

The Power of First-Person Storytelling for TPP Programs Workshop: Listening, Learning, and Telling Your Story


April 26th, 2022

Slide 1




Aisha Moore: Welcome everyone to today's webinar, The Power of First-Person Storytelling for TPP Programs Workshop. I'm so glad all of you are here today. We are recording this webinar and the slide deck, as well as the transcript will be available on the rhntc.org website within the next few days following the webinar. Also, during this webinar, we will be chatting out a evaluation link to you all, so you have it handy. We really do appreciate and welcome your feedback. It's extremely important to us and has enabled us to make so many quality improvements in our work based on your comments. So please take a moment to open the evaluation link that gets chatted out. And also remember, in order to obtain a certificate of completion, you must be logged in to the rhntc.org when you complete the evaluation. This presentation was supported by the Office of Population Affairs, and its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not represent the official views of OPA, OWH, or HHS.

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Learning Objectives




By the end of the webinar, participants will be able to:

1. Define the three elements of digital storytelling
2. Understand the four C's of simple structure
3. Compose a first-person story related to their TPP program

Aisha Moore: All right, so now we're going on to the learning objectives. And some of you may have come to the previous webinars we've had on communications. We had one on social media earlier in the year. And so, this one sort of ties into that, because you have to figure out what content to put on social media, and stories are a great thing. So by the end of this webinar, you're going to learn the three elements of digital storytelling, you'll understand the four Cs of simple structure, and you'll be able to actually compose a first-person story related to your TPP program. So we will be putting things into action today.

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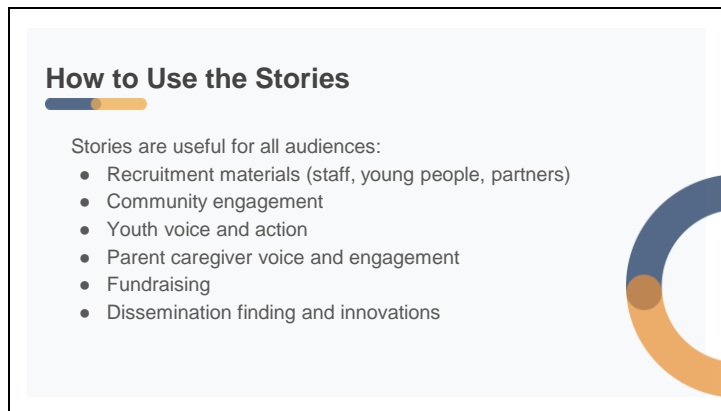
Why Storytelling for TPP?

Grantees are required to have a communication strategy and conduct activities and create materials that:

- Raise awareness of optimal health and the issue of teen pregnancy and STIs
- Inspire change through sharing lesson learned
- Inform youth, parents/caregivers, and the community about the services/interventions available
- Assist in maintaining an active online presence

Aisha Moore: So why storytelling, right? So grantees are required to have a communication strategy. And in that communication strategy, you're required to raise awareness about optimal health and the issue of teen pregnancy and STIs, inspire change and sharing lessons learned, and really inform your whole community, the youth, the parents, caregivers about the services and interventions available, especially for those Tier Ones. And then also, just to maintain an active and online presence.

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How to Use the Stories

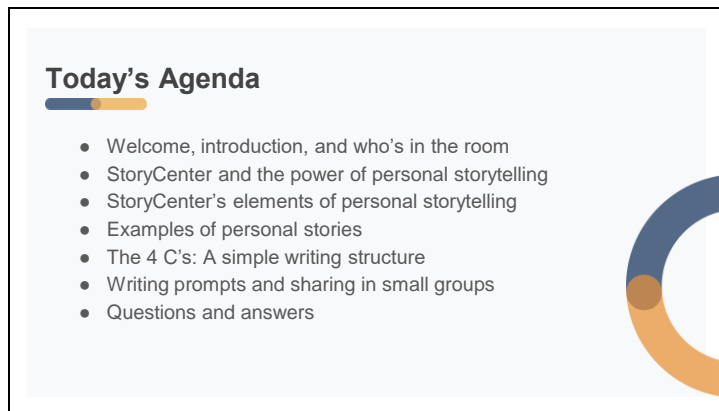
Stories are useful for all audiences:

- Recruitment materials (staff, young people, partners)
- Community engagement
- Youth voice and action
- Parent caregiver voice and engagement
- Fundraising
- Dissemination finding and innovations

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Aisha Moore: So then how can you use these stories that we're going to teach you to use today? You can use it for all of your audiences, right? So you can use some of the stories as part of recruitment materials, community engagement, fundraising, and all of that stuff. So now, I'm going to turn it over to Allison Myers, our presenter from storytelling, and she's going to take us through the rest of this workshop. Allison.

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Today's Agenda

- Welcome, introduction, and who's in the room
- StoryCenter and the power of personal storytelling
- StoryCenter's elements of personal storytelling
- Examples of personal stories
- The 4 C's: A simple writing structure
- Writing prompts and sharing in small groups
- Questions and answers


Allison Meyers: Great, thank you Aisha. So before I cover the agenda, I want to start with a story that I'm going to tell you. So, several years ago, I facilitated a workshop in Northern Kenya and for a week, my colleague and I, who are both white Western women, sat with leaders from eight different indigenous communities in Northern Kenya. And in that group, there were men and women, there were evangelical Christians, there were African spiritualists, there were deeply conservative Muslims, and there were Catholics. And some of the people at the table were fishermen, and some were hunter gatherers, and some were pastoralists. They had sheep and goats and cows. And some were, there were a couple of tribes that were actually historical enemies of each other's communities. In fact, while we were there, we experienced a cattle raid. So they would raid each other's cattle and goats. And we were working in 10 different languages, eight tribal languages, Swahili into English. And all of these people in the room were not people that would normally sit at the same table together, much less listen to each other, but for five days we ate together, we laughed a lot, we cried some, we struggled with new technology, we listened to each other's stories. Some of the stories were about struggles. Some were about wins and triumphs. People told stories about aha moments, learning moments, about their concerns about the future, their concerns for their children, stories about the land and the loss of culture and tradition. And each day my colleague and I invited someone from a different community or spiritual tradition to open or close the day with a prayer, a ceremony, a story, whatever they wished, and the rest of us in the room not only listened, but actively participated. And so, what we call deep listening at StoryCenter. And on the evening before the last day, I don't know if you're familiar with Al-Shabaab, the terrorist group, attacked the only university in the region, which was less than 150 kilometers from where we were all week. And we learned that almost 150 young people had been killed at Garissa University the day before. So everyone in the room, as you can imagine, was stunned, but everybody there knew somebody, one of their kinsmen, or a neighbor, a friend of a friend's child was either at the school or had been killed at the school. And as we sat there really stunned, there's one man that was kind of the elder, is a leader, who was also quite stubborn and was known for being probably one of the most difficult to please people in the program. Stood up at the table and said to the group, "I wish that this week of listening and sharing stories would never end. From this experience that we've had, I know something now that I didn't know before. And that is if more people like us sat at a table like this one and listened deeply to each other's stories, as we have done this week, things like what happened in Garissa wouldn't happen. Stories change

