Public Narrative/Story of Self Workshop

Participant Guide

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Originally adapted from the works of Marshall Ganz of Harvard University
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Modified for this webinar by Kristi Chester Vance & Dusan Stojicic

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10:30 AM	Introduction to Public Narrative (30 min)	Page 7
11:00 AM	Introduction to Story of Self (20 min)	Page 9
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11:50 AM	Debrief Stories of Self & Review Key Learnings (10 min)	

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We welcome your suggestions for improving this guide further for future trainings. We also welcome you to use it and adapt it for your own trainings, subject to the restrictions below.

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INTRODUCTION TO PUBLIC NARRATIVE

Creating A Public Narrative

Goals for this session:

- Learn WHY Public Narrative is an essential leadership skill
- Learn HOW Public Narrative works: values, emotion & story structure
- Learn HOW TO learn to tell your public narrative.

If I am not for myself, who will be for me?
When I am only for myself, what am I?
If not now, when?

- Hillel, 1st century Jerusalem sage

Crafting a complete public narrative is a way to connect three core elements of leadership practice: story (why we must act now, heart), strategy (how we can act now, head), and action (what we must do to act now, hands). As Rabbi Hillel's powerful words suggest, to stand for yourself is a first but insufficient step. You must also construct the community with whom you stand, and move that community to act together now. To combine stories of self, us and now, find common threads in values that call you to your mission, values shared by your community, and challenges to those values that demand action now. You may want to begin with a Story of Now, working backward through the Story of the Us with whom you are working to the Story of Self in which your calling is grounded.

Public Narrative

Public narrative as a practice of leadership

Leadership is about accepting responsibility for enabling others to achieve purpose in the face of uncertainty. Narrative is how we learn to make choices and construct our identities – as individuals, as communities, as nations.

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Each of us has a compelling story to tell

Each of us has a story that can move others to action. As you learn this skill, you will be learning to tell a compelling story about yourself, your constituency, and the need for urgent – and hopeful – action. In addition, you will gain practice in listening, and coaching others to tell a good story.

Learning Public Narrative

We are all natural storytellers. We are "hard wired" for it. Although you may not have learned how to tell stories "explicitly" (their structure, the techniques), you have leaned "implicitly" (imitating others, responding to the way others react to you, etc.). In this workshop you will learn the tools to make the implicit explicit. We will use a four-stage pedagogy: explain, model, practice and debrief. We will explain how story works, you will observe a model of storytelling, you will then practice you own story, and you will then debrief your practice with others.

You will learn this practice the way we learn any practice: the same way we learn to ride a bike. Whatever we read, watch, or are told about bike riding, sooner or later we have to get on. And the first thing that usually happens is that you fall off. Then, and this is the key moment, you either give up or find the courage to get back up on the bike, knowing you will continue to fall, until, eventually you learn to keep your balance. In this workshop you'll have the support of your written materials, peers and coaches.

You will also learn to coach others in telling their stories. We are all "fish" so to speak in the "water" of our own stories. We have lived in them all our lives and so we often need others to ask us probing questions, challenge us to explain why, and make connections we may have forgotten about so we can tell our stories in ways others can learn from them.

We all live rich, complex lives with many challenges, choices, and outcomes of both failure and success. We can never tell our whole life story in two minutes. We are learning to tell a two-minute story as the first step in mastering the craft of public narrative. The time limit focuses on getting to the point, offering images rather than lots of words, and choosing choice points strategically.

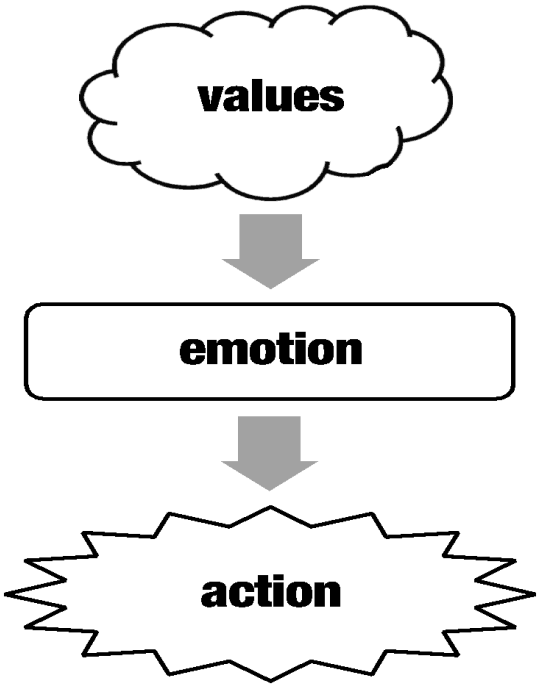
How Public Narrative Works

Why Use Public Narrative? Two Ways of Knowing (And we need both!)

