Talking About Science to Lay Audiences

Health Officers Association of California and Brown-Miller Communications
Value of Science

- Neutral, unbiased
- Reliable, constant
- Proven, defendable
- Specific, grounded
- Revealing

Platform for Smart Decisions
Challenges in Talking About Science

- Overwhelmed
- Intimidated
- Confused
- Bored
- Suspicious
What do people need?

• Concrete
• Compelling
• Relatable
• Human
Connects Raw Data & Concepts to Human Experience
STORYTELLING

Converts **Data/Concepts** into digestible format by harnessing **Emotion** & capturing **Attention**.
STORYTELLING

CAN MAKE:

• Talking Points Capture Attention
• An Influencer Take Action
• An Infographic Digestible
• A Reporter Care
• A Press Release Connect
The State of the Union
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Science</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Averages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Material Changes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cool, Distant View</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From Nowhere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raw Data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literal, Exact</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Facts: 1 in 3 minors in our county miss dinner nightly. CalFresh requires 49% more funding to eliminate child hunger.

No Point of View.

Only Provides Raw Data.

Very literal. Does not open the discussion for future action.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Science</th>
<th>Stories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Averages</td>
<td>Individuals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Material Changes</td>
<td>Motives for Change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cool, Distant View From Nowhere</td>
<td>Point of View</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raw Data</td>
<td>Context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literal, Exact</td>
<td>Open-Ended, Metaphorical</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Stories:** 1 in 3 minors in our county miss dinner nightly. CalFresh requires 49% more funding to eliminate child hunger.

**POV**
Let me tell you about my friend’s son, Juan. He misses dinner each night and his grades are worsening, meaning he may not fulfill his dream of going to college.

Nevertheless, Juan is hopeful. Local advocates are calling for more resources for food aide.

**Motive**
Will you help Juan and our friends at Stop Hunger, Inc. by asking your supervisor to prioritize CalFresh?

**Provides Context.**

**Offers Future Action by Remaining Open-Ended.**
5 Steps to Telling a Compelling Health Story
Step 1

Identify Your Audience
TYPES OF AUDIENCES

- General Public
- Media
- Decision-makers
- Interest Groups
- Demographic Groups
Research Their Needs & Interests
ASK MORE QUESTIONS
• Why do they care?

• Who influences them?

• What are their preconceived notions?
MASLOW’S HIERARCHY OF NEEDS:

• Food & Shelter
• Safety
• Social Acceptance
• Self-Esteem
• Self-Fulfillment
FOR EXAMPLE:

- Knowledge
- Profit
- Health
- Influence
- Entertainment
- Personal Growth
- Specific Material Interests
Construct

A Suitable Narrative
Have Each Audience Member **Feel** They Are The Star of Your Story Using the 5-Act Dramatic Structure and an identifiable character.
Frame Your Story as a **Journey**

1. Setup
2. Conflict
3. Struggle
4. Climax
5. Resolution
Setup: 1 in 3 Children Go Hungry

Conflict: Juan Misses Dinner, Gets Bad Grades, Might Not Go to College

Struggle: Local Advocates Call for More Resources

Resolution: Supervisors Increase Funding, Juan Goes to College, You Made a Difference

Climax: You Call Your County Supervisor
Step 4

Tailor to Your Medium
FORMATTING DECISIONS

- Length: Anecdotes vs. Full Narratives
- Medium: Text? Visuals? Audio?
- Format: Simple vs. Complex
- Aesthetics: Photos vs. Graphics/Charts
POTENTIAL PLATFORMS:

- Email
  - Personal, Variable Length
- Opinion-Editorial, Letter
  - First-Person, Complex
- Social Media Visual or Message
  - Simple, Dramatic, Concise
- Video
  - Emotional, Engaging, Variable Length
- Billboard
  - Simple, Striking
- Radio
  - Complex, Concise, Medium Length
- Press Release
  - Aids a reporter in developing their own story, can follow a modified narrative-journalistic structure similar to a newspaper’s feature stories
POTENTIAL VOICES

• Formal vs. Informal
• Corporate vs. Individual
• First- vs. Second- vs. Third-Person
• A Specific Person vs. a Representative Character
• Organizational Outsider vs. Insider
Adapts the narrative form for use with press releases and op-eds:

1. Anecdote
2. Nutshell Graf (lede)
3. Meat
4. Meat
5. Meat
6. Anecdote
Incorporate Data Visuals To Maximize Impact
Data Storytelling:
The Best of All Worlds
Data Storytelling

• Use Charts or Prominent Data Points
• Use Color, Size & Positioning to Guide Eye
• Keep it Simple, Avoid Clutter
Data Storytelling

- Provide Context
- Use words, images to ease understanding
- Incorporate narrative devices
Data Storytelling Done Right

SOUTH FRESNO
93706
1.02
PARK ACRES
Per 1,000 residents

NORTH FRESNO
93720
4.62
PARK ACRES
Per 1,000 residents

Your ZIP Code shouldn’t predict how long you’ll live – but it does. Because where we live, affects how we live. Staying healthy requires much more than diets and doctors. We need #OneHealthyFresno with better parks for all.
To learn more visit: www.fresnobhc.org
• Call us:
  – We can help
    • Suggest approaches
    • Brainstorm infographics and stories
    • Focus your use of data

Jonathan Bash
Jonathan@brownmillerpr.com
(925) 370-9777