people. I believe this with all of my heart," he said. And I tell you that because I also believe that with all of my heart, that stories change people. So with that, my name is Allison Myers, as Aisha said. I'm from an organization called StoryCenter, which is a nonprofit based in California in the Bay Area. I currently, I live in Portugal, in Lisbon. So I'm calling in from Lisbon today. I have a background in intercultural communication and a lot of international work. And a lot of my work at StoryCenter is in public health, which is part of why I'm here today. But I have the good fortune of having a vocation for the last 15 years where I have traveled around the world, helping people in different communities and organizations learn how to share their stories, their personal stories in impactful and meaningful ways. Ways that bring about healing, community, advocacy, justice, understanding. Stories that educate people about important issues, social issues, health issues, but from a real personal perspective, a real personal way. So you could say, I often like to say that I'm a midwife of stories. So with that, I'm going to cover the agenda, and then I'd like to hear from you all. So we've already done a bit of a welcome and introduction. In a minute, we're going to learn something about who's here with us, who all is here, you guys, and then I'm going to tell you a little bit about StoryCenter, just to kind of ground you in the work and why we do the work that we do, why we think first-person or personal storytelling is really important, especially in the context of what we're talking about today. And then I'll go on to share with you what we call the elements of storytelling. In our curriculum that we've developed, we have the seven elements of digital storytelling. Today, we're not going to be making digital stories, but the first three elements are really about the narrative construction. How do you tell a powerful story? So we're going to cover the first three elements of personal storytelling. And while we do that, I'm going to show you a couple of examples of stories that other people have made in different workshops. And we'll just kind of talk about them a little bit and how they work as examples. And I'm going to ask you for some of your feedback in the chat, some things that you notice about the stories. And then I'm going to give you kind of a format, a simple writing structure that my boss developed called the four Cs. And I think it's a really helpful, easy way to focus stories. And we're going to then try it out. I've got some writing prompts for you all, and going to give you some time to do a little writing. And then we're going to go into some breakout rooms, so that you can share your stories in groups of just three. So don't panic. And then hopefully we'll have some time for questions and answers at the end. So that's what we're going to be doing.

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StoryCenter Background

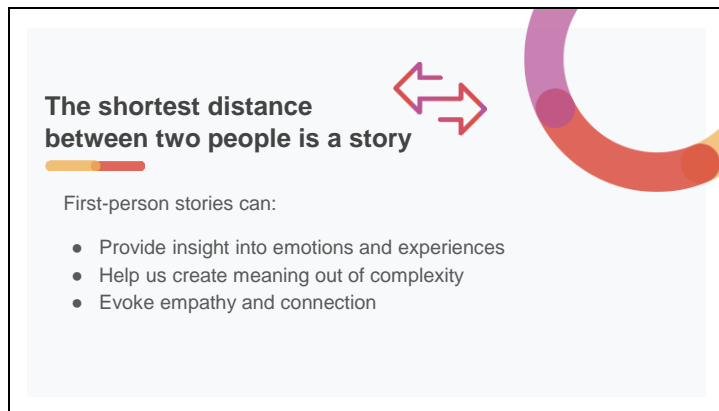
- Developed original digital storytelling methodology in 1993
- Lengthy history of collaborative work with community-based and institutional partners around the world
- Accessible to individuals at all levels of experience as storytellers and video editors (we are skilled at adapting our methods for non-literate and low-literacy groups)



Allison Meyers: Moving along, just a little bit about StoryCenter. So I mentioned that I work for StoryCenter. It's a nonprofit, pretty small, but I think we pack a punch. We've been around for almost 30 years. We were around before there was YouTube, before there was StoryCorps, before storytelling was the super hot buzzword that it is today. Of course, not before storytelling, because that's been around since the beginning of humankind, but we've been around a while. And we work with all kinds of groups. We work with a lot of nonprofits, a lot of community-based organizations, probably like a lot of the organizations that you all represent. We work with government agencies, lots of health and human services, public health departments, NIH, universities, faculty and students. So we work with a lot of different groups and help people tell their first-person stories for lots of different reasons. I mentioned earlier, sometimes to educate people about an issue. For example, we work with a transgender law center. We might work with transgender communities as part of an anti-stigma campaign, and part of the leadership development. They share their stories and then decide how they want to share them and how they want to educate people about the challenges that they face in their community. Or we might work with, I'm working with the Mayo Clinic on a project that's an intervention for refugees with type 2 diabetes. So we help people share their stories, and then help them also often think through how they're going to share them publicly and why. And as I mentioned before, we do a ton of work in the public health sphere. And that's a lot of the work that I do, but usually we work in small groups, and we adapt our methods for the group, whether different tech literacies and alphabetic literacies. Most often the work that we do ends in a media product, like a digital story, which I'll explain a little bit more about, but sometimes it's audio or podcasting. Sometimes it's written text, but storytelling drives all of it. And you can share different components of stories in different forms of media. So why do we do all of this? Why do we think stories matter? So we believe that everybody has a story, or lots of them actually. We don't give people a voice. So often I'll have people come to the workshops and say, oh, I want to help. I want to give voice to the people in my community. And what I say is, we don't give anybody a voice because everybody already has one. What we do are just giving, we're giving them some tools to be able to share their voice, and maybe a platform to be able to share it with more people and to participate in the conversation. So everybody has a story and everybody has a voice. We also believe that people are the experts of their own experiences, the experts of their own stories, right? And they should be able to represent themselves. We don't need to tell other people's stories for them, but we should be able to help them tell their own stories. We also believe that

being listened to, and more specifically, being heard is healing. And it changes us, just like that story I told you that took place in Kenya. And people should have the tools to make thoughtful, ethical media. Lots of media is being made. It's not always thoughtful. It's not always very ethical, but we want people to be able to participate in the big conversations that are happening. So that's why we do the work that we do. People are consumers. We all consume lots of media, but not everybody is creating media, and not everybody is getting a chance to participate in those conversations. And that's why we do what we do at StoryCenter. So we help people tell their own stories in their own voices and represent their own lived experiences. So that's first-person storytelling. Usually, like I said, we work in small groups. We find that there's a real power in sharing your story, first in a small setting, often with strangers, but 8 to 10 people. And there's a real power in being witnessed and to bearing witness to other people's stories. And we take people through a participatory media-making process, like I said, so they're learning the tools. We teach video editing. We teach how to record audio. We teach how to take photos and videos with the tools that you have, like a smartphone, that many people have. But the foundation of all of that is this idea of democracy of voice. And that's why we do what we do.

