

# STYLELIFE

## On Generating Stories

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### 1 Story Generation

You will meet three types of people in your social interactions:

1. Talkers
2. Exchangers
3. Listeners

All Talkers require is a little guidance to talk about things that lead the relationship to a place you want. Exchangers and Listeners, on the other hand, will require you to open your mouth and express snapshots of your life that develop attraction and rapport. You will need to tell your stories.

#### Step 1: Choose Your Emotional Theme.

Some emotional themes are better for attraction stories:

Discovery	Gain	Surprise
Wonder	Happiness	Amusement
Courage	Pride	Pleasure
Boldness	Mystery	Desire

Some emotional themes are better for rapport building stories:

Completion	Pity	Innocence
Modesty	Closeness	Caution
Patience	Relaxation	Composure
Security	Togetherness	Privacy
Respect	Appreciation	Love
Familiarity	Hope	Competence

Some emotional themes are better left for cases where your partner initiates a similar theme first, and you need to reciprocate to show commonality:

Confusion	Loss	Unhappiness
Weariness	Cowardice	Repentance
Incompetence	Pain	Anger
Stress	Fear	Nervousness
Envy	Hatred	Despair

When relating one of these negative stories, it's best to install a turn-around in the story to bring the conversation back to more positive topics.

Choose one primary, and two secondary emotional themes for your story.

#### Step 2: Choose Your Topic.

Within your chosen theme, select a topic for your story. Make sure your topic is relevant and relatable to your audience. A relevant topic is one that is important to your audience. What topics are important to women in general? Women's Magazines offer an abundance of topical ideas:

# STYLELIFE

## On Generating Stories

---

1. Sex and Love
2. Family and Parenting
3. Celebrities and Entertainment
4. Well Being, Health, Fitness and Diet
5. Style, Fashion and Beauty
6. Food Recipes
7. Home Decor

Once you get to know your partner better, you can select customized topics that will be interesting to her, but when you are just starting from scratch, it's best to stay with a safe and sane topic.

A relatable topic is one that your audience can understand and relate to. Just because you are an astrophysicist does not mean that your audience wants to hear stories about Quantum Theory. Or, if you *really* want to discuss Quantum Theory, you should find a way to break it down, and make it relatable to the lay person. Just be sure and test the story out on a few of your friends before you spring your revolutionary ideas on a stranger.

### **Step 3: Source Your Story.**

The best source for your story is your own life experience. If you absolutely, positively are not able to think of a time in your life that reflects the emotional theme and topic you want to express, you can use other people's stories. Just remember to preface the story with,

*"That reminds me of a time when my friend..."*

Or some such reference that tells how this story wasn't happening to you personally. If you do choose to adopt someone else's story, be sure to customize it to be congruent with your personality.

### **Step 4: Write Out Your Story.**

You must write out your story. This is necessary because we will be revising it later, and if it isn't written out, then we won't have anything to revise, will we! ?

Start with short stories. Television commercials are thirty seconds for a reason. The reason is because the MTV generation has a very short attention span. Human Resource managers tell us that they favor an answer to an interview question that is one to two minutes in length. So, for starters, let's make our stories anywhere from thirty seconds to two minutes long.

Given that we speak an average of 150 words per minute, this would translate to a length of 75 to 300 words for your first stories.

### **Step 5: Inject Humor.**

Laughter is the body's way to release tension. It's a great workout as well as great fun! You can generate laughter in your audience through the use of humor. Memorizing jokes from the internet and inserting them into your story is a coarse way to go, but it is better than nothing. It's best to learn to create jokes on your own.

A joke simply consists of a setup and a punch. A setup is a short sub-story that moves in one direction, and a punch is a quick, unexpected change to another, sometimes opposite direction. For example, here is a joke I wrote in my Procrastination Story:

# STYLELIFE

## On Generating Stories

---

Setup:

*"You know how people with the same problem get together, and form like a group..."*

Punch:

*"to drag each other down."*

See? This is unexpected. You expect me to be talking about groups like Alcoholics Anonymous or Procrastinators Anonymous that help their members, and lift each other up, out of their rut.

