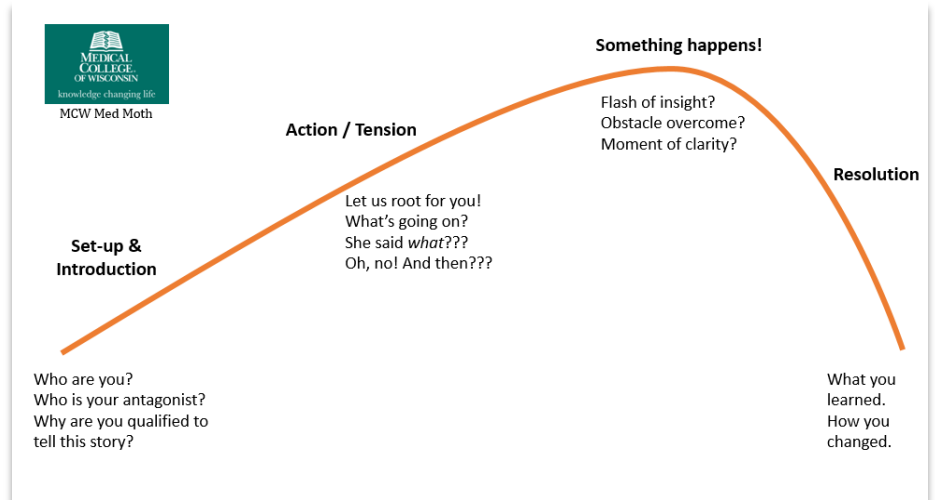


Questions and comments:
Bruce Campbell, MD

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THE MOTH: Storytelling Tips & Tricks

What to do

Be forewarned

Moth stories are told, not read. We love how the storyteller connects with the audience when there is no PAGE between them! Please know your story "by heart" but not by rote memorization. No notes, paper or cheat sheets allowed on stage.

Have some stakes

Stakes are essential in live storytelling. What do you stand to gain or lose? Why is what happens in the story important to you? If you can't answer this, then think of a different story. A story without stakes is an essay and is best experienced on the page, not the stage.

Start in the action.

Have a great first line that sets up the stakes and grabs attention

No: "So I was thinking about climbing this mountain. But then I watched a little TV and made a snack and took a nap and my mom called and vented about her psoriasis then I did a little laundry (a whites load) (I lost another sock, darn it!) and then I thought about it again and decided I'd climb the mountain the next morning."

Yes: "The mountain loomed before me. I had my hunting knife, some trail mix and snow boots. I had to make it to the little cabin and start a fire before sundown or freeze to death for sure."

Know your story well enough so you can have fun!

Watching you panic to think of the next memorized line is harrowing for the audience. Make an outline, memorize your bullet points and play with the details. Enjoy yourself. Imagine you are at a dinner party, not a deposition.

...and what not to do**Steer clear of meandering endings**

They kill a story! Your last line should be clear in your head before you start. Yes, bring the audience along with you as you contemplate what transpires in your story, but remember, you are driving the story, and must know the final destination. Keep your hands on the wheel!

No standup routines please

The Moth loves funny people but requires that all funny people tell funny stories.

No rants

Take up this anger issue with your therapist, or skip therapy and shape your anger into a story with some sort of resolution. (Stories = therapy!)

No essays

Your eloquent musings are beautiful and look pretty on the page but unless you can make them gripping and set up stakes, they won't work on stage.

No fake accents

If your story doesn't work in your own voice, or that of your people of origin, please consider another story. In our experience, imitating accents from another culture or race rarely works and often offends.

Please use our stage to practice civility and respect. Please don't include racism, homophobia, misogyny or any form of hate speech.

From The Moth's website

<https://themoth.org/share-your-story/storytelling-tips-tricks>

The Moth Teaches A Thing or Two About The Arc Of Storytelling

When we listen to a story, we tend to try and relate it to our personal experiences, and it is this ability to relate to someone else's experiences that ultimately breeds empathy and the push for change or innovation.

Much of what people remember from a significant learning experience are the feelings elicited or the underlying message conveyed, rather than a multitude of facts.

Any presentation benefits from story construction because organizing the information into a beginning (introduction), middle (crisis or challenge), and end (climax) enables the audience to retain the information better and reshape the knowledge acquired into something meaningful.

In addition to a beginning, a middle, and an end in every story, another major principle is that all stories have an "arc." At The Moth, the middle of this arc is called "the moment of change." It is the moment towards which the entire story has been building up. Thus, while helping the workshop participants "develop an arc," we ultimately spent a great deal of time exploring the peak of the arc—that is, the moment of change.

Modified from *Forbes* (Nov 11, 2013)

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/ashoka/2013/11/11/the-moth-teaches-ashoka-a-thing-or-two-about-storytelling-the-arc-of-a-story/#614d5ae16fd1>

Six Rules for Great Storytelling, From A Moth-Approved Master Of The Form

Margot Leitman, *Long Story Short: The Only Storytelling Guide You'll Ever Need*

LESSON 1: MAKE PEOPLE ROOT FOR YOU

"In everything from politics to acting," says Leitman, "the way to get ahead is often to get people to root for you." When starting a story, first quickly introduce yourself as a clear character: "I'm the type of guy/girl who . . ." The next step will run against the grain of what you've been taught about how to present yourself. In interviews and resumes, you're supposed to talk yourself up. But in storytelling, people want to root for an underdog.

