

# Seek and Speak Your Story Workshop

*"Tell me a fact, and I'll learn.  
Tell me a truth, and I'll believe.  
Tell me a story and it'll live in my heart forever."*

*Indian Proverb*



# Seek and Speak our Story

## Our Workshop Goal



We have all grown up with stories. They are told every day on television, movie screens, Broadway stages, off-Broadway stages, around the kitchen table and office water cooler. Stories are all around us.

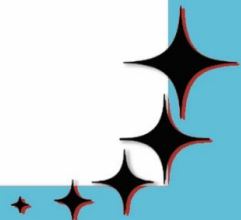
We have all enjoyed stories. In our childhood through our adult lives, we likely have favorite stories that we love listening to or telling to others. Some of the stories make us double over with laughter, some of them make us question life and the world issues, some of them help us learn more about cultures different from ours, or about men and women who have accomplished so much decades before our lives.

A story can be defined as a narrative or tale of real or fictitious events.

In this workshop, we will be focusing on telling a few of our true stories.

We will be seeking and sharing Powerstories.

Powerstories are personal true stories we choose to tell to give as a gift to our audience.



# Seek and Speak our Story

## Storytelling



Storytelling is the conveying of events in words, images, and sounds, often by improvisation or embellishment. Stories or narratives have been shared in every culture as a means of entertainment, education, cultural preservation, and to instill moral values. Crucial elements of stories and storytelling include plot, characters, and narrative point of view.

### Storytelling

is

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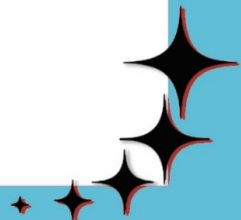
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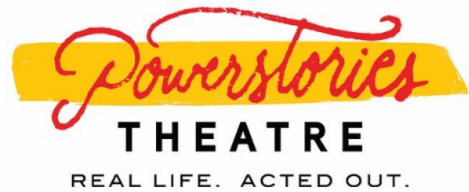
Stories have been shared in every culture as a means of  
entertainment,  
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cultural preservation, and to  
instill moral values.

Crucial elements of storytelling include  
plot,  
characters,  
narrative point of view.



# Seek and Speak our Story

## Storytelling – Getting Started



Telling true stories can be very simple for some and for others overwhelming. The key to getting telling stories for whatever purpose is to....GET STARTED. Try one...then try another one and another.

Telling stories is meant to be fluid. Every time you tell the story it could be slightly different. Stories connect us with others...so let's start connecting.

Select one of the topics below and see if any of them could be a true story.

**My first job**

**My beautiful grandmother**

**Riding a bicycle**

**The fabulous pet story**

**The worse mistake I made**

**That dress I wore!**

**Getting my driver's license**

**The most romantic story**

**The Dentist Story**

**The venturing forth story**

**The worse meal I ever made**

**Adventure – that's me!**

**My first kiss**

**The night I was terrified**

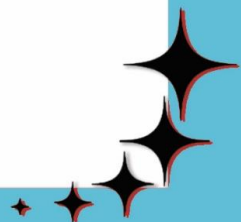
**The worse storm I was in**

**Dinner time with my family**

**My performance nightmare**

**My crazy girlfriend story**

**My favorite vacation story**



# Seek and Speak our Story

## Storytelling - Theme



For this course, we will be telling several small stories for a total of up to seven minutes. Each story will be short and meaningful. Each story will be from a different time in your life.

The element that will tie these stories together is a theme that you will determine.

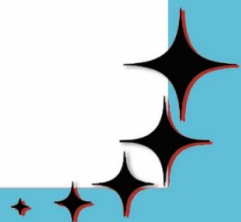
Theme - The theme in a story is its controlling idea or its central insight. It is the author's underlying meaning or main idea that she is trying to convey.

You will be telling three stories tied together with a common theme. We will discuss HOW they are told (crafting them, the story arc, and order) later in the course.

Telling a true story of youth

Telling a significant or life-changing true story

Telling a resolution story



# Seek and Speak our Story

## Story Theme – Your Values

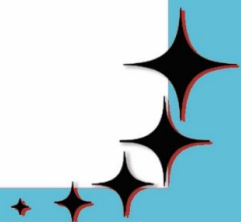


You will be the main character of your story, so your story needs to represent your values. Values are the intangible elements that give substance and meaning to our lives. They anchor us to our culture, country, family, and friends.

