

Teach Through Your Stories as a Family Advisor

Constructing a Story that Can Teach

The following 4-step framework is one way to approach developing your presentation. It requires that you take time to reflect on your experiences, decide on a particular point you want to make and have a personal story that will help you illustrate it. Writing it down will insure your thoughts are well developed.

Step 1: OUTSIDE

Begin by setting the stage for your listeners. Give some concrete details that help them imagine the scene.

Step 2: INSIDE

Give the listener a sense of what was going on inside of you at the time—emotionally, physically, and mentally.

Step 3: EVENT

Describe the actual experience or conversation. The teachable element will be imbedded in your story. Your listener will hopefully experience it with you.

Step 4: MESSAGE

Now, briefly state the key point you want your audience to take away.

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Getting the Feedback You Need

Great presentations don't just happen. Few of us write a first draft that ends up being our final one. Many people find it helpful if not essential to seek feedback from others while preparing their story.

Why bother getting feedback?

- What's clear to you may not be clear to others
- It's a way to test if you're having the impact you want on your audience.
- What is written out as notes or a script doesn't always translate well when spoken.

When to seek feedback and who to ask:

- Seek feedback along the way to what you have written and/or to how you present.
- Seek feedback while you are still open to changes and before you become too attached.
- Seek feedback from a variety of people — those you respect and trust as well as those who are familiar with your audience.

How to ask for feedback:

When gathering feedback, ask each person to help you by answering the following questions:

- What message did you hear?
- What did you like?
- What suggestions do you have for strengthening it?
- As you listened were you confused or distracted at any point, and if so, where?
- What details or entire parts could I leave out?

What to do with the feedback:

- Listen and take to heart what you heard.
- Go back to your draft and edit, rewrite, then edit and rewrite some more.
- When you are done practice, practice, practice saying your presentation out loud.

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Delivering a Polished Presentation

It's the day of your presentation. You've come to the event well prepared and, yet, you're feeling pretty nervous. This is a common experience. Here are some tips from experts and other family presenters for managing real time jitters and delivering an effective presentation.

Tips for managing nervousness:

- Know your presentation, inside and out.
- Before you get to the event do something physical/loud to relieve tension.
- Bring a small object such as a smooth stone or a lucky pen to keep in your pocket
- Arrive early, practice in the room and imagine yourself being successful.
- Be familiar with any equipment you'll be using
- Use positive self-talk. *For example: "I can do this" or "This is my way to honor our experience".*
- Focus on the message, not yourself *For example: "This is important stuff for people to know and understand".*
- During your presentation find a familiar or supportive face and focus on those who are engaged.

Tips on how to deliver a good presentation:

- Stand tall and ground yourself with a deep breath.
- Be yourself and use language and an approach that is true to you.
- Remember, your goal is to "speak your presentation" not "read it."
- Settle into a comfortable pace — rarely do people ever go too slowly.
- Establish clear and frequent eye contact with audience.
- Concentrate on your audience, not yourself.

Ways to handle if emotions surface during your presentation:

- Pause. Take 2-3 deep breaths.
- Use positive self-talk such as "This is OK. I'll be fine."
- Mentally focus on something outside of yourself.
- No need to apologize or fight it (can sometimes make it worse).
- Touch or hold your small object to ground and settle yourself.

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Responding to Questions and Answers

Frequently after a parent panel or presentation there is time devoted to “questions and answers”. This is often a less formal time that offers opportunities for back and forth exchange. However, it is typically not the time for in-depth conversation and discussion.

Here are some tips for making this a helpful and engaging time for your audience:

- Anticipate potential questions ahead of time by spending time thinking through what you might say and how you would say it.
- Listen well to make sure you understand the question.
- Be brief with your response.
- Whenever possible be positive. Avoid blame, offer positive solutions.
- Speak for yourself. Begin responses with *“For me...”* or *“What works best for our family....”*, or *“In our situation...”*.
- When fielding questions with other parents, monitor and manage your urge to restate what others have just said in your own words. Everyone does not have to speak to every question.
- Be aware of your own personal “triggers.” These are sensitive subjects and hot topics for you—ones that “push your buttons.” Ways to deal with “triggers” include:
 - Pause and breathe
 - Let someone else answer the question
 - Enter into each question mindfully and carefully