

16 March 2016



# STORYTELLING HANDBOOK

Hawaii State Department of Health, Emergency Medical Services & Injury Prevention  
System Branch



For more information about this storytelling resource, visit:  
<http://health.hawaii.gov/injuryprevention/story-bank/>

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# Contributors

**A**uthor, Chief Storyteller, and Co-Founder of [Wakingstar](#), Jay Golden is a 15 year veteran of innovative storytelling - from improvisational theater to online music videos to eBooks for the iPad. Jay has trained leaders at organizations such as Facebook, LinkedIn, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to help them develop the powerful everyday stories that can change lives. Jay contributed his expert content for the development of this Storytelling Handbook, as well as various speeches and trainings, to help our group effectively find, shape and share the personal and professional stories of injury prevention or any other area of public health.



**T**his 2016 Storytelling Handbook and storytelling webinar training series (i.e., April 19, April 26, and May 3, 2016) is brought to public health workforce through the sponsorship of Hawai'i State Department of Health, Emergency Medical Services Injury Prevention System Branch (EMSIPSB) in the partnership with the [University of Hawaii, Office of Public Health Studies](#), and the Hawaii Public Health Training Hui.

The [Hawai'i Public Health Training Hui](#) is a group of health professionals in Hawai'i collaborating together to share planning, funds, and sponsorship of key trainings that are focus to offer continuing education opportunities for those engage in Population Health.



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII  
OFFICE of PUBLIC HEALTH STUDIES

**F**ollowing the 2015 [storytelling workshop](#), the [Injury Prevention Advisory Committee](#) (IPAC), and Steering Committee (SC), advised the EMSIPSB to institutionalize this public health core competency training into an ongoing storytelling resource. With contribution from partners, the story bank "Voices of Injury Prevention" aims optimize our impact of elevating the visibility of injury prevention issues in Hawaii.



# Introduction

This Storytelling Handbook is intended to help you find, shape, and share your injury prevention, safety, or wellness story. You can use this self-paced tutorial/ handbook to write your story. The handbook provides tips, techniques, and templates as support to the story you would like to tell. It will take a little bit of reading, some development, testing, and refinement to get it right. Once you develop your story, we hope your intended audiences (i.e., public health leaders, professional funders, co-workers, community members, family, and friends) will benefit from the very valuable asset and resource you contributed.

At a later time, you can choose to contribute your story to the [online Story Bank](#). This Story Bank is an ongoing resource directory and educational bank of inspiring and impactful stories in Hawaii that are used to promote injury prevention, safety, and wellness throughout the life-span and in all areas of safe living. These stories are housed on the Department of Health (DOH), Emergency Medical Services & Injury Prevention System Branch (EMSIPSB) website for ease of access to the public.

# What is a Story?

## Two ways to describe a story:

1. A problem, approached in an interesting way that makes us care.
2. A journey, taking us from one place to another place, where a change happens.

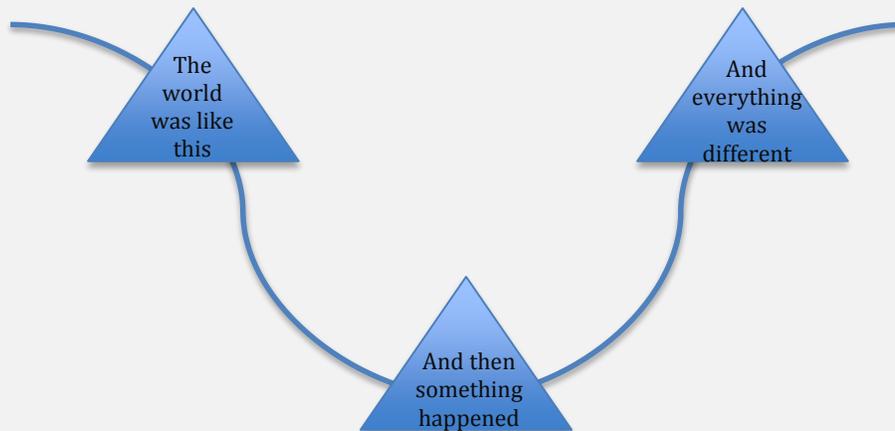
Sometimes, your story is a short journey, depicting what happened today. Sometimes, it is a greater journey, spanning across years, and landing on a turning point in your life, your leadership, or your business. Either way, the journey truly delineates a difference between *Now* and *Then*, with a beginning (**B**), middle (**M**), and end (**E**).