Identifying significant values — and updating them as we learn and grow — gives us a powerful tool for creating a fulfilling and satisfying life, and a satisfying story that we want to tell over and over!

**What are your values?** Circle the values below that are most important to you. Add as many as you like...

Achievement	Humor	Togetherness
Aesthetics	Integrity	Wisdom
Affection	Intelligence	_____
Altruism	Leisure Time	_____
Appearance	Love	_____
Arts (music, painting, writing, etc.)	Loyalty	_____
Authority	Money	_____
Autonomy/personal	Openness	_____
Career	Patriotism	_____
Community	Personal Growth	_____
Community	Physical Health	_____
Creativity	Pleasure	_____
Dependability	Power	_____
Emotional Health	Privacy	_____
Environment	Recognition	_____
Expertise	Relationships	_____
Fairness	Religion	_____
Family	Risk-taking	
Fortitude	Security	
Freedom	Service	
Fun	Socializing	
Home	Solitude	
Honesty	Spirituality	
	Status	



# Seek and Speak our Story

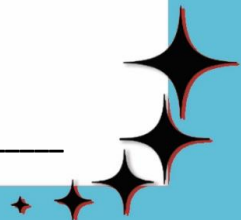
## Story Theme – Your Strengths



You are the main character of your story, so your story may also represent your strengths. Strengths of character and conviction — the building blocks of our personality — come in many forms. They help us relate to the world, keep us going in the face of challenges, and pull us back on track when we become distracted. Often we recognize strengths in ourselves only when we notice them (or the *lack* of them) in others. Often we simply take our gifts for granted.

**What are *your* strengths?** Following is a list of special traits and characteristics. Circle the ones that help describe you... *Are you...?*

- |                 |              |               |                |
|-----------------|--------------|---------------|----------------|
| a good listener | empathetic   | intelligent   | relaxed        |
| accepting       | encouraging  | Intuitive     | responsible    |
| achieving       | energetic    | Knowledgeable | Responsive     |
| active          | engaging     | likable       | self-aware     |
| adventurous     | enterprising | logical       | self-confident |
| affectionate    | entertaining | motivated     | serious        |
| ambitious       | enthusiastic | nurturing     | sincere        |
| animated        | exacting     | objective     | skillful       |
| approachable    | expressive   | observant     | spontaneous    |
| articulate      | extroverted  | open-minded   | steady         |
| assertive       | fair         | optimistic    | stimulating    |
| attractive      | focused      | orderly       | strong         |
| caring          | friendly     | organized     | sympathetic    |
| charming        | funny        | outgoing      | tactful        |
| compassionate   | gentle       | patient       | talented       |
| composed        | Genuine      | persistent    | thoughtful     |
| confident       | good-natured | persuasive    | tolerant       |
| congenial       | gracious     | precise       | trusting       |
| conscientious   | happy        | productive    | truthful       |
| considerate     | Helpful      | prudent       | unpretentious  |
| consistent      | humorous     | quick         | vigorous       |
| Creative        | imaginative  | rational      | warm           |
| curious         | independent  | realistic     | zany           |
| Dedicated       | insightful   | reassuring    |                |







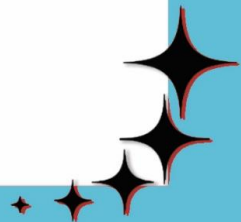
# Seek and Speak our Story

## Story Theme – A Purpose



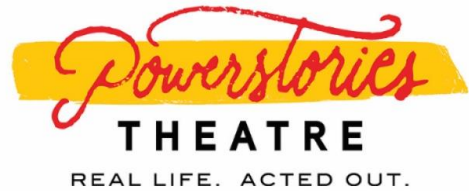
**What purpose resonates with you?** This exercise is here to encourage you to consider and explore a purpose in your life. This is a rough first draft, and over time you may discover many purposes. So fill in the blank with one or more of the words below — or find words that better suit your purposes:

*A major purpose in my life is to \_\_\_\_\_.*



# Seek and Speak our Story

## Story Ideas



For our next meeting complete the following:

The theme of my stories will be \_\_\_\_\_ or

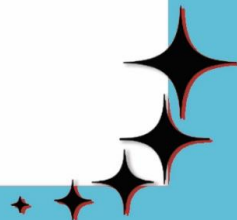
\_\_\_\_\_

or \_\_\_\_\_.