LESSON 2: HAVE A FEW GO-TO STORIES AT THE READY

You should have a polished story or two in your repertoire. You never know when it'll come in handy, says Leitman, pointing to a moment in Steve Jobs's original iPhone keynote when the slide deck failed, and he sprung gracefully into a story he had at the ready. "I think it was a story he told socially a million times," says Leitman. "Probably it worked socially, so he decided to tell it in front of the crowd. To me, it's the most memorable part of that speech. Rather than talking about the components of the iPhone, he's taking a moment that makes him human."

LESSON 3: STORIES ARE ABOUT HOW YOU FELT

"It's really not what transpired that makes a good story," says Leitman, upending conventional wisdom. "It's about how you felt about what transpired." The "plot" of your story is almost irrelevant when it comes to making a connection with your audience. "It's not a matter of, 'We won the game.' It's, 'How did you feel when you won? What did you believe was impossible that now suddenly you can do?'" A corollary of this: Stories can be about very small stuff, so long as the emotions involved are big. Leitman tells a story about wandering into a Whole Foods in the midst of a personal medical nightmare. The cashier invited her to donate to the Haiti earthquake relief, and an emotional Leitman signed over \$50. "The cashier said, 'Wow, you're a really nice person.' I started crying, 'I am! I am! a good person!'" Though small in scale, the story always gets a laugh.

LESSON 4: THIS MAY SEEM OBVIOUS, BUT . . .

"Stories have a beginning, middle, and an end," says Leitman. Yes, it sounds obvious, but in years of teaching storytelling, she wouldn't repeat this fact if it weren't necessary. Think about it: Have you ever been at a wedding and heard one of the toast-givers drone on and on, without focus? "A lot of people never get to the story. I don't know why they can't. But they talk and talk and never get to a point," she says.

LESSON 5: GOOD STORIES ARE UNIVERSAL

Your story needs to be framed inclusively; there has to be something your audience identifies with. Leitman remembers a student who began a story, "So I went to Yale." The story that came after was really interesting and funny, about being seized with paranoia that a car was following him. But his opener, "I went to Yale," didn't mean for most audiences what the student thought it did. For him, "I went to Yale" immediately communicated, ". . . which is in New Haven, Connecticut, which has some dangerous neighborhoods in it." But all anyone else heard was: "I went to a fancy exclusive school." It was an invitation for most audiences to tune out. The lesson has an analogue in a term from tech and design: Try to think about the "user experience" of your story.

LESSON 6: DON'T BE BORING

Leitman doesn't mean that your story shouldn't be boring (though that's true, too). She means you should stop living a boring life. This lesson should be taken with a grain of salt, because she believes that all of us who've been on this earth a few years have a trove of stories worth telling. Even so, why not use your newfound interest in storytelling to reconsider some of your risk-avoidant habits? "We get into a groove in life where we get scared of trying new things," says Leitman. "You have to say yes to things that scare you, otherwise you won't have a very story-worthy life. And the legacy that goes on after you pass are the stories people tell about you."

Modified from *Fast Company* (10.21.15); article by David Zax

<https://www.fastcompany.com/3052152/6-rules-for-great-storytelling-from-a-moth-approved-master-of-the-form>

Is it a Story or Anecdote? And Why It Matters

The Difference Between Anecdotes and Stories

An anecdote is an incident that's usually amusing, odd, sad, or tragic. Typically, an anecdote illustrates a point. Other anecdotes that are biographical or autobiographical often serve to reflect someone's personality, attitude, or philosophy.

Stories, on the other hand, have an "official" literary definition: A hero or heroine struggles to overcome obstacles to reach an important goal. (Of course, that "hero" might be an organization struggling to stay afloat and avoid bankruptcy. Or the "hero" might be a new product developed on a shoe-string budget struggling to become number one in the market. Or the "hero" might be a team fighting to prove its worth and avoid being laid off during a merger.) You get the idea.

4 Persuasive Pluses for the Story

- **Stories involve the listener in the struggle.** As the hero overcomes this and that setback, the listener identifies with similar problems—or at least the frustrations and disappointment such problems cause. Empathy sets in. Listeners (employees, spouse, coworkers, suppliers) can begin to identify with the hero in the story, trying to solve the problem and reach the goal.
- **Stories forge a deeper involvement and engage emotions on many levels.** The details necessary to set the scene and structure the story involve multiple senses: The physical scene. The appearance of people, things, or places. Fear. Beauty. Starkness. Hearing—conversations, disturbances, arguments, laughter. Withdrawal. Shyness. Mockery.
- **Stories bring closure on a significant goal.** Listeners actually feel a sense of closure and satisfaction after the story "ends" in much the same way they feel at the end of a movie. Whether the movie or story ends "happily ever after" or butts up against some harsh reality, still there is closure—a truth to be processed and internalized.
- **Stories are memorable because they have structure.** Although good speakers know how to tell even an anecdote well, a story stays in the psyche because it has a definite arch that is always the same: Beginning, middle, end. Not so with an anecdote. Anecdotes can simply be a slice of life.