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**The shortest distance
between two people is a story**

First-person stories can:

- Provide insight into emotions and experiences
- Help us create meaning out of complexity
- Evoke empathy and connection

Allison Meyers: So why stories? So what I love about stories, and I think I may have said this to Aisha and the folks that organized this workshop, I love stories because they don't tell us what we should think. They don't tell us what we should do. And they don't tell us how to feel. Okay? Stories don't offer advice. They're not messages, health messaging, even. Messages are not the same thing as stories. Statements of belief and opinions are also not necessarily stories. So what are stories? So in a story, there are characters. And in this case, we're talking about first-person stories. So at least one character is the storyteller themselves. So there are characters in a story who usually want something, like every character wants something, maybe it's to learn, it's to get better, if they have a health issue, it's to be heard, to understand what's happening to their body, to go on a trip, all kinds of things, to find love, but there's a character that wants something. And something happens to somebody in a story, something or someone, and there's some kind of cause and effect, usually some piece of reflection. So like the story, again, that I told you earlier, stories can change how we relate to each other. They can provide insight and emotions, or sorry, insight into emotions and experiences. They can alter prejudices about things, about people, about communities, about health issues. They help us create meaning out of complexity, right? In a really grounded way. They make some big idea more real when we hear it from somebody, somebody like us, somebody telling it in a first-person voice, in a storytelling sort of tone, right? Stories make different points of views more accessible. People on opposite sides of an issue can often, if they hear a story from a person across the table who's different from them, religious differences, gender differences, socioeconomic differences, but they can hear a story in a different way than facts often, right? And stories evoke empathy and build connection. So that's why we think stories are a great tool for public health as well. They offer insight both into the stories, into the experiences of other people, but also into our own experiences. I believe, actually, I think all of my colleagues believe as well that when you tell stories, it's a part of making sense of your experiences, right? And we tell the stories as part of that process.

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Stories that stand out

- Address universal themes in personal ways, with unique details
- Create intimacy
- Convey a sense of honesty
- Avoid messaging

Allison Meyers: So how can we tell stories in an impactful way? So, first of all, some tips on stories that stand out. They often address universal themes, these big ideas of health, or education, or different political issues, all kinds of things that we might tell a story about, but in a really personal way, with unique details specific to you, or specific to the storyteller, specific to the moment. Stories that stand out create a sense of intimacy with the storyteller. It doesn't feel like, I'll give you an example. Some projects that we've done in different communities in Ghana and Papua New Guinea and Kenya, for example, where we're working with young people who are peer educators in sexual and reproductive health programs. So instead of having the expert educator, public health, the nurse, or the doctor, or the public health provider come and talk about why you should do these things, sharing a story from another, hearing a story from another young person about their own experiences really connects the listeners to that story. Allows them to feel a little bit more intimate, a little bit more connected, and maybe a little bit more willing to ask questions or to share a story of their own, to be more interested in the information around the story, right? So stories that stand out also convey a sense of honesty. They feel really authentic. They feel real. You don't feel like we're being sold something, or told to feel something, or to think something, or to do something, like I said earlier. And I said this before, but I think it bears repeating, stories that stand out avoid messaging. We see a lot of messages, a lot of ads, a lot of things throwing information at us, but stories have a different sort of feel. They give us as an audience, a space to listen, to engage, to make sense of, and then to make our own decisions about what we want to do with the information, right? And they tend to engage us. We've all heard lots of presentations, and often when they use a story to connect the facts, right? They give you all this factual information, but when they share a story, usually what we remember is the story more than all of the data, right? And so, then we can go and find out more about the data or the educational information.

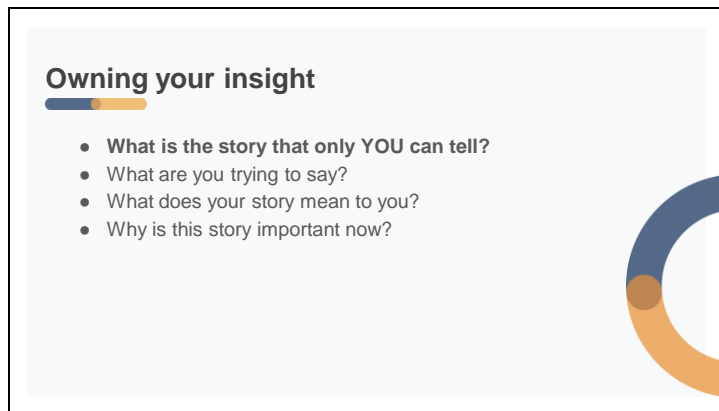
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Three Elements of Personal Storytelling

Owning your insight		Tell a story that only you can tell
Owning your emotion	OR	Let yourself be vulnerable and honest
Finding a moment		Find a moment that illustrates the insight

All right, so the stories that we're going to be talking about today and the stories that we work on with people at StoryCenter are usually, they're pretty short. They're two to maybe four minutes. People, as you know, have a super short attention span. They're not Twitter short, but they're still 350 words or less, like I said, two to four minutes. They're not the whole journey of your life or some epic event, but they're really stories about moments of change, moments of learning something, a shift in perspective, an insight into something new. So I mentioned earlier that I was going to share with you the first three elements of digital storytelling, which are really the elements of personal storytelling. So are owning your insight, owning your emotion, and finding a moment. And the way that I would talk about that is, first of all, when people come to our workshops at StoryCenter, I can't tell you how many times people say, ah, but I don't have a big story. I don't have some epic journey or some huge, deep tragedy. Actually, I just want to tell a story about why I'm a health educator, or about my daughter's adoption, and maybe that's not an important enough story, but all of those stories are important. What's really the most important in telling that is that it's your story, it's your experience, right? Your lived experience. And so, you take a small moment, or a couple of moments, with its unique details and maybe a scene, which I'm going to talk about in a minute, a story that only you can tell, right? So owning your insight. What's the story about? What's the point of the story? Not the moral necessarily, but the point of the story. What is the insight that you, as the storyteller, have come to? But it's also the story that only you can tell. If there were 10 of us that experienced some big event, my story about that is going to be very different than the other nine people if I tell it from my own perspective and I bring to it who I am and describe the scene and all of the things that happened to me, what I want, me as the storyteller.