I thought about these groups and made an observation that they sometimes just make each other miserable, always talking about each other's problems, and getting everyone even more depressed. Humor based on truthful observation is funny.

There are plenty of resources for you to develop your funny bone, including books on stand-up comedy and Comedy Classes.

### **Step 6: Perform Character Voices and Impersonations.**

The characters in your story will seem more real if you use the voice of the character instead of your own voice. Proper use of character voices and impersonations is also a great way to add humor.

Doing voices may feel like a stretch for some people, but the rewards are worth it! Practice impersonations of your favorite stand-up comedians, and celebrities. In order to do a proper impersonation, you have to throw yourself into the role, and do it whole-heartedly. If you have any nervousness or trepidation about performing the character's voice or impersonation, it will show through and be magnified.

Don't be afraid of sucking. You might suck the first few times. That's OK. You won't die. You won't get thrown in jail. And you won't get maimed. Remember, it's part of the process. Practice first with friends and ask for evaluations on how you could improve your performance. Your persistence will pay off.

### **Step 7: Get Animated !**

While a few guys should tone down their expressions, the vast majority of guys need to amp-up their dynamic energy levels to best get their story across. As you act-out the story, associate strongly with your role and the role of the other characters. A dull and wooden story is sure to put your audience to sleep. Enhance your personality and charisma by enlivening your tools of expression:

# STYLELIFE

## On Generating Stories

---

1. Voice
2. Facial Expression
3. Hand and Body Gestures

### **Step 8: Speak OUT !**

Submodalities are a useful tool when remembering aspects of a sensory memory. They can also be helpful to examine your vocal qualities:

1. Quiet or Loud.
2. Soft or Harsh.
3. High-Pitch or Low-Pitch.
4. Slow-Tempo or Fast-Tempo.
5. Your Voice or a Character's Voice.

Different parts of your story will require different submodalities of your speech. Every time you rehearse your story, inject a little more feeling and expression by pushing the variations on these submodalities. When you, or a friend, feel your performance is "over the top". Tone it back a bit.

It is important to push yourself past the limit of reasonableness so that you can return to an appropriate spot. If you are changing your storytelling style to be more animated, you may not yet know just what is "too much" and what is "enough". You will need to boldly charge forward into uncharted territory outside your comfort zone if you want to develop this ability. To straighten a crooked metal rod, you first have to bend it a bit the other way. Then, when you let go, the metal rod will naturally return to a straight position. Be the metal rod.

### **Step 9: Show Your Face.**

Anthropologists have identified six basic facial expressions that are universal to all cultures:

1. Joyful Happiness
2. Surprise
3. Anger
4. Fear
5. Sadness
6. Disgust

Pull out your friend Mr. Mirror and practice your facial expressions as you tell your story. You can also try these fun variations:

7. Glare (squint with contempt)
8. Laughing
9. Puzzled Concentration
10. Desire (another squint, this time with lust)
11. Sticking your Tongue Out
12. Pouting

Do you have an elastic face, or is it going to take some effort to loosen up those facial muscles and let the expressions run free? Only the mirror or a friend will tell you.

# STYLELIFE

## On Generating Stories

---

### **Step 10: Take Your Hands Out of Your Pockets.**

Deaf people have developed an entire Sign Language using only their hands. So, you should be able to assist your story with expressive, descriptive, expansive hand gestures.

An entire separate article could be written on this topic alone. I'm going to leave it up to your imagination to innovate ways of using your hands to convey the events in the story in an entertaining fashion. And don't forget the occasional kino test.

