

An Introduction to Public Narrative

Originally adapted from the works of Marshall Ganz of Harvard University
<http://www.hks.harvard.edu/about/faculty-staff-directory/marshall-ganz>
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We welcome your suggestions for improving this guide further for future trainings. We also welcome you to use it and adapt it for your own trainings, subject to the restrictions below.

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**PUBLIC NARRATIVE:
An Introduction**

INTRODUCTION TO PUBLIC NARRATIVE

Creating A Public Narrative

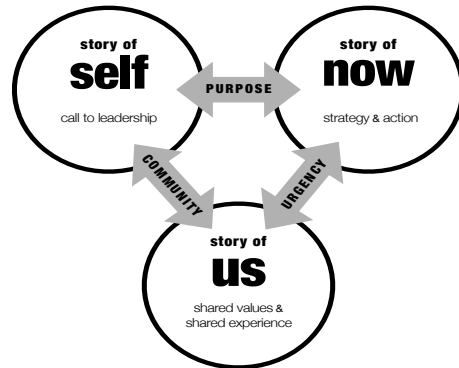
Goals for this session:

- Learn WHY Public Narrative is an essential leadership skill
- Learn HOW Public Narrative works: values, emotion & story structure
- Learn WHAT practicing, coaching, and receiving coaching in public narrative is.

If I am not for myself, who will be for me?
When I am only for myself, what am I?
If not now, when?

- Hillel, 1st century Jerusalem sage

Crafting a complete public narrative is a way to connect three core elements of leadership practice: story (why we must act now, heart), strategy (how we can act now, head), and action (what we must do to act now, hands). As Rabbi Hillel's powerful words suggest, to stand for yourself is a first but insufficient step. You must also construct the community with whom you stand, and move that community to act together now. To combine stories of self, us and now, find common threads in values that call you to your mission, values shared by your community, and challenges to those values that demand action now. You may want to begin with a Story of Now, working backward through the Story of the Us with whom you are working to the Story of Self in which your calling is grounded.



Public Narrative

Public narrative as a practice of leadership

Leadership is about accepting responsibility for enabling others to achieve purpose in the face of uncertainty. Narrative is how we learn to access the moral resources to make choices through which we construct our identities – as individuals, as communities, as nations.

Each of us has a compelling story to tell

Each of us has a story to tell that can move others to act. As you learn this skill, you will learn to tell a compelling story of yourself, your constituency, and the need for urgent – and hopeful – action. You will also practice listening, coaching others, and receiving coaching.

Learning Public Narrative

We are all natural storytellers. We are “hard wired” for it. Although you may not have learned how to tell stories “explicitly” (their structure, the techniques), you have learned “implicitly” (imitating others, responding to the way others react to you, etc.). In this workshop you will learn tools to make the implicit explicit. We use a four-stage pedagogy: explain, model, practice and debrief. We explain how story works, you observe a model of story telling, you practice your own story, and you debrief your practice with others.

You will learn this practice the way we learn any practice: the way we learn to ride a bike. Whatever we read, watch, or are told about bike riding, sooner or later we have to get on. And the first thing that usually happens is that you fall off. Then, and this is the key moment, you either give up or find the courage to get back up on the bike, knowing you will continue to fall, until, eventually you learn to keep your balance. In this workshop you’ll have the support of your written materials, peers and coaches.

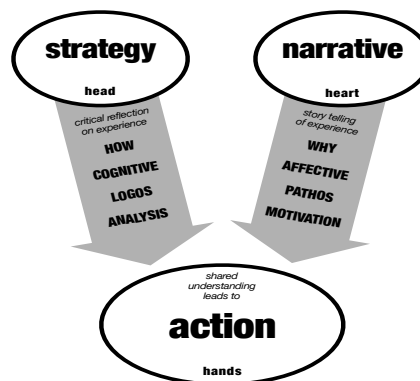
You will also learn to coach others in telling their stories. We are all “fish” so to speak in the “water” of our own stories. We have lived in them all our lives and so we often need others to ask us probing questions, challenge us to explain why, and make connections we may have forgotten about so we can tell our stories in ways others can learn from them.

We all live rich, complex lives with many challenges, choices, and outcomes of both failure and success. We can never tell our whole life story in two minutes. We are learning to tell a two-minute story as the first step in mastering the craft of public narrative. The time limit focuses on getting to the point, offering images rather than lots of words, and choosing choice points strategically.

How Public Narrative Works

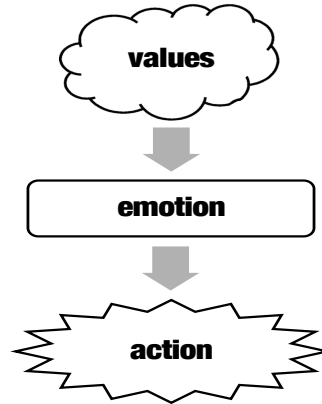
Why Use Public Narrative? Two Ways of Knowing!

Public leadership requires use of the “head” and the “heart” to mobilize others to act (“hands”) effectively on behalf of shared values. We engage people in understanding why they should act – motivation – and how they can act – strategy. Public narrative focuses on the “why” – the art of translating values into action through stories.



