

Iowa Department of Education

2015

Participant Guide and Workbook



*"We are our stories. Our stories give meaning to our lives. Through them, we discover ourselves. By sharing them, they give us strength and make us part of something larger that embraces all the mysteries of life's joys and sorrows."*

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# Your Role Today:

- Clear your thoughts
- Open your mind;
- Decide that you will learn something;
- Decide to contribute;
- Listen to the thoughts, perspectives and experiences of others;
- Assume the role of teacher and learner;
- Support the facilitators;
- Make new friends to support you in the future;
- Have fun!

# Telling Your Story

1. Participants will understand the multiple purposes of being able to tell their family story to an audience in a positive way;
2. Participants will understand presentation strategies and will formulate creative ideas for their personal presentation;
3. Participants will demonstrate and receive feedback from other participants as they present a sample “Telling Their Story” presentation;
4. Participants will develop a network among themselves to support “Telling Your Story” around the state.

# Part 1

## Setting the Stage



*"Our stories shape us. They give us our songs and our silence. When they are full of joy, they allow us to soar. When they are full of pain, they allow us to journey into the darkness of our souls where we meet ourselves, sometimes for the first time. They destroy us and allow us to rebuild. We must share our stories. They are our gifts." – S. Zimmermann*

# Your Story is Important!

## **To promote sensitivity and awareness**

- Your story is a way to let current and future service providers know how they can be sensitive to families;
- Most service providers have little or no opportunity to interact with families of children with disabilities before they begin working in the field. Your story will contribute to their education and preparation to work with families and to include children with disabilities with other children.

## **To educate about family-centered services**

- Children with disabilities are a part of a family. As you speak about your family, they will see that you focus on other families members as well as your child;
- Service providers will understand that their own expertise is enhanced when they consider the family as a valuable resource.

## **To show your audience that KIDS are KIDS**

- Children with disabilities are kids first and have the same hopes and dreams as other children;
- Children with disabilities need opportunities to be with children in natural settings, in their schools, in their communities, with their services.

## **To advocate for quality programs**

- Your story and your helpful suggestions will assist service providers to improve their programs, making them more child and family friendly.

It is important that you know that there is no “right” or “wrong” story. It is your family story — how you feel and how you see it now. Tomorrow your story may be different. You are the expert in the care of your child with special needs.

*Information adapted from: Telling Your Story, Training for Family Faculty, Jan Moss, UCEDD, and the Parent Leadership Program. The Arc Michigan (Blough, Brown, Dietrick and Fortune)*

**NOTES:**

# Word Power

## *The Way We Speak About Ourselves and Others*

### **What do you say about yourself?**

- When people first meet you, what do you want them to know?
- Your interests? Your age? Your job?
- When you meet others, what do you want to know?

### **We can advocate by the way we speak**

- Direct the focus on the person;
- Use family and person supportive language;
- People are people, not their diagnosis.

### **Value yourself and others**

- Speak of the person first;
- Emphasize abilities not limitations;
- Don't group people under a label (for example, the disabled or the blind);
- Remember, people are not owned (my chair kid);
- Present a positive image for persons with disabilities.

## **HANDOUT – People First Language**

# Examples of People First Language

<http://www.diversityisnatural.com/peoplefirstlanguage.htm>

## **SAY:**

people with disabilities  
she has a cognitive  
disability  
he has autism  
he has Down syndrome  
she has a learning disability  
he has a physical disability  
she's of short stature  
he has an emotional  
disability  
he uses a wheelchair or  
mobility chair  
  
he receives special ed  
services  
typical kids/kids without  
disabilities  
congenital disability  
brain injury  
accessible parking  
she needs... or she uses...

## **INSTEAD OF:**

the handicapped or disabled  
he's mentally retarded  
  
she's autistic  
he's Downs  
she's learning disabled  
he's a quadriplegic/crippled  
she's a dwarf (or midget)  
he's emotionally disturbed  
  
she's wheelchair bound;  
she's confined to a  
wheelchair  
he's in special ed  
  
normal or healthy kids  
  
birth defect  
brain damaged  
handicapped parking  
she has a problem with...

## Part 2

# Why Tell Your Story?



*"Our stories are the retelling of our personal journeys, our walks down steep hillsides into green valleys, our climbs over ridges into dry canyons, our ascents to summits and falls from rocky cliffs." – S. Zimmermann*

# The Benefits of Parents Speaking to Classes: The Family Perspective

“She [the instructor] made us feel we were important, and our information was valued.”

“He’s a little boy not a problem. He’s my son, my husband’s son, my Kyle’s brother, a grandson, a nephew, a neighborhood child... life goes on and you learn to enjoy and treasure your children just the way they are! Keep sending parents into classrooms!!”

“The program is essential for parents/professional communication to continue to progress. I really enjoyed participating.”

“As a father, it was a true pleasure to participate in the program. Often I do not take nor have the time to devote to the ‘communication’ process – really felt it was a good experience for class to hear from a ‘father’.”

“I thoroughly enjoyed myself!”

“Sometimes, seeing is believing and personal appearances help increase interest in the subject.”

“What a great thing to do – to have parents talk to future teachers. I could tell from the looks on the students’ faces that they were gaining insight into things that perhaps they hadn’t considered. Thanks for the opportunity to help.”

“I believe speaking to university students is an excellent experience for parents and a necessity for students!”

# The Benefits of Parents Speaking to Classes: The Student Perspective

“Listening to a ‘real’ person talk made it more real. It [the situation of the person] became less of a statistic.”

“I think I developed empathy toward these parents and learned of how they overcame their difficulties and how they cope on a daily basis.

“True, actual stories are much more interesting and we can remember and even learn more from them.”

“I gleaned some information about children with Down syndrome, but most important I loved Lori’s statement about letting the parent be in the driver’s seat. I want to remember that.”

# The Benefits of Parents Speaking to Classes: The Faculty Perspective

“It really helped make concepts ‘real’. Vicky did an excellent job. I could see by student expressions and questions that the course material was now being applied to ‘real’ situations.”

“Created empathy and understanding.”

“The students appreciated the opportunity to hear first-hand the concerns of families with children facing developmental challenges.”

“Bringing reality to all aspects of my instruction.”

“It was a good experience to have students apply the concepts we’ve been learning in class, i.e., grieving, resources, etc., to a real-life situation.”

## Examples of What Parents can Teach Professionals

- How and when sensitive information (e.g., diagnosis) should be delivered;
- Showing feelings is okay;
- Share information openly — “I don’t know” is okay;
- Parents may have selective hearing or may not understand the words you use;
- Definitions of diagnosis are important, not just labels;
- Parents need to hear that it is not their fault;
- Parents need to hear that it is okay to use respite;
- Parents need to know that any questions is okay;
- Parents need to hear positives.

# Variety of Roles for Family Partnerships

<b>ROLE:</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION:</b>
<b>Panel Presentations</b>	Parents (usually 3 or 4) sharing together their personal experiences usually following similar themes or questions.
<b>Sharing "Telling my story"</b>	Parents sharing their personal family experiences to help students understand family strengths, issues, and problems.
<b>Family Mentor</b>	Parents providing an opportunity for students to visit their home and meet their family to learn firsthand about family life.
<b>Initial/Limited presentation of course content</b>	Parents providing content to students in areas about which they feel comfortable and knowledgeable, such as: developing IFSPs and IEPs, grief and coping, and communication skills.
<b>Shared co[instruction of course content</b>	Parents taking an equal role in planning and delivering course content and participating in the role of co-instructor.
<b>Shared use of family scenario method of instruction</b>	Parents taking an active role in discussion of family scenarios to help students generate possible solutions to problems and potential family consequences.
<b>Shared class organization and management</b>	Parents taking an active role in organizing the schedule, agenda, readings, and assignments for class and participating in grading.
<b>Evaluation and development of curriculum</b>	Parents taking a leading role in helping personnel preparation programs to evaluate their curriculum and recommend changes or revisions.
<b>Training for faculty on co-instruction</b>	Parents taking a leading role in training faculty on how to include parents in a variety of preservice roles.

# Family Partnerships Invitation Worksheet

<b>ROLE:</b>	Things I need to know in order to do this. Make a list of questions to ask or issues to address in order to take on this role.
<b>Panel presentation:</b>	
<b>Sharing "Telling my story"</b>	
<b>Family Mentor</b>	
<b>Initial/Limited Presentations of course content</b>	

# Making or Accepting the Invitation

## Questions the presenter/family member asks of the person organizing the presentation:

- ✓ Who is the audience
  - ✓ What is the topic?
  - ✓ Where should my focus be?
  - ✓ What are your expectations of me?
  - ✓ What amount of time do I have?
  - ✓ What technical equipment is available?
  - ✓ Is there a honorarium or stipend available?
  - ✓ Where is the parking?
- Do discuss possible complications (e.g. medically fragile child, so how do they prefer you handle a cancellation: numbers to call, as much time ahead of time

## Questions the presenters ask themselves in preparation:

- I will need to ask enough questions to have a clear idea of what the organizer wants me to accomplish as a presenter.
- I need to be clear about what I believe I can give or offer the group.
- What do I need to think about as I prepare/outline my story?
- What family pictures, symbols or visual aids will I use?
- How will I handle difficult questions?
- How will I express my thanks for this opportunity and offer my services again (and to others)?

## Questions Faculty/professional needs to ask the presenter:

- What information do I need to share with the parent/ family member as I make the request?
  - ✓ Who is the audience?
  - ✓ How many people?
  - ✓ What is the topic?
  - ✓ What is the class focus?
  - ✓ What are my expectations?
  - ✓ What is the amount of time for class?

- Will there be other parents of family members involved in the presentation (for example a panel)
- What are the learner outcomes I want?
- What specific information or content do I want covered or addressed from the parent or family member?

**Question the faculty/professional need to ask themselves:**

- What are the logistics I need to discuss?
  - ✓ What building?
  - ✓ Where is parking?
  - ✓ Is there a stipend available?
  - ✓ Are there handouts?
  - ✓ What AV equipment may the presenter use?
  - ✓ Is there time to plan together?
  - ✓ If the presenter or their child should get sick, what do expect to happen?
  - ✓ Give the parent a phone number to contact me if needed
- Can student frame questions before parent(s) get there?
- What will I do if the parent gets nervous or is asked difficult questions?
- How will I get students to reflect on impact of the learning?
- Can parent come in for a check-in and or stay for a debriefing? Can I?
- How will I extend a thank you from myself and/or the class/group?



## Part 3

# Preparing Yourself & Building the Story!



*John Brubaker, an adjunct professor of public speaking and communications at Maine Community College, writes that the topmost practice he teaches is to begin your presentation outline by answering from the audience's perspective: "W.I.I.F.M. - what's in it for me?" - S. Zimmermann*

# What do I need to start?

## **Objectives of the Presentation**

- Who is the audience?
- What is the topic of the presentation?
- What is the focus of my presentation?
- What do I want the audience to know when I am finished with my presentation?
- What does the person who invited me expect the audience to learn from the presentation?

## **Topic of the Presentation**

- Who selected the topic?
- How much time will I have?

## **Presentation Focus**

- What specific area of the topic am I to address?
- Determine a sequence/outline;
- Follow the outline.

## **What do I want my audience to know?**

- Be clear before beginning;
- Be specific;
- Check for understanding.

## **What is expected of me?**

- Meet with the person to discuss any specific learning outcomes she/he may have for the audience;

Discuss any special format she/he wants you to follow.

# Making Presentations

by Deborah Manning

The average person speaks over 34,000 words each day, which adds up to the equivalent of several books per week! And yet, when polled, the number one fear of American people is that of public speaking. The fear of speaking to a group ranked above fear of dogs, fear of flying, and even fear of death!

*“Courage is resistance to fear, mastery of fear – not absence of fear.”*  
–Mark Twain

What is it that causes this discomfort in some of us and downright terror in others? What can we do to minimize these feelings?

The most important tool is preparation. Prepare yourself; prepare your material; and prepare for the actual presentation.

**Preparing yourself.** It is difficult to feel comfortable if you don't feel adequately prepared. Make sure you have done your homework. Once you are certain that you know the subject matter, you can begin to concentrate on your delivery.

**Preparing the presentation.** What are the key points you will be making? What can you do to reinforce them? Are there supporting materials that can help to drive the point home? Perhaps a video, handouts, or an easel and markers? Add variety and materials to reinforce your presentation when possible.

## What's in a Message?

The message that people get comes from more than just the words they hear. According to communication studies, how the message is delivered has more impact on what we hear than the actual words themselves.

So, what's in a message? First, there are *the words*. A speaker needs to make sure that (s)he has chosen words that the audience can understand and relate to.

Next there is *how the words are said*. No matter how good your material is, no one will want to listen if the message is delivered in a monotone or with such low volume that it cannot be heard beyond the third row. Your voice should express interest in what you are saying.

Then there is *body language*, or the "nonverbal" part of communication. Body language includes your gestures, posture, and facial expressions. These have a major impact on how your message is received.

As you prepare your talk, think of all the factors that make up the message. Try rehearsing so that you feel comfortable incorporating them into your presentation.

### **QUICK TIP: Remember to Breathe**

When we get nervous we tend to begin rapid, shallow breathing. And when you begin to breathe this way, it is difficult to project your voice and speak clearly. So, before that very first sentence, get a good lungful of air!

# Quality Presentations

Use this list to help you both present and provide constructive feedback to your presenter.

## **Posture**

1. Stand up straight but not stiff.
2. Keep your weight evenly distributed on both feet so you don't sway and shift.

## **Movement**

1. Take a few steps to the side and toward the audience.
2. If you are using a lectern or a table, step to the side or front occasionally to make contact with your audience.
3. Stay close to your audience to keep them engaged.
4. When you make a point that may be difficult for your audience to hear move to a prearranged spot to state the message – and then don't return to that area for rest of the presentation.

## **Gestures**

Use gestures as you do in a normal conversation with your friends.

## **Orientation**

Be sure to keep your shoulders square with your audience and to speak only when you are facing the audience.

## **Eye Contact**

1. Eye contact is crucial to establish and build rapport with your audience.
2. Focus on one person and maintain eye contact 1-3 seconds before moving on to another person.
3. Smile more and frown less.

## **Voice**

1. Articulate clearly.
2. Speak loudly and don't trail off at the end of your sentences.
3. To deliver a talk with natural animation that is not monotone, relax by gesturing and breathing normally.
4. Keep talk free of repetitive sounds such as "um," "uh," and "OK?"

## **Overall Presence**

1. Look relaxed.
2. Keep focused and to the topic.
3. Use visual aids and props effectively.
4. Story is appropriate length.
5. Story keeps attention of audience.

How to market yourself info – community agency listing from brainstormed listing:

## **Ideas: Where could I present?**

1. Day Care providers
2. Community Colleges
3. Retail people
4. Civic groups i.e.; Knights of Columbus
5. Local zoo
6. Park and Recreation Departments
7. Photographers
8. Guidance counselor conference
9. Respite providers
10. Public Library
11. Volunteer Fairs
12. Corporate officers – Board
13. Child Care Directors Meeting
14. Empowerment Board
15. Other boards?
16. Para-professionals
17. Vet students
18. Animal rescue league
19. Medical clinic – a panel of people you know?
20. National conference
21. Foster/adoptive classes
22. Salons/barbers
23. Parent support groups
24. Schools our kids attend –
25. Marathon
26. Family consumer classes/parenting a child with a disability/special health care nurses
27. Local AEA – access through the PEC
28. Service learning opportunities
29. Church
30. Contact information
31. Introduction letter with phone follow-up
32. IEP teams
33. Employer/Employee
34. Annual conferences/ check it out!
35. School board meetings
36. NAMI
37. Health Care teams
38. F2F Network

# Prepping Your Story

1. Prepare to “tell your story” of the impact and influences your child with a disability has had on your life (positives and negatives).
2. Prepare to describe your experience and thoughts in two of the following areas:
  - a. Development and implementation of IEPs/IFSPs;
  - b. Coping strategies and supports you have used;
  - c. How professionals, family, and friends have, and have not, been supportive; another way to say this is ‘what worked, what didn’t work’.
  - d. When something was not supportive or didn’t work, what would have been supportive or what may have worked?
  - e. Most important message you want new professionals to hear;
  - f. Most positive contributions of your child.
3. Decide what visual aids, artifacts, or items you could share to illustrate your story.

