Storytelling in Healthcare

Amy Hill, StoryCenter
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Presentation Overview

• The Power of *Personal* Stories, in Healthcare
  • Theoretical Perspectives on Story
  • Health Case Study Examples

• Situating Individual Stories in a Social Context
  • “Episodic” versus “Thematic” Stories

• StoryCenter’s “Seven Steps of Digital Storytelling”

• Questions and Discussion
The Power of *Personal* Stories, in Healthcare
Theoretical Perspectives on Story

• Public Health (health literacy; culture-centered approach)
• Psychology (healing; identity formation)
• Neuroscience (mirror neurons and empathy)
• Social Sciences (social learning theory; popular education)
Health Case Study Examples

• **Stories by people living with / affected by hepatitis b**: raising community awareness, building leadership for advocacy, and supporting provider education (Hepatitis B Foundation)
  
  *Read Story*

• **Stories by LGBTQ youth**: educating community mental health providers about their specific needs and concerns (Bay Area Youth Center’s *Our Space* program)
  
  *View Story*
Situating Individual Stories in a Social Context
“Episodic” versus “Thematic” Stories

• **Episodic:** “I have this health challenge because of my biology and/or my personal choices.”

  *Example:* “I have type 2 diabetes because it runs in my family, and I have made poor decisions about what I eat.”

• **Thematic:** “I have this health challenge in part as a result of structural problems in our society.”

  *Example:* “I have type 2 diabetes not only because it runs in my family, but because the beverage industry downplays the health risks of consuming sugary drinks, and I live in a neighborhood lacking access to healthy food shopping choices.”
StoryCenter’s “Seven Steps of Digital Storytelling”
“Seven Steps” of Digital Storytelling

• Owning your insight
• Owning your emotion
• Finding a moment
• Sharing your story
• Seeing your story
• Hearing your story
• Assembling your story
Step One: Owning Your Insight

• What story do you want to share, and why share it now?

• What shift in your own awareness will you convey?

• Why was this experience important to you? How did it move you?

• What makes it a story that only you can tell?

• Who is the story for?
Step Two: Owning Your Emotion

*Emotional Honesty:*

- Demonstrating an awareness of emotions to help your audience connect to the story
- Understanding the emotional information that will best convey the journey of the story
- Developing scenes and descriptions that convey emotional experience without resorting to “feeling words” (i.e. SHOW, don’t TELL)
Step Three: Finding a Moment

- A **moment of change** is the single event that demonstrates the storyteller’s insight.
- A **scene** is the fuller description that wraps around the moment.

**Identifying the Moment of Change:**

- Where is the moment of change, in your story?
- Is there more than one moment from which to choose?
- Which one will best convey the meaning of the story?
- Can you describe the moment in a scene?
Step Four: Sharing Your Story

• Remember you are writing for an audience: the site-specific Health Union community you’re involved with

• Be sure to distinguish between facts (reference them) and your own opinions

• Write with an eye towards leaving out content that may feel uncomfortable to disclose

• Ask for support and feedback, if you feel comfortable doing so
Steps Five-Seven: Seeing, Hearing, and Assembling Your Story

• **Seeing Your Story:**
  How do images support the message/mood/aesthetic that is important to convey in the story? How can images expand on or deepen the content of the script? How do images help establish place and cultural context, in the story?

• **Hearing Your Story:**
  How does the voice recording capture the emotional tenor of the story? How do music and sound effects complement but not overwhelm the voice?

• **Assembling Your Story:**
  How is pacing contributing to the impact of the story? Is the story “breathing” enough? How do images and audio work together?
Questions and Discussion

Amy Hill
510-682-8311
amylenita@storycenter.org