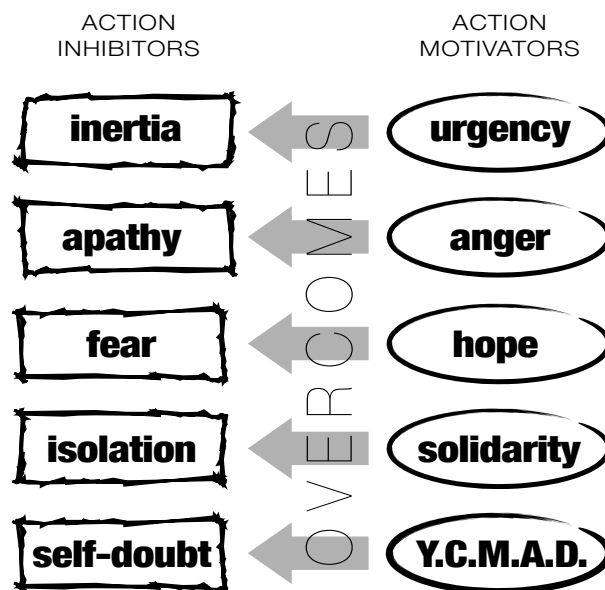
A key to motivation is understanding that values inspire action through emotion.

Emotions inform us of what we value in ourselves, in others, and in the world, and enable us to communicate the content of our values to others. We can use stories to enable others to *feel* what matters, not only to think about what matters. Because stories allow us to express our values not as abstract principles, but as lived experience, they have the power to move others.



Some emotion inhibits mindful action, but other emotion can facilitate it.

Mindful action – or agency – can be inhibited by inertia and apathy, on the one hand, and fear, isolation and self-doubt on the other. And it can be facilitated by urgency and anger, on the one hand, and hope, solidarity, and YCMAD (you can make a difference) on the other. Stories can mobilize emotion enabling agency to overcome emotion inhibiting it.

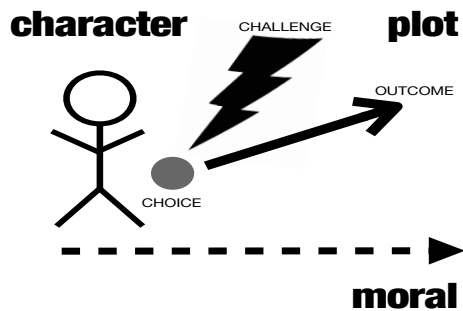


The Three Key Elements of Narrative Structure Challenge – Choice – Outcome

A plot begins with an unexpected challenge that confronts a protagonist in pursuit of a purpose with an urgent need to pay attention, to choose how to respond, how to act, a choice for which s/he is unprepared. The choice yields an outcome that teaches a moral.

Because we can empathetically identify with the character, we can experience the emotional content of the experience, learning the moral with our hearts, not only our heads. We not only hear “about” a person’s courage; we can be inspired by it.

The story of the character, his or her struggle to choose, the values that enabled him or her to act, engages listeners in recalling their own stories of struggles, choices, and action, the values that moved them, offering new insight into their own lives.



Narrative Structure

Public narrative combines a story of self, a story of us, and a story of now.



Public Narrative
A STORY OF SELF, US, AND NOW

A “story of now” communicates an urgent challenge you are calling on your community to join you in acting on now.

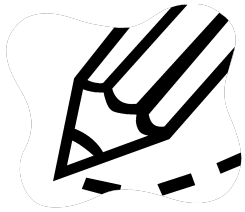
The story of now focuses on a challenge to your community demanding action now, a source of hope, and the choice of a pathway to action you call on others to join you in taking. Story and strategy converge in the story of now.

A “story of us” communicates shared values that anchor your community, values that may be at risk, and may also be sources of hope.

Just as with a story of self, the values of a community are often expressed through stories told of moments in its life: founding moments, moments of crisis, of triumph, disaster, of resilience, of humor. Stories of us are accounts of events involving specific people, moments, events, words, etc.

A “story of self” communicates the values that called you to lead: in this way, in this place, at this time.

Each of us has compelling stories to tell. Although our values are influenced by choices others – parents, friends, teachers – have made, we have made our own choices to shape our own life path: we dealt with challenges as children, found our way to a calling, responded to needs, demands, and gifts of others; confronted leadership challenges in places of worship, schools, communities, work.



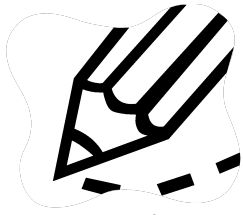
WORKSHEET: DEVELOPING YOUR STORY

What is the change you want to make in the world: your story of now?

Why are you called to make that change: what specific experiences have shaped your story of self?

What personal story can you tell that will help others understand why you want to make that change?

CHALLENGE:	CHOICE:	OUTCOME:



WORKSHEET: INSTRUCTIONS FOR SELF-FACILITATION

When listening to the stories of others, listen and pay attention to how the story resonates within you. During the feedback portion, comment on the following:

Public Narrative #1

What connects with me?	What would I like to know more about?
<i>be specific: choices, feelings/values, images</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• focusing in: what details and moments do you want to hear more about?• bridging parts of the story: what gaps in the story did you want to know about?

Public Narrative #2

What connects with me?	What would I like to know more about?
<i>be specific: choices, feelings/values, images</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• focusing in: what details and moments do you want to hear more about?• bridging parts of the story: what gaps in the story did you want to know about?

Public Narrative #3

What connects with me?	What would I like to know more about?
<i>be specific: choices, feelings/values, images</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• focusing in: what details and moments do you want to hear more about?• bridging parts of the story: what gaps in the story did you want to know about?



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