What possible stories can you tell to support this theme?

### *Story Ideas*

1.	Example – the time I fell off a “cliff” when I was 5 years old and got into big trouble.
2.	Example – the time I realized at age 12 we could not afford a clarinet so I could not take music classes.
3.	Example – the time at age 20 when I decided to drop out of college and go to work full time instead.
4.	Example – my decision at age 31 to marry a man with children
5.	Example – my decision at age 43 to quit my full-time job to find my passion.

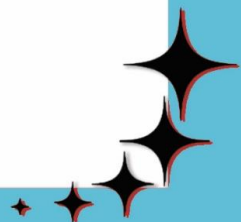


# Seek and Speak our Story

Story Ideas

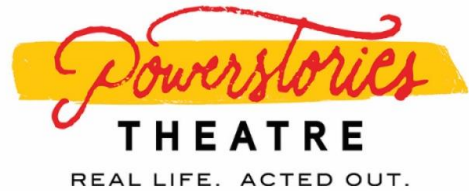






# Seek and Speak our Story

What is a Powerstory?



**Powerstory – A Powerstory is a narration of events where you experienced a truth that you want to share for the positive growth of others.**

A Powerstory has many forms, just like a “story” has many forms. However, there are some criteria for telling an effective Powerstory.

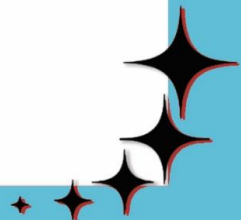
A Powerstory is a story where **YOU** are the main character. This is known as telling your story in first-person narrative and it is writing from the “I” point of view.

A Powerstory is a **GIFT** you are willing to give your audience. The story is no longer just about you; it is an experience you walked through, but now it is time to release it and “let it go” so others can learn.

A Powerstory is about a **TRUTH** you experienced. It has a clear message. It is often termed as a “compelling” story. A story of an event that throws life out of balance, the need to restore balance, and the “object of desire” one pursues to restore balance.

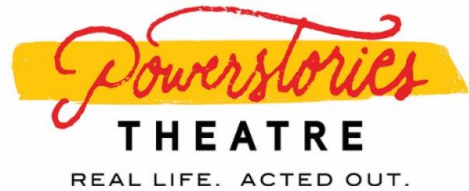
A Powerstory has a **RESOLUTION**.

**YOU GIFT TRUTH**



# Seek and Speak our Story

## What a Powerstory is Not



A Powerstory is not a speech.

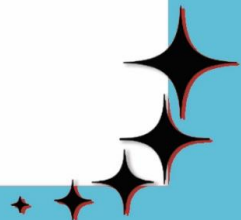
In a speech, you will often (and hopefully) use a Powerstory to illustrate and support an important point to persuade your audience to think, act, or believe differently.

This is a VERY effective use of a Powerstory; however, it does not work this way in reverse.

When you are telling your Powerstory, in its purest form, you will not “come out” of your story to lecture or editorialize or dictate how the audience should think, act, or believe. For example, you would never say, “therefore, I encourage each of you to begin carpooling to work immediately.” Instead, you tell a story about YOUR experience with carpooling to work. Allow the audience to receive the message through the story.

A Powerstory is not an editorial. A Powerstory is not a lecture. A Powerstory is not a motivational speech.

If you hear me say “you have entered into the world of motivational speaking” then you know you have “come out” of your story.



## **Seek and Speak our Story**

### Selecting the Right Powerstory



Now it is time to select the story you want to work on first! How can we begin to narrow it down?

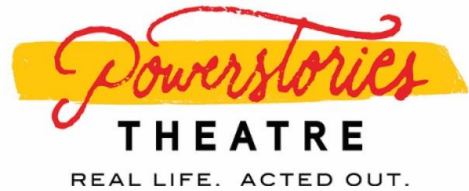
**I LOVE this story  
topic! YES!!!!  
The theme is very  
meaningful and  
true.**

**Hmmm? I KNOW  
a lot about this  
topic, so this  
would make more  
sense. It is safe  
and it all fits with  
a theme.**



# Seek and Speak our Story

## Your Three Stories



The theme that will link my stories together is:

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The purpose I am conveying to the audience is:

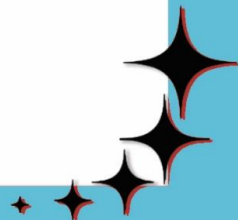
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My first story is about:

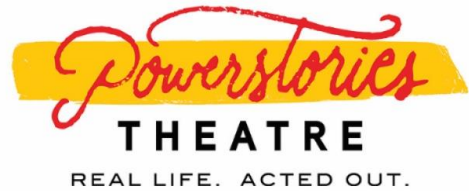
My second story is your Powerstory. It is about:

My third story is about:



# Seek and Speak our Story

## Story Elements



Story elements – A good story to be told usually contains the following:

Setting - This is where the story takes place. Begin to tell your story by setting the scene. Where does it take place? What city? Or what time of the day? Allow the audience to get a sense (or senses) of where you are in time and space.

Plot - The plot is how events are arranged to develop the basic story idea. The plot is a planned, logical series of events having a beginning, middle, and end. There are five essential parts of the plot:

Introduction – The beginning of the story where the characters and the setting are revealed.

Rising Action – This is leading to the protagonist’s “inciting incident”. The events in the story become complicated and the conflict in the story is revealed. An antagonist may be revealed.

Climax – This is the highest point of interest and the turning point of the story. The reader wonders what will happen next; will the conflict be resolved or not?

Falling action – The events and complications begin to resolve. The reader knows what has happened next and if the conflict was resolved or not (events between climax and resolution).

Resolution – This is the final outcome or untangling of events in the story.

Conflict – Conflict is essential to the plot. Without conflict, there is no plot. It is the opposition of forces that ties one incident to another and makes the plot move. Conflict is not merely limited to open arguments; rather it is any form of opposition that faces the main character. Within a story, there may be only one central struggle, or there may be one dominant struggle with many minor ones.

Characters - Remember YOU are the main character, but there may be other characters you need to introduce so the audience will better understand your story. Who are they? What perfect detail (s) can you use to describe your character (s)? Show us.





# Seek and Speak our Story

## Structuring Your Story



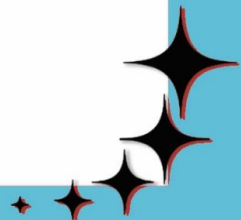
Within the story structure we will be discussing today, or any other structure, there are a few KEY essentials in defining the plot of your story. There are many elements that are important that can bring your story to life, but these are critical for success in establishing the plot line.

**Hook:** Does my “Inciting Incident” hook, or engage, the curiosity of the audience/reader and raise in their minds the Major Dramatic Question: “How will this turn out?”

**Hold:** Does the protagonist’s pursuit of his or her desire hold the audience/reader’s interest without interruption?

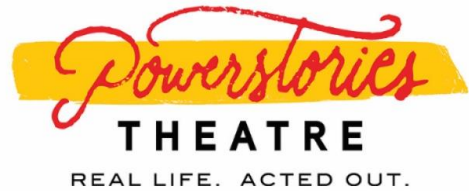
**Resolve:** Does the Story Climax close all of the audience/reader’s open emotions and answer all of the reader’s questions of cause and effect, of why, and how?

StoryLink: An Interview with Robert McKee  
[www.storylink.com/article/321](http://www.storylink.com/article/321)



# Seek and Speak our Story

## Structuring Your Story



Key Scene Approach (Life Spanning Approach) - We often shape a told story by weaving several “mini” stories together that end up with a common theme and powerful message. This is another way to organize a story. The collection of stories still must contain story elements, however only one will contain the obstacle and resolution.

Here are points to consider.

1. You have a personal and powerful story that you want to tell, but it cannot be told well without telling a past seemingly unrelated story. So, you identify three short stories that you want to tell that will eventually all relate to your main story and message.

Example - You want to create a story about how one of your dreams came true. Your “message” is dreams can come true. Instead of spinning a plot around one certain event, you may want to organize your story like a portrait gallery around several memories. In simple chronological order, you may tell three “mini” stories, or develop three key scenes

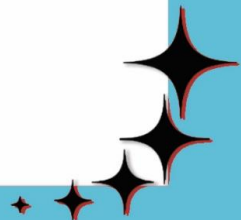
- First KEY scene - The first scene could be YOU remembering a tale your mother told you about how she met her husband. You remember after she tells the story that she always says “Remember, Dreams Can Come True. You must include a setting and a narration of events. The first “mini” story does not need to have an obstacle and a resolution.
- Second KEY scene – The second scene could be when YOU decided to tackle one of your personal dreams of riding a bike across the United States. Again, you need to include a setting and a narration of events. Tell about the obstacle here. This may or may not contain the larger story resolution. You may choose to relate it in the last “mini” story.
- Third KEY scene - The third scene may be a time when YOU finally realized how unhappy you were and decided to change careers and follow your passion.