Public leadership requires the use of both the "head" and the "heart" to mobilize others to act effectively on behalf of shared values. It engages people in interpreting <u>why</u> they should change the world – their motivation – and <u>how</u> they can act to change it – their strategy. Public narrative is the "why" – the art of translating values into action through stories.

The key to motivation is understanding that values inspire action through emotion.

Emotions inform us of what we value in ourselves, in others, and in the world, and enable us to express the motivational content of our values to others. Stories draw on our emotions and show our values in action, helping us *feel* what matters, rather than just thinking about or telling others what matters. Because stories allow us to express our values not as abstract principles, but as lived experience, they have the power to move others.



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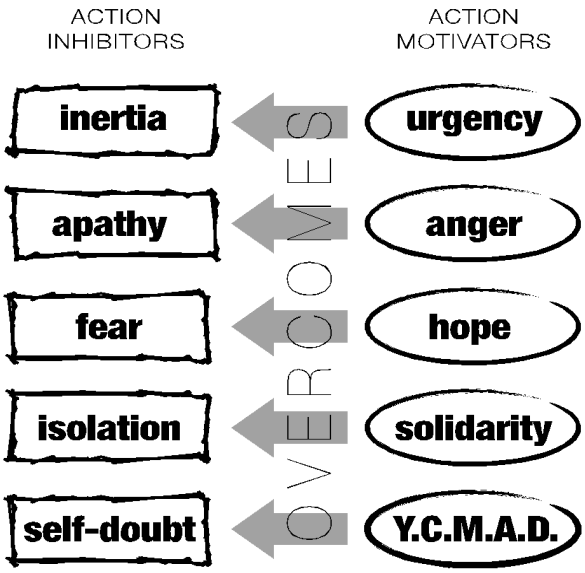
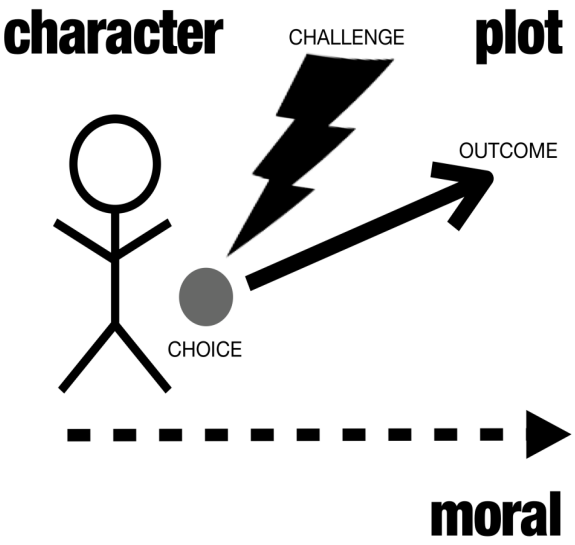
Some emotions inhibit mindful action, but other emotions facilitate action.

The language of emotion is the language of movement, sharing the same root word. Mindful action is inhibited by inertia and apathy, on the one hand, and fear, isolation and self-doubt on the other. It can be facilitated by urgency and anger, on one hand, and hope, solidarity, and YCMAD (you can make a difference) on the other. Stories can mobilize emotions enabling mindful action to overcome emotions that inhibit it.



The Three Key Elements of Public Narrative Structure: Challenge – Choice – Outcome

A plot begins with an unexpected challenge that confronts a character with an urgent need to pay attention, to make a choice, a choice for which s/he is unprepared. The choice yields an outcome—and the outcome teaches a moral.



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Because we can empathetically identify with the character, we can "feel" the moral. We not only hear "about" someone's courage; we can also be inspired by it.

The story of the character and their effort to make choices encourages listeners to think about their own values, and challenges, and inspires them with new ways of thinking about how to make choices in their own lives.

Public narrative combines a story of self, a story of us, and a story of now.

A "story of now" communicates an urgent challenge you are calling on your community to join you in acting on now.
The story of now focuses on a challenge to your community demanding action now, a source of hope, and the choice of a pathway to action you call on others to join you in taking.