**Figure 1: Diagram of Now and Then**



But a good story, in fact, is not a straight line. It sends us on a journey of discovery and, along the way, a change happens. Something happened. You got through it. You are different. We are different. We see the world with new eyes.

**Figure 2: Line of Discovery**



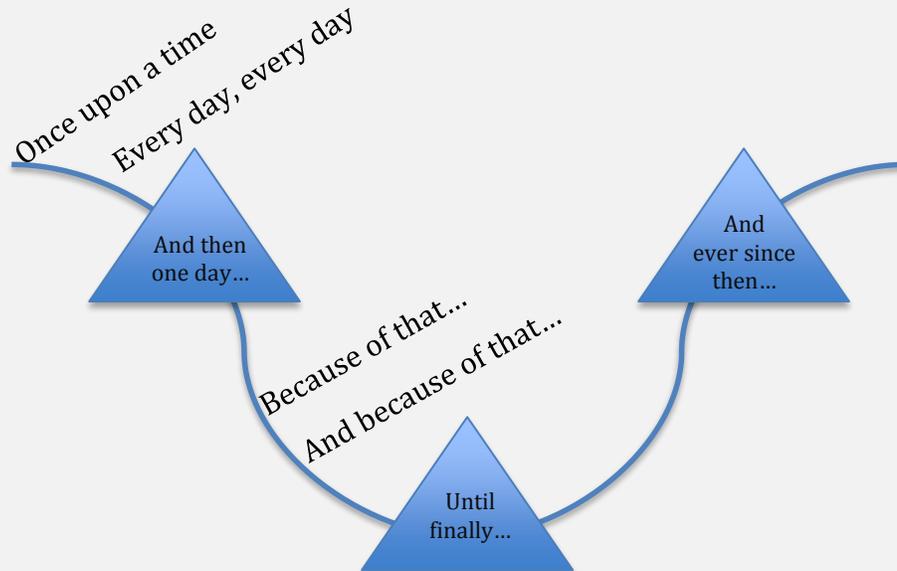
So, the most basic story structure looks like this: The world was like this...and then something happened...until finally! And then, everything was different.

The Journey Curve is a story structure you can use again and again for nearly any story. It overlays frameworks from Joseph Campbell, Kurt Vonnegut, and Pixar, using a seven-point approach:

1. *Once Upon a Time...*
2. *Every Day, Every Day...*
3. *And Then One Day...*
4. *Because of That...*
5. *And Because of That...*
6. *Until Finally!*
7. *And Ever Since Then...*

For more details on each step, see the story template on [page 16](#).

**Figure 3: The Full Journey Curve and Framework**



Once you have a frame to hold your stories, they become much easier to recognize, shape, and retell. It also becomes much easier to find the stories of others. Where's the change? Where's the *ever since then*? Am I stuck in the gulley? Did I reveal the change at the end?

**Please note, your individual story is unique and may not use each of the seven-point approach/ seven steps illustrated by The Journey Curve.** But, I will suggest you practice them once in a while. As you practice them, they'll become more natural, helping you to prep for stories and helping you see where your stories will land as you tell them.



## Why Tell Stories to Support Injury Prevention?

A story has an unparalleled power to inspire and transform. It carries critical insights and lessons, creates profound connection, cultivates alignment across unlike parties, and guides audiences to action they had never even considered.

When it comes to injury prevention, or any other area of public health, you are often surrounded by information. Telling stories is a way to move beyond data and reveal the importance of your mission, inspire community members and stakeholders, and show the world around you, why you do this work.

By some estimation, we take in some 5,000 ads, tweets, messages, emails, commercials, posts, and data points each and every day. And tomorrow, your key audience members will wake up, have a cup of coffee, and all of that will be forgotten, but the stories will be remembered.

Sharing your injury prevention story, or any other health-related story can help your mission resonate with your target audience and further your mission. When you tell your story, funders, media, partners, and those doing research can all benefit.

This is not to suggest you should be more comfortable with narratives than with numbers, rather to know the narratives can carry the numbers. You should be empowered with the skill of delivering meaningful anecdotes that can complement healthy and safety statistics. You can inspire your audiences, have impact, and show a pathway into the vision of the future through a well-crafted story.