## Things to consider as the story expands and your child (and you!) get older

- When your story adds chapters, you will have more experiences to add to your bucket of ideas that illustrate the points you wish to make.
- Your ideas and thoughts may change over time- so maybe it is appropriate to talk about how your views have altered over time.
- As you child gets older, seriously getting their permission to share elements of the story that involve them. A good statement for self determination for our children is “nothing about me without me”.

# Telling Your Story Worksheet

What is the purpose for my presentation?

What outcome would I like from my audience?

What powerful examples do I have that I am willing to share?

How should I organize my points with my examples?

What visual aid, creative wording/reading, or “audience hook” will I use?

What solutions or suggestions will I give my audience?

How will I close?

What will I do if I get nervous and don't know what to say next?

## Part 4

# Telling Your Story: The Beginning, The Middle & The End



*"Tell me a fact and I'll learn. Tell me the truth and I'll believe.  
But tell me a story and it will live in my heart forever." –  
Melanie C. Green*

# Organizing Your Story

Although most stories have a beginning, middle, and an end, they can also vary in length – some are 30 seconds long; others can last over an hour. Engaging stories rely on a beginning that “hooks” the listener who then listens for the details in the middle of the story, and awaits the punch line at the end. The beginning sets the stage, identifies the key characters and location, and gets the listener interested. The middle – where the plot thickens – adds details, examples, and interesting information to understand the key ideas and people. The end usually ties things together and often gives an idea of what can be learned from it – what was the theme or lesson? Sometimes this theme can be stated directly; at other times it is best to let the listeners draw their own conclusions.

Helping your audience follow your message easily requires that you build into your structure a certain amount of redundancy. That means that you reiterate main points. When you divide your presentation into an introduction, the main body, and the conclusion, you are building in this necessary redundancy.

**In the introduction (beginning), you "tell them what you are going to tell them"**

**In the main body (middle), you "tell them"**

**In the conclusion (end), you "tell them what you told them"**

This kind of deliberate repetition helps your audience follow and remember the main points you are making. (Readers can "reread" text, but listeners cannot "rehear" oral remarks.) To design your presentation with planned repetition, you must clearly know your purpose and what you want your audience to know.

*Treat the presentation as a creative project in its own right.*

Don't think about "presenting your work," as if the creative part was limited to the work and the presentation was tacked on afterwards. Apply the same level of imagination and passion to your presentations as you do the rest of your creative work. Once you do that, you'll start discovering all kinds of interesting ways to get your message across in a persuasive fashion. Here are some tips to help you get started - and to illustrate why your creative talents are the perfect ingredients for a killer presentation.

## **1. Tap your enthusiasm.**

Everyone I've ever coached on presentation skills has told me they want to be more confident - but I tell them to forget about confidence and focus on enthusiasm. Confidence can be impressive, but it can still leave an audience cold. Enthusiasm, on the other hand, is infectious - it will be hard for audiences to resist your passion.

## **2. Get to the core of your message.**

If you're an information architect, you'll know how important it is to present the most

important points clearly and simply, only introducing details when people have grasped the big picture and are ready for more. If organizing information is new to you, then here's the quick version:

Boil your presentation down to three key points your audience must understand. This forces you to hone your message to its essence, and helps you remember the structure of your presentation (even if the worst happens and the projector fails). It will also make the message more memorable for your audience.

### **3. Tell a captivating story.**

Next time you hear a presenter say "I'll begin by telling you a story..." watch the audience - you'll see them relax into their chairs. They are re-entering the pleasant "story time trance" they knew and loved as kids. Their critical guard is down, and the speaker has a golden opportunity to engage them emotionally, by telling a powerful story that is relevant to her theme.

You have the same opportunity. Consider the message you are trying to get across. What problem does it solve? What's the human dimension? Who does it remind you of? Once you have the seeds of a story, practice telling and retelling it until you it makes you laugh, cringe, groan, flinch or grin as you speak. When it affects you like this, it will move your audience too.

### **4. Wow them with words.**

You should never try to get your presentation word perfect, by memorizing every single word - that will only make for stilted delivery. But it does pay to sprinkle it with a few choice phrases and add the odd rhetorical flourish.

### **5. Create stunning slides.**

Slides are optional, but if you're going to use them, make them great. Even if you're not a graphic designer, it's relatively easy to stand out from the crowd of bullet points and PowerPoint templates, by licensing high-quality images from stock sites like istockphoto and Veer, or searching for Creative Commons-licensed photos from Flickr using Compfight (just make sure you read the licensing terms carefully, especially for commercial use!).

And if you are a graphic designer, check out Nancy Duarte's beautiful book *Slide:ology*, for a stimulating guide to the creative possibilities of slide design. Nancy and her team designed the slides for Al Gore's "Inconvenient Truth" presentation and feature film, so she knows a thing or two about creating slides with impact.

## **6. Keep it simple.**

Simplicity - focusing on core themes and eliminating fluff - is the key to a lot of great design, great writing, great music, great dance, and great art of many kinds. It's also one of the things that make presentations powerful and memorable.

This is all you need for a truly great presentation:

1. One big idea
2. Three key points
3. One compelling story
4. One idea per slide (and no more than six words- if you are using slides!)
5. One clear call to action

# The Beginning

The introduction should clearly tell the audience what the presentation will cover so that the audience is prepared for what is to come.

In planning your introduction, be sure that you state your goal near the beginning. Even if you use some type of anecdote or question to interest your audience, state the goal of your presentation next. Then, state how you will proceed in your presentation: what main issues you will discuss. The main ideas you have developed during the research and content planning stage should be announced here. Generally, the introduction should end with a reiteration of your main point.

Summary:

Purpose of story as it relates to the class objectives/outcomes.

What is a good story starter?

Where does the story occur?

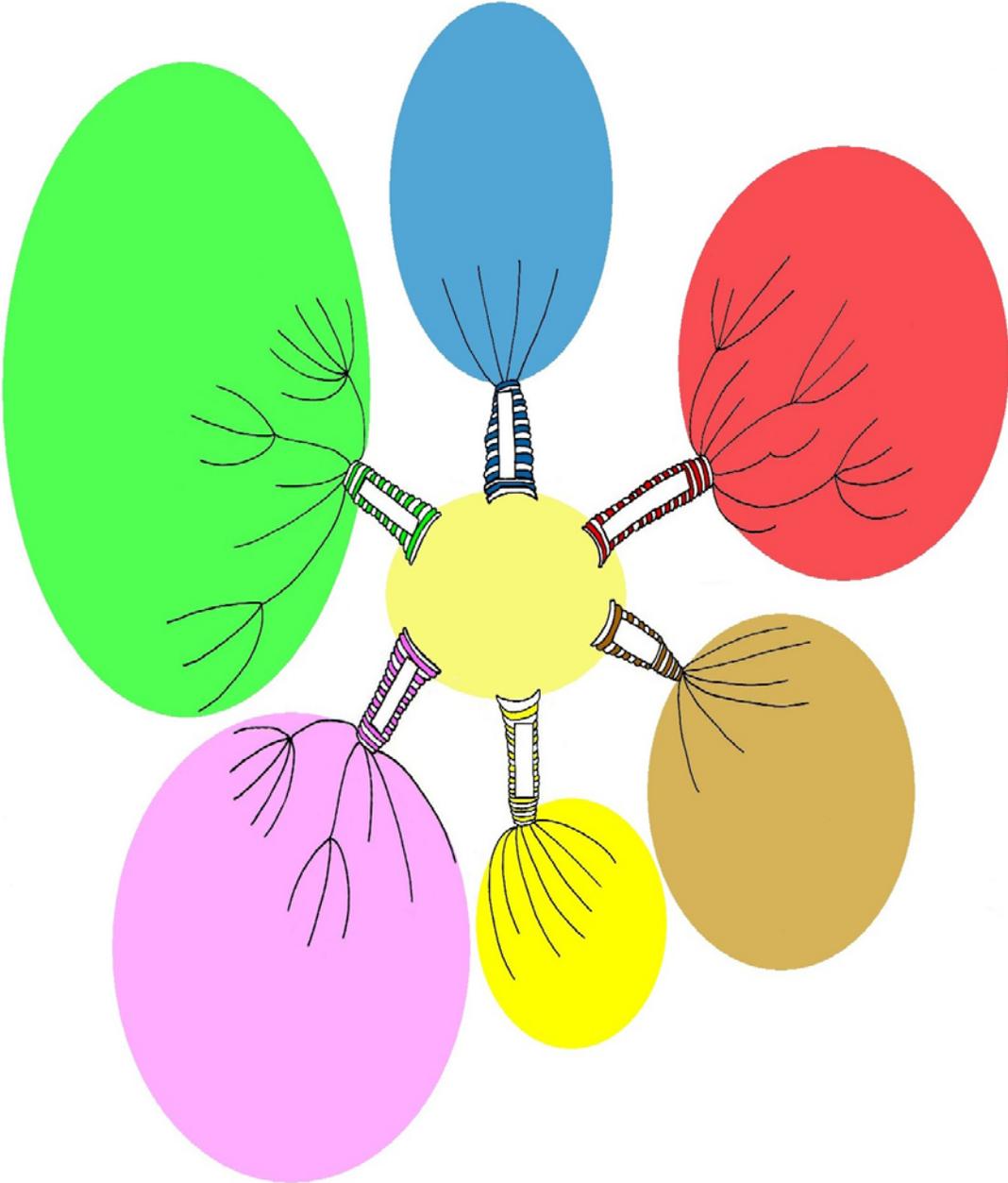
Who are the important people?

When did the story take place?

Tell them what you are going to tell them.



**Basic message for presentation:**



**Audience:**

**Date:**

**Contact person:**

**Topic:**



# **My Story Beginning**



# The Middle

The body should develop each point previewed in the introduction.

In the introduction you state the main issues or topics you plan to present. Thus, in designing the body of the presentation, you develop what you want to say about each of these main points or ideas. You may want to present your ideas in a chronological sequence, a logical sequence, or a simple topical sequence. This method will help your audience follow your ideas if you are giving an informative speech, an analytical speech, or a persuasive speech. The important point, however, is that you need to demarcate and announce each point in the body as you come to it so that your audience knows when you have completed one point and begun another.

Summary:

Tell the audience what you said you were going to tell them!

Use people first language.

Organize topically or chronologically?

What happened first, second, third?

What was the major conflict?

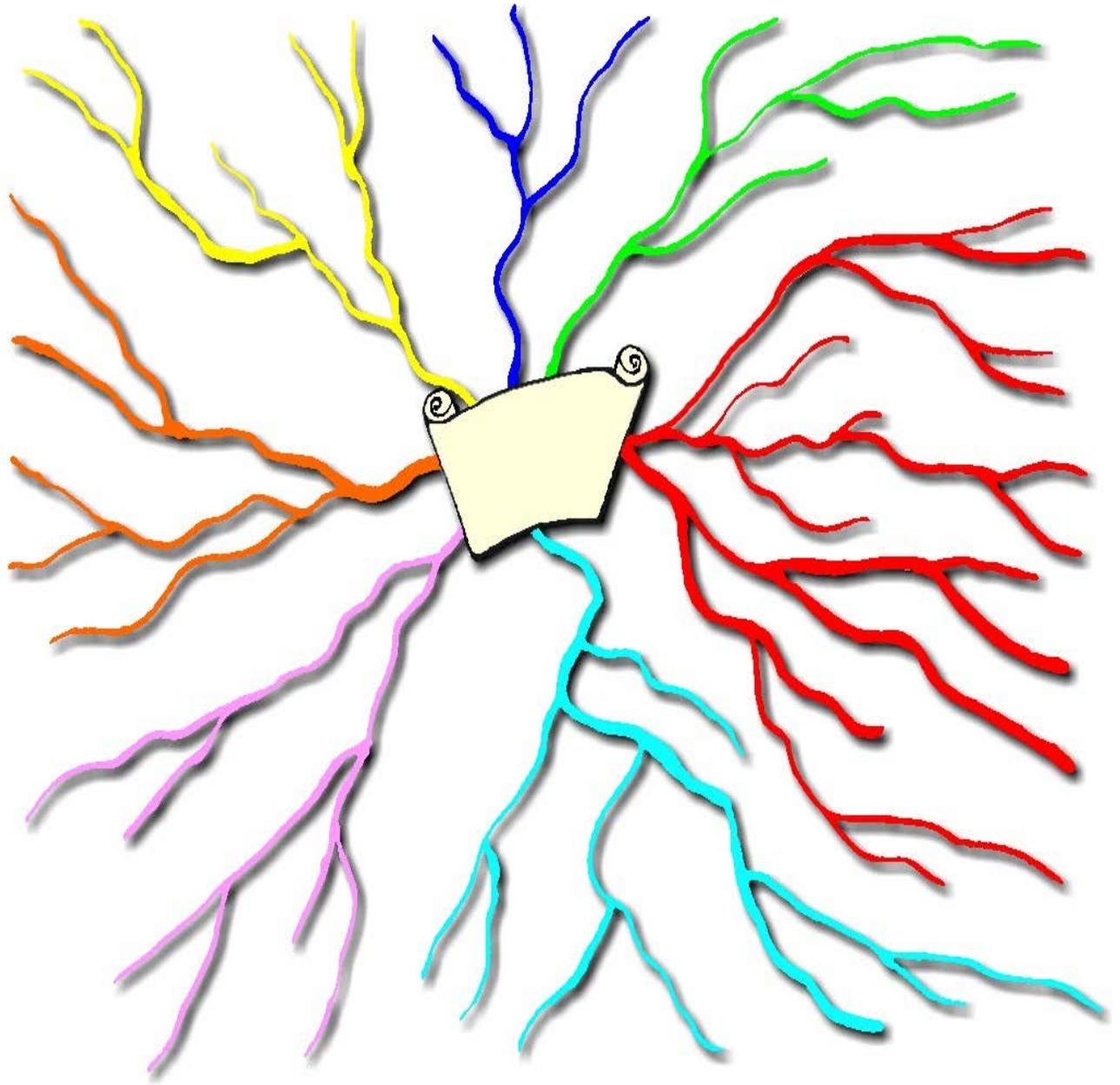
What were some of the key feelings elicited in the experience?

What pictures/symbols/technology will I use?

What TTYN (turn to your neighbor) questions do I have?



**Basic message for presentation:**



**Audience:**

**Date:**

**Contact person:**

**Topic:**



# My Story Middle



# The End

The conclusion should reiterate the ideas presented and reinforce the purpose of the presentation. It usually answers the question: "so what?"

The conclusion to the presentation should help the audience understand the significance of your talk and remember main points. At a minimum, you should restate the main issues you want your audience to remember, but do so in a concise way. Try to find a concluding narrative or statement that will have an impact on your audience. The conclusion should not be long, but it should leave the audience with a positive feeling about you and your ideas.

The conclusion reinforces the main ideas you wish your audience to retain. Remember: in the introduction, you "tell them what you will tell them"; in the body, you "tell them"; and in the conclusion, you "tell them what you told them." In a presentation which has covered numerous points, you should be sure to reemphasize the main points. But the conclusion also allows you to emphasize the importance of specific ideas, or you can reiterate the value to the ideas you have presented. In short, how you design the conclusion will depend on your initial purpose. A strong conclusion is nearly as important as a strong introduction, as both the beginning and the end will be the parts most likely remembered.

Summary:

Tell them what you told them!

What happened to conclude the story?