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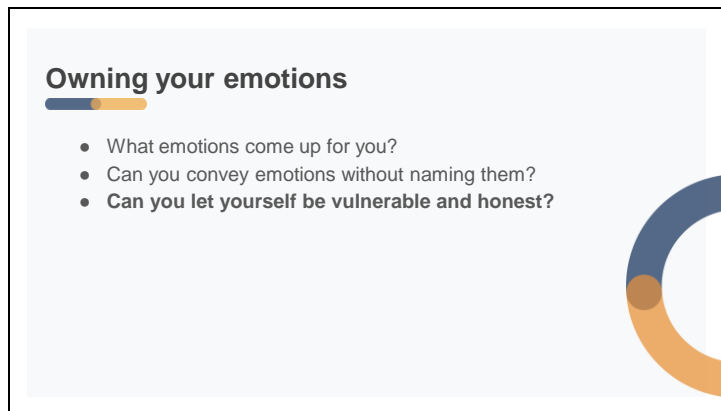


Owing your insight

- What is the story that only YOU can tell?
- What are you trying to say?
- What does your story mean to you?
- Why is this story important now?

Allison Meyers: So what is the insight, is the story about, the story that only you can tell? Owing your emotion. It doesn't mean the stories have to be emotional or sad. A lot of times people say, oh, some of the stories are sad or really deep, but they really, I think what makes 'em feel that way sometimes is that because they feel real, they're authentic. They don't feel super polished, made by some professional communications person. They just feel a little bit vulnerable. They feel honest. It's kind of that difference in, right now, social media is all about showing when you got the job, and when you got the new house, and when you looked great, and when you went on the fancy trip, right? But it doesn't always show when we didn't get the job, or when we got divorced, or when we got cancer, or when we were the bully, right? We don't always show some of those more honest, vulnerable moments that we all have.

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Owing your emotions

- What emotions come up for you?
- Can you convey emotions without naming them?
- **Can you let yourself be vulnerable and honest?**

Allison Meyers: And so, owning your emotion is really just tapping into the emotions in the story, and maybe without naming them, without saying the emotion words. And I'll talk a little bit more about that in a minute.

Finding the moment (of change)

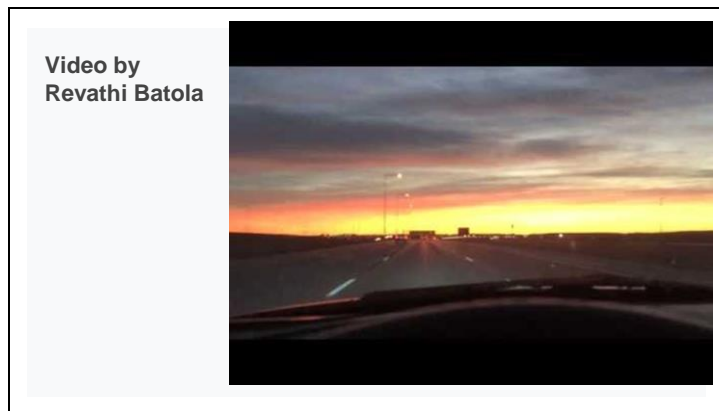
- **SHOW, don't tell:** Find a moment that *illustrates* the insight
- Use your senses—who was there, what was said, what did you see?
- What are the details?
- Did something change? When were you aware of it?
- Write the scene from memory, as if you were there living it again



Allison Meyers: And the third one is really about, we call it finding a moment, but it's really the way that you ground the story. Instead of telling us what the story is about or how you came, the day that I realized that you taking care of my health was important. To tell the story about that moment when it happened, when the phone rang, or when you finally got up off the couch and decided to go for a run, like, how did that happen? So finding a moment that illustrates the insight or the moment of change, right? Because stories take place in a real, they take place in a car, in a conversation, sitting at a table with a friend over coffee, right? So they take place in a real place and time, and something's happening and there are people there, or there are sounds there, using your five senses. Something is going on there. So just kind of, so you tell a story that only you can tell, that's important. You let yourself be vulnerable and honest. And you find a moment. For example, the moment when you knew you were going to be a cancer survivor. The moment when you knew you were no longer a child. Or the moment that you knew that you had made a difference in somebody's life, right? So owning your insights. Again, I think I've been pretty clear about that one. Sometimes we ask people, why are you telling this story now? Why is this story important? Because sometimes something just happened that triggered it. And that's a good way to kind of jump into a story perhaps. But the story that only you can tell is probably the driver of this. What is the story about and why are you the one telling it? And how does that differentiate it? Owning your emotions, again, I think it's about, a lot of the young people that I work with say, it's really about keeping it 100, right? Just being honest and real, and a little bit vulnerable. And finding the moment. I think if, I don't know if we have any communications folks here in the room, but I know in journalism, they talk about this idea of showing, not telling. And I think that's probably one of the most important parts of telling an impactful story is finding these moments that illustrate that insight rather than telling the insight. And I'm going to show you a couple of stories and we'll break it down a little bit, but again, using your senses. Who was there? What was the dialogue? I picked up the phone and I heard her voice on the other end. It broke because she had to tell me, we got your test results. I've got cancer, right? So there's dialogue. There's somebody said this and I did this. Something happened. What are those details? And what changed? Was I aware of that insight in the moment? Or was it 10 years later when something else happened? And then I thought back on how that moment might have prepared me for this one, or, ah, that's what that moment really means, right? Okay, so. Oops, before I show this. So I think just the last couple of tips is, especially for these stories, I think we've all done a lot of writing. We've been writing since we