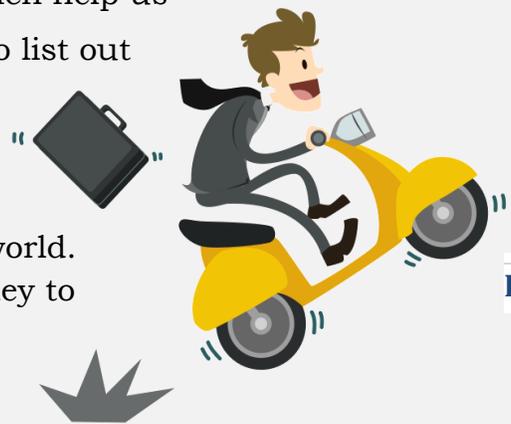
# The Kinds of Stories

There are three main kinds of stories:

1. **Origin Stories**
2. **Impact Stories**
3. **Vision Stories**

**#1: Origin Stories** *depict your beginnings*. They hold your DNA, revealing key moments of insight and early influences, which help us understand who you are today, without having to list out every single hurdle you've ever leapt. They:

- A. Reveal to public health community members, colleagues, partners, and funders, why you do your work in the world.
- B. Show what you've learned on your journey to build well-being and how much you've grown.
- C. Create connection among team members around a common goal.



**#2: Impact Stories** connect your audience to *what you do*. They are the smaller stories that reveal key moments, define your offering, and put a face on the changes you've helped catalyze.

Another word for impact stories is success stories. But, of course, going too quickly to the success can drain the power out of the story. How you set up the journey is essential.



**A well-told impact story can:**

- A.** Remind you and those around you, why you do this work.
- B.** Inform decisions going forward.
- C.** Raise money, help recruit, and promote services.
- D.** Show that your funds have been well-allocated.
- E.** Connect you more deeply with your community.

**#3: Vision Stories** tell the audience *where you're going*. They can draw the audience into the future, rallying their participation in making a great shift that alters their direction. Vision stories also communicate your role in that future and, sometimes, reveal your role in helping make this happen.

Vision stories are, by definition, intended to inspire a change in the way the world works, such as Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech. Vision stories can, sometimes, be origin stories connected to your vision statement: "And that's why, today, our vision is..."

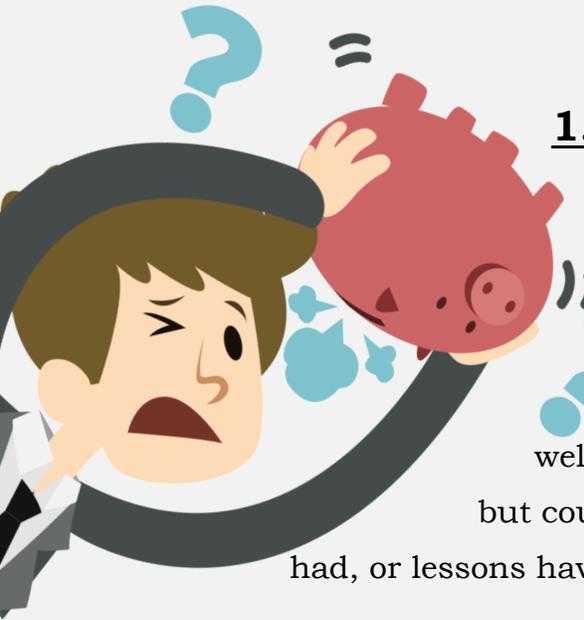
This is important, because your audience or your team may never be able to repeat your vision statement...and if they do, it will sound memorized.

**A well-told vision story can help you:**

- A.** Help your organization navigate changing seas.
- B.** Activate funders to fund you.
- C.** Motivate, inspire, and guide your team.
- D.** Change the future.



# Prepare to Find, Shape, and Share Your Story



## **1. FIND THEM.**

- **Take a few moments to scan your personal and professional life.** What stories do you already tell, that are (or might be) connected to injury prevention, safety, or health and wellness? Which stories are you not quite ready to tell, but could be with some work? What key insights have you had, or lessons have you learned that might, one day, become stories?