### **Step 11: Elicit Audience Participation.**

Nobody likes to be lectured. Everybody likes to participate in a two-way conversation. Punctuate your story with the following phrases to get your audience nodding or shaking their head and following along actively with your story:

*"Yeah?"*  
*"Right?"*  
*"You feel me?"*  
*"See what I'm sayin'?"*  
*"Ya' know?"*  
*"Has that ever happened to you before?"*  
*"Ya' know what I mean?"*  
*"You get it?"*

Don't forget to pause after you've requested a response, to actually read their status and make sure your audience is on-board. Don't rail-road your audience. You can actually write these interjections into your story so that when you are rehearsing them you will remember where they belong. Use these opportunities of reading your audience to adjust to their energy level. It is OK to have an energy level just higher than that of your audience, but if you are way off-base, you will alienate them.

### **Step 12: Insert Silence.**

In sheet music, a "rest" is a musical notation that tells the performer to pause. The shape of the rest also determines the duration of the stillness. The written word you are reading now contains commas, periods, and paragraph breaks to help you take mental time-outs and digest the flow of information.

One of the most common mistakes new storytellers make is that they under-emphasize their pauses. Frequently, they are so nervous and anxious to plow-through and get the story over with, that they drive full speed ahead in a mad rush to the finish line. That is not what storytelling is about. Even MTV had a "Best Dramatic Pause" category that underscored the value of this performance device.

In addition to pausing after querying your audience as suggested above, find places in your story to insert silence to enhance suspense. Relax. Enjoy your story, and lengthen the pauses just to the point of becoming uncomfortable. Remember, we are forming new habits, so what feels uncomfortable at first, may feel just right to your audience. Your audience will thank you.

# STYLELIFE

## On Generating Stories

---

### **Step 13: Consider Short-Term and Long-Term Attraction.**

Laughter, excitement and surprises provide a good medium for short-term attraction. But what will they remember about you tomorrow? Find ways to display integrity, charisma, and intrigue that will evoke long-term attraction that will help you to get the call-back. Be more than just an entertaining clown. You can also make round-about allusions to social value in your story by casually touching-on themes of money, power, and an abundance of beautiful women.

### **Step 14: Evaluate Truth versus Fiction.**

It's too bad Superman can not tell a lie, because that means he also can not tell a Tall Tale. Tall Tales have been a part of American folk literature for centuries, spinning stories of exaggerations and embellishments that have entertained generations.

Although truth is stranger than fiction, there is nothing wrong with adorning your story with descriptions, facts and figures which stretch the truth and bend the rules. You are not sworn in to a court of law or at a job interview; you are in a social interaction, where captivating stories may contain an element of the Tall Tale.

### **Step 15: Review Beginnings and Endings.**

Beginnings and endings are everything. Meditation practice belongs at the beginnings and endings of your day for maximum benefit. If you want to schedule an interview, try to get the first spot or the last spot in the day so that you will be remembered. First impressions have proven to be critical in sizing-up character. And proper conclusions to your story will either leave your audience with a smile on their face, or a frown. Stand-up comedians frequently put their best joke at the end of their set so they can leave the crowd on a high-note.

The beginning of your story should hook your listener's attention and evoke their curiosity. It should be short and sweet. It could be a super-short summary of your story that leaves out the final punch. Pay attention to news headlines to get some ideas. Also analyze how television news shows leave you with a brief intrigue hoop to jump through, that will make you want to watch the entire news broadcast later. They irritate the hell out of me, but I still watch!

The ending of your story needs to wrap-up loose ends in a nice tight package. If you can fashion it into a big punch then it will have even more power.

When I hear boring stories, I attach a dog-leg into the story that will give it a final sudden turn of events.

Good Story:

*"I adopted a child."*

Better Story:

*"There was this child that was about to be sent to a foster home, and at first I thought there really is nothing I can do. Ya' know?... But then, just on the last day, before child was about to go into the State's Custody, I adopted it!"*

You see how I create suspense and release it by first traveling down a dark, hopeless road, and then at the last moment resurrect the scene with the light of my action!

# STYLELIFE

## On Generating Stories

---

At the very minimum, have your ending conclude with the moral of the story, another summary device, or an open-ended question to summon a companion story from your partner.

