



# Crafting Your Story

ECPC

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UNIVERSITY CENTER FOR  
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DEVELOPMENTAL  
DISABILITIES

# Your ECPC Elevator Speech

- What is an elevator speech?
- An elevator speech is a clear, brief message about you or an activity, organization or issue you are involved with. It communicates who you are, what you're looking for and how your issue/activity/organization is important to others. It's typically about 30 seconds, the time it takes people to ride from the top to the bottom of a building in an **elevator**.
- This is a good skill to have when you're introducing yourself during an interview, a meeting or a networking event. People are busy and being able to communicate who you are and what you do quickly and effectively will ensure that you get your most important points across, no matter how short the conversation.

# Elements of your elevator speech

- **The Hook:** The attention getter. Did you know that families are an essential component of early childhood programs and services? I am really passionate about this because.....
- **Your name, title or role**
- **How do you help address the issue/solve the problem?**
- **Call to action**—We would love to come and talk to your staff; Or--- can I send you more information and follow up? Or---will you or your staff invite us to participate in your next training?

**You can write an elevator speech  
in**

**15 minutes.**

# ACTIVITY ONE: Minutes 1-5

- Write everything you think is important on a sheet of paper.
  - This includes everything you want someone you are meeting to know about you and your issue.
- Don't hold back here. You will edit later.
- Include:
  - What makes you different?
  - How do you stand out?
  - What contribution do you want to make to early childhood programs in your community , state, nation?

# ACTIVITY ONE: Minutes 6-10

- Take the information from your sheet of paper and **condense the information to a sticky note.**
  - Prioritize. What is not that important for a first encounter? Eliminate redundancies.
- **Summarize:** What do you do? Why do you do it? Why does it matter? What's next?

**Examples:** I am part of the ECPC family cohort. I provide insights as a family member because....;

Did you know that.....?; I would love to meet with folks in your agency to talk about this or send you more info or....

# ACTIVITY ONE: Minutes 11-15

- **SPEAK OUT LOUD!!! LOOK IN A MIRROR!**
- Careful not to use jargon.
- Keep your sticky note where it will be accessible and look at it every day! Tweak as you need to.

# Assignment

- During an event or meeting in your state use your elevator speech on one attendee you do not know.
- Make any adjustments based on that interaction.



# Know Your “Why”: Telling stories is powerful!

- We appreciate fact, logic, wit—but we FEEL stories
- Stories help us connect through shared experiences, beliefs and purpose
- Your story will allow your audience to know you, and to help you influence behavior and inspire action
- Your story can be a gift to another person. They may benefit from your perspective, learn from your mistakes, or be inspired and empowered by your tenacity.

# Find Your Story

- Look in your experiences
- Recognize stories that are happening right now and pay attention to your emotions when these events are happening
- Capture your stories in real time: carry a notebook or take notes on your phone. Use photos, video or a voice recorder.
- Don't judge your stories as they are happening. Give your memories and ideas an opportunity to live a little before you label them.
- Look for your stories in the turning points or big, life changing moments

# MOTH Story: The Accident by Ophira Eisenberg

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vt24Kj2MK\\_k](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vt24Kj2MK_k)

- What images made this a great story? What did you see?
- How was humor part of this story?
- What emotions did you feel?
- What did you learn?

# Telling Your Story: Don't be Afraid of Difficult Stories

Difficult conversations are not necessarily enjoyable, but sometimes they are necessary.

*“In the middle of every difficulty lies opportunity.”* Winston Churchill

# Craft Your Story

- Telling a story and telling a compelling, authentic story are two different things. Know the difference.
- Telling your story involves time, energy and attention, but effective storytelling requires effort and practice.
- The art of storytelling will make your message resonate and allow you to take the basics of your story and teach a particular skill, strategy or guiding principle.

# Storytelling that Teaches

- Keep the presentation short, focused and teachable
- How to deal with problem participants: defer questions, “parking lot”, time constraints
- It’s okay to say “I don’t know” or “I had not considered that”. It’s okay to ask the audience for their own ideas on how to resolve an issue.
- Make sure the story’s conclusion makes sense. Does it fully convey the main teaching point? Does it relate well to the rest of the story? Is it too abrupt? Is it easy to understand? Does it touch the heart?

# Learn how to frame an issue

- Framing : How an issue is characterized to an audience
- Issue framing refers to the selective exposure of information to an audience with the intent of shaping their understanding of an issue.
- To frame a story is to withhold some information or prioritize some facts over others.
- It is the selection of, and emphasis on, particular attributes for the audience when talking about something.



# Building Skills as Storytellers

- Learn to organize your information
- Practice, practice, practice- this is critical for families who are new trainers and even for those who are more seasoned.
- Solicit honest feedback on whether the story will teach the topic you are focused on.



# Make Your Message Matter Through Your Story

- Choose stories that illustrate an intentional and deliberate point.
- The story will illustrate your point and bring it to life
- Your story should make sense to your audience in the context of what you are teaching or seeking to accomplish
- If your stories are misplaced or all over the place, your message will be lost.

# Understand what a personal story is and is not

- The story has to be yours
- This is not a hypothetical ( Imagine if you will....a galaxy far away...)
- You can illustrate a point with a hypothetical, but if you are doing your job as a storyteller, you won't have to create a hypothetical
- You cannot sum up an effective personal story in six words. You need adequate time and space to build your narrative, and your audience needs to invest time in your story.
- You must lead your audience along the path you want them to take and this takes time. Otherwise, they may draw unintended conclusions.

# Build your own narrative

- Families engage in cycles that do not always come with a beginning, middle and end because families are complex
- Give an adequate description to set the foundation of your story, but do not overwhelm with details. They need intentional, relevant and specific detail.
- Describe the important people in your story that allows your audience to know and care about them. Help them create images about the setting of your story.
- Focus on the turning point: The moment things changed. It can be big, small, positive or negative. But something happened and reality changed.

# Include the New Reality

- This is the resolution
- Did anything change, and if so what?
- What did you learn? Who did you become? How could this situation have been improved? Are you wiser, stronger?
- What should the audience learn from your story?
- This is the part of your story that makes or breaks your authenticity.
- Every detail, decision, person or plot that you presented in your storytelling was there intentionally because you lived it and learned from it.

# Storytelling Traps I

- Just because you lived it chronologically, you don't have to tell it that way. Organize your story so it makes the most sense to your audience.
- You don't need to include every detail. You will need to take some of the good stuff out. A story that "tells it all" is likely to be ineffective. Focus on the details that enhance the purpose of the story and illuminate your message.
- Is this a story of strength and survival, joy and happiness, or a sad story? Our stories can be messy and difficult to tell. Stay positive and solutions focused even if it's a story about overcoming obstacles.

# Storytelling Traps II

- The journey your audience takes should be different from your experience. It should be uplifting and a teachable moment for them.
- End strong. Your audience should know you have reached the end of your story. They should have a concrete takeaway. If they don't, your story is little more than a missed opportunity.

# **ACTIVITY TWO: CRAFTING YOUR STORY**

**Your story should touch on a personal experience with early childhood services for your child and/or other families. It could address the positive impact of well trained personnel or the difficulties in working with personnel who are not comfortable engaging with family members.**

# Crafting Your Story

- 45 Minutes: Use the handout to guide you in telling your story. For this activity, your story should be not more than 10 minutes.
- Read it over silently, or out loud if you can find a private place to practice.



# PRACTICE, Revise, PRACTICE AGAIN

- Your story is a process
- Change it for your audience, for your outcome or teaching objective

TELL

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