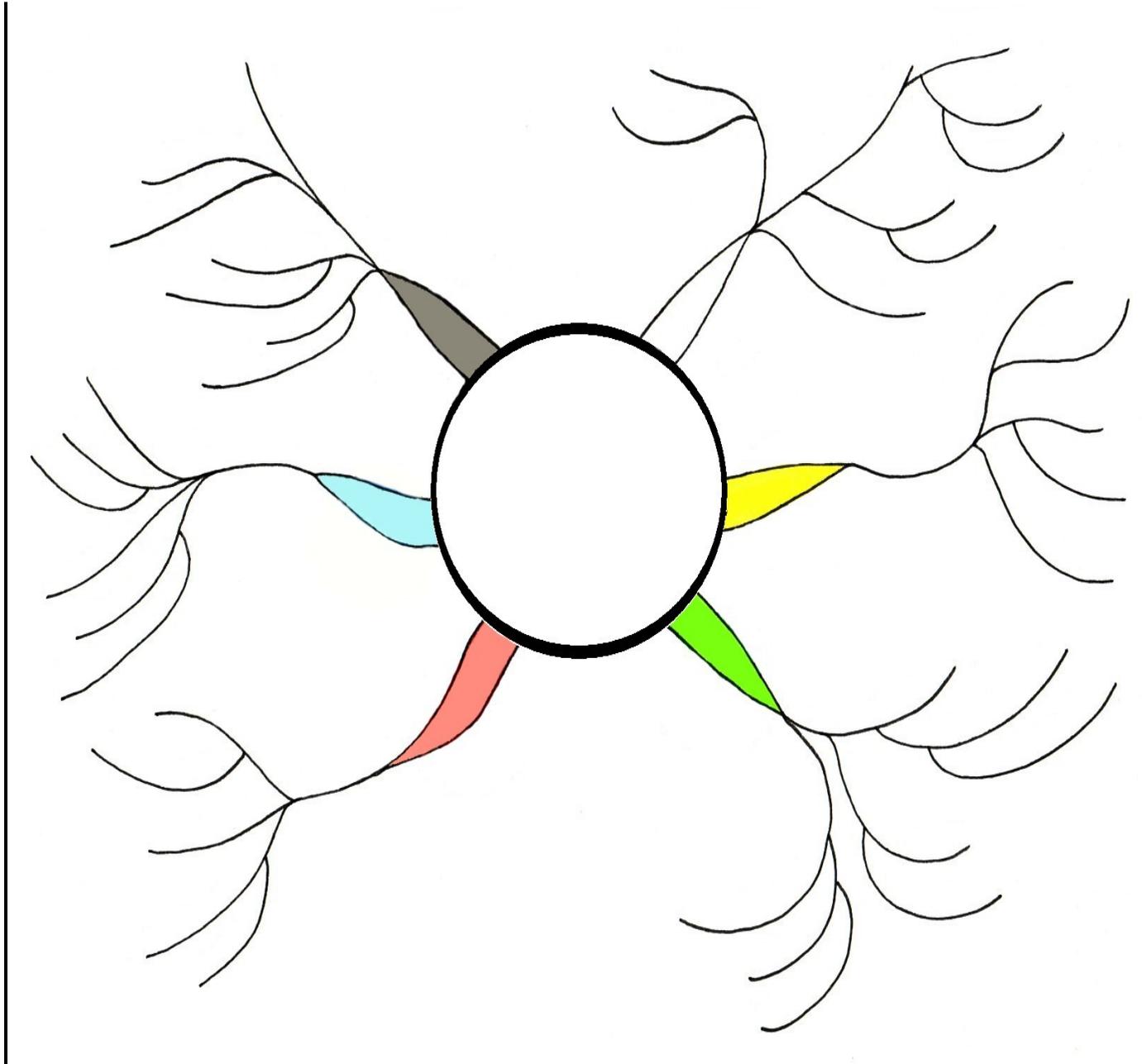
How was the problem resolved?

What was the key theme you learned?

What is the key theme you want the audience to understand?



**Basic message for presentation:**



**Audience:**

**Date:**

**Contact person:**

**Topic:**



# **My Story Ending**



# Part 5

## Dress Rehearsal



*“Turning the anger that could go inward and become depression, turning it outward to make change, can be energizing.” – S. Zimmermann*

# Why Practice?

Practice it in its rough form.

Next you give it a 3<sup>rd</sup> Dimension by blending in your presentation method. This entails the equipment and materials you use, case studies, examples, quotations, analogies, questions and answers, individual and syndicate exercises, interesting statistics, and any kind of presentation aid you think will work.

Practice it in rough 3D form. Get a feel for the timing. Amend and refine it. This practice is essential to build your competence and confidence, and also to practice the pace and timing. You'll be amazed at how much longer the presentation takes than you think it will.

Ask an honest and tactful friend to listen and watch you practice. Ask for their comments about how you can improve, especially your body position and movement, your pace and voice, and whether they understood everything. If they can't make at least a half a dozen constructive suggestions ask someone else.

Produce the presentation materials and organize the equipment, and ensure you are comfortable with your method of cribbing from notes, cards etc.

Practice it in its refined 3D form. Amend and refine if necessary, and if possible have a final run-through in the real setting if it's strange to you.

Take nothing for granted. Check and double-check, and plan contingencies for anything that might go wrong.

Plan and control the layout of the room as much as you are able. If you are a speaker at someone else's event you'll not have much of a say in this, but if it's your event then take care to position yourself, your equipment and your audience and the seating plan so that it suits you and the situation. For instance, don't lay out a room theatre-style if you want people to participate in teams. Use a boardroom layout if you want a cooperative debating approach.

Make sure everyone can see the visuals displays.

Make sure you understand and if appropriate control and convey the domestic arrangements (fire drill, catering, smoking, messages, breaks etc.).

# Check-up

Before you make a presentation, it is wise to analyze the group you will be speaking to. Here are some questions that can help you do that:

- What does the audience already know about the subject you will talk about?
- What more do they need to know?
- How much can they absorb in one sitting?
- What's your audience's attitude toward your subject?
- What different jobs or positions are included in your audience?
- What is the best way to present the material so that it will be understood by all?
- How many people will be in your audience?

By answering these questions, you can begin to determine the material that should be covered and how best to present it.

# Action Plan

The following pointers can help you to prepare for your presentation:

1. Be prepared. Know your topic and your audience.
2. Practice (to yourself, with a friend or colleague, or perhaps on tape).
3. If possible, check out the room beforehand so that you'll know where to stand and where to set things up; then arrive early to finish your preparations.
4. When possible, use visuals to reinforce your remarks; charts and graphs, slides, and posters help; so does the use of color.
5. Have a comfortable beginning, middle, and end to your presentation.
6. Involve your audience by keeping eye contact, showing enthusiasm, asking questions, and encouraging input.
7. If you are using humor, be careful; it can backfire.
8. Don't be afraid to say, "I don't know the answer to that... but I'll find out and get back to you."
9. Relax! Your audience is there to get information from you, not to judge you. They want you to succeed.
10. Learn from what worked well and what did not, and use that information for your next presentation. Practice makes perfect.

*QUICK TIP: KISS - Keep It Simple, Speaker*

People are inundated with information. The best way to get their attention, and then to keep their attention is to: KISS!

# Thinking about “THE DAY”

Relax, have a rock-solid practiced opening, and smile. Be firm, be confident and be in control; the floor is yours, and the audience is on your side.

Introduce yourself and tell them what you're going to tell them. Tell them why you're telling them it; why it's important, and why it's you that's telling them. Tell them how long you're going to take, and tell them when they can ask questions (if you're nervous about being thrown off-track then it's okay to ask them save their questions until the end).

By the time you've done this introduction you've established your authority, created respect and credibility, and overcome the worst of your nerves. You might even be enjoying it; it happens. If you're just giving a short presentation then by the time you've done all this you've completed a quarter of it!

Remember, if you are truly scared, a good way to overcome your fear is just to do it.

"What doesn't kill you makes you stronger." (Friedrich Nietzsche)

Remember also, initial impact is made and audience mood towards you is established in the first 4-7 seconds.

Be aware of your own body language and remember what advice you got from your friend on your practice run. You are the most powerful visual aid of all, so use your body movement and position well. Don't stand in front of the screen when the projector is on.

If people talk amongst themselves just stop and look at them. Say nothing, just look. You will be amazed at the effect, and how quickly your authority increases. This silent tactic usually works with a chaotic audience too.

If you want a respite or some thinking time, asking the audience a question or involving them in an exercise takes the pressure off you, and gives you a bit of breathing space.

Pausing is fine. It always seems like an age when you're up there, but the audience won't notice unless you start umming-and-aahing. Knowing that a pause now and then is perfectly fine will help you to concentrate on what you're saying next, rather than the pause.

Keep control, no-one will question your authority when you have the floor, so don't give it up.

If you don't know the answer to a question say so and deal with it later. You have the right to defer questions until the end (on the grounds that you may well be covering it in the presentation later anyway, or just simply because you say so).

Close positively and firmly, and accept plaudits graciously.

# Feedback Form

**Strengths of Your  
Presentation:**

**Suggestions for Next Time:**

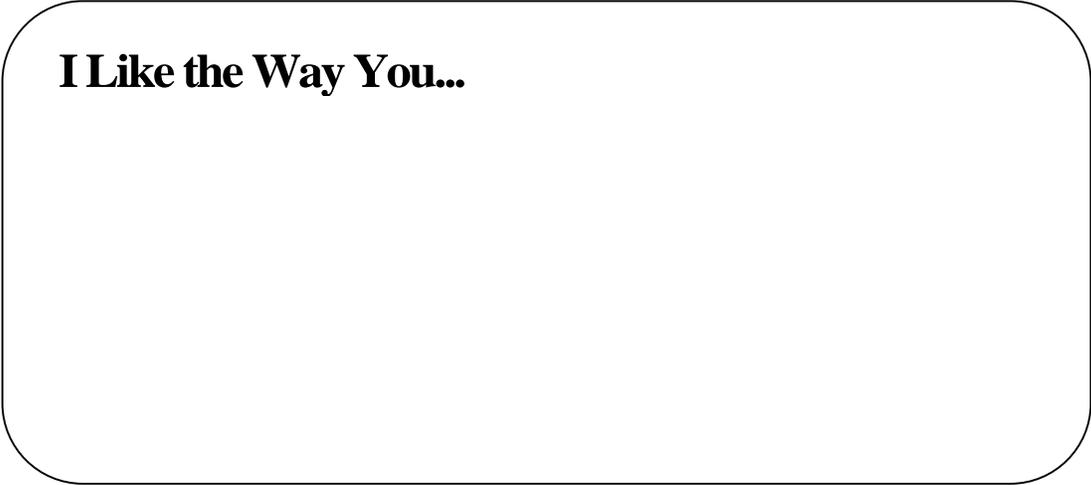
**Other Comments:**



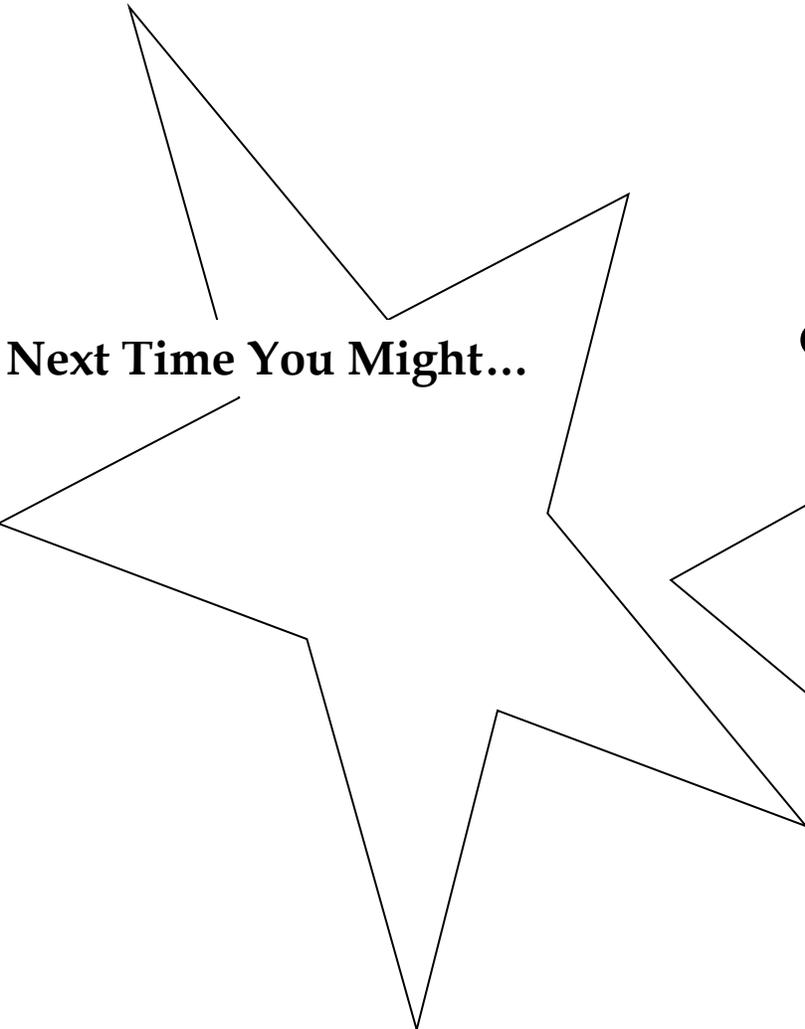
# Feedback Form

Name \_\_\_\_\_

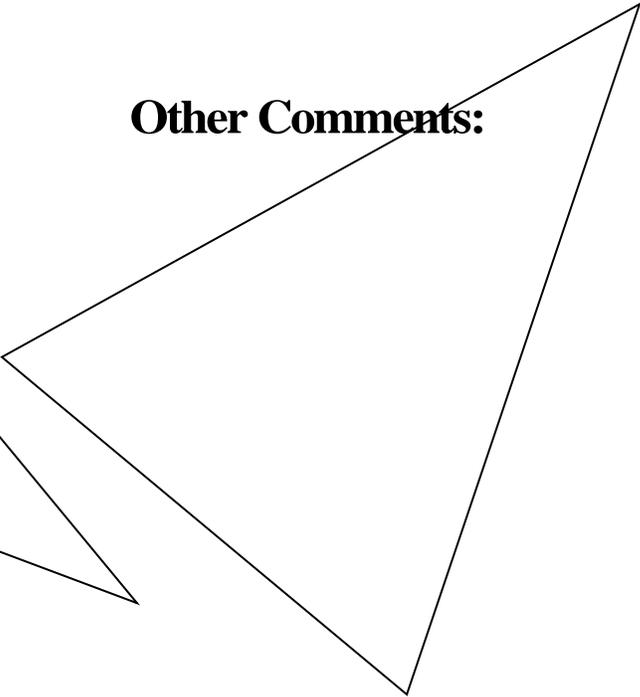
**I Like the Way You...**



**Next Time You Might...**



**Other Comments:**





# Sample Feedback Form

Name Ariel

## **I Like the Way You...**

*You stayed on the topic and presented your story clearly*  
*You did a nice job of using your pictures to engage the audience*  
*Your voice was loud enough*  
*You controlled your emotions well*  
*Your story held my attention*