Steve Jobs told stories to launch his Apple products successfully. Warren Buffet tells stories about his investment strategies and philosophies. Presidents and world leaders tell stories about what they've achieved while in office and where they want to take the country in the future. The next time you need to inspire your team, launch a new vision, or motivate people as a leader, perfect great stories.

Modified from *Huffington Post* (02/06/2015) - Diana Booher, MA

https://www.huffingtonpost.com/dianna-booher/is-it-a-story-or-anecdote_b_6609364.html

How to Create Your TED Talk: An 8-Step Process

The TED conference (which stands for *technology, entertainment, design*) began in 1984 and continues sharing “Ideas Worth Spreading.”

So, What is a TED Talk?

According to Chris Anderson, the owner and global curator of TED, every TED talk starts with an idea that, “you have something meaningful to say, and your goal is to re-create your core idea inside your audience’s minds.” Anderson calls this idea “the gift in every great talk.”

Your idea may:

- Be common-sense or counter-intuitive
- Describe a scientific breakthrough or your own experience
- Motivate people to action or greater self-awareness

But in every case, your TED talk will begin with an idea.

In *TED’s secret to great public speaking* - an eight-minute video that’s worth watching - Anderson offers three guidelines for creating your TED talk:

(https://www.ted.com/talks/chris_anderson_teds_secret_to_great_public_speaking)

- Focus on one major idea
- Give people a reason to care
- Build your idea with *concepts that your audience already understands*

Eight-Step Process for Creating Your TED Talk

Step 1. Find an idea you want to share

To home in on your idea worth sharing, it can be useful to ask yourself things like:

- What’s one assumption I’d like to challenge?
- What’s a belief of mine that has changed, and why?
- What does everyone miss when they think about my area of interest or expertise?

And remember, you’re looking for an *idea*. An idea is not a theme, a general truth, a platitude or a big goal. “Everyone wants to feel included” is not an idea, it’s a general truth. “Empowering women” is not an idea, it’s a topic.

Step 2. Develop an unexpected and/or catchy way to state your idea

If your idea can be stated in a catchy way, listeners will pay more attention and remember it more easily. Here are some examples (with more conventional versions of the same idea in parentheses):

- We can solve malnutrition now (vs. “Malnutrition is a problem we can with science.”)
- Almost dying saved my life (vs. “A near death experience motivated me to overcome problems that would have slowly killed me.”)
- Never, ever give up (vs. “Committing to things is essential to lifelong success.”)

Step 3. Collect anything and everything that relates to your idea

To re-create your idea in the minds of your listeners, you'll need vivid examples, illustrations, stories, facts, questions, and comments, so notice anything and everything that relates to your idea. Examples of things you might collect include:

- Snippets of conversation
- A quote you heard in high school
- Stories that relate to your idea
- Clusters of data that support it
- Metaphors or analogies that helps explain it
- A relevant personal moment
- A physical object that helps your audience understand

Don't worry about which materials will end up in your talk.

Step 4. Imagine how you might open and end your talk

While it's too soon to *choose* your opening and close, it's not too soon to start playing with ideas for these important parts of your talk.

An effective way to begin any speech is to grab your audience's attention with a human-interest story, a surprising statistic, an unexpected observation, or a thought-provoking question.

As for the close, you might want to end your talk in a positive, forward-looking way. This is often done by:

- Calling the audience to action
- Painting a hopeful picture of the future
- Finishing or resolving the story or discussion that has run through your talk, so that listeners get a sense of closure.

Step 5. Put the rest of your materials in a reasonable order

The middle of any speech is tricky, so to tackle this part of your TED talk, take the materials you've collected and shuffle them until you find a good arrangement. To do this, you can:

- Create a high-level outline
- Write each element on a 3 x 5 card and physically shuffle them to see different possible orders.
- Speaking out loud to put your elements into different sequences and ask, *Does it sound right if I tell that story first, then give the fact? How about if I give the fact first, then tell the story?*
- Try any other method that works for you.

Step 6. Talk your way to a rough draft of your script

This is where your "speaking plan" becomes a "speech."

Take your outline or list of ordered elements and *talk about* each item in turn.

When I'm writing a speech, I like to talk it out loud and type up what I'm saying as I'm saying it – but you can also use your computer's voice recognition software to capture your words, or talk into the voice memo feature on your phone and type up the sound file later.

Step 7. Try out your TED talk draft on a volunteer listener

The point of this step is to get feedback on how to improve the structure and clarity of your draft.

Read it and then ask them:

- Did I explain my idea clearly?
- Was there anything in my talk that you didn't follow?
- Was there anything you didn't understand?
- Did anything seem out of place?
- Did I lose your interest anywhere?
- What made you so curious that you wanted to know more?

Step 8. Repeat the steps as needed

And finally...

Relax.

Modified from: SPEAK UP FOR SUCCESS <https://speakupforsuccess.com/create-a-ted-talk/>