were in first grade, and we've written reports, and essays, and presentations, and proposals, and all kinds of things. And we learned a certain way of writing. We learned how to state your thesis statement, more or less. This is what I'm going to tell you. And here are the three points that I'm going to make my point or my thesis statement. And then we proceed to break down those three major points, and we talk about them and why, and then our ending paragraph is, now, this is what I've told you. I'm going to sum it up and explain what it all means, okay? Telling stories, you can forget all of that. Don't tell your teachers that, but I'm going to throw all of that out of the window for these, because we don't talk like that. We don't tell stories like that, right? They're much more conversational. They're not preachy. Stories like, this is what happened to me. So think about when you're writing your story, tell it in a more conversational tone, as if you were having coffee with a colleague, or your daughter, or your boss, and you might change, the tone might change a little bit. Some of the details might change a little bit if you're telling your daughter as opposed to your grandmother. But we often tell stories in short sentences, not using the long, complex phrases, pulling out our biggest, best vocabulary. We just talk like real people. And so, I'm going to encourage you to shift your writing style and just talk like a real person.

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Allison Meyers: Okay, so I've talked a lot now. So I'm going to show you a story. This story is, I think the actual story itself is about two minutes and 10 seconds. So it's about 250 words or less. I would argue that it packs a lot in the story. She only used three images. So we're not focusing on a lot of fancy video, or art, or animation, or anything like that. The narrative really drives this story. It's told by a young woman from India who came to the US for a year-long educational program. And she lived with a host family and attended a community college. And they were asked to write a story about that experience. If you think about all the stories you could write about a life-changing international educational study abroad experience, but a moment or story about how that experience changed you or impacted you. And this is the story. So as you watch it, I would love for you to be thinking about those elements that we just talked about. The insight, what is the insight of this story, right? And how did the storyteller, how did Revathi convey that insight? What's the story about? And owning the emotions. So the emotions in the story, what emotions is she conveying? What emotions does it make you feel? And how does she do that? Does she use emotion words, or does she actually tell a story that helps us feel that? And then the third one is thinking about the moments that she uses to tell the story. The scenes that she uses, the moments that illustrate that insight or show that change. And then I'm going to ask you after we watch it, if you just respond in the chat, anything you like. Things you liked about the story, or didn't like about the story, that's fine, too. Things you noticed, any responses, but also, particularly in light of insight, emotion and moments. Okay? So let's watch.

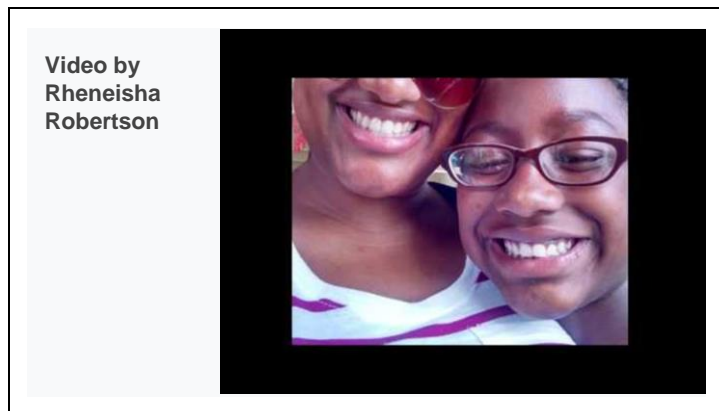
Revathi Batola (<https://youtu.be/e5ofXkjGuTI>): I was tired, but excited to meet my host family. I recognized the face before I saw the sign with my name on it. We talked on the drive to her house. She asked about my journey. I learned this was her first time to host girls. "How is it to have strangers in your house each year? "How can you trust us?" I asked. "I read your bio and you must be special "if you were selected to come here." She asked about my family and how they felt about me being here. I told her about my mom passing away six years ago, how my father was dealing with his depression after losing her, and how my sister and I started working at an early age, since my dad lost his job because of his drinking problem. Despite all of this, my family was beyond happy to see me in this program. I was surprised that I had poured out so much of myself in the first 30 minutes of meeting her. Something about her trusting me from just reading my bio made me want to trust her, too. My host dad waited by the door and welcomed

me with open arms. We continued our conversation over dinner. He also listened like he was really interested in me. Then it was time to shower and go to bed. I had already undressed when I realized I had forgotten a towel. I stood in the bathroom trying to decide what to do. I'm really modest. I was hesitant to call out to her, but the bigger issue was, what should I call her? I stood there for what seemed like a long time. Finally, I called out. "Mom!" hoping she could hear me down the long hallway. I was amazed at what I had just said. I hadn't used that word for a long time. My host mom came immediately, asking what I needed. That's exactly what my mom would have done.

Allison Myers: Okay. So I would love to hear from you guys in the chat, any things that you noticed, things that you liked, things that stood out to you? Yeah. She shared feelings of loss and gain, yeah. There's multiple emotions in the story. So the mention of trusting, yeah. Let's see, what else did somebody say? The mention of her dad's passing came as a shock. Okay. What do you think the story is about? What is the insight? What is the story about? There's no right or wrong answer to it. I think there are multiple ways to interpret it, which is why stories can be super engaging, right? We all bring to stories our own experiences. And so, we might interpret them in different ways. Yeah, her vulnerability actually made her feel strong. That's a great insight. Great way to see that. Stories about the, somebody said, the innate human bond, human mother-daughter bond, trust and bond. A story about finding a new mom or a family. Story about connection. The universality of vulnerability. Yeah, she never says, this is a story about the day I learned that people are just people everywhere, no matter the culture, no matter the food, no matter the language, and that we can connect, and that we can find family anywhere. This is the day that I realized that. That that would be such a, that wouldn't even be a story. That's really kind of lame, right? She actually told a story that made us feel something. Now, I'm pretty sure that no other person who's gone on an international exchange experience, I'm pretty sure that this is not the story of how life-changing and impacting an experience like that is, right? But this is really a powerful one. And this is hers. The day she connected, the day she knew that she really trusted a stranger, or that she had found a mom, as somebody said, or that you can find family with people that you wouldn't expect, right? So there's a lot of different ways. It could be a story about surprising yourself, right? But she never tells us, because we are smart. Your audiences are smart. You don't need to hammer home the points to them, and sum it up in that last little paragraph, like we learned to do in school, right? If you tell a compelling story, people will get it and they'll be more engaged, right? Absolutely, she showed instead of told us. So all of those things, right? So I'll just kind of break it down a little bit. She could have started with, and probably in her first draft, would've been something like this. I've always wanted to go to the US and study abroad, but it was a total dream for me. My family could never afford it. And then it was really hard to get a visa. And I did all these things, and blah, blah, blah. And then I got on a plane after I got my acceptance letter. And then I went there. And then I met my host mom. We tell all this stuff at the beginning that's really not necessary. And she also doesn't tell us, I'm going to tell you the story about how important an exchange program is, or how people are just people anywhere. She says, she starts with, I was tired, but I recognized her face before I saw my name with a sign on it. Okay, wait, what? Who's her? Where is she? What sign? What's going on here? Where is she going? Who is that, right? So she hooks us, right? She catches us. She starts right in the middle of a moment, because there's not time to give all that other stuff. And it's really not necessary for us, because that's not what she's going to tell. She's try to get to the part about how she knew that she had really connected with a total stranger, right? So she jumps into a moment, and excuse me, and there are lots of emotions in it, right? I'm sure she's tired and jet lagged and nervous, and she even asks something like, how do you trust having a stranger in your home, right? And so, what's implied is there's a little bit of nerves on her end, too. And so, she has really these two moments and she describes them. So she's in the car. They're driving home. And she has the scene that looks like a sunset driving