## **Suggestions for Next Time:**

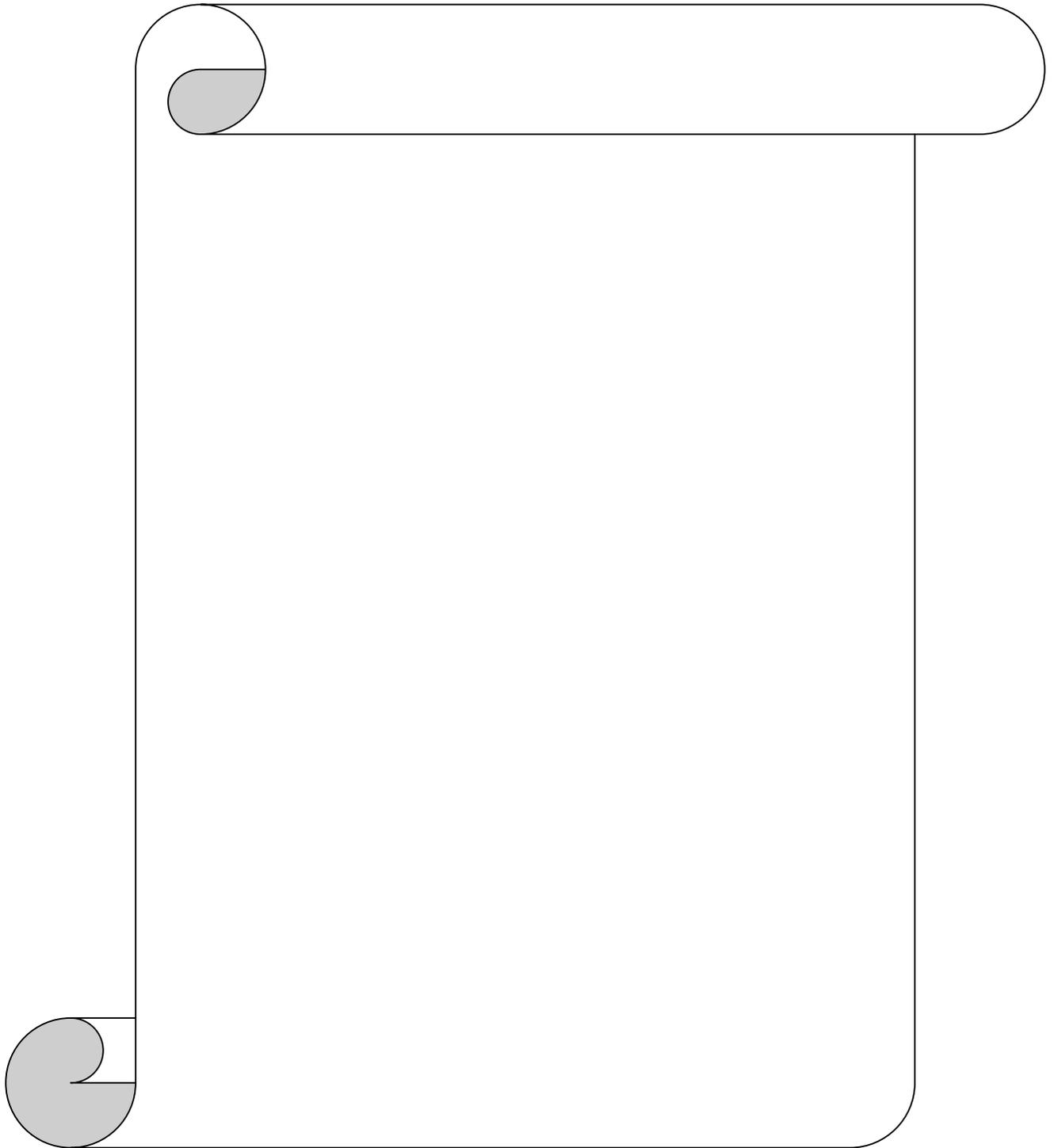
*You have a lovely smile - Use it!*  
*Use more hand gestures to make your points.*  
*Strengthen your conclusion.*

## **Other Comments:**

*Great first time presentation!*



## **Next Time I Tell My Story, I Will...**



**Ways to get information from your audience after a presentation - in a class room, civic organization, small group, church...**



# Evaluation Ideas

Take your own Index cards:

Ask Participants to: (pick one!)

1. Write three 'takeaways' from my presentation.
2. What part of my story illustrated something you are learning in class?
3. Was there a part of my story that really surprised you?
4. What question wasn't asked that you are curious about?
5. Did I meet the objectives for your class? 1-5, 1= not at all, 5 = right on target AND why is that so?
6. Call me or write me: share your phone or email address if you have other questions.

Email address

Perhaps it is already being done by the instructor: having student's journal, evaluation of guest speaker - you can ask for the comments/sampling.



## Part 6

# Workshop Practice and Coaching



*"Also note that invariably when we design something that can be used by those with disabilities, we often make it better for everyone." - Donald Norman*



## Directions

1. Coaches go with group to assigned rooms.
  - Take wall chart on Effective Feedback with you
2. Pass out feedback forms.
3. Describe effective feedback.
  - Post wall chart
  - See wall chart
4. Briefly review the process for giving feedback.
  - See feedback directions on page 4 of folder
5. Ask what questions participants have prior to starting, and address them.
6. Be conscious of time in order to provide each participant the same amount of time, so that they can both present and receive feedback.
  - Selecting observers to keep time for their peers works well
7. When observers give feedback to the presenters, they should address the presenter directly, using the speaker's actual words, rather than addressing the coach or the entire group.

**Example: "Jane, when you said, 'With all my heart, I wanted to help my son to be able to speak.' I could tell how passionate you were about wanting this to happen."**

8. Timing for small group work:

**10 minutes to set up and talk about how to give effective feedback**

**15 minutes per person to give presentation**

**5 minutes for feedback from fellow participants and coach**



**Parents As Presenters  
Coaching Guidance for Participants  
Giving  
Personal Story Presentations**

**Effective Presentations**

**Effective Presentations have three parts:**

- 1. Introduction**
- 2. Body**
- 3. Summary or Conclusion**

**All parts are critical to an effective presentation, and each provides its own unique contribution.**

---

**Introduction**

**The introduction provides the opportunity to grab the listeners' attention. This may be done by using a question or making a compelling statement.**

**Examples:**

- Have you ever planned every detail of an event only to find that something unexpected turned your plans upside down?**
  - I'm here to tell you about how I planned a wonderful family trip to Jamaica, and how through a twist of fate we ended up in Holland!**
- 

**Body**

**The body is where you tell your story. You have valuable, important information to share with the audience.**

---

**Summary or Conclusion**

**The summary or conclusion may be a sentence or two, which states the impact of what you have said. It wraps a ribbon around your message. The summary may include your statement of why it is important for the audience to hear your message.**

---

**Summary  
Or Conclusion**

**The summary is the final picture your audience has of your story. It is what you want the audience to remember as they reflect back on hearing your story. A clear summary adds impact to your message.**

**Examples:**

- **As those who provide service to children birth to age 3, it may be helpful for you to know the critical role you play in assisting families in their search for early intervention services.**
  - **As students in the School of Social Work, it is important for you to know that how you approach family members is critical to your success in building relationships and getting the services needed for children.**
-

**Key Points to Remember When Coaching Presenters**  
**Remind Presenters of the Following:**

**Tone**                      **A positive tone invites the audience to listen. Negativity can cause the audience to disregard the speaker’s message. Avoid blaming individuals or groups, such as “the doctors...”, “the teachers...”, etc. Even challenging situations can be explained using a positive tone.**

**Examples:**

- **There were challenges when Beth was born. When we were told, “There is no chance Beth will ever walk,” we chose not to believe what we were hearing.**
  - **When we didn’t get the support we needed, we just kept looking till we found it from someone else.**
- 

**Clarity**                      **Be clear and concise when telling your story. It holds the attention of the audience, and it helps you focus on the important points you want to share.**

---

**Audio Visuals**                      **Use audiovisuals, such as photos, overheads, PowerPoint, scrapbook pages, video clips, etc. to enhance your presentation. These help the audience remember what they have learned about your family story.**

---

**Prepare**                      **In order to be prepared to share your story with any audience, practice giving it in front of a mirror, or practice giving it to a friend or family member. The more you practice, the more comfortable and confident you will feel. It’s a gift you can give yourself. Practice, Practice, Practice!**

---

## Presentation Feedback Directions

### Logistics

Observers and coach have 1 feedback sheet for each person giving a presentation.

Observers are asked to provide written feedback for each person presenting using the characteristics of effective feedback as follows:

Feedback is...

1. Timely
2. Specific (in the actual words of the presenter)
3. Concise
4. Provided in the spirit of helping presenters improve their presentation skills

After each presentation is completed, coach does the following:

### Coach asks presenter...

1. What did you do well?  
(Note: most people jump to sharing what they want to improve. If this happens, re-direct the presenter to what s/he did well first.)
2. What's something you'll do differently the next time you present?

### Coach asks observers...

1. Tell \_\_\_\_\_ one thing s/he did well.  
*Presenter name*
2. Tell \_\_\_\_\_ one thing s/he could do differently to improve the  
*Presenter name*  
presentation.

**Note:** After first presenter has received feedback from first observer, coach asks for remaining observers to share only additional strengths and areas for improvement, which have not been previously mentioned.

**Coach provides observation input...**

- 1. After all observers have provided feedback, coach shares hers/his feedback, emphasizing the presenter's strengths.**
- 2. After all presentations are completed, coach thanks group for their good work and willingness to share their stories with others.**

**Note: Effective Feedback wall chart should be posted in each room where presentations are given.**

## **Effective Feedback Wall Chart**

**Note: A wall chart needs to be created with brightly colored markers on flipchart paper approximately 28"x 36" and posted in each room where presentations are given.**

### **Effective Feedback is...**

1. Timely
2. Specific (in the actual words of the presenter)
3. Concise
4. Provided in the spirit of helping the presenter improve her/his skills

**Parents As Presenters  
Presentation Feedback Form**

**Presenter Name** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_

**Presentation Strengths:**

**Suggestions for Improving Presentation:**



**Parents As Presenters  
Presentation Feedback Form**

**Presenter Name** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_

**Presentation Strengths:**

**Suggestions for Improving Presentation:**



**Parents As Presenters  
Presentation Feedback Form**

**Presenter Name** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_

**Presentation Strengths:**

**Suggestions for Improving Presentation:**



**Parents As Presenters  
Presentation Feedback Form**

**Presenter Name** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_

**Presentation Strengths:**

**Suggestions for Improving Presentation:**



# Part 7

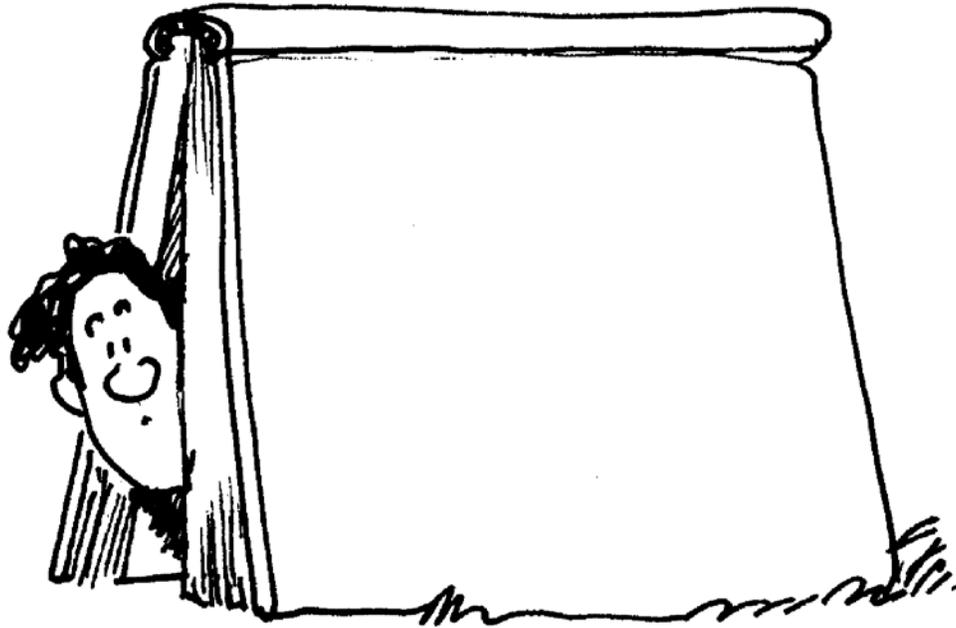
## Writing Your Story



*"If we don't stand up for children, then we don't stand for much."  
- Marian Wright Edelman*

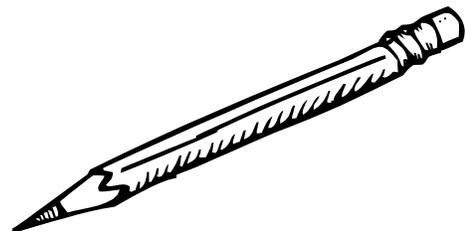
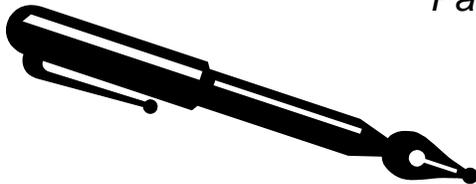
*"Experience is an author's most valuable asset; experience is the thing that puts the muscle and the breath and the warm blood into the book he writes."*

*~ Mark Twain*



**Tips on writing about your life  
experience and perspective to  
inform, enlighten, and influence.**

*Prepared by  
Connie B. Fanselow  
for  
Parents as Presenters*



## WHY WRITE YOUR STORY?

*“Our opinions do not really blossom into fruition until we have expressed them to someone else.” ~ Mark Twain*

- ↯ Telling and writing your story can be very closely linked
- ↯ You are telling a human story about a human experience
- ↯ Life experience stories help connect us with others who share our experiences and help create understanding among those who have different experiences
- ↯ Stories can motivate change in attitudes, actions, policies, and laws

You might use your story to:

- ✎ Teach others what you have learned
- ✎ Present to community groups
- ✎ Advocate for a cause
- ✎ Talk to reporters
- ✎ As a letter to the editor or guest editorial
- ✎ Support grant proposals
- ✎ Advocate for policy changes or funding
- ✎ Influence legislators
- ✎ Testify before governing bodies



Know why you are writing:

- ↯ To send a memorable message
- ↯ To teach a lesson
- ↯ To provide insight
- ↯ To offer hope or support
- ↯ To influence

*“The best way to cheer yourself is to try to cheer someone else up.”  
~ Mark Twain*

## BASIC GUIDELINES FOR WRITING YOUR STORY

- Keep it simple
- Be brief
- Make it personal
- Be specific
- Use a Conversational style
- Use active words to keep it lively
- Be honest
- Share your humanity

*“I have been through some terrible things in my life, some of which actually happened.” ~ Mark Twain*

## GETTING READY TO WRITE

- ✎ Read well-written stories
- ✎ Play your story in your mind
- ✎ Narrow and focus in on small “bites”
- ✎ Know your perspective -- don’t try to write about something for others if you are still processing it
- ✎ Find your voice – written voice is very much like spoken voice
- ✎ Know your audience
- ✎ Identify and clarify your message
- ✎ Check your facts

*“Get your facts first, and then you can distort them as much as you please.”*

*~ Mark Twain*

*“Time cools, time clarifies, and no mood can be maintained quite unaltered through the course of hours.” ~ Mark Twain*

## FACING THE PAPER (OR KEYBOARD)

- ↯ JUST START - don’t worry about writing it “right” at first, just write it “down”
- ↯ Spelling, grammar, and punctuation don’t matter until after there are words on the paper
- ↯ Let the feelings that you have as you tell it be reflected in your words
- ↯ Think about different ways to tell the story
- ↯ It can start at any point in time – it doesn’t have to be chronological
- ↯ You might want to start with a “happy ending” and then explain what it took to get there
- ↯ You might want to start with your “lowest” or most dramatic point
- ↯ When does the story “begin”? – you have many choices (more about openings later)
- ↯ Think about keeping on track as you write
- ↯ Everything should contribute to the message
- ↯ Too much detail is confusing and usually unnecessary
- ↯ If you do get off track or the story gets “bigger” than you intended, you can edit later
- ↯ If you have trouble getting it down on paper, find a tape or digital recorder and talk through it first
- ↯ There is room for humor even in a painful or sad story
- ↯ Humor can be helpful in breaking tension and creating understanding, but should be used carefully

*“It usually takes more than three weeks to prepare a good impromptu speech.”*

*~ Mark Twain*

## STRUCTURING YOUR STORY

Every well-written story has a beginning, middle, and an end.

