STORY GOES ON?

# RISING ACTION

- CREATE A **DRAMATIC ARC**
- **INCREASE THE STAKES** AS THE STORY UNFOLDS AND REACHES ITS DRAMATIC CLIMAX





# RESOLUTION

- SOOOOOO...? **HOW DOES IT END?**
- THIS MIGHT NOT BE HAPPY OR TIDY!

# REFLECTION

- HOW ARE YOU **DIFFERENT** AT THE END OF THE STORY THAN YOU WERE AT THE BEGINNING?

The image features a dark blue, textured brushstroke that serves as a background for the text. In the top-left corner, there is a cluster of orange dots of varying sizes. In the bottom-right corner, there is a thick, orange, wavy line. The text "QUESTIONS?" is written in a white, hand-drawn, sans-serif font across the center of the blue brushstroke.

QUESTIONS?



# USEFUL TIPS

FOR EFFECTIVE STORYTELLING



# SET THE TIME AND PLACE

- THIS IS ESSENTIAL FOR  
**AUDIENCE ORIENTATION**

# TENSE

- STORIES TOLD IN THE **PRESENT TENSE** FEEL **MORE IMMEDIATE** AND ARE **EASIER TO VISUALIZE**.

# DETAILS ENRICH A STORY

INCLUDE INFORMATION SUCH AS:

- NAMES AND RELATIONSHIPS
- ENVIRONMENT
- SENSATION

It all comes down to the **small details**. In the hands of a good writer, that old lady, her cottage, her flowers, and the smell and taste of her tea, as well as the feel of the smooth, porcelain cup in her hand, become **quite real** for the reader, and the story ends up being **truly compelling**.

– Mark Spencer



# INNER LIFE

WHAT ARE YOU

- OBSERVING
- SENSING
- THINKING
- FEELING
- SAYING TO YOURSELF?

**TELL YOUR STORY FROM THE INSIDE OUT.**

MAKE YOURSELF A PARTICIPANT, NOT A  
WITNESS.



# FOUR PITFALLS

TO AVOID



# TRITE PHRASES AND CLICHES

- STORY TITLES
- PRELUDE PHRASES
- MORAL STATEMENTS
- ANY WORDS THAT TAKE YOUR AUDIENCE OUT OF THE STORY
  - "FAST FORWARD"
  - "BUT THAT'S ANOTHER STORY..."
  - "NEEDLESS TO SAY..."
  - "LONG STORY SHORT..."

# FORECASTING

- DON'T SPOIL THE SURPRISE!

# SPEECHMAKING

- ALLOW YOUR AUDIENCE TO DRAW THEIR OWN CONCLUSIONS

# PERFORMING

- YOUR STORY SHOULD **SOUND NATURAL** IN ANY SITUATION

The image features a dark blue, textured brushstroke that serves as a background for the text. In the top-left corner, there is a cluster of small, solid orange circles. In the bottom-right corner, there is a thick, orange, wavy line that resembles a stylized 'M' or a series of connected 'V' shapes.

QUESTIONS?





# PROCESS

TURNING AN IDEA INTO A STORY



# HERE'S HOW I DO IT\*

- WRITE IT OUT
- READ OR RECORD
- LISTEN TO WHAT YOU'VE CREATED
- REVISE
- GET IT ONTO AN INDEX CARD
- PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE

\*but it's different for everyone



GETTING CAST



# HOW DO I JOIN A SHOW WHERE I LIVE?

- OPEN MICS VS. CURATED SHOWS
- THEMES
- PITCHES



# Thank you.

WHAT IS ONE THING YOU WILL  
TAKE AWAY FROM TODAY'S WORKSHOP?



# Terry Wolfisch Cole

## Tell Me Another

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