down the road. And you're listening to her tell the story. And she sets it in this moment of these two people sitting in a car, having a conversation, but she doesn't tell us just, like how tired she was, or that there was yucky food on the plane. She picks the details that are setting up the story, right? She says, yeah, I was really surprised at myself. I just started pouring out all of these details from my life. I told her about how my mom passed away, and how my dad lost his job because of his drinking problem, and how my sister and I had to start working at an early age, right? So she tells these things. So she's setting up something. And then she's like, I'm surprised that I just trusted her with all of this information. And there's a little bit of banter. Oh, well, you must be special. And then there's the second moment. There's a little bit of dinner and some conversation with the dad, but then there's the second moment where she's in the bathroom. She's taken off all her clothes. She's tired. She's a world away. She's never been away from home. She's standing there naked in a stranger's house. And she's like, oh my God, I don't have a towel. What am I going to do, right? But she says, but that actually wasn't the biggest issue of, what was I going to do? It was, what was I going to call her? That's what she's thinking about in that moment. What am I going to call her? And she says, I stood there for what felt like a long time. And then I called out, "Mom!" And I was surprised at myself. And she pauses. I hadn't used that word for a long time. And so, we know that's important, that she just used that word. That's the pivotal moment, the moment of change, right? But she doesn't tell us that. I hadn't used that word for a long time. And then she pauses again and she says, she came running down the hallway, brought me a towel. And then she says, that's exactly what my mom would've done. Okay? Somebody said, I just saw in the chat, that moment gave somebody anxiety. Yeah, I mean, it would give you anxiety, right? And you can hear her kind of, she kind of laughs a little bit like, oh my God, I'm really modest. What am I going to do? But that's the moment, because I asked her later, I said, so, she said, I want to tell a story about how special, like probably one of the biggest thing was my connection with my host mom. And that relationship for me was really big. And I was like, well, how did you know that that was important? And when did you know? If you can ground it, not just 'cause she's super nice and she is really special and open and all these things. That's not a story. She says, oh, I know exactly when it was. It's this weird little moment on the first night when I was standing naked in the bathroom and I didn't know what to call her, right? But that first moment sets up the last moment, that context. If we don't know that she's lost her mom, then that story is just a weird little story. It's like, okay. But so what? But we need this other information to make the connection that, oh, she used the word mom and she hasn't had a mom for a long time. And so, that must mean she felt comfortable enough to call this woman mom, right? So then the story makes a lot of sense, right? So she's used these two moments to show the insight, right? And there's emotion. I've shown that story at least 1,000 times. I helped this young woman create that story, but it still brings up a lot of emotion for me every time. And I don't have that exact same experience. And I imagine that most of you don't either, but we've all felt vulnerable. Like somebody said here, yeah, it felt a little, we've all felt anxious. We've all been in a moment where we didn't know what to do and we felt exposed in some way. We've all been surprised at something that we said or did that turned out to be pretty amazing in the end, right? So we can connect to the story, even though we don't have the same experience. All right, so I think I've maybe talked that one to death, but you can see there's a lot of power in a simple story like that. Okay, so let's watch another one. Oops. Oh, and somebody did ask, why is it called "Two"? I would guess that it's because, like two moms, right? I think that's pretty much why, two moms.

Slide 14




So this next story is more connected to the topic at hand. I showed that first one because it's a great, just a really nice story structure. And I thought it would be easy to break down those elements for you. This story does that as well. This is a public health story from a project in New Orleans. So I'll just leave it at that. And then I'd like you to do the same thing, pay attention to the narrative, the way that the storyteller tells the story, the way that she uses moments, the way that she gets at emotions, or what emotions you feel, and what is the insight of the story, or how is it the story that only she can tell? What does the story mean? And just general responses. But I'd love to hear from you guys afterwards.

Rheneisha Robertson (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RrqBgyT6POs&feature=youtu.be>): We squeezed in tight and hit the road for the long drive. So much excitement in the air. It was our first family vacation to the magical world of Disney. We all caravanned together, first, second, even third cousins. Wedged in the backseat, I felt the butterflies of anticipating my first rollercoaster, but the butterflies turned into weird, sharp pains that I'd never felt before. I felt dizzy and nauseous. What's going on with me? I was too afraid to say anything or ask any questions. I was the shy, quiet one, sometimes awkward. I hoped I wasn't getting a migraine, or the flu, or even worse. I didn't want to stay in the hotel while everyone else had fun. I was getting scared and the discomfort was growing. The pain got worse, excruciating, even. At a rest stop, I ran to the restroom. "What's wrong with you?" "Aren't you excited?" "You're such a weirdo," my cousins laughed. Brown spot in my underwear. Oh God, what's going on? What's wrong with me? This can't be my period? That's supposed to be a red spot, right? At least that's what they said in, "Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret". I'm not ready to die. I'm only 12. At the hotel, more brown spots. Two days of this and no change. I built up the courage to tell my grandmother. "Silly girl, it's just your period. We'll go to the store." That was it. No dramatic death and no real explanation or tender moment. I still had a lot of questions. No one had prepared me for what was happening to my body. What could have been a special moment was just the beginning of the shame, of not understanding my own body. That moment shaped me for this one. "Mom, what's this brown spot in my underpants? I don't feel so well. And these butterflies in my tummy, what's wrong with me?" "My sweet girl, remember, we talked about this a year ago when your body began to change." "I'm scared. I think I know what's going on, but am I going to be okay?" "Baby girl, you're going to be just fine. Ask me anything. If I don't have

the answer, we'll figure it out together. This is your magical moment. Let's celebrate the young woman you're becoming. And I'm right here."