### Beginning

- Engage the reader (or listener)
- The first few lines should “hook” your reader
- Set the stage for what is to come
- Identify the characters and the situation
- Create interest
- Tell who, what, where, and when



### Middle

- Where the plot thickens
- Add more details (but still use sparingly)
- Use examples that people can identify with
- Share your emotions (but be sure you have processed them first)
- Create understanding
- Tell what happened, describe events and feelings

### End

- Tie everything together
- Share the theme or lesson
- Your life story may not have an “ending” yet, but the telling of the story needs to have a conclusion
- Tell the resolution, lessons learned, or new understanding gained

*“My mother had a great deal of trouble with me, but I think she enjoyed it.”*  
~ Mark Twain

## POLISHING YOUR STORY (MORE GUIDELINES)

Once you have a draft on paper, take a critical look back at it:

-  Did you use vocabulary that you are comfortable using?
-  Did you keep the sentences short?
-  Did you keep the paragraphs short?
-  Did you avoid using technical, medical, and legal language as much as possible?
-  If you did need to use technical language, have you explained what it means in everyday language?
-  Is it appropriate to the intended audience?

Review checklist:

- ↯ Keep use of names to a minimum – only those who have “starring” roles
- ↯ Using too many names is confusing – it is better to refer to people by role (“my son’s doctor,” “my daughter’s eighth grade teacher,” for example)
- ↯ Consult others who are mentioned in your story
- ↯ Get permission from others to use their real names
- ↯ As your child grows older, he or she should decide whether and how “their story” is told
- ↯ Consult other family members – do they have concerns about what is shared with others?
- ↯ Read it aloud – it should read easily and naturally
- ↯ Test your story, and especially the humor on others to see if it “works”
- ↯ Sometimes humor in writing can read as sarcastic or even as serious – you want your meaning to be understood
- ↯ Consider if anything might be unintentionally construed as insulting or insensitive to others

*“The difference between the right word and the almost right word is the difference between lightning and a lightning bug.” ~ Mark Twain*

## SHARING, EDITING, AND REWRITING

Yes, *rewriting*. Expect to go through several to many drafts before your story is the best you can make it. All good writers do.

Recruit readers, editors, and (compassionate) critics and ask them for honest and constructive feedback:

- Does the opening “grab” them?
- Is the story easy to follow or confusing?
- Is the message clear?
- Is your central point understood?
- If you used humor, does it work?
- Is the vocabulary level right?
- Do any words seem “wrong” or potentially offensive?
- Do they have suggestions?



Be prepared to make improvements and remember criticisms are not of “your story” – they are to make the “telling” of your story more effective. It is still your story and you are free to accept or reject the input you receive.

*“A man cannot be comfortable without his own approval.” ~ Mark Twain*

*“Keep away from people who try to belittle your ambitions. Small people always do that, but the really great make you feel that you, too, can become great.” ~ Mark Twain*



## FINAL TOUCHES

- ↯ REVIEW
- ↯ EDIT
- ↯ REORDER, REORGANIZE
- ↯ REWRITE
- ↯ REPEAT (as many times as necessary until you are satisfied)

Hint: It's time to stop if you start changing things back to the way you started.

Now is the time to CAREFULLY check spelling, grammar, and punctuation (pull out your “fine-tooth comb”)

- ↯ PROOF, PROOF, PROOF – proofread carefully – your credibility depends on it
- ↯ MAKE IT PRETTY – this is one place that appearance does matter. Make sure printed copies have adequate margins and spacing, and appear neat and professional. Like it or not, appearance will add to or detract from your credibility and affect how others perceive your efforts.

*“Always do it right. This will gratify some people and astonish the rest.”  
~ Mark Twain*

## WRITING TO INFORM AND INFLUENCE

Letters to the Editor, Op-Ed pieces, and letters to policy and law makers

- ✎ Know what you want to say – Are you responding to a news story or article that has already been printed? If you are responding to a published piece, refer to it clearly. (For example: “I am writing to refute a statement made by Clark Kent in his article entitled ‘Why We Need Superman’ that appeared in the Daily Planet on July 10, 2009.”)

Or are you writing from your “soapbox” to bring attention to an issue that has not been written about? If you are introducing a topic, start with a strong, clear opening statement to introduce it. (For example: “Iowa has not done enough to address a critical shortage of trained direct health care workers and our most vulnerable citizens are paying the price.”)

- ✎ Do your homework – Learn about any particular guidelines for the publication or forum you are submitting the story to for consideration. Address your submission correctly, with the given name of the editor or specific person you want to reach. “Dear Editor” or “Dear Legislator” just doesn’t cut it – look up names and addresses and make sure you spell them correctly and use applicable titles.
- ✎ Know your audience – make yourself familiar with the publication or the person you want to reach and learn as much as you can about their point of view. It will help you know how to approach them and introduce yourself and your story.
- ✎ Know what length is generally acceptable for your audience and stick to it. About 150 words is usually a safe length for a letter to the editor – definitely keep it under 200. Op-ed pieces or guest editorials may be longer – anywhere from 250 to 500 words, sometimes up to 1000, but generally, short and concise is best. If you are invited to write such a piece, the length may be specified.
- ✎ Be relevant and timely – if you are writing in response to an article or editorial, do so within a few days of its publication. If you are writing about an event, submit your piece close in time to its occurrence. That would be either about a week prior to a planned event or shortly after a news event has happened.



(Just a note: Comments or opinions on local issues are often more easy to get published than pieces addressing national or “big picture” issues.)

- ✎ Be very clear about what is fact and what is opinion. If you cite facts or statistics, reports, other sources of factual information, or quote anyone, check your accuracy and clearly identify your sources. Supply reference footnotes or supporting documents if necessary. Be very selective and sparing in attaching lengthy materials. Supplying references or links to websites where supporting documents may be found can be helpful.
- ✎ Humanize issues with personal examples or personal descriptions of impact.
- ✎ Keep your topics, sentences, and paragraphs short and to the point.
- ✎ Use language and terminology that is not technical, inflammatory, or offensive.

*“Training is everything. The peach was once a bitter almond; cauliflower is nothing but cabbage with a college education.” ~ Mark Twain*

## SUBMITTING YOUR STORY FOR PUBLICATION

- ☑ Submissions should be typed, double spaced, with one-inch margins, on plain white paper (or letterhead) and present a clean and professional look.
- ☑ If the submission is electronic, similar rules of appearance still apply. Generally it is best to submit electronic documents in pdf (portable document format) form unless requested in another format. Microsoft Word or other commonly used word processing format documents are also acceptable.
- ☑ Include your contact information: mailing address, telephone(s), and email.
- ☑ You may want to include a (very) short biographical statement that says who you are, where you are from, and why you have something relevant to say on this topic. For example: *“Carol Ellen Rose is a disability advocate from Des Moines, Iowa. She is the parent of a 16-year-old son with multiple disabilities and special health care needs and is currently the Chair of the Iowa Parent Association for System Change.”*
- ☑ If the publication uses pictures (or if requested), you might include a recent photo of yourself. It should be a “formal” head-and-shoulders-only shot with a plain background, but does not need to be a professional photo.
- ☑ You may suggest a title or provide a “tag line.” (For example: “Reforming Health Care: A Family Perspective”)

*“I am not one of those who in expressing options confine themselves to facts.”  
~ Mark Twain*

*“When in doubt, tell the truth.” ~ Mark Twain*

## EXPLORING VENUES FOR PUBLICATION

There are multiple venues for publishing or presenting your story or opinion on issues. Here are a few you may want to consider:

- ~ Your local newspaper
- ~ State or regional newspapers
- ~ Organizational newsletters and websites
- ~ Blogs
- ~ Social networking sites
- ~ TV and radio stations
- ~ Local Cable access



*“I was gratified to be able to answer promptly. I said I*

*didn't know."*  
~ Mark Twain

## ADVANCING YOUR WRITING SKILLS

### What Makes a Strong Opening?

One of the best ways to learn to write is to read writing that works. Following are opening lines or short excerpts taken from *Stories of Survival in Iowa*, a collection of personal stories of recovery written by mental health consumers and compiled by Iowa Advocates for Mental Health Recovery (2009). Read each one and think about its impact:

- Are they good openings? Which ones are the best?
  - Do they capture your attention?
  - Do they make you want to read on?
  - Even if your life experience is very different, can you identify with them?
  - Can you see the importance of a strong opening to draw in the reader?
  - Can you begin to see there are many good ways to start and tell your story?
- 

(1) "Before I became ill with bipolar disorder, I was a middle school teacher in a small private school." ~ Andrea Lynn

(2) "It's hard to know what came first. Was mania already a part of my life and why I was so involved? Or was I so involved that it 'tipped the bucket' into mania?" ~ Andrea Lynn

(3) "Flower gardening is my passion. Care to relax and happily read along as I explain?" ~ Annie Prisk

(4) "To plant is to be part of a joined process of life that, like the seasons, is invincible. Life in the garden (and in me) grows and thrives." ~ Annie Prisk

(5) "Refill after refill! When will it end? I just want to feel normal!!!! Is this even worth it? ABSOLUTELY!!!! The key component: *the right prescription.*" ~ Ashley Ryker

(6) "I began writing my story while confined to the Iowa State Mental Health Hospital in Cherokee. It's a gloomy, rainy day outside with a sharp wind that whistles throughout the old castle-like building." ~ Brandon Gray Rainbow

(7) "It all began in May 1995, on a Wednesday to be exact—the day my world came crashing down." ~ Brandon Gray Rainbow

(8) "The worst part of my day has always been waking up. When I wake up, I have no idea what time it is or how long I've slept. Sometimes even looking at the clock doesn't help—is it 5:30 a.m. or p.m.?" ~ Debbie Johnson

(9) “The jail cell I stepped into was a dull concrete cube with one shiny spot in the center: a stainless steel toilet and basin. The beds against the wall were cement blocks covered with thin, bare pads. It was Christmas Eve 1993, but the video camera that scanned every corner of the room showed no celebration.” ~ Emma Ruth Pearson

(10) “When I turned eight years old, I started writing poetry and short stories. Even at that age, my poetry had a dark edge to it.” ~ Larry Sells

(11) “I sat in front of the TV feeling hopeless and helpless. From inside my head, my mother’s voice ordered me to kill myself.” ~ Larry Sells

(12) “It’s all gone away—the pains of my past, and my life, that day. My last words, as I gurgled and gasped, ‘God, please forgive me for all I have done . . .’” ~ Lisa Robin Sanford

(13) “I got lost on a dirt road outside of Kansas City and saw a shooting star. I heard a train whistle that signaled me to stop my car on the tracks. I was struck by a train on October 12, 1994, less than a month before my 19<sup>th</sup> birthday.” ~ Melissa Haynes

(14) “If anyone were to look at me today, no one would ever imagine what I went through. . . I’ve learned that surviving difficulty brings depth to one’s personality.” ~ Melissa Haynes

(15) “I had typed the note and had taken the pills. There was nothing left to do but die. Then I looked at the clock. My lunch break was almost over and I would soon be late. ‘Oh, no!’ I thought. ‘I will be in real trouble at work.’” ~ Phyllis Ann Johnson

PRACTICE – Write one a one (or two) sentence statement that describes the main point of your story:

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## People Telling Their Stories -- books that may be of interest:

*A Difference in the Family: Living with a Disabled Child*, by Helen Featherstone (1981). One mother's experience as a parent and advocate.

*A Different Kind of Perfect: Writings by Parents on Raising a Child with Special Needs*, by Cindy Dowling (2006). Fifty parent essays.

*After the tears: Parents Talk About Raising a Child with a Disability*, by Robin Simons (1987). A collection of parent stories.

*Changed by a Child*, by Barbara Gill (1998). The mother of a son with Down Syndrome tells her story.

*Being the Other One: Growing Up with a Brother or Sister Who Has Special Needs*, by Kate Strohm (2005). The sibling perspective.

*Count Us In*, by Jason Kingsley and Mitchell Levitz (1994, reprinted 2007). Two young men share their experiences of growing up with Down syndrome.

*The Elephant in the Playroom: Ordinary Parents Write Intimately and Honestly About the Extraordinary Highs and Heartbreaking Lows of Raising Kids with Special Needs*, by Denise Brodey (2007). A collection of parent stories.

*More Than a Mom: Living a Full and Balanced Life When Your Child Has Special Needs*, by Heather Fawcett and Amy Baskin (2006). Parents talk about how they take care of themselves while caring for their families.

*Perfectly Normal, A Mother's Memoir*, by Marcy Sheiner (2002). A parent's account of raising a son with disabilities.

*Reflections from a Different Journey, What Adults with Disabilities Want all parents to know*, Edited by Stanley D. Klein and John D. Kemp (2004). Forty essays written by adults on their experiences of growing up with a disability.

*Voices from the Spectrum: Parents, Grandparents, Siblings, People with Autism, and Professionals Share Their Wisdom*, Edited by Cindy Ariel and Robert A. Naseef (2006). Sixty personal stories about living with autism.

*Waist-High in the World: A Life Among the Nondisabled*, by Nancy Mairs (1998). A collection of stories on the experience of disability.

*You Will Dream New Dreams: Inspiring Personal Stories by Parents of Children with Disabilities*, Edited by Stanley D. Klein and Kim Schive (2001). A collection of over sixty parent stories.

*Firewalkers: Madness, Beauty and Mystery*, Edited by Cassandra Nudel; Storytellers: Myra Anderson, Carla Beck, Debra Knighton, Joni Michelle, Michelle Sese-Khalid, Lauren Spiro, and Tracy D. Stuart (2009). Stories by people with lived experience, radically rethinking their own mental illness.



# Part 8

## Resources



*"We know that equality of individual ability has never existed and never will, but we do insist that equality of opportunity still must be sought." - Franklin Delano Roosevelt*

# Family Experiences: \* Ways to Lead Change Through Telling Your Story *by Glenn Gabbard*

*NECTAS at the Federation for  
Children with Special Needs, Boston,  
Massachusetts*

I recently attended a conference about model programs serving children with disabilities and their families. After one parent gave a particularly moving account of her family's struggles, the audience took a break. During the break, I overheard a remark from another audience participant. "I don't know if I can listen to any more tear jerking stories," the person complained. "What's the point?"

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**"Stories help us connect.  
Stories also reveal the  
details, the impact of  
systems on the daily lives  
of families and children."**

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I was initially startled by the remark, then insulted. How could someone be so callous as to question the experience of a parent? As a parent of two children who receive special education services, I took this comment personally — as if the person were talking about my story — and telling me that it wasn't worth listening to. As I thought more about this situation, however, I realized the problem was not one of insensitivity, but that somehow the story had no impact on some listeners. It did not move them to think and consider using the themes and information as a prompt to change their personal and professional lives.

Whether it be to pediatricians, neighbors, legislators, therapists, conference audiences, teachers, administrators, or peers, parent of children with disabilities are frequently asked to

tell all or part of their family's life story.

Parents reveal their stories as a way to understand the past in relation to an imagined future for themselves and their children.

Stories help us connect. Stories also reveal the details, the impact of the system on the daily lives of families and children. They are a powerful way to develop relationships among parents and professionals. These stories are what connect us to our work and to each other in meaningful ways. They deepen our understanding of individuals and shared experiences. Stories often spur change in systems that seem impossible to understand. They can also help clarify disagreements.

Storytelling can also be a huge risk. By sharing a story, you can easily make a point; however, you can also be vulnerable to criticism or misinterpretation. Often, the powerful lessons that these stories reveal are not fully appreciated; often parents grow fatigued with revealing private experiences that are frequently painful to recall.

This edition of the *Early Childhood Bulletin* will focus on ways parents can shape their stories so that key themes are emphasized and improvements are made within a program or system. We'll cover some of the key issues to consider in preparing and presenting a story. We've also included some additional resources to consider if you wish to pursue this topic.