### **Step 16: Install Intrigue Hoops.**

Barnum & Bailey used to lead toy poodles through hula-hoops with kibbles and bits. After the poodles had been conditioned to jump through the hoops they put on a fine and dandy show for their audience. You can leverage people's natural tendency to satisfy their curiosities by installing intrigue hoops into your stories.

If you have a roommate, you can study intrigue hoops with the following exercise: Give your roommate the remote control and tell them to turn the Television off while you are watching it at any random time in the next 24 hours without any warning. The moment they flip the switch, ask your self these questions:

1. How do I feel?
2. Am I missing something?
3. What was the story about?
4. Are there any unanswered questions? What are they?
5. What is left hanging?
6. Why do I want to turn the TV back on?
7. What is so intriguing that I want to find out about?

If you "aren't getting the signal" repeat the exercise. If your roommate is really clever, they will shut the set down just before a climax in the story. That is the best place to install intrigue hoops.

In advanced storytelling, you can combine sub-plots. If you build one of these subplots to a climax, and just before the climax is resolved you suddenly switch to another sub-plot, you will have created an intrigue hoop.

Since this is an intermediate level technique you don't have to try it your first time out. Just let the seed germinate in your mind and when you are ready let the flower bloom. Don't forget to share your story with the forum at [StyleLife.COM](http://StyleLife.COM) for evaluation.

There are other ways to generate information hunger. By making vague references or allusions to an important person, place, or thing and leaving out key details you can spark curiosity. Remember the exercise of concealing an object in your fist in front of a toddler who tries to pry your fingers open? If it's important and it's unavailable, it must be interesting! "Who dun it?" novels and Monster Movies are classic examples. How long did they take to show the monster's face in Alien (1979) or Godzilla (1998)? A freaking long time! That's how long!

Finally, incomplete lists are a quick and easy way to generate intrigue:

*"So she said she had three important things to tell me, first she told me to feed the cat, second she said to water the plants... then the phone rang!"*

### **Step 17: Cut the Fat.**

William Strunk Junior was a literary genius who loved to cut the fat from his writings. He analyzed every paragraph, sentence, and word to see if it truly added value to the story, or needed to be surgically removed.

# STYLELIFE

## On Generating Stories

---

You need to do the same thing. As in most behavior modifications, you will need to be super critical on your story and not get attached to irrelevant elements. Enlist the help of a fiend to get a fresh opinion on what belongs and what doesn't.

The invention of the remote control has crystallized the power people have to "switch-off" of the channel they were watching. Prevent getting mentally tuned-out by trimming the "stuffing" in your story.

Professional presenters teach that you should never have more than seven rows or columns of information per slide. Similarly, your story should fit nicely into no more than seven bullet points. If it takes more than seven, your story definitely needs to be cut down to size.

### **Step 18: Memorize Your Story.**

The StyleLife.COM eBook on Memorizing Openers also applies to memorizing stories. Here is a quick recap:

1. Visualize with submodalities.
2. Repeat the story out loud until you don't need the source document.
3. Review your presentation in a mirror.
4. Make your dress rehearsal simulate a real world environment.
5. Perform for your family and friends.

### **Step 19: Raise the Curtain on Opening Night.**

Don't fall in love with stocks in your portfolio and don't get attached to your story. Be flexible. If a polite interruption occurs that properly moves with the flow of the conversation go with it. Of course, if someone is being rude, it is important to stand your ground. But if you are not a perfect storyteller yet, and perhaps someone thought you were done talking and innocently started a new thread, don't talk over the other person just to finish your story. You could always return to it later, or let it go altogether.

If a story isn't working for you, don't be afraid to 86 it, and start over fresh.

### **Step 20: Take it One Step at a Time.**

I have presented many qualities of the perfect story. Do not feel like you have to tell the perfect story the first time out in the field. Pick one of the qualities you want to express through your story, and practice expressing that quality until it feels natural, and begins to become part of your unconscious habits and personality. Then choose another quality and work on it. By using this bit-by-bit approach you can become a perfect storyteller in no time!

By Don Diego Garcia for Stylelife