Why & How to Tell Your Science Story
Welcome!

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AGENDA

- Identify Benefits of Storytelling
- Analyze Features of Effective Stories
- Review 4-Step Storytelling Template
- Explore Possible Challenges for Non-Native English Speakers (NNES)
- Brainstorm Implementation
Benefits of Storytelling

Science Needs a Makeover
Science Needs a Makeover

Atif Kukaswadia, PhD
National Postdoctoral Association (NPA)

Core Competencies

PDOs:
Do you use the core competencies to guide your programming?

Postdocs:
Do you use the core competencies to guide your own professional development and goal setting?
If you do, is it useful? If you don’t, why not?
Core Competency III: Communication

Speaking
○ Presenting research to scientific and lay audiences
○ Conference and seminar presentations, including posters and PowerPoint
○ Job interviews and job talks

Teaching and Mentoring

Interpersonal Communication Skills
○ Style, tone, and nonverbal cues
○ Negotiation, e.g., in difficult economic times, formal conversations with PIs/mentors about continued funding of the postdoc position

Special Situations
○ Networking
○ Managing the news media
Features of Storytelling
Turn and Talk

With your neighbor, discuss the features of a successful story.
# Features of Storytelling

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Narrative (Story)</th>
<th>The Discourse (Delivery)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relevance</td>
<td>Organization - beginning, middle, end</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hook</td>
<td>Cohesiveness/Signposting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analogy</td>
<td>Word Choice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to zoom in and out</td>
<td>Intonation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Engagement</td>
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Core Competency III: Communication

Communication is more than preparing and sending a message; it is making every effort to **be sure that the message is heard** and **understood by the appropriate audience**. Postdoctoral scholars **are expected to** demonstrate interpersonal and other communication skills that enable them to **communicate effectively with colleagues at all levels**. They must also **be prepared to communicate with students, media, and society at large**. They need to develop writing, speaking, and listening skills.
4 Steps An Approach to Storytelling
Telling Your Science Story

4 Part Story

❖ Problem (framed as an analogy)
❖ Process
❖ Importance
❖ Solution/Future
Challenges for NNES
Turn and Talk

With a neighbor, brainstorm some communication/storytelling difficulties NNES might have.
Challenges w/ NNES

**Analogies!** - cultural references need to be universal (for them as speaker and for the audience!)

**Discourse** - storytelling in English speaking contexts, transitional phrases, structure

**Pronunciation** - Syllable stress, numbers, thought groups, using strategic emphasis

**Engagement** - Interacting w/ audience, sentence & vocabulary variety, risk taking w/ content

**Dealing with Blunders/Interruptions, etc.** - Extending ideas/going off script (lack of ability), handling questions
## Analogy Examples

<table>
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<th>Research</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Cancer Screenings</td>
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<td>Creating an easy to use, low-cost point-of-care device for HIV, Zika, and HPV detection</td>
<td>Over the Counter Pregnancy Test</td>
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According to the 2017 NPA Institutional Policy Report, roughly 50% of postdocs are considered “international.” This is about 40,000 postdocs.
Definition of Postdoc

“...Is an individual who has received a doctoral degree (or equivalent) and is engaged in a temporary and defined period of mentored advanced training to enhance the professional skills and research independence needed to pursue his or her chosen career path.”

NPA Fact Sheet, February 1, 2016
Cultural & Linguistic Needs for International Scholars 2018 Survey

Distributed through NPA & received 937 responses

91% identified as NNEs and represented 84 different countries, with the highest representation from China (17%) and India (15%)

27.3% of respondents rated themselves lower than a 3 when rating their “Confidence in English communication in professional contexts”
Programming Ideas & Implementation
Programming at Your Institution

Step 1: Brainstorm some ways you could facilitate programming to allow postdocs to begin developing their stories, practice already developed stories, or both.

Step 2: Share your ideas as a small group

Step 3: Share out
Our Suggestions

**First & Foremost:** Remember...storytelling can’t be accomplished in a one-off workshop; stories are developed over longer periods of time.

1. Connect with any English Language Program your institution may have and begin having a conversation w/ them around this OR connect with the TESOL or Education Departments- they may have grad students who need fieldwork practice

1. Identify several postdocs that already have good stories; invite them to share their stories w/ other postdocs and discuss their approach to developing their stories

1. Create a “Telling Your Science/Research Story” Meetup group that meets in casual environments and allows individuals to share their ideas and get feedback; they can “workshop” their analogies, hooks, sequencing, etc.

1. Host a 3-minute thesis competition (3MT)- BUT-remember to build in preparation support
## Meetup Discussion Idea: Analogy Examples

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And...always encourage goal setting around communication

Set one communication goal that you can achieve in the
next week...

next 6 months...

next year.
Thank you!