

MODULE 5: The Six-Step Process for Creating Brilliant, Emotionally Connecting Stories

CORE CONCEPTS



The Six Steps



MODULE PRACTICE:
The Two-Minute Story



MODULE PRACTICE:
The Story Framework



 **MODULE PRACTICE: The Two-Minute Story**

NOTE: Time for exercise = 20–30 minutes. Do this at a special meeting or retreat-type setting.

- Pick one person.
- Learn about them and jot down as much as you can. (Be specific: Hair color, age, describe them, find out what conflict they have or are experiencing and how they feel about the conflict.)
- Write down the exact results this person or child has experienced do to YOUR organization. (Be specific: Graduated from college, got a job, built a well for clean water, helped pass a law, stayed sober, etc.)
- Make a list of transformations due to your involvement. (Be specific: They feel safe for the first time; they have confidence, or are less shy; they are more energetic, engaged or appear happy.)
- Circle words that are emotionally connecting.
- Put the story into the *Story Framework* form (Worksheet 5.7A & B).
- In teams of two, share the story you drafted, one at a time for two minutes. After each story provide feedback. (Be specific: What moved or inspired you? What did you want to know more of or less of?)
- PRACTICE. PRACTICE. PRACTICE.

 **MODULE PRACTICE: Story Framework**

Using the *Story Framework* form (Worksheet 5.7A & B) in this module, craft a story that's two minutes long or less. Two minutes is about 250-300 words, depending on how fast you talk.

Practice the story often to get it tight and compelling. A kitchen timer or the stopwatch on a cell phone is a great resource in timing your story.

Once you've got your people story crafted we'll use it in Module 6 to combine with your money story.

Your Checklist for Building the Foundation of a Brilliant Story

- Story must be about an actual person using a name, age, and descriptive words so you paint a picture for your listener.**
- Count the number of words that emotionally connect the listener to your work and the person you're speaking about.**
Use a minimum of 5 descriptive words in any story, written or told.
- Eliminate any words that are JARGON.**
(Examples: residential housing, advocacy, rheumatoid arthritis, achievement gap)
- Share up to three specific examples of YOUR work. Be specific about how your staff, program, event, or volunteers make a difference in the life of a real person.**
(Example: After school program to help kids with homework, stay safe, and be surrounded by young adults who listen and help kids learn how to make smart choices)
- When telling the story it must be tight—2 minutes or less.**

The Six-Step Process



Identify one person (only one) who stands out for you as someone who has benefitted from your programs, has been a real success story for your organization, OR could have been a success story if you had more resources.

List names of people you can't get off your mind or who stand out as an excellent example of your programs:

Circle ONE name that you will fill in with more details as you work through the story crafting process.

The Six-Step Process



Learn their first name, age, and describe some characteristics of their personality or how they look.

Age: _____ How they got to us: _____

What they physically looked like: _____

WHY they came to us: _____

What they were experiencing in their life: _____

What they were feeling at the time they arrived: _____

The Six-Step Process



Now you have a list of the exact results and transformations. Go back and note or **ADD** emotionally connecting or descriptive words and phrases.

Underline or circle the words that resonate with you, that cause you to feel something.

A place to call my own	Eyes pooled with tears	Numb
Abandoned	Eyes glimmering with hope	Painfully lonely
Ashamed	Fierce	Passionate
Awkward	Fleeting feelings of _____	Piercing eyes
Bitter	Gentle	Precious
Blessed	Glowing smile	Ravenous
Bright	Gnarly hands	Revitalize
Broken	Healthy	Safe
Bruised	Hunger to be loved	Surrender
Catapult	Hunger to learn	Thrive
Delight	Infectious smile/laugh	Tired eyes
Emotionally bruised	Joy	Uncomfortably shy
Empower	Kind	Uncontrollable sobs
Erupt in anger	Leathery hands/skin	Unrestrained excitement
Even out the odds	Lifeline	Vibrant
Explosive anger	Lost	Weary
Exuberant	Naked fear	Weathered

The Six-Step Process



You now need to practice this. *Often*. List the date and event where you are going to practice telling your story.