Family or parent involvement has become a hallmark of many programs and services for young children with disabilities and their families. Though being "involved" may translate into many different kinds of activities and interactions, one of the ways that parents can make a difference is by telling their story.

Outlined in the next pages are some important guidelines to consider when a story is to be told. The guidelines are designed around three phases of storytelling:

- 1. *Preparing what you have to say***
- 2. *Presenting the story***
- 3. *Following up the story and assessing the impact of your story***

It's a good idea to spend at least some time on each of these phases — even if the story that you tell is one you've told before, even if the audience to which you tell it is a familiar one.

## 1. Preparing the Story

### What's the Purpose?

Parents tell their stories in many situations, sometimes when they are invited, others when they discover the opportunity informally. Parents speak in formal settings, including parent training, professional development, keynote speeches or panels for conferences, legislative hearings, school presentations to teachers and students. A group of parents gathered at a recent Part C conference in the Midwest discussed some of the key purposes for speaking out. They mentioned the importance of using one's own experience to bring change and broaden their experience to apply to others.

- Turning grief and anger into constructive energy by talking publicly;
- Helping service providers by sharing stories for effective networks to pro-grams;
- Reinforcing values to guide a family's commitment to themselves and their children;
- Influencing public opinion by illustrating how policies affect families;
- Helping yourself and others to feel less alone in efforts to make change;
- marketing key strengths of early intervention to legislators and other policy makers;
- Entertaining others
- Sharing information that cannot be easily presented by charts or graphs with others who do not directly experience the problem;
- Raising awareness and promoting sensitivity to the experience and knowledge that grows from these experiences.

## *Where Do Family Stories Get Told?*

“As part of our Parent-to-Parent program, I often meet families who have newly diagnosed children. I find that the telling the story of my own children's births helps create an almost immediate bond.”

—Parent Support Staff Member

“Managed care had made life for kids with special/health care needs a real nightmare in our area. I told my story to my HMO's board of directors to help them understand how unique my family and others like mine are.”

Parent Representative,  
State Interagency Coordinating Council Member

### Who's the Audience

It is important to think a bit in advance about who will hear your story. A little ground work can help to make the story effective and help you be comfortable in telling it. Who is in the audience can help you to decide which parts to emphasize and, more importantly, why you are telling it. Aspects can change depending on the audience: a story about a wonderful preschool program can emphasize the need for funding with a group of legislators considering the next year's budget; to a group of preschool teachers, it can emphasize the importance of parent/teacher communication and collaboration.

### How to Organize a Story

Although most stories have a beginning, middle, and an end, they can also vary in length — some are 30 seconds long; others can last over an hour. Engaging stories rely on a beginning that “hooks” the listener who then listens for the details in the middle of the story, and awaits the punch line at the end. The *beginning* sets the stage, identifies the key characters and location, and gets the listener interested. The *middle* — where the plot thickens — adds details, examples, and interesting information to understand the key ideas and people. The *end* usually ties things together and often gives an idea of what can be learned from it — what was the theme or lesson? Sometimes this theme can be stated directly; at other times it is best to let the listeners draw their own conclusions.

## Some Questions to Consider:

- Who is your audience?
- What is their purpose?
- What is their education level?
- How many people are you speaking to?
- Age?
- Where are you presenting?
- Numbers of men and women?
- Did the audience pay to hear you?
- Numbers of parents and professionals?

## *The Organization of a Story*

### *Beginning*

1. Where does the story occur?
2. Who are the important people?
3. When did the story take place?

### *Middle*

1. What happened first, second, third, etc.?
2. What was the major conflict?
3. What were some of the key feelings elicited?

### *End*

1. What happened to conclude the story?
2. How was the problem resolved?
3. What was the key theme you learned?
4. What is the key theme you want the audience to understand?

## 2. Presenting the Story

### **Finding and Using Your Voice**

The way a story is told is often as important as the story itself. To be an effective storyteller you must have something to tell, someone to tell it to, and the ability to make yourself heard. Some suggestions on presenting:

**Relax** — Before you begin to speak, take a few deep

breaths and slowly scan the audience for familiar faces.

**Project** — With large audiences, use a microphone. In smaller groups, project your voice with confidence.

**Pace** — The most frequent problem with nerves is they make us speed up our presentations. Remember to speak calmly and slowly — just a bit slower than normal conversational style. Good listeners require some processing time.

**Eye Contact** — It's always helpful to establish clear and frequent eye contact with your audience. Even in small groups, you will find listeners who appear to be attentive; some folks may nod or smile.

It's often useful to consistently look at familiar or sympathetic faces in different parts of the audience. Look around frequently at these groups so that all of the audience feels included.

**Humor** — If appropriate, it may be helpful to use a bit of humor. Test any humorous comments with friends or colleagues to see if it works for them. Avoid making any one group (professional or parent) the butt of humorous comments. Teasing and sarcasm are not a good idea — one person's idea of a sarcastic remark might be another's insult.

### **Give the Audience Time to Ask Questions**

- Allow time at the end of your presentation for audience members to ask questions;
- If someone asks a personal question that hits a raw nerve simply say, "I find that question difficult for me and I would really rather not answer it;"
- Be comfortable saying, "I don't know, but I can find out for you" if you can't answer a question immediately.

## *Where Do Family Stories Get Told?*

"You know, as a preschool director, the connection and empathy I feel with others — parents and

professionals alike — is so powerful when I hear stories that connect somehow with my own. I get tired some-times of hearing broad statements about how important collaboration is in thinking about family centered services and pro-grams. What really makes a difference for me is when I hear stories about what happened today at the center... what kind of difference we made in the lives of the families we serve.”

—Community Preschool Director

### **Working with Props or Audio-Visuals**

- The use of AV materials such as over-head transparencies, slides, videotape selections, photographs, and computer-enhanced presentations can be helpful tools;
- Know how to work equipment your-self. You cannot depend on someone being there who knows what you need.
- Be sure the equipment is working.
- Be sure that you aids are an enhancement of what you are saying and not a distraction.

### **What if I Cry?**

For even the most experienced speakers, telling a story reveals a personal or emotional time can be difficult. Crying is, of course, perfectly acceptable; however, you need to be aware of the audience and their need to understand your emotions and your message. Also, the last audience response you want from telling your story is pity or confusion. Some tips from parent storytellers:

- If you start to cry, pause long enough to take three or four deep breaths, and then go on. The audience will appreciate your taking the time and being able to hear the rest of your presentation;
- Sometimes it is useful to explain to the audience that you need to collect your-self and that you really want them as much to understand what you have to tell them as well as how emotionally difficult it is for you;

- Mentally focus on something that makes you laugh inside; this sometimes evens out the fear and sadness enough to let you go on;
- Take a small squeezable rubber toy or some other object that will fit in the palm of your hand. If you start to cry, squeeze the toy to relieve some of the tension;
- Avoid someone “rescuing” you by interrupting and interpreting what you mean. If you still have a message to convey, take the time to collect yourself and then go on.

## ***Where Do Family Stories Get Told?***

“There is so much misinformation in our state about inclusion and natural environments. Recently, I testified at our local school committee meeting and told them how my son was part of his local little league team, even though he uses a wheel-chair. A few of the committee people came up later to thank me for showing them some real examples of what we mean by including everyone.”

— Parent Advocate

“For the first time in our state, we have to request additional funds for our Part C programs from our legislators. We’ve set up training in marketing and public awareness for parents and professionals whom we are asking to visit legislators and tell their stories.”

— Part C Coordinator

## **3. Following Up**

### **How Can I Get Feedback?**

Understanding how listeners heard your story is as important as preparing and telling it. If possible, ask

trusted colleagues or friends to listen to your presentation and to let you know what they thought of it. Prepare focused questions and listen carefully to their responses. This will help you develop the story and emphasize effective features.

Some questions to ask when getting feedback:

- What key phrases and words caught your ear?
- What was the most successful part of the presentation?
- What was the most difficult to understand?
- If you knew the story was going to be told again, in what ways could it be different?
- What were the major themes?
- How did the audience respond?
- What about volume? Pace?
- Did I use humor effectively?
- Did the story make logical sense?

If there is an evaluation form for the activity in which you were speaking, ask to review the results. If you are speaking in an informal setting, ask someone to observe how the audience responds. This can be useful in meetings, training sessions, or even small groups in which stories are told. In some school or hospital settings, families ask a friend to act as an informal “critic;” this individual can give you feedback about the interaction if it seems appropriate.

### **A Final Note to Consider**

As children grow older and more independent, it’s important to consult them about the story details and, sometimes, whether or not the story should be told at all. It’s important to remember that as children mature, some will be asked to tell their stories and should understand the importance as well as their right to keep details that they deem private to themselves.

## ***Where Do Family Stories Get Told?***

“When I need to make any big changes in my child’s Individualized Education Program (IEP), I know that there may be some resistance. I usually introduce the need for a change with a story about my child that illustrates how the change could really help. It helps the group to become more child centered rather than focusing on possible conflict between me and them.”

— *Parent Representative*  
*Local Interagency Coordinating Council (LICC)*

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## ***Resources...***

### **On Telling Your Stories**

University of Wisconsin-Madison, Waisman Center, Early Intervention Program Parent Projects (Producer), & Geier, D. and Thompson, C. (Directors). (1994). *Telling your family story... Parents as presenters [Video recording]*. Madison WI: University of Wisconsin-Madison, Waisman Center. 1 Video Cassette plus accompanying video guide. 28 min. “Telling Your Family Story... Parents as Presenters.” Video Cassette. Waisman Center, Early Intervention Parent Projects, University of Wisconsin, Madison, (1994). 28 min. Waisman Center.

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“Using Stories as Catalysts for Change.” *Parent Leadership Program Training Manual* (March 1996). Lansing MI: Michigan Department of Education, 608 west Allegan Street, Lansing, MI 48933. Phone 517-373-6335. A useful set of activities designed to foster skill and knowledge building for parent leaders

involved in policy making capabilities.

## **On Public Speaking**

Hoff, Ron and Barrie Maguire (1992). *I Can See You Naked*. New York: Andrews & McMeel.

## **Stories That Have Been Told**

Simons, Robin (1987). *After the Tears: Parents Talk About Raising a Child With a Disability*. New York: Harcourt Brace. A collection of interviews and stories from parents who share their experience of becoming parents.

Featherstone, Helen (1981). *A Difference in the Family: Living With a Disabled Child*. New York: Viking Press. A classic account of one mother's experiences as a parent and advocate.

Coles, Robert (1990). *The Call of Stories: Teaching and the Moral Imagination*. New York: Houghton Mifflin. The nationally renowned psychiatrist and humanist reflects on the importance of learning from the stories we tell and hear.

Mairs, Nancy (1998). *Waist-High in the World: A Life Among the Nondisabled*. New York: Beacon Press. A recent collection of eloquent essays reflecting on the experience of disability and change.

## **Thank You**

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ICC Parent Leadership Training Project at the Federation for Children with Special Needs.

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**\*This article taken from *Early Childhood Bulletin***

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***An Important  
Electronic  
Resource for Parents  
Serving on ICCs***

***NECTAS is pleased to  
sponsor the ICC Parent  
Leadership listserv.***

Parents serving on ICCs play a unique role. They are often perceived as representatives of large groups of parents within communities and their own personal experiences are considered, many times, to be representative of others. The purpose of this listserv is to facilitate networking and discussions related to the unique leadership challenges and opportunities, etc. The ICC Parent Leadership listserv is a closed list, which means the request to subscribe are made to a list moderator. Glenn Gabbard, NECTAS Technical Assistance Specialist at the Federation for Children with Special Needs in Boston, MA will moderate. E-mail Glenn with your subscription request at:

**[ggabbard@fcsn.org](mailto:ggabbard@fcsn.org)**

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# Innovative Practices

## Parents as Co-Instructors in Preservice Training: A Pathway to Family-Centered Practice

*Susan L. McBride*  
*Lisa Sharp*  
*Iowa State University*

*Ann Higgins Hains*  
*University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee*

*Amy Whitehead*  
*University of Wisconsin-Madison*

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*The joint participation of family members and faculty in training activities has been an effective strategy for assisting both faculty and students in gaining knowledge and skills for implementation of family-centered practice. This article describes faculty-parent co-instruction in preservice settings. Goals for co-instruction and implementation issues such as recruitment and selection of parent, preparation for co-instruction roles, student evaluation in co-instruction settings, supports for parents and faculty in co-instruction roles and diversity issues are addressed. The experiences of several co-instruction teams are described as well as the benefits and challenges of this approach for teaching about family-centered practice.*



# Part 9

## Appendix



*"You've developed the strength of a draft horse while holding onto the delicacy of a daffodil ... you are the mother, advocate and protector of a child with a disability." - Lori Borgman*

# How to Create a Captivating Presentation

by Mark McGuinness

"Creativity" isn't the first word you'd associate with the average business presentation. The phrase "Death by PowerPoint" has been a cliché for years, but sadly the same clichés are being perpetuated day in day out - slides "designed" using hideous templates, crawling with bullet points and paragraphs in tiny fonts, which presenters then read out in a monotone (turning their backs to the audience), using interchangeable meaningless corporate jargon. But there is an alternative - and you hold the keys to it.

Now, you may not consider yourself a natural presenter. Maybe, like many creatives, you are slightly shy by nature, at your most comfortable when seated at your desk or alone in the studio with your work. As an introverted poet, I can relate.

But I managed to transform myself from someone who was terrified of standing up in front of an audience to an in-demand public speaker and workshop leader. Not only that, preparing and delivering presentations is now one of the things I enjoy most about my work. Here's how I did it - and how you can do the same:

*Treat the presentation as a creative project in its own right.*

Don't think about "presenting your work," as if the creative part were limited to the work and the presentation were tacked on afterwards. Apply the same level of imagination and passion to your presentations as you do the rest of your creative work. Once you do that, you'll start discovering all kinds of interesting ways to get your message across in a persuasive fashion. Here are some tips to help you get started - and to illustrate why your creative talents are the perfect ingredients for a killer presentation.

## **1. Tap your enthusiasm.**

Everyone I've ever coached on presentation skills has told me they want to be more confident - but I tell them to forget about confidence and focus on enthusiasm. Confidence can be impressive, but it can still leave an audience cold. Enthusiasm, on the other hand, is infectious - it will be hard for audiences to resist your passion.

## **2. Get to the core of your message.**

If you're an information architect, you'll know how important it is to present the most important points clearly and simply, only introducing details when people have grasped the big picture and are ready for more. If organizing information is new to you, then here's the quick version:

**Boil your presentation down to three key points your audience must understand.** This forces you to hone your message to its essence, and helps you remember the structure of your presentation (even if the worst happens and the projector fails). It will also make the message more memorable for your audience. For more detailed advice on structuring presentations, read Cliff Atkinson's book *Beyond Bullet Points*.

## **3. Tell a captivating story.**

Next time you hear a presenter say "I'll begin by telling you a story..." watch the audience - you'll see

them relax into their chairs. They are re-entering the pleasant "story time trance" they knew and loved as kids. Their critical guard is down, and the speaker has a golden opportunity to engage them emotionally, by telling a powerful story that is relevant to her theme.

You have the same opportunity. Consider the message you are trying to get across. What problem does it solve? What's the human dimension? Who does it remind you of? Once you have the seeds of a story, practice telling and retelling it until you it makes you laugh, cringe, groan, flinch or grin as you speak. When it affects you like this, it will move your audience too.

Nancy Duarte's new book, *Resonate*, will show you how to entrance audiences with storytelling.

#### **4. Wow them with words.**

You should never try to get your presentation word perfect, by memorizing every single word - that will only make for stilted delivery. But it does pay to sprinkle it with a few choice phrases and add the odd rhetorical flourish.

It's true that "statistics can be misleading," but saying it like that won't get people to sit up straight. Try injecting a little more originality:

"There are three kinds of lies. Lies, damned lies, and statistics." -Benjamin Disraeli

For a concise guide to emulating the verbal eloquence of great speakers, read chapter 4 of Max Atkinson's book *Speech-making and Presentation Made Easy*.

