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The Seven Steps of Digital Storytelling: Brief Overview*

Owning Your Insight

- We all have experiences. What do we understand about ourselves and the world, as a result of them? How do we act differently because of them? Write what you know because of what you experienced.
- Ask yourself, “Why this story, why now?”, to gain entrance into the writing.
- What’s the message? Who are you talking to (sometimes it will be one person; sometimes the ‘world’)? What are you trying to convey?

Owning Your Emotions

- Identifying the emotional content of the story may be easy, but addressing it in your script may be difficult to execute.
- Emotional content is what makes stories authentic. The audience will watch and listen to compare their emotional journey to yours. They want to learn more about the journey – the struggle, the celebrations - of change. Connecting through emotional experience is a fundamental aspect of being human.
- Some strategies for accessing emotions:
 - o Tell the story from your heart to the heart of your audience, not from an analytical space. Be careful not to use cliché to express emotions. Be authentic.
 - o Find emotion through evocative moments of the story. What were the most “intense” moments of the story? How were you feeling, and what did these feelings mean? Tap into your vulnerability, to access these feelings as you prepare your script.
 - o To do this, try free writing, pretending you are writing in a diary, or writing a letter to someone.
 - o Question your reactions as you recall the events of the story. Why did you react in a certain way? What happened as a result? Let the audience know these things.
 - o Instead of listing feelings to describe how you felt, just share what happened, so that your audience can have its own emotional response.

Finding a Moment

- Create a scene to bring people deeply into your story, right to the moment.
- Write the way you talk. If in doubt, read your script aloud to yourself and change accordingly.
- Use sensory details to describe the moment – colors, sounds, smells, dialogue, etc.

* Based on Lambert, J., and Hessler, B. *Digital Storytelling: Story Work for Urgent Times*. Digital Diner Press: 2020 (sixth edition). [Purchase your copy on our web site.](#)

- Show, don't tell:

In descriptions of nature, one must seize on small details, grouping them so that when the reader closes his eyes he gets a picture. For instance, you'll have a moonlit night if you write that on the mill dam a piece of glass from a broken bottle glittered like a bright little star, and that the black shadow of a dog or a wolf rolled past like a ball. (playwright Anton Chekhov, in a letter to his brother)

Hearing Your Story

- Honor the gift, the uniqueness of your own individual voice, as you tell/record the story.
- Pay attention to the tone and pacing of how you tell/record the story.
- Consider what sounds other than your voice may add to your story. Will they make your story more engaging? Or situate the story in a particular time, place, or culture?
- Use music to encourage reflection by the audience, or support the story's pacing.
- Music can undermine and detract from the story if it overpowers your voice or contradicts (in lyrics or tone) the feelings and moment(s) you're expressing.

Seeing Your Story

- Images help tell the story: provide visual 'proof', enhance scene, provide visual engagement...
- Engage your audience to make connections between the images and the voiceover.

Assembling Your Story

- Levels of meaning conveyed through the various pieces, how they all work together (voice, images, sound).
- Voice, images, sound can all be thought of as separate layers of the narrative that need to work together to help convey the meaning of the story.
- The creative journey involves making decisions about what each of the layers looks like or sounds like, and how they will work together to accomplish the goal of your piece
- We will help you by providing ideas and options about how all of these pieces will fit together, but the final decisions will be up to yours.

Sharing Your Story

- The process of writing and creating can bring us important new understandings of ourselves and our world. The best stories also tap into our vulnerability. Carefully consider your degree of readiness to share particularly sensitive stories, in the context of the workshop.
- Reflect on the possible implications of your truth-telling on others, as well as on how your individual narrative is situated within larger social/cultural/historical/political contexts.
- When writing and editing, consider what information needs to be in the story, and what information can more effectively be shared as part of an introduction to the story or in information that accompanies the story, for instance in a YouTube description, on a web page, in a policy briefing, etc.
- As you develop your story, you'll need to think about where, when, why, and how you may wish to share it publicly, and make decisions that you feel good about, in terms of what to include and what not to include (in both words and images).