Date:

Event:

Hold yourself and staff/board members accountable to practice your story.

The more comfortable you are sharing your story the more effective it becomes.

Story Framework – Part I

Let me tell you about:

(Fill in their name, age, and a few descriptive details about them.)

His/her life was:

(Share specific details about how they felt about their choices, unasked for situation, health issue, etc. You get the idea.) Special note: Stay away from jargon and “grant-writer” speak.

_____ made his/her way to us because:

(Share how the person found you or your programs. Be specific. A helicopter didn’t drop them off. Maybe ten other homeless shelters turned them down or their doctor or landlord referred them to you.)

Story Framework – Part II

Here's how our organization helped:

(Be specific here. As you share examples of your work or the impact your staff has had be sure to choose engaging language and share what the person in your story felt about your support/work/program.)

Because of our work: _____ is now: _____

(What are the exact results AND transformations your main character is experiencing? Remember: even if you are serving the environment or an advocacy organization you are still talking about one person whose life is different because of your work.)

This is just one of thousands of stories I could share with you about how we:

(Explain briefly how you save or change lives.)



NOTE: Count how many “feeling and descriptive” words were used in this story. Do your stories paint a clear picture for your listeners and readers?

Sample Story Application – Arts

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Mrs. Lee is one of our subscribers to our theater series. She’s been a part of our theater family for many years.

Mrs. Lee loves the performing arts and rarely misses one of our shows. She often brings guests with her and makes sure we know that she is spreading the word about our quality performances. We love Mrs. Lee as much as she loves our theater.

2

At the tender age of 9, the first show that the wide-eyed young Amanda saw was a three-hour long production of Camelot. Now at 79, Mrs. Amanda Lee loves to remind me she can still recall the thrilling moment when the orchestra music began and she was swept away to a time long ago to dream about being a queen and living in “Camelot.”

It’s not surprising that Mrs. Lee has become one of our most passionate and regular patrons. Even when money was tight, she was proud to bring her son and daughter, dressed in their one best outfit, to the People’s Theater; and now she delights in opening the eyes of her grandchildren to the magic of live theater.

Even though Mrs. Lee may be tiny in stature and has lost some of the spring in her step, she still has a twinkle in her eye. She makes me smile just to think about her.

I think Mrs. Lee has been feeling a bit lonely since the death of her husband last year. And she’s a bit frail and takes more time getting to her seat in our theater.

What hasn’t changed is her love of our theater. She’s recently told me the joy she gets from attending our performances is better than any rehab or medication.

What Mrs. Lee reminds me is that we are much more than a theater company. For Amanda Lee and her family we are a place where memories are made, dreams are woven, and passion is felt. And frankly, we love Mrs. Lee as much as she loves our theater.

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Sample Story Application – Environmental

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Under my leadership, the Clean Lakes Community started a Living Water Art Program for middle school students. Of the many programs I have been involved with at the Clean Lakes, this is my favorite. We asked students from around the state to create powerful messages through their artwork to convey the importance of protecting and restoring our lake waters. Their work was truly inspiring—and who best to carry that message but our students?

The program not only had a deep and profound impact on the students, but the hundreds of thousands of community members, parents, friends and family that were moved by the messages in their artistry. Their artwork was featured at the State Capitol, where legislators saw firsthand how important river resources protection was to our youth and to our communities.

Helping Clean Lakes Community move closer to its goals to educate and inspire people to conserve, protect, restore and value water has profoundly changed me and I know the people we have reached have been changed as well.

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Close your eyes for just a moment and think about a time when you were a child, it was summer and you and your family may have been at the beach or the shore or the cabin and there was a beautiful lake or river that you played in during your vacation. For those of you who had a childhood memory like mine... do you remember the smells of the summer and the water? Do you remember the laughter and your sandy feet as you ran along the beach? Did you ever think “what if this lake or river weren’t here?” I know I didn’t.

You may open your eyes.