#### **5. Create stunning slides.**

Slides are optional, but if you're going to use them, make them great. Even if you're not a graphic designer, it's relatively easy to stand out from the crowd of bullet points and PowerPoint templates, by licensing high-quality images from stock sites like istockphoto and Veer, or searching for Creative Commons-licensed photos from Flickr using Compfight (just make sure you read the licensing terms carefully, especially for commercial use!). And Garr Reynolds' book *Presentation Zen Design* will introduce you to basic design principles for creating slides from the images.

And if you are a graphic designer, check out Nancy Duarte's beautiful book *Slide:ology*, for a stimulating guide to the creative possibilities of slide design. Nancy and her team designed the slides for Al Gore's "Inconvenient Truth" presentation and feature film, so she knows a thing or two about creating slides with impact.

#### **6. Keep it simple.**

Simplicity - focusing on core themes and eliminating fluff - is the key to a lot of great design, great writing, great music, great dance, and great art of many kinds. It's also one of the things that make presentations powerful and memorable.

This is all you need for a truly great presentation:

- One big idea
- Three key points
- One compelling story

- One idea per slide (and no more than six words)
- One clear call to action

As with any other creative project you've executed, the challenge is to pare it down to the essentials, using your critical thinking skills.

Looking at the list, you can see it's made up of the core skills of creative professionals: crafting messages; organizing information; telling stories; choosing words carefully; and creating striking visuals. You probably don't

have all of these skills, but I'm sure you have at least one or two. Start with these, then work to acquire the others using the resources I've listed.

For example, I'm pretty good with words, and telling stories is second nature to me, but I had to study to learn how to develop visually striking slides. But if you're a designer, you can give yourself a head start on other presenters by creating a remarkable slide deck, which will boost your confidence - then start working on your verbal delivery and storytelling.

The ultimate test will be your audience's response. But a sure sign that you're on the right track will be when you start looking forward to creating your next presentation.

# How Good Are Your Presentation Skills?

## Understanding Your Impact

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Good presentations come with practice.

© iStockphoto/MistikaS

How do you feel when you have to make a presentation? Are you well prepared and relaxed, confident that your performance will have the desired impact on your audience? Or is the thought of standing on a podium, holding a microphone, enough to give you stage fright?

Enjoy it or not, presenting – in some form – is usually a part of business. Whether you get up in front of formal audiences on a regular basis, or you simply have to make your voice heard in a meeting, you're using presentation skills.

Many believe that good presenters are born, not made. This is simply not true. Sure, some people are more relaxed and comfortable speaking in front of others, but everyone can learn the skills and techniques they need to increase their level of confidence and performance when presenting.

From sales pitches to training lectures, good presentation and public speaking skills are key to many influential roles in today's business world. The good news about presenting is that you can improve with practice.

So do you have the skills you need to do a good job? And how effective are you when you have to 'perform'? Take this short quiz to help you assess your skills.

# How Good Are Your Presentation Skills?

**Instructions:**

For each statement, click the button in the column that best describes you. Please answer questions as you actually are (rather than how you think you should be), and don't worry if some questions seem to score in the 'wrong direction'. When you are finished, please click the 'Calculate My Total' button at the bottom of the test.

Statement	Not at all	Rarely	Some times	Often	Very Often
1 The visuals in my presentation match well with the information I'm communicating, and they help carry the speech.	<input type="radio"/>				
2 To prepare for my presentation, I think carefully about the message I want to send.	<input type="radio"/>				
3 Before I present, I become familiar with the room and the space in which I'll be speaking.	<input type="radio"/>				
4 I plan and practice my presentation until I can speak comfortably and fluently.	<input type="radio"/>				
5 I assume my audience knows very little, and then I give them all the information they need.	<input type="radio"/>				
6 I use an indirect, subtle approach, and I send a gentle message to my audience.	<input type="radio"/>				
7 Anxiety gives me stress, and brings negative energy to my presentation.	<input type="radio"/>				
8 I make sure that organizers or other staff prepare my equipment so that I can arrive right on time and start immediately.	<input type="radio"/>				
9 I encourage my audience to ask statements at the end of the presentation.	<input type="radio"/>				
10 I pay attention to my nonverbal behavior, like facial expressions and eye contact, to make sure I stay engaged with the audience.	<input type="radio"/>				
11 I use examples to support my points.	<input type="radio"/>				
12 My presentations sometimes take longer than planned.	<input type="radio"/>				
13 If I want to persuade an audience, I get them to think about what the future will be like if they continue without making changes.	<input type="radio"/>				
14 I focus on the main part of the presentation more than the beginning and end, because that's where most of the information is given.	<input type="radio"/>				

## Score Interpretation

Score	Comment
14-32	Your presentations are probably quite weak, and perhaps a little boring. There are lots of ways to bring more excitement to what, and how, you present. You simply need more practice developing the right kind of content, and learning to use your nervousness to create a positive flow of energy. Read this article for everyday tips on building your self-confidence. (Read <a href="#">below</a> to start.)
33-51	Your presentations are OK, and they're probably very typical of average presenters. The impression you leave isn't good or bad – it's essentially nonexistent, and your message is likely soon forgotten. Use the tips and tools in this article to add life to your presentations so that your audience remembers you for all the right reasons. (Read <a href="#">below</a> to start.)
52-70	Super job! You're giving excellent presentations. They're interesting and well suited to the audience, and you know that taking time to prepare pays off in the end. Review the strategies in this article, and challenge yourself to continue improving your presentation skills. (Read <a href="#">below</a> to start.)

## Becoming a Better Presenter

Effective presentations are a mixture of a variety of elements. You have to know what your audience wants. You need to prepare good, interesting, engaging content. You must be confident in presenting the material, you have to know how to manage your environment successfully, and you need to make sure that your message has maximum impact.

Balancing all four elements is no easy task. And, when combined with the natural anxiety often felt before giving presentations, it's no wonder that many people struggle with this skill. In fact, fear of public speaking is extremely common.

However, you don't have to remain fearful and stressed by the thought of giving a presentation. With the right tools and material, along with planning and preparation, you can present with energy and confidence.

Let's now look in detail at those four key elements of effective presentations:

1. Understanding your audience.
2. Preparing your content.
3. Delivering confidently.
4. Controlling the environment.

### Understanding Your Audience

(Statements 2, 5, 6, 9)

The success of most presentations is generally judged on how the audience responds. You may think you did a great job, but unless your audience agrees with you, that may not be the case. Before you even

begin putting your PowerPoint slides together, the first thing you need to do is understand what your audience wants. Try following these steps:

- Determine who the members of the audience are.
- Find out what they want and expect from your presentation. What do they need to learn? Do they have entrenched attitudes or interests that you need to respect? In addition, what do they already know that you don't have to repeat?
- Create an outline for your presentation, and ask for advance feedback on your proposed content.

When what you say is what your audience wants or needs to hear, then you will probably receive positive reinforcement throughout your presentation. If you see nods and smiles, or hear murmurs of agreement, for example, then this will motivate you to keep going and do a great job.

When your audience is satisfied, it doesn't matter if your delivery wasn't absolutely perfect. The primary goal of the people listening to your presentation is to get the information they need. When that happens, you've done a good job. Of course, you want to do a great job, not just a good job – and that's where the rest of the tips can help.

## Preparing Your Content

(Statements 6, 11, 13, 14)

The only way to satisfy your audience's needs and expectations is to deliver the content they want. That means understanding what to present, and how to present it. Bear in mind that if you give the right information in the wrong sequence, this may leave the audience confused, frustrated, or bored.

If you provide the information in a well-structured format, and you include various techniques to keep the audience engaged and interested, then they'll probably remember what you said – and they'll remember you.

There are a variety of ways to structure your content, depending on the type of presentation you'll give. Here are some principles that you can apply:

- **Identify a few key points** – To help the audience retain the messages you're giving them, use the chunking principle to organize your information into five to seven key points.
- **Do not include every detail** – Good presentations inspire the audience to learn more, and ask further statements to maximize their understanding of the issue.
- **Use an outline** – At the beginning, tell your audience what you intend to cover, and let them know what to expect. This helps build anticipation and interest from the start.
- **Start and end strongly** – Capture people's interest as soon as you begin, and leave them with a message they won't forget. It is tempting to put all of your effort into the main body of the presentation. However, if you do not get people's attention at the start, they will probably lose interest, and not really hear the rest anyway.
- **Use examples** – Where possible, use many examples to support your points. A lecture is often the least interesting and engaging form of presentation. Look for ways to liven things up by

telling stories, talking about real-life examples, and using metaphors to engage your audience fully.

A special type of presentation is one that seeks to persuade. Monroe's Motivated Sequence, consisting of five steps, gives you a framework for developing content for this kind of presentation:

1. Get the attention of your audience – Use an interesting 'hook' or opening point, like a shocking statistic. Be provocative and stimulating, not boring or calm.
2. Create a need – Convince the audience there is a problem, explain how it affects them – and persuade them that things need to change.
3. Define your solution – Explain what you think needs to be done.
4. Describe a detailed picture of success (or failure) – Give the audience a vision; something they can see, hear, taste, and touch.
5. Ask the audience to do something right away – Get the audience involved right from the start. Then it's usually much easier to keep them engaged and active in your cause.

To brush up on your skills of persuasion, look at The Rhetorical Triangle. This tool asks you to consider your communication from three perspectives: those of the writer, the audience, and the context. It's a method that builds credibility, and ensures that your arguments are logical.

## Delivering Confidently

(Statements 1, 4, 7, 10)

Even the best content can be ineffective if your presentation style contradicts or detracts from your message. Many people are nervous when they present, so this will probably affect your delivery. But it's the major distractions that you want to avoid. As you build confidence, you can gradually eliminate the small and unconstructive habits you may have. These tips may help you:

- **Practice to build confidence** – Some people think that if you practice too much, your speech will sound rehearsed and less genuine. Don't necessarily memorize your presentation, but be so familiar with the content that you're able to speak fluently and comfortably, and adjust as necessary.
- **Be flexible** – This is easier to do if you're comfortable with the material. Don't attempt to present something you just learned the previous night. You want to know your material well enough to answer statements. And, if you don't know something, just admit it, and commit to finding the answer.
- **Welcome statements from the audience** – This is a sign that a presenter knows what he or she is talking about. It builds audience confidence, and people are much more likely to trust what you say, and respect your message.
- **Use slides and other visual aids** – These can help you deliver a confident presentation. The key point here is to learn how much visual information to give the audience, and yet not distract them from what you're saying.
- **Keep your visuals simple and brief** – Don't use too many pictures, charts, or graphs. Your slides should summarize or draw attention to one or two items each. And don't try to fit your whole presentation onto your slides. If the slides cover every single detail, then you've probably

put too much information on them. Slides should give the overall message, and then the audience should know where to look for supporting evidence.

- **Manage your stress** – Confidence has a lot to do with managing your stress levels. If you feel particularly nervous and anxious, then those emotions will probably show. They're such strong feelings that you can easily become overwhelmed, which can affect your ability to perform effectively. A little nervousness is useful because it can build energy. But that energy may quickly turn negative if nerves build to the point where you can't control them.
- If you have anxiety before a presentation, try some of these stress management tools:
  - Use physical relaxation techniques, like deep breathing and visualization, to calm your body and ease your tension.
  - Use imagery to help keep calm, and visualize yourself delivering a successful presentation.
  - Learn strategies to build your self-confidence in general. The more assured you are about yourself and your abilities, the better you'll feel when you get up in front of people, and say what you want to say.
- When you present with confidence and authority, your audience will likely pay attention and react to you as someone who's worth listening to. So 'pretend' if you need to, by turning your nervousness into creative and enthusiastic energy.

For other tips on delivering confidently, see [Delivering Great Presentations](#), [Speaking to an Audience](#), [Managing Presentation Nerves](#), and our Bite-Sized Training session [Giving Better Presentations](#).

## Controlling the Environment

(Statements 3, 4, 8, 12)

While much of the outside environment is beyond your control, there are still some things you can do to reduce potential risks to your presentation.

- **Practice in the presentation room** – This forces you to become familiar with the room and the equipment. It will not only build your confidence, but also help you identify sources of risk. Do you have trouble accessing your PowerPoint file? Does the microphone reach the places you want to walk? Can you move the podium? Are there stairs that might cause you to trip? These are the sorts of issues you may discover and resolve by doing one or two practice presentations.
- **Do your own setup** – Don't leave this to other people. Even though you probably want to focus on numerous other details, it's a good idea not to delegate too much of the preparation to others. You need the hands-on experience to make sure nothing disastrous happens at the real event.
- **Test your timing** – When you practice, you also improve your chances of keeping to time. You get a good idea how long each part of the presentation will actually take, and this helps you plan how much time you'll have for statements and other audience interactions.
- Members of the audience want you to respect their time. If you end your presentation on time or early, this can make a huge, positive impression on them. When speakers go over their allowed time, they may disrupt the whole schedule of the event and/or cause the audience unnecessary inconvenience. Be considerate, and stick to your agenda as closely as possible.

## **Key Points**

Presenting does not have to be scary, or something you seek to avoid. Find opportunities to practice the tips and techniques discussed above, and become more confident in your ability to present your ideas to an audience. We all have something important to say, and sometimes it takes more than a memo or report to communicate it. You owe it to yourself, and your organization, to develop the skills you need to present your ideas clearly, purposefully, engagingly, and confidently.

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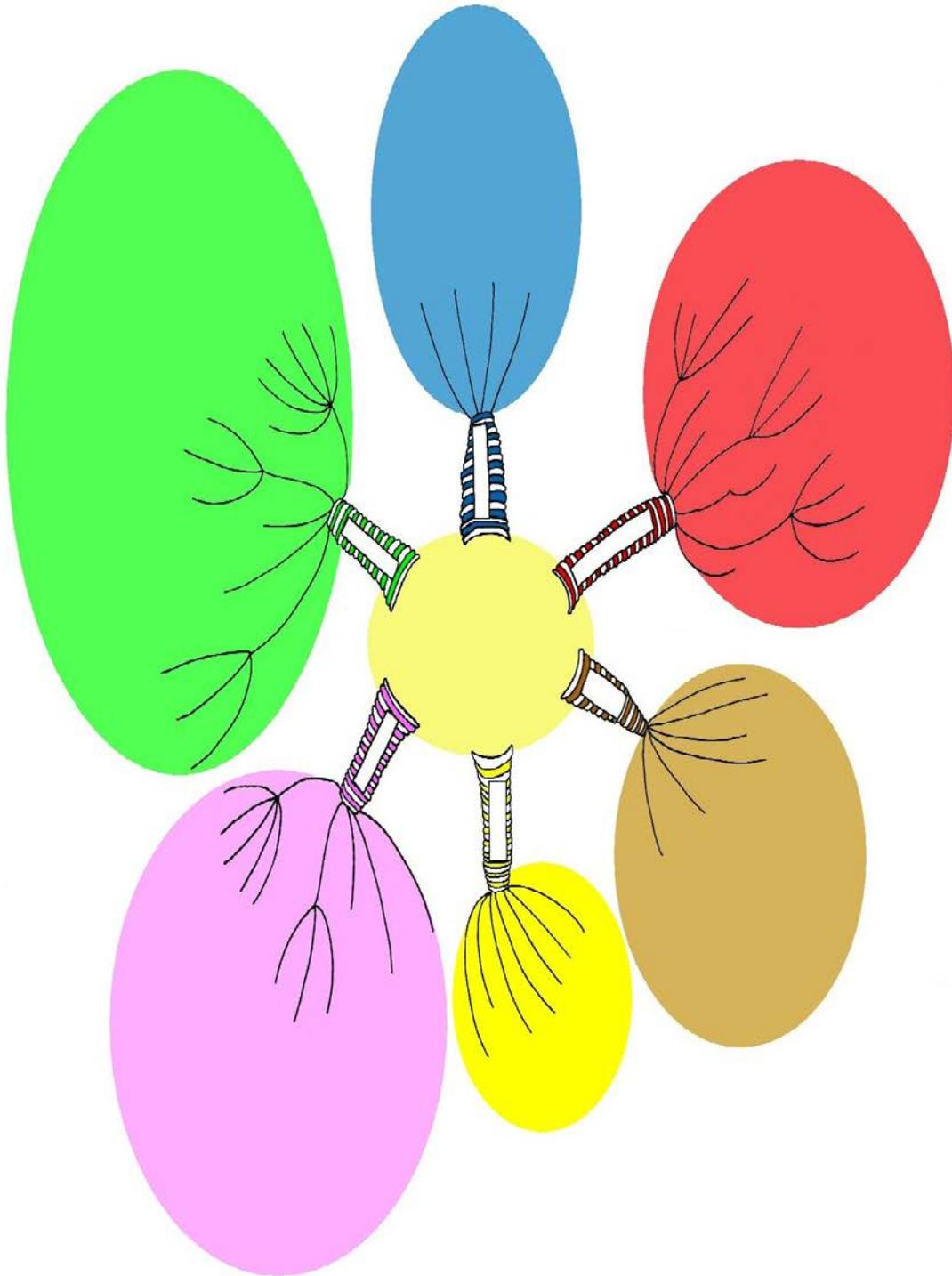
# Part 10