A "story of us" communicates shared values that anchor your community, values that may be at risk, and may also be sources of hope.

Just as with a story of self, the values of a community are often expressed through key choice points in its life: founding moments, moments of crisis, of triumph, disaster, of resilience, of humor. Stories of us are accounts of events involving specific people, moments, events, words, etc.

A "story of self" communicates the values that called you to lead in this way, in this place, at this time.

Each of us has compelling stories to tell. In some cases, our values have been shaped by choices others – parents, friends, teachers – have made. And we have chosen how to deal loss, even as we have found access to hope. Our choices have shaped our own life path: we dealt with challenges as children, found our way to a calling, responded to needs, demands, and gifts of others; confronted leadership challenges in places of worship, schools, communities, work.

Public Narrative

VIDEO REVIEW:

James Croft

We'll be watching five minutes of James Croft's Linked Public Narrative. As you watch it, focus on the elements of SELF – US – NOW that you hear in his story.

SELF	US	NOW
What experiences shaped his values? Whose choices were they? Why are they stories?	**Who is the "us" to whom he appeals? What moments of choice does he recall? What are the values?**	**What challenges to those values does he describe? What's the source of hope? In what action does he ask us to join?**

1. **Why does James Croft begin as he does?**

2. **What challenge, choice, and outcome are at the core of each story he tells?**

3. **What details, images, moments do these stories bring alive?**

4. **What values do these stories communicate?**

STORY OF SELF

Goals for this session:

- Learn how to tell a story of SELF in a way that communicates your values.
- Learn how to coach others by giving feedback on their story of SELF.

What is a Story of Self?

You tell a story of self to enable others to "get you" – to enable them to experience the values that call you to serve the cause you serve AND to have accepted responsibility to lead. The key is to focus on choice points: moments when your values influenced choices you made in response to challenges you faced. When did you first need to be heard and believe that you could be? When did you have to care for someone else and found out you could? When did you have to stand up to someone bigger than you? Where did you find the courage? Or did you? What were the circumstances? What makes a story of self powerful is not "high drama" or "tragedy" but the extent to which you allow yourself to be vulnerable, to let others see something real about your sources of caring and of courage.

Incorporating Challenge, Choice, and Outcome in Your Own Story

Ask yourself questions to focus on choices you made along the way that brought you to this point in time as a leader. Once you identify a specific choice point, dig deeper by trying to answer the following questions.

Challenge: Why did you feel it was a challenge? What was so challenging about it? Why was it your challenge?

Choice: Why did you make the choice you did? Where did you get the courage (or not)? Where did you get the hope (or not)? Did your parents', grandparents' or others life stories teach you how to act in that moment? How did it feel?

Outcome: How did the outcome feel? Why did it feel that way? What did it teach you? What do you want to teach us? How do you want us to feel?

A word about challenge. Sometimes people see the word challenge and think that they need to describe the misfortunes of their lives. A struggle may be of your own choosing – a high mountain you decided to climb, not only a valley you managed to climb out of. Any number of things may have been a challenge to you and be the source of a good story to inspire others.

VIDEO REVIEW:

Amal Beydoun

We'll be watching two minutes of Amal Beydoun's Story of Self. As you watch it, focus on the elements of Story of Self that you hear in her story.

CHALLENGE	CHOICE	OUTCOME
What experiences shaped her values? What details and images bring her challenge alive?	**What moments of choice does she recall? What are the values?**	**Where does she locate the source of hope? What is the outcome of her choices?**

1. **Why does Amal Beydoun begin as she does?**

2. **What details, images, moments her bring her story alive?**

3. **What values does her story communicate?**

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PRACTICE SESSION:

STORY OF SELF PRACTICE

Goals for this session:

- Practice telling your Story of Self and get good, constructive feedback
- Learn to coach others' stories so they become better storytellers: **constructive critical and affirmative** feedback.

AGENDA

TOTAL TIME: 30 minutes of teamwork

1.	Review the agenda. **Choose a timekeeper, introduce yourselves & set norms. Your coach will tell his/her 2-minute story of self** as a model.	5 min
3.	Take some time as individuals to **silently develop your story of self**. Use the worksheet that follows.	5 min
4.	As a team, pick 4 participants to tell their story. Each person who volunteer has **2 minutes to tell his/her story** and **3 minutes for coaching** from the group. ***** NOTE:** You have 2 minutes to tell your story. Stick to this limit. Make sure the timekeeper cuts you off. It encourages focus and ensures everyone has a chance.*	20 min
5.	Return to large group.	1 min

WORKSHEET:

DEVELOPING YOUR STORY OF SELF

Before you decide what part of your story to tell, think about these questions:

1. What will I be calling on others to do? What is my purpose in calling on others to join me in action? Why am I called to leadership?
2. What values move me to take action and might also inspire others to similar action?
3. What stories can I tell from my own life about specific people or events that would show (rather than tell) how I learned or acted on those values?