If you used this approach, how could you begin your story?

How could you transition from one scene to the next?

How could you end the story?

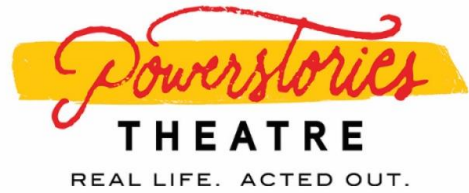
Approach described in Power of Personal Storytelling - Jack Maguire



# Seek and Speak our Story

## Structuring Your Story

Key Scene Circles



Each circle contains a separate, seemingly different story. Each “circle” gets connected by a theme within your personal message.

Question – How soon should the narrator introduce the “inciting incident”?

Question – How much history does the narrator need to give for the listener to feel empathy for the protagonist?

A “mini” story is told first. It **MUST** relate to the main message.

A large, empty rectangular box with a light blue border, intended for writing the first mini-story.

This story needs to encounter the obstacle and overcome it or begin to overcome it. Story builds.

A large, empty rectangular box with a light blue border, intended for writing the second mini-story.

A final “mini” story. Narration of events needs to lead to the resolution.

A large, empty rectangular box with a light blue border, intended for writing the final mini-story.

# Seek and Speak our Story

## Picturing Your Story



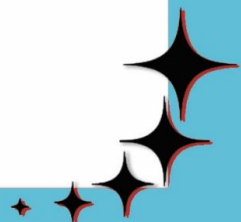
“Thank you for the movies!” - After an audience listens to your story, we want them to come over to you and say...“Thank you for the movies!”

Why? Your story will be a succession of pictures...just like a movie. Your story will trigger visual images in the listener’s mind. The listener needs to SEE your story; therefore, it helps enormously if the teller has a strong visual sense of what they want to communicate.

When you get a **visual** sense of the pictures...jot down all the detail you recall! You do not need to write your detail in complete sentences, remember you are going to be telling the story. Just write notes. Detail, Detail, Detail. Recall as much detail as possible about your story and keep notes.

Also, ask yourself questions around your *five senses* to trigger memories of where YOU are in the scene. We want to see YOU. It is a story about YOU. For example:

1. What was I wearing?
2. What was the weather like? How did I react to it?
3. What was my health like at the time? Did I look sick?
4. What activities was I involved with at the time? Did I enjoy them?
5. What did the room/space look like? Where was I in the room?
6. Who else was in the room/space? What did they look like? Where was I in relation to them?
7. Were there any significant smells? Did I find them pleasant or unpleasant? What was the look on my face?
8. Were there any significant sounds?
9. What was said? What was the tone?
10. What did something taste like?



# Seek and Speak our Story

Action – Show Us What is Happening



Show more than tell - *Focus on re-creating events rather than reporting or summarizing them.*

Speak as if the event were taking place now in the present instead of reporting it or summarizing it

Reporting – I remember the night when I was taking out the trash and just as I was getting close to the trash can...a huge cat jumped out. Oh, boy did I ever scream! I woke up the neighborhood for sure.

Showing – I am walking out my back door in my long white nightgown getting ready to take out the trash. As I am standing by the trash can this huge cat jumped out. (scream) I am screaming and screaming and waking up the entire neighborhood.

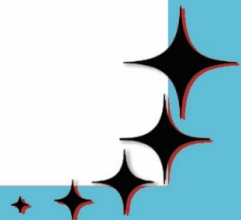
Which one allows you to act it out more?

Which one allows the audience to get a better image of you?

To keep your story in the present, ask yourself these questions:

**AM I SHOWING THE AUDIENCE WHAT IS  
HAPPENING?**

**CAN YOU SEE ME NOW?**



# Seek and Speak our Story

## Telling Your Story



There are three basic components of storytelling.

You the teller

The listener

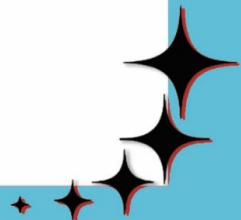
The story