**Make a list of five story possibilities, key insights, and lessons learned:**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

### **Examples:**

- a) Not taking the extra precaution to bring my vehicle to come to a complete stop resulted in injuring a dog that unexpectedly dove in front of our tire.
- b) The daughter requested me to conduct a home assessment in her mother's house.

- **What is a challenge you face?** When you know the challenge you're facing – or your audience is facing – you can better look for stories that relate to that challenge. Often, the challenge has two parts: one may be the solution or desire of your audience. The other may be the barrier to that solution or desire.



**What's one challenge you face, (or have faced) that you'd like to include in the story?**

**Examples:**

- a) Prevention extends beyond yourself; consider taking extra precautions in anticipation that other people will act unexpectedly.
- b) Elders can live healthier, longer lives with in-home safety improvements, but they often resist any intervention.
- **Who is your target audience?** Let's be clear about to whom you're speaking and think about what they need. There may, of course, be several different audiences. But for now, focus on one and consider how they see things and what interests them as you prepare your story.

**Target Audience:**

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**Examples:**

- a) Drivers of a motorized vehicle.
- b) Elders and their families, who need home assessments done for safety.

**Prepare to Find, Share and Share Your Story**  
(Continued on next page)



- **What is your main safety, health or prevention message?** What's the one thing you want your audience to remember? It might be something you say over and over again. It might be a lesson you've learned or the center of the work you do.

Don't get hung up in precise language here. Focus on the concept.



**Main Message:**

**Examples:**

- a) In our daily life, sometimes we're late for something; we're rushing. And that's the whole point, not to put your timetable or your convenience ahead of the safety of other people.
- b) Home assessment and modifications can allow for safer mobility through the house and yard.

[Prepare to Find, Share and Share Your Story \(Continued on next page\)](#)

## 2. SHAPE THEM.

**As you begin to shape your story,** go back into the experience and freeze it. **Immerse yourself** in the moment. Treat each key moment that you explore as if it were a wax museum, frozen in time. Bring your curiosity to see what else is there. What do you hear?

**Details, details!** Use those sensory details. The sensory details help us anchor in time and space, making the story into a movie inside the head of your listeners.

**Choose 5 sensory details that support your story:**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

### **Examples:**

- a) The dog didn't make any sound, but we heard the crunch of bones, and we were just shocked.
- b) The mother frowned at me as I walked around the house during my assessment.



## **2. SHAPE THEM, Continued.**

**Use surprise and suspense.** Keep them curious, and they'll ask: And then what happened?

**Travel across time.** Don't get sunk in the details of time passing. To move around in time is part of your asset as a storyteller. You are free to begin in 1962, move to 1982, and then come to today.

**Set your sights on your end line.** This is the last stop on your journey - your last stepping stone. When you're telling a story in front of an audience, it's a good idea to know where you're going to go. This will help you navigate, along the way, with more flexibility and fun.

**What's your end line?**

### **Examples:**

- a) Once something happens, it can never be undone... why not take that extra precaution?
- b) A safe house can become a happy house and allow more independence.



### **3. SHARE THEM.**

**Set a low bar for yourself as you begin.** Success, especially in storytelling, is not a straight line.

**Tell it first.** Write some talking points for your story and practice telling it before writing it out long-form. Call on a friend to let them know you're working on your story skills. Again, low bar! Then, share some stories with them. If in person, you buy the mocha fancy latte.

**To whom will you tell your story before you write it?**

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**Find 5 stories.** Now that you've gotten this far, what 5 candidates for stories do you have? You may find they've changed a bit. Following this process, develop five key stories that you hold in your pocket to tell to various audiences and to land various points. Begin with one, trying it out with your story buddy or friends at dinner. If you wish, come back and share another one in the story bank!

**What are your top five candidates for stories?**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

**Examples:**

- a) The traffic injury.
- b) The day the Japanese elder could bathe safely again.



# Your Story Template

Please note, steps 1 through 7 are intended to be guidelines! If you aren't able to use each of the seven steps, it's just fine! At this stage, use the feedback you received from your friends (i.e., Share Them) to refine your storyline.

## 1. "Once upon a time..."

The first step in a story is to cue in your audience that we're going from here to another place in time. The more modern version of this, of course, is not "Once Upon a Time." It is something like, "Five years ago, when I was thirty." Or, "Last week, I was walking down the street..."

