

We begin by acknowledging that we are gathered on unceded territory which belongs to The Okanagan Nation.

Empower your audience and your agency's clients through consent, context, and compassion.

Let's expand our thinking about storytelling.

Ethics of Storytelling

Overview

1. What are stories?
 2. Why do we use stories?
 3. Risk management
 4. Consent
 5. Context
 6. Compassion
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True or False?

1. The AFP Code of Ethics references specific protections for privacy, dignity, and confidentiality of service recipients.
 2. The ethical code of the Canadian Marketing Association references protections for service recipients of organizations.
 3. Psychologists are prohibited by their ethical code from asking for endorsements from clients.
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What is a story?

- ▶ A snapshot in time and place.
 - ▶ Assigns roles to people - victim, villain, hero.
 - ▶ Has purpose and intent in the framing.
 - ▶ Brings connection and shared understanding.
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What is a story?

- ▶ Is cultured, and gendered.
 - ▶ Multiple perspectives can round out a story.
 - ▶ Is filtered through the perspective of the listener/reader.
 - ▶ Some stories are more likely to be heard and recognized as valid.
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Did you know?

- ▶ We begin to have a sense of our own personal story around age 20.
 - ▶ Our stories are part of our brain development.
 - ▶ Through stories, we learn to
 - ▶ explain what happened and why,
 - ▶ to remember and integrate the past, and
 - ▶ to anticipate the future.
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Healing and Connecting Through Stories

- ▶ Telling one's story can be part of healing for those who have suffered hurt, loss, or trauma.
 - ▶ We need to tell our stories and to have them heard by others who understand and continue to think well of us.
 - ▶ This is human connection and validation.
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Why do we use stories in
marketing and fund
development?

What risks do we manage in using stories?

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**Privacy &
Confidentiality**

2

Safety

3

**Dignity &
Empowerment**

4

**Future
Consequences**

Do you need consent if you change the names and details?

- ▶ Agencies may use composite or altered stories.
 - ▶ Avoid the message that there is a “typical” client as this perpetuates stereotypes.
 - ▶ Service users receive a message by how they are portrayed by the agency when using stock images, actors etc.
 - ▶ Potential supporters may find this approach less compelling and authentic.
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Do you need consent if you change the names and details?

- ▶ Using a real story but changing details can be invalidating if the person knows you've done it.
 - ▶ The story you tell is your interpretation or experience - try telling it as your own story of knowing that person and how they affected you.
 - ▶ We still have ethical obligations about how we use someone's story, even when identifying details are concealed.
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Obtaining Informed Consent

“We have our clients sign something.”

The owner of the story (the client)...

1. Is treated as an empowered partner in the storytelling process.
 2. Has capacity to consent or to not consent.
 3. Is given time to consider, before consenting.
 4. Can withdraw consent at any time (but there are limitations once a story has been published).
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Obtaining Informed Consent

The owner of the story ...

5. Is at a safe and stable point in their lives.
 6. Has an opportunity to review and edit their story in finished format.
 7. Knows there are no consequences to receiving services if they say no, and no service rewards for saying yes.
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Obtaining Informed Consent

The owner of the story ...

8. Knows the request is not “payment” for services.
 9. Is agreeing of their own free will (no overt or subtle coercive forces are in play).
 10. If a child’s story, the child has been consulted.
 11. If a family or community story is being told, they have been consulted where appropriate.
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Obtaining Informed Consent

The owner of the story ...

12. Is fully informed of

- ▶ The identifying details that will be shared, or disguises that will be used to hide their identity.
 - ▶ The purpose for which the story is being used.
 - ▶ When, where, and for how long the story will be shared.
 - ▶ Risks they may not have thought about (legal considerations, personal safety, privacy, employment, housing).
 - ▶ *See sample consent form.*
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Should clients be paid for their stories?

- ▶ Does payment empower the client and make them feel valued?
 - ▶ Does the client feel that they are, in any way, paying the agency back for free services?
 - ▶ Does payment create an element of coercion, especially if the client lives in poverty?
 - ▶ Does payment compensate the client for time and associated costs (missing work, transportation, child care)?
 - ▶ What are the rules around payment if the client changes their mind? Is the client informed of the rules?
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Context

Keeping a story in context means...

- ▶ Telling the story in the most complete way possible.
 - ▶ Surfacing orphaned stories in circle of support.
 - ▶ Not using personal stories as a way to avoid telling a larger organizational impact story.
 - ▶ Telling the story tied to related social issues, not just framed as personal deficits or triumphs.
 - ▶ Being conscious about how we categorize people, and whether this perpetuates inequality.
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Context

Keeping a story in context means...

- ▶ Being mindful of the framing of people and their roles.
 - ▶ The client is always the first hero of their own story.
 - ▶ Does the person hearing the story need the client to seem different from them, and lacking relative to them, in order to be motivated to give? Are they seeking a brief involvement?
 - ▶ Or does the audience need the client to be relatable? Are they motivated to give to someone who seems similar to themselves? Are they seeking closeness and ongoing involvement in a cause?
 - ▶ Is your call to action about bringing people together in commonality, OR reinforcing separation and differentness? Is it about brief intervention, or ongoing connection?
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Compassion

- ▶ How do we know someone is ready to share their story?
 - ▶ What entitlements do audience members feel about knowing personal client details, in order to feel good about giving?
 - ▶ What are the benefits of sharing your own story?
 - ▶ What are the risks of sharing your story?
 - ▶ How do we support a person...
 - ▶ Before they share their story?
 - ▶ During the telling?
 - ▶ While hearing a story?
 - ▶ In the days and weeks after?
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Reciprocity = Shared Vulnerability

“No one is free from contributing - everyone must be able to connect. That’s the price of admission.”

- Kathryn Johnson Gindlesparger

“The Sadder the Story, the Bigger the Check”

Summary

- ▶ Involve clients in the process as much as possible
 - ▶ Consider a Speakers Bureau or Client Advisory on Storytelling
- ▶ Have thoughtful conversations with funders, media partners, counsellors, clients and others involved in the storytelling process about what approach is truly in the best interests of clients.
- ▶ Develop agency policy on using client stories, and ensure that it is compliant with FOIPPA and PIPA, and professional ethical codes

Resources and Materials

- ▶ **The Sadder the Story, The Bigger the Check: Reciprocity as an Answer to Organizational Deficit Models** - Article by Katherine Johnson Gindlesparger.
 - ▶ **Concordia University Centre for Oral History and Digital Storytelling**
<http://storytelling.concordia.ca/toolbox/ethics>
 - ▶ **Human Rights and Narrated Lives: The Ethics of Recognition** - Book by Kay Schaffer and Sidonie Smith
 - ▶ **Monica Lewinsky - The Price of Shame** - TED Talk on YouTube
 - ▶ **Nanette** - Netflix Special featuring Hannah Gadsby
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