

/How to tell a story

WELCOME! This document is adapted from Jack.org's many resources to train and equip young leaders to take action for mental health across Canada. We're thrilled to be sharing our learnings externally with this resource.

Objectives:

- To understand why stories are important in presentations
- To learn how to craft a personal story with intentionality, as a way to connect with the audience and make main messages come to life

WHY AND HOW TO USE STORIES

Any good presentation will have personal stories woven in that help communicate and emphasize the main messages.

What's the purpose?

- Stories personalize the presentation, increasing connection with an audience.
- They make the content come alive – it becomes real, relatable, and more relevant.
- They present the take-home messages of the talk in a different way.
- Evidence shows storytelling is very effective for captivating audiences and changing attitudes. When audiences hear of something they were wary of before, it becomes less unknown to them and less scary.

CRAFTING A PURPOSEFUL STORY

Which story am I telling?

- Before you think about crafting a narrative, you need to decide what message or key learning you would like to convey.
- What experiences are you comfortable sharing that would help communicate and emphasize this message?
 - Most speakers aim to **inspire action**. Build a story around the impact of the problem you seek to have audiences address – what in your life illustrates this?

Shaping your story

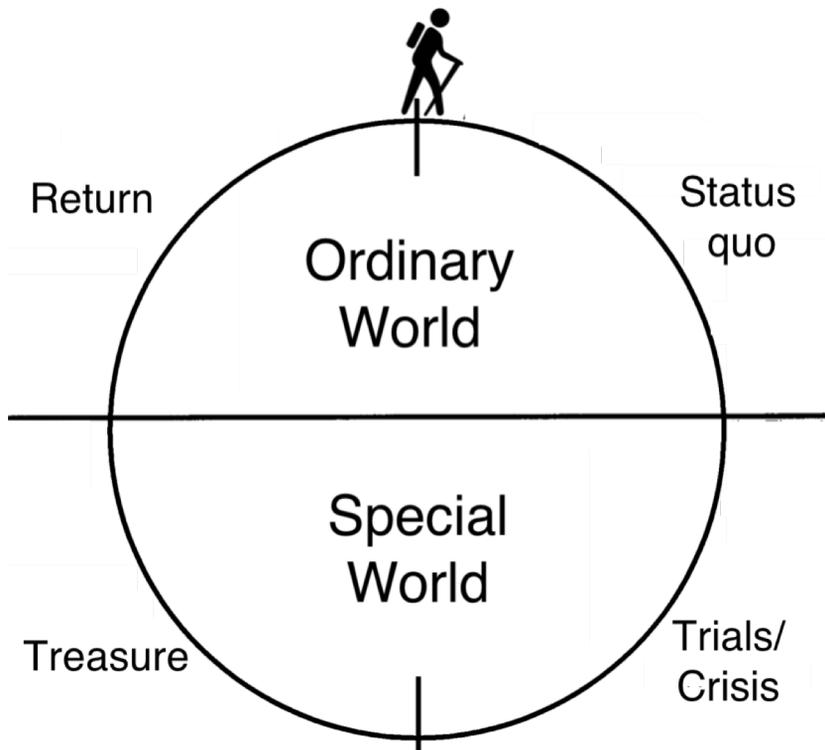
- It sounds simple, but make sure your story has a beginning, middle, and end.
- Start where the status quo for you was challenged (where you or someone you know started to struggle), then describe the impact of not getting needed help for whatever reason, what happened to motivate you to rise above it, and what you learned.
- An excellent model to think about this is that of the “Hero’s Journey” - [HERE](#).



Building a narrative

In a short story like the one you're crafting, key points to build out are:

- **Status quo** - briefly, what were things like (your "ordinary world")
- **Trials/crisis** - what did you see/go through (be vague and safe) and what was the impact of silence, stigma, or other barriers to help?
- **Treasure** - How did it turn around? What was the turning point? How did you come out the other end?
- **Return** - what did you learn? How have things changed? What's your new understanding (what's your new "ordinary world")?



Think about a few key defining moments, and build a narrative around those.

There should be a clear path for the audience to follow – it should center around key learnings or a transformation that's happened in your life and inspire audiences to want to create similar transformations or changes in their communities.

IMPORTANT TIPS

- Speak from the heart!
 - These are your experiences, from your life. Tell stories in a genuine and uplifting way. Generalizing or sounding scripted may come off as insincere.
- Stick to a key point. Add some imagery to engage the audience, just don't overdo it.
 - Zoom in on key moments, turning points, and main messages to convey.
- Keep it real!
 - Speak with your own words in your own voice. Be candid and conversational.
- Avoid jargon or academic language. This is a story, not a lecture.

HOMEWORK - Tell a story!

Think about something you've learned in your life. Something simple. Like, the time you learned that Batman was cooler than Superman. Or that you shouldn't touch the stove when it's on. Now, use the narrative structure covered in this module to craft how you learned that. Record yourself telling the story as you would on a stage to an audience. Watch it back and see if you find the story interesting. Workshop it until it's a story worthy of telling!