I’d like to paint another picture for you of something that scares me. It’s a picture of a lake that has dark brown water. It’s a lake I can’t imagine ever swimming in or launching my boat into. The rivers that feed the lake have had chemicals dumped into them and the result is a “dead” lake.

Now whenever I drive by the lake it smells awful. It shows no signs of life and is in danger of becoming a toxic pool of liquid. That lake no longer makes me smile and remember my childhood.

What saddens me most is that lakes like this are so common it’s become an epidemic in the U.S. Our lakes, rivers and even our drinking water is at risk at an alarming rate. Once I realized how big the crisis had become I vowed to my children and grandchildren to work to make sure I was protecting our clean water. I vowed to bring awareness to the top of as many people’s minds as I could reach.

While the task is daunting, I believe each of us must take action to do SOMETHING to keep our precious water clean.

My passion has become a part-time volunteer job at Clean Lakes Community. And I’ve watched my promise to my family become a reality. Last year I invited hundreds of school age students to submit a piece of art about the importance of protecting and restoring our lake waters. I organized an exhibit of that art at the state capital. Literally thousands saw that exhibit. I beamed with pride the day I walked through the exhibit and saw so many people thinking about clean water differently.

I was profoundly changed that day at the state capital. I realized the impact one person with passion can have even when the project is daunting. I’m just a tiny cog in the wheel of the Clean Lakes Community, but I love waking people up to a future that is possible because TOGETHER we ARE protecting and restoring our precious water.

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Sample Story Application – Advocacy

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Her name is Molly—Dr. Molly Mooden. And she is our new general practitioner for a 500-mile radius outside my home town of Brookview, OH. Dr. Mooden is now practicing medicine in rural Ohio because Physicians for Rural Communities PAC worked to pass legislation that allows a rural tax credit for physicians who live more than 20 miles outside of the city limits of cities with a population of 35,000 or less.

This legislation is critical to ensuring our rural communities have access to quality health care. Dr. Mooden is smart and is excited to be living a small town life and helping others—something she’s always dreamed of doing.

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As a young girl, Molly Mooden liked to pretend she was a doctor even when others told her she should be a nurse. She often heard the words, “Little girls grow up to be nurses and little boys grow up to be doctors, Molly.”

Those words spurred on a deep desire in Molly to not only be a doctor but to help as many people as she could in communities where it is tough to get to see a doctor.

With scholarships and loans Molly was able to scrape together the money she needed to get through college and then medical school. Often tired and feeling as if her dream would never become reality, Molly had a single focus for nearly 10 years. To be the very best doctor possible. And then land that “dream” job in a rural community where she could make a difference giving medical care to her neighbors.

In her first year of medical school Molly learned about a new bill that was up for a vote in the state legislature sponsored by us, the Physicians for Rural Communities PAC. The bill was to create a rural tax credit for physicians who live more than 20 miles outside of the city limits of cities with a population of 35,000 or less.

This sort of tax credit of \$5000 each year would make it possible for Molly to handle her student loans and be able to accept the lower salary she might receive working in a small community.

In between long days in class Molly worked long hours to spearhead letter writing campaigns by medical students and school faculty. While it’s not certain that Molly’s work was THE tipping point for the legislation to pass, it certainly helped.

When it was time to look for a “real” job, Dr. Molly Mooden set off on her adventure to move to Brookview, OH. While they already had a small clinic and a local General Practitioner, he was getting ready to retire. Molly’s lifelong dream was to move to a safe, caring community like Brookview.

I’m delighted to report that Molly was hired by the Brookview Medical Clinic. I’m told she brings a breath of fresh air with her new ideas and love of the town. When she first arrived I’ve heard some of the young men in town got strangely ill so they had to go visit the new, pretty, young doctor.

You might think advocacy work is for other people. Molly will tell you differently. When she describes the key to her getting to live out her dream, Molly says: “The rural tax credit was one of the things that allowed me to practice in rural Ohio. Five thousand dollars goes a long way. And I’m proud to have had a hand in getting that bill passed.”

And we are proud of Dr. Molly Mooden!

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