Allison Myers: All right, so I'd love to see your responses in the chat. Comments or things you liked or didn't like about that story, the emotions, the narrative structure, all of that. I'd love to hear from you guys. So this Rheneisha is obviously a mom, but she's also a public health educator. So you could see how a story like this could fit very well in a lot of the work that you guys do. Aisha, yeah, it does. I mean, it's so real, right? There are a lot of emotions in it. There's a lot of vulnerability, both her as the storyteller from her own childhood experience, and then how she uses that to make a teachable moment for her daughter, right? Somebody said strength and vulnerability. Absolutely. She uses her own pain to guide her to be supportive of her own daughter. Absolutely. Yeah. Anything else? Other comments, other responses? Simple. I mean, this one's a little bit longer, maybe three minutes and 40 seconds without the fade in and out, beginning and end, but still, probably about 350 words or less. Yeah, so both of these stories are good examples of jumping into a scene of a moment, right? There's not a lot of expository writing or a lot of background information that's not necessary to the moment. So all the details that are here really matter. Somebody said, I see somebody said, it seems like there's two endings. Yeah, you could say that. I think she does do, I like her transition to, that moment prepared me for this one, because I think she's using that to give a lot of information without it sounding super like, here's what a period is and here are the sign. Here's what you should look out for, so that it's not a story, right? It's a really wonderful story, I think. Let's see. I'm just trying to check out the chat. Reparenting, changing the cycle aspect. Yeah. I mean, I think there's that trust, and I absolutely agree with you, Aubrey. Yeah. Somebody else does too. I think both of these stories, and they're different, and I'm not suggesting that there's one way to tell a story. Every person tells stories differently. Every community tells stories differently. It depends on who your audience is, but you can see that this personal storytelling and this short format can have a lot of impact and can be a really great tool for generating dialogue, to engaging people in discussion. And I know that you all are going to be thinking about how you help other people, help other people tell their stories or collect, elicit the stories. And then you create them in some way. We think it's really important for people to learn how to tell their own stories first. And so, that's part of why we're doing this, where we're going to have you actually do some writing on your own. Let's see, what else was I going to say? Let's see, one of the things that I like, when you jump into the scene, you create an interest because you're not telling people up front what's going to happen. There's a little bit of tension. They don't know where this story's going to go. So they're going to keep listening to the end, and you're going to keep their attention. And the other thing I wanted to say is let the story be a story, right? The story doesn't have to carry the weight of all of the information that you need to convey, all of that data, or all those educational points. It's not going to live in a vacuum. If you share a story, it's going to be in a presentation. It's going to be on a website with the context around it. It'll be at some health fair and you show the story, and then you have some kind of toolkit where you have a discussion afterwards. So the story can serve its own purpose as a point of engagement. And then, then you do the other work of educating, or of generating dialogue, or getting people to share their own stories. So let the story, just don't burden it with a lot of stuff. Then it's no longer a story. It becomes a message, or advice, or boring, right? Sorry to say that, but it can be.



The Four C's Structure

A model of framing a decisive moment as the story

Typically, beginning storytellers work chronologically. But we are all aware of the power of flashbacks in framing a story. Being pulled into a moment of decisive action right from the beginning engages us in such a way that we are more likely to listen. We are held in suspense.

What if you change the order of a story? You jump into the scene of change and *then* give us the background?

StoryCenter uses a template for this kind of shift, call the "Four C's."

Allison Meyers: All right, so now, let's talk about the four Cs, 'cause I think this might be helpful. Again, it's not the only way to do it. It's just, it's a nice construction that we find works for people, especially if you're feeling stuck, like where to start, right? I already pointed out in both of these stories where it worked really well to just jump into the moment. A lot of times we think that stories start at the beginning, and then they end at the end, but that's not always the case. Often stories that are really compelling start in the middle, like think about Revathi's story. It starts when she's at the airport, you might say it's at the beginning, but really it's not. It starts when she's at the airport, but she goes back to give us the information from her life that brought her to that moment, right? So sometimes stories start in the middle. Sometimes they start at the end and they go back, or sometimes they split a moment, right? And so, you can play with the framing of the story. And so, this is a framework to starting right at the beginning or in the middle of the action, in the middle of a decisive moment, as we say, okay? So let me just go.

The Four C's Structure Breakdown

Connect
Imagine an event in your life that was decisive. Imagine starting the story in the middle of that scene, just before a decision was made, or an action taken, and then leaving it hanging. This is the essence of suspense, right?

Context
Now you provide just enough background for us to make sense of why this scene is important. What is going on in your life, or in the life of the story subject, that brought them to that moment?

Change
Return to the original moment, or to a subsequent moment that relates to the first moment—one that shows what changed and how the event led to a shift in direction.

Closure
Give us an exit line for the story—maybe a statement that suggests the new situation and how it is being held, or that you have come to terms with the events, but without summing up or explaining the story.

Allison Meyers: So I'm going to break it down a little bit. And I think I've already kind of addressed each of these things in talking about the stories, but just to go through it one more time. You could almost think of these as four separate paragraphs, or the first one could be a sentence or two, but the connect is that hook. How are you going to get people in? Jump into the story. Don't give a lot of background information. I was tired, but I recognized her face before I saw my name, or the sign with my name on it, right? So she gives us that hook. And then the next paragraph is some context. So she's got to go back and make sense of the story or set up what's going to happen at the end. So kind of creating this, so what? Because if she doesn't give us that context about her mom passing away, her dad drinking, losing his job, then that moment of her calling out, "Mom!" is not as poignant, right? And so, you have to give it enough background, enough context, but choosing the details that are going to set up the story. It might be a great detail, but if it doesn't help tell the story, then leave it out because you've only got about 350 words. The next one is change. So that's the moment where something happens, something shifts, right? I shouted out the word mom, I called, "Mom!" And I hadn't used that word for a long time, right? So that scene, that's the scene of the moment of change, right? And where we see what's happening, where we see the insight, but we aren't told what it is, right? It's shown, not told. It's the difference between taking you on a hike with me, I don't know, Mount Kilimanjaro, we're going to go on the hike, or me coming back and telling you how great it was. It was so awesome. Oh, the scenery. Oh, my legs are tired. Oh, wait till you see my pictures. It's a lot more interesting if you go with me, if you feel what it feels like while I'm there, while I'm taking one more step. And then when I get to the top, if I can take you on the journey, then you're going to connect to my story a lot more than if I just say, yeah, it was really awesome. All these things happened and I learned a lot. And the last one is closure. Get out of the story. We've been taught, we have a tendency to want to explain it at the end, 'cause we just want to make sure that everybody, you see, that's how, that's the moment when, that was really important, that made all the difference, that's how you know. You don't need that. You just say, she came running down the hall and brought me a towel. That's exactly what my mom would've done, right? And then you'd get out. Boom, you're done. And then you let your audience go, wow, okay. Yeah, that's what that means.