What are the experiences in your life that have shaped the values that call you to leadership?

FAMILY & CHILDHOOD	**LIFE CHOICES**	**LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE**
Parents/Family	School	First Experience with Political & Civic Issues
Growing Up Experiences	Career	Key Moment in Your Work
Your Community	Partner/Family	Role Models/Community
Role Models	Hobbies/Interests/Talents	Current Experience as an Organizer
School	Finding Passion	
	Overcoming Challenge	

Think about the challenge, choice and outcome in your story. The outcome might be what you learned, in addition to what happened. Try drawing pictures here instead of words. Powerful stories leave your listeners with images in their minds that shape their understanding of you and your calling.

CHALLENGE:	CHOICE:	OUTCOME:

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For Further Reflection

We all live very rich, complex lives with many challenges, many choices, and many outcomes of both failure and success. That means we can never tell our whole life story in two minutes. The challenge is to learn to interpret our life stories as a practice, so that we can teach others based on reflection and interpretation of our own experiences, and choose stories to tell from our own lives based on what's appropriate in each unique situation.

Take time to reflect on your own public story, beginning with your story of self. You may go back as far as your parents or grandparents, or you may start with your most recent organizing and keep asking yourself why you in particular got involved when you did. Focus on challenges you had to face, the choices you made about how to deal with them, and the satisfactions – or frustrations – you experienced. Why did you make those choices? Why did you do this and not that? Keep asking yourself why.

What did you learn from reflecting on these moments of challenge, choice, and outcome? How do they feel? Do they teach you anything about yourself, about your family, about your peers, your community, your nation, your world around you – about what really matters to you matters? What about these stories was so intriguing? Which elements offered real perspective into your own life?

Many of us active in public service have stories of both loss and hope. If we did not have stories of loss, we would not understand that loss is a part of the world, and we would have no reason to try to fix it. But we also have stories of hope, otherwise we wouldn't be trying to fix it.

COACHING TIPS:

STORY OF SELF

Remember to START with positive feedback, balancing it with constructive critical feedback. You are coaching to facilitate the other person's learning by asking them questions, rather than giving them advice, with a focus on improving story telling craft, rather than content.

DON'T simply offer vague "feel good" comments. ("That was a really great story!")
DO coach each other on the following points:

☑ **THE CHALLENGE:** What were the specific challenges the storyteller faced? Did the storyteller paint a vivid picture of those challenges?
"When you described _____, I got a clear picture of the challenge."
"I understood the challenge to be _____. Is that what you intended?"
"The challenge wasn't clear. How would you describe _____?"

☑ **THE CHOICE:** Was there a clear choice that was made in response to each challenge? How did the choice make you feel? (Hopeful? Angry?)
"To me, the choice you made was _____, and it made me feel _____."
"It would be helpful if you focused on the moment you made a choice."

☑ **THE OUTCOME:** What was the specific outcome that resulted from each choice? What does that outcome teach us?
"I understood the outcome to be _____, and it teaches me _____. But how does it relate to your work now?"

☑ **THE VALUES:** Could you identify what this person's values are and where they came from? How? How did the story make you feel?
"Your story made me feel _____ because _____."
"It's clear from your story that you value _____; but it could be even clearer if you told a story about where that value comes from."

☑ **DETAILS:** Were there sections of the story that had especially good details or images (e.g. sights, sounds, smells, or emotions of the moment)?
"The image of _____ really helped me identify with what you were feeling."
"Try telling more details about _____ so we can imagine what you were experiencing."

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WORKSHEET:

COACHING YOUR TEAMMATES' STORIES OF SELF

Record Feedback/Comments from Your Team Members Here:

Coaching Your Team's "Story of Self"

As you hear each other's stories, keeping track of the details of each person's story will help you to provide feedback and remember details about people on your team later. Use the grid below to track your team's stories in words or images.

Name	***Values***	***Challenge***	***Choice***	***Outcome***