## Personal Work



*"There are two ways of meeting difficulties: you alter the difficulties or you alter the way you meet them." - Phyllis Bottome*





**Audience:**

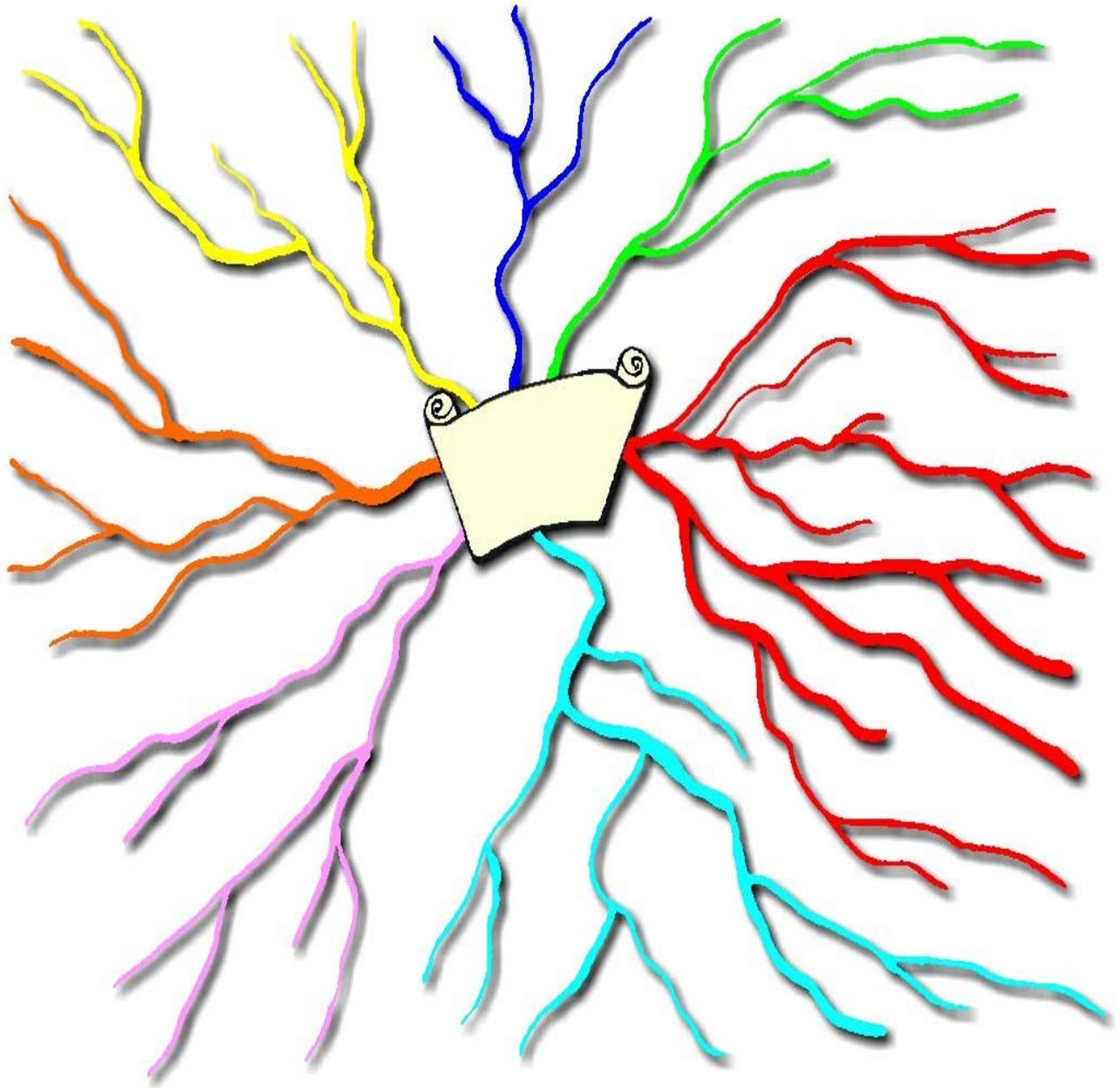
**Date:**

**Contact person:**

**Topic:**



**Basic message for presentation:**



**Audience:**

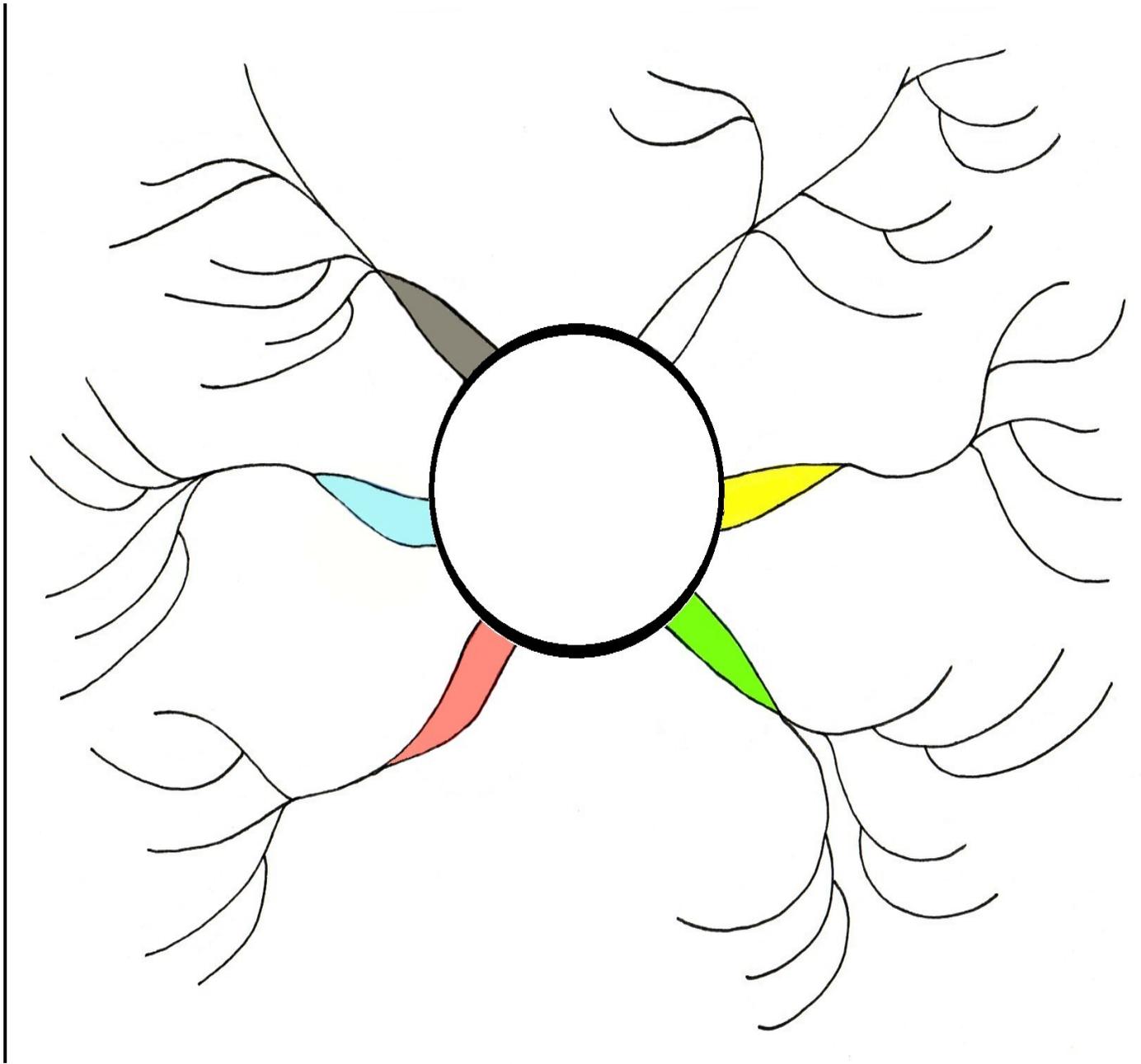
**Date:**

**Contact person:**

**Topic:**



**Basic message for presentation:**



**Audience:**

**Date:**

**Contact person:**

**Topic:**



# Feedback Form

**Strengths of Your  
Presentation:**

**Suggestions for Next Time:**

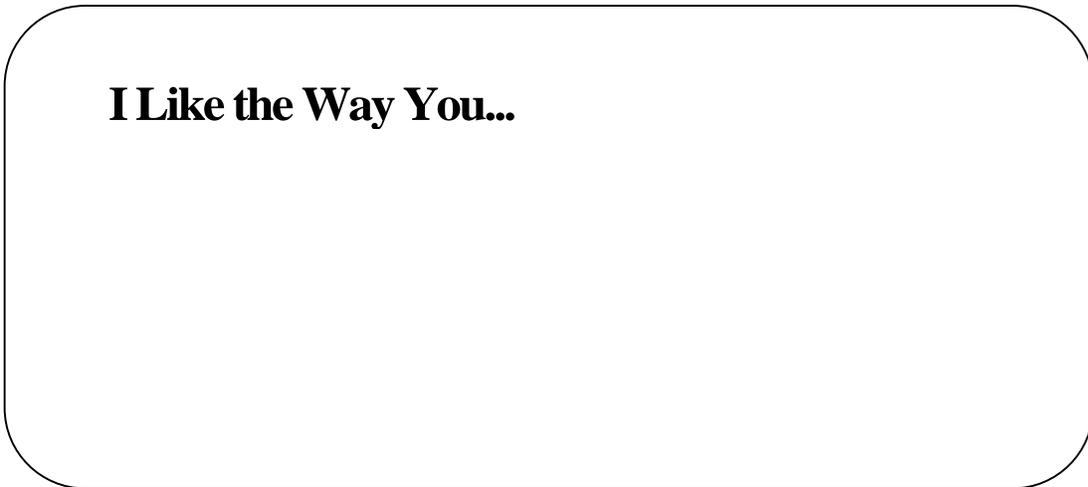
**Other Comments:**



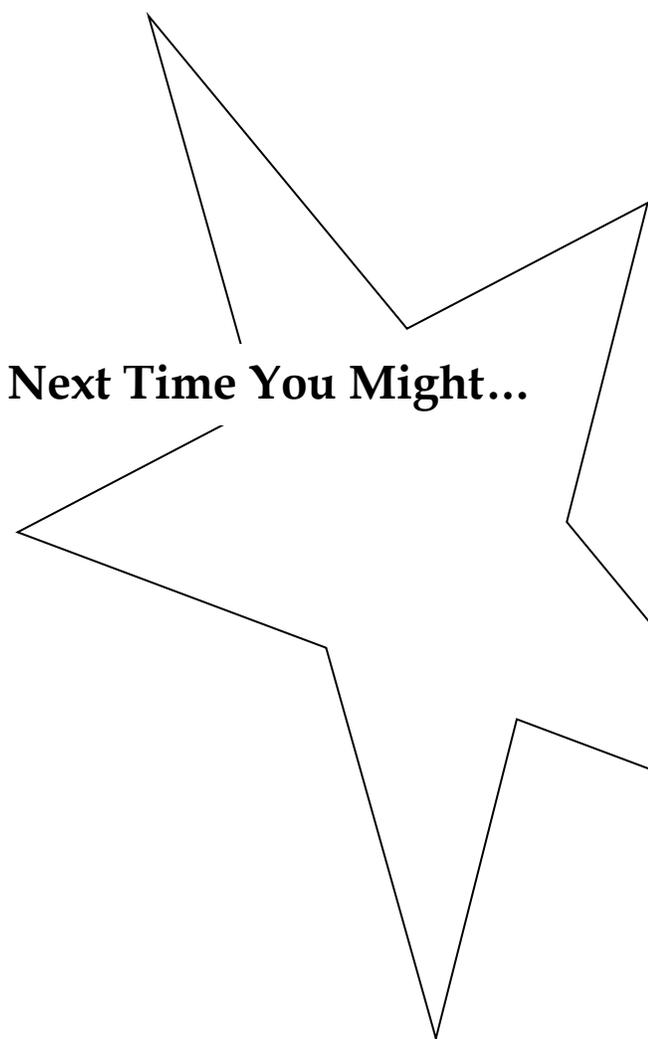
# Feedback Form

Name \_\_\_\_\_

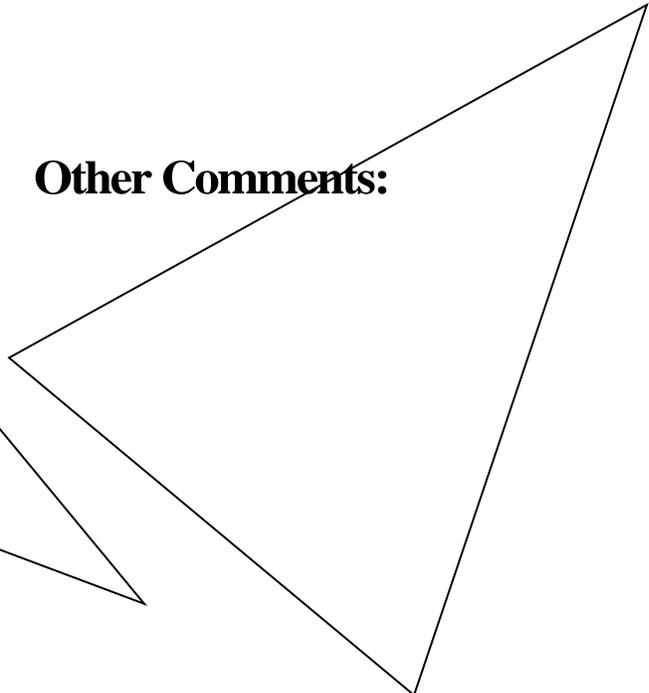
**I Like the Way You...**



**Next Time You Might...**



**Other Comments:**





## **Next Time I Tell My Story, I Will...**

A large, empty rectangular box with rounded corners and a scroll-like top edge, intended for writing a story. The box is outlined in black and has a light gray shaded area at the top left corner, suggesting a rolled-up scroll. The rest of the box is white and empty, providing space for the user to write their story.



**Parents As Presenters  
Presentation Feedback Form**

**Presenter Name** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_

**Presentation Strengths:**

**Suggestions for Improving Presentation:**



# Part 11

## Workshop Materials



*“Character cannot be developed in ease and quiet. Only through experience of trial and suffering can the soul be strengthened, ambition inspired, and success achieved.” - Helen Keller*



***“Their story, yours and mine – it’s what we all carry  
with us on this trip we take, and we owe it to each  
other to respect our stories and learn from them”. –***

**William Carlos Williams**

**Parents as Presenters Worksop 2015**

**September 25-26, 2015**