Slide 17

Write a story about a moment when...

- You faced a barrier to connecting with a young person/young people
- You knew you were called to do the work you're doing
- You discovered your own strength (or wisdom, determination, etc.)
- You learned from a leadership failure
- You saw a message click for a young person
- You realized that a partnership was successful
- You saw an impact of your work



Slide 18

HERE: Write your own story based on one of the prompts in the last slide (10 minutes)

Your Turn!

BREAKOUTS: Share your story with 3 peers (15 minutes)

The slide features a light blue background with a white rectangular area containing the text. To the right of the text is a decorative graphic consisting of two overlapping curved shapes, one blue and one orange, resembling a stylized 'C' or a partial circle. A small vertical bar with orange and blue segments is positioned between the text and the graphic.

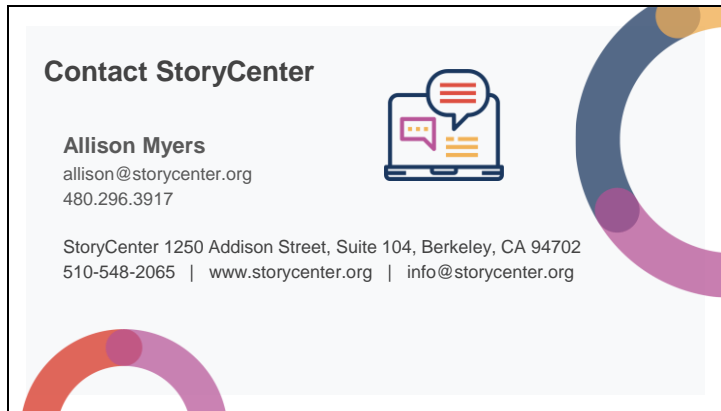
Allison Meyers: So thank you guys for giving that a go. I know it's a little bit scary and that might be why some people are like, check you later. It is scary, but you have to think about this. If you're going to ask other people to tell a story, you have to be willing to do it yourself. So I think this is a good exercise to then think about, and the same kinds of questions if you're helping a young person, or a parent, or somebody tell a story, asking them, what's the story that only you can tell about this? And when did you know that? And what are some, what's an example? Give a moment. What was happening then, right? So if you're helping someone else do it, you would do it kind of in an interview format and asking some of those questions and helping them keep it in their voice, right? So we only have about four or five minutes left. So I did take note of some questions. We maybe have time for one or two questions, but let me say this. I know some people are like, so how the heck are we going to use these kinds of stories? Or how do you do this in a campaign? Or how do we help other people tell stories? So we're going to in the follow up information, send you some links. StoryCenter has some free webinars. They're informational. So it'll be like, story time and public health. And so, we'll share examples of other clients that we've worked with and how they, some of the stories or how they use them. We also have one, Storytelling for Advocacy. We have one for podcasting, and then we also have some links for different case studies, so you can read what other people did that worked with us and see some of the stories. So I'll encourage you to check those out. I think you'll find useful in kind of that next level, thinking about, now, what do we do with these stories? So I think we have maybe time, Aisha, do we have time for a question or should we move to your last slide?

Aisha Moore: And then I'll wrap it up.

Allison Myers: Okay, so I have time for one question. Anybody have a burning question? Or if anybody would like to just, and you're welcome to turn, oh wait, here's a question. Here we go. So how do you combat the need to summarize in the end? We were talking about that during our, when you guys are in the breakout. It's like, we've been doing it for so long. It's hard to stop doing that. So one thing is that you're not going to get this in the first go. So you're going to write a first draft, and then you're going to read through it and you're going to be like, okay, do I really need to sum that up? And if I need to sum it up, then maybe I didn't do such a good job of telling the story, right? So then how can I go back in, where are there some places that I can put some more details in a scene or I can set up that scene, so that the listener understands the

significance? Sometimes you do it, like if it's a recording, if you're doing an audio piece, the pause of your voice, right? And for Revathi, she pauses. And she said, I hadn't used that word for a long time. And so, we know that's an important sentence, right? Because we kind of lean in, like, okay, what's she going to say next? It stands out. And so, then she could take out that last paragraph about, you know, that's the day I discovered, because it really ends well on, that's exactly what my mom would've done. So it really, it comes with practice and it comes with paying attention to the fact that you're doing it, and then where you can take it out, and what you can put in place.

Slide 19

A graphic for a contact slide. It features a light gray background with a white rounded rectangle containing text and an icon. The icon is a laptop with two speech bubbles above it, one red and one purple. To the right of the text is a large, stylized circular graphic composed of overlapping segments in blue, purple, and orange. At the bottom left, there is a smaller version of this circular graphic in red and purple.

Contact StoryCenter






Allison Myers
allison@storycenter.org
480.296.3917

StoryCenter 1250 Addison Street, Suite 104, Berkeley, CA 94702
510-548-2065 | www.storycenter.org | info@storycenter.org

Allison Meyers: All right, I'm going to turn it over to Aisha. Thank you guys for sticking it out. I hope it was useful. Like I said, if you want to look at next steps, let me share my screen, so Aisha can have that. Then check out the links that we're going to share with you.


Slide 20

How to Engage with Us

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Slide 21



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Allison Myers: Great, thank you everybody. And feel free to, if you have questions and you want to email me, you can find me at StoryCenter's website, and I'm happy to, I will follow up, I promise. So I hope you found this useful, and I hope you help people tell their important stories. Thanks guys.