In this, you tell us how the world was. Maybe, your journey began when you were 10 or 20 years of age. Maybe, someone close to you fell ill. Or perhaps, someone came into your office unexpectedly. Perhaps, the story features one of your clients, and so your job is to set up their experience.

Consider a few options for this first moment and try out your best bet. Reveal a few sensory details that anchor us in time and place.

## 2. “Every day...”

Taking us deeper into the way the world was, you can tell us more. What happened there? What was life like? “Every day, a new patient came in with the same respiratory problem.” This will give us a sense of who they were and what they cared about and set us up for the trial ahead – the change that is about to take place.

## 3. “And then one day....”

Maybe it was a lunch meeting. Or a phone call. Or a particular incident. This is where you introduce your problem. The twist that sends us in a different direction. You’re going along, and something happens. Focus in on that moment and reveal what changed.

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**4. “...because of that...”**

What followed? What was the result? How did it impact that person and their team? As you drop into the journey of discovery, a series of things happened. This event led to something else, which led to something else. You met helpers and overcame hurdles. “Because of that, I began to look more deeply into the problem...”

**5. “...and because of that...”**

**6. “...until finally ...”**

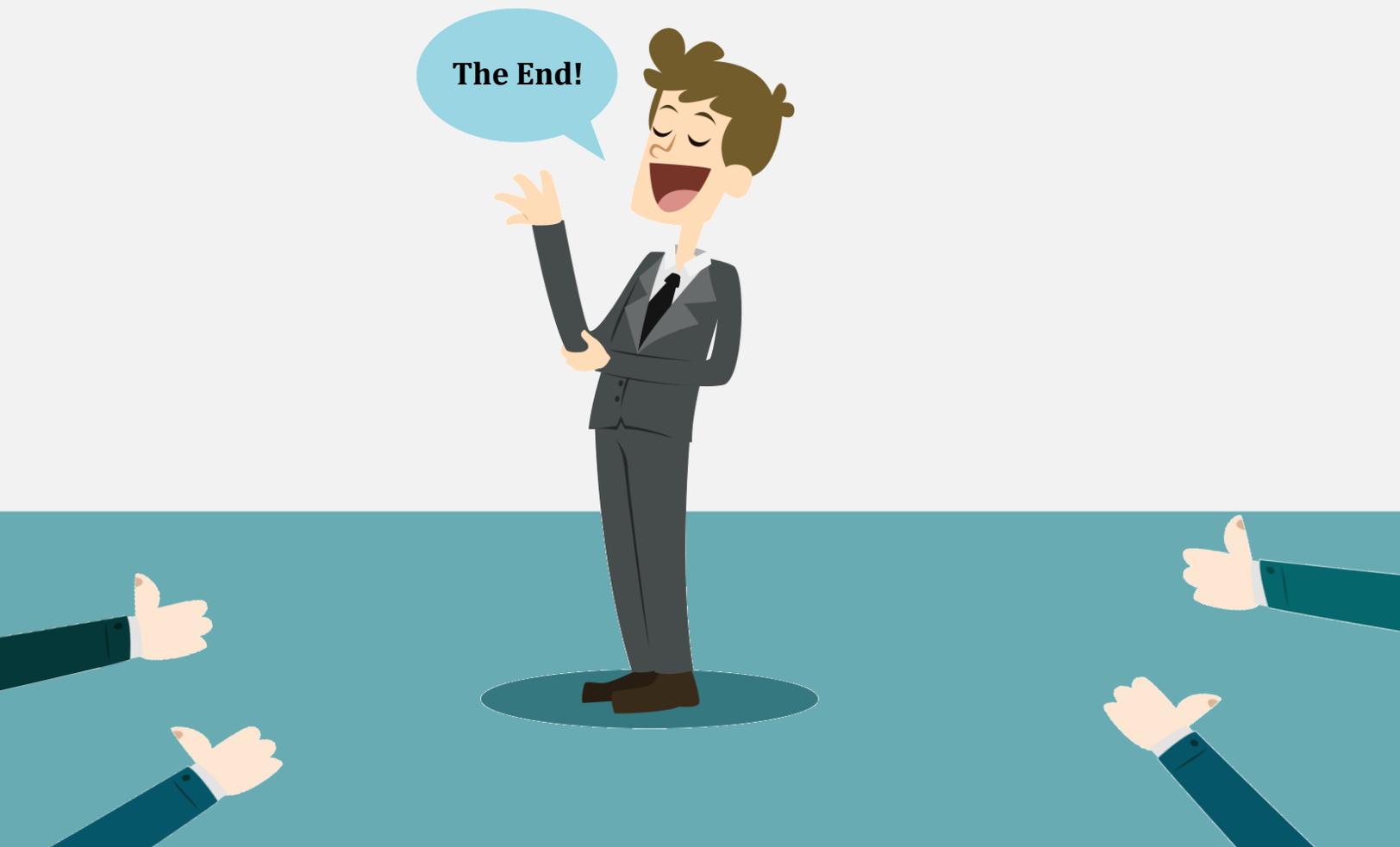
Finally, we’ve reached the place of the shift. It may be preceded by a deep, dark place, the place Joseph Campbell called, “The Innermost Cave.” Change is imminent. This is the place where we see the status quo just won’t work, and a decision is made, which changes the course of the story. It may be a helper who comes or some discovery. “Until finally, we found the solution...” “Until finally, the war ended.” This is the big twist in your story.

## 7. “...and ever since then...”

The world is different now, in some small or great way, either inside of your character or outside the window. Or you finally remember something you had that you needed all along. There may be many similarities to the old way of doing things, but this particular difference, this particular lesson, shifted things.

This may be where you land your message. “That’s why we work every day to...” This is your chance to show us what has changed, how you or your main character see(s) the world differently, why you do the work that you do, or what your organization provides and why.

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# STORY CHECKLIST

Now that you've been working on your stories, here are a few steps to ensure you're on track. Once you reviewed this checklist, bring your final story together on the next page.

<b>Completed</b> 	<b>Workbook Task</b>
	I know what <a href="#">kind of story</a> I want to use: origin, impact, or vision?
	<b>Find Them:</b> I know problem or challenge I want to address.
	<b>Find Them:</b> I know my target audience.
	<b>Find Them:</b> I included my injury prevention, or health message.
	<b>Shape Them:</b> I included five (5) sensory details in the story.
	<b>Shape Them:</b> I included the end line message in the story.
	<b>Share Them:</b> I shared my five (5) key stories with a friend, and made refinements based on feedback.
	<b>Your Story Template:</b> I used several of the seven (7) step Journey Curve guidelines to bring together my story.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I include something that communicates "how the world was" - it may be "<b>Once upon a time...</b>," or "<b>About 5 years ago...</b>," or "<b>Just yesterday...</b>" that cues my audience.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I include something that communicates an "<b>Every day...</b>" that share moments, anchoring your audience in time and space.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I included the "<b>And then one day...</b>," or "<b>until finally...</b>," element to show change.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I have a strong finish that includes "<b>and ever since then...</b>," that lands your message in a memorable way.</li> </ul>

# Bringing Your Story Together

Now that you've completed your story and reviewed the above checklist, it's time to bring the pieces together (i.e., [Your Story Template](#)) as a final version to be written below. Make sure you read your story aloud to ensure it reads and sounds good. Once more, each of the above seven steps listed in (i.e., Your Story Template) is intend to be a guideline. If you aren't able to join each of the seven guided steps, it's just fine!

# Bringing Your Story Together

# Troubleshooting: When a Story Goes Wrong

Sometimes, the journey doesn't seem to get anywhere, like a story that just stays at the bus station. Do you ever hear someone tell a story and just flat out wonder why they're telling it? You wait for the payoff, and wait, and it never seems to happen? In fact, nothing really seems to happen? Or something happens, but you don't feel connected to it?

On the other hand, have you ever heard a story that you immediately wanted to share with another? One that you were so excited about that it changed your thinking on a topic?

This is the case when stories have a high chance of being told more than once. That is, when told together, suspense, sensory details, and change, it's more likely that your story will sink in, and when it sinks in, it's more likely to be shared.



If your story feels disconnected, it may be because of one or more of three reasons:

**1. It is not a story; it is an explanation.**

An explanation doesn't need to convey a yearning. It is information delivery that needs only to convey your key points. A story, however, is about somebody who wants something and can't have it. As they struggle to get what they want, we begin to feel connected to them. An explanation doesn't give us a sense of connection to the story, make us wonder what's going to happen, or feel compelled to go along on a journey. It doesn't cause us to open up or seek the answers, ourselves.

A story makes us ask: "And then what happened?"

**2. You skipped the trial**

Rarely is a good story about simply achieving a goal. A good story is made, because the character paid for it with blood, sweat, tears, sleep, stress, sorrow, and challenge. So, as you review the stories around you, focus in on the change. Once you've identified the change in your story and have honed in on it, consider how you might accentuate it further. Oftentimes, the best way to do this is to go back to the beginning – before the problem you're addressing occurred – and consider how the world was before. What was happening? What did you (or the main character) believe? And then, look at the result of your journey: How did that change?

Maybe, it was your expectation or knowledge of something that changed or the outer world itself. Did you set out on your journey, thinking you had the answer, but found out you were very wrong?

Did someone you despised become your strongest ally? Did you find, simply, "we can't get there from here?" and change course? Did you build a movement of thousands of people, each telling the story in their own way, to move the dial?

Once you know what really changed, zoom into that moment, just as the change is revealed. Freeze time and depict it to the audience with some details in a way the audience can experience in their hearts and minds.

Maybe, the trial seems too heavy or too long, and you don't want to bring your audience into it. But here's the thing: one trial connects to another. So, if your trial is about a near drowning experience, or a job that you loved and lost, or a challenge from your youth that gave you a key insight about what you wanted in the world, it doesn't have to be the same trial as everyone else. It just has to connect us to your why. If we only know what you do and don't know why you do it, we might be intrigued, but we're not going to be inspired. So drop us into the trial, but bring us back up as well.

### **3. You're still stuck in the middle of the story.**

Your character faced the problem, and the problem was real, and it was big, and...well, that's it.

It's very valuable to lend an ear to a friend, to offer our empathy. It is critical as a species. But, people want some way they can plug in, some way out of this trial.

If your story is burdened with a struggle that doesn't seem possible to resolve, you miss an opportunity. Do you ever hear someone tell a story in this manner?

*I was feeling really out of shape. So I started walking a little more and cutting out my afternoon muffin. After two weeks, nothing changed. Then, I stopped walking. And after a month, nothing changed. And still, I feel out of shape!*

This kind of story is sure to make you just a little uncomfortable and leave you nodding. Uh, huh. It's because the journey hasn't been completed. A lesson hasn't been learned, and a change hasn't occurred.

Some ways to see if a story can depict a state of change:

*Did you learn anything?*

*Are you still in that challenge?*

*What's your vision to get out of it?*

If any of these feel real and worthy of being told, they will bring you to an *ever since then*. That depicts the change we need, anchors it in our memories, and best ensures your message will be remembered tomorrow.

# Additional Resources

## [Safe Messaging Checklist for Suicide-related Stories](#)

This checklist focuses on highlighting mindful and safe alternatives to terms or phrases to describe a suicide related story. This resource includes language to **avoid**, along with ways to enhance using the list of **alternatives**.

## [Storytelling: A Journey in Injury Prevention](#)

Explore how the Hawaii State Department of Health (DOH), hosted an interactive storytelling workshop that set the foundation for this storytelling handbook and online story bank.

## [The stories behind the statistics](#)

“Descriptions of the circumstances of injury enhance the value of research findings and lead to better understanding of the injury problem and potential solutions”

## [15 Readymade Storytelling Techniques for Leaders](#)

Tips to help you find, shape, and share your story to a variety of audiences for a variety of purposes.

## [TED Talks Storytelling: 23 Storytelling Techniques](#)

(Book) TED Talks Storytelling: *23 Storytelling Techniques* from the Best TED Talks - Kindle edition by Akash Karia.

## [Strategic Storytelling](#)

This three-page RWJF Connect Policymaker Outreach brief is about using your story to underscore the importance of your policy ask.

## [Storytelling and Social Change: A Strategy Guide for Grant makers](#)

This guide is a project of Working Narratives. Throughout the guide you'll see icons denoting quotes, ideas, and media.

## [The Value of Stories – National Association of County & City Health Officials](#)

NACCHO's Stories from the Field website provides a means for local health departments to share their experiences and demonstrate the value of public health.

### **Hawaii State Disclaimer**

The contents of these stories are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the Hawaii State Department of Health.

### **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Disclaimer**

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### **Contact**

Nicholas L. Hines, M.P.H.  
Nicholas.Hines@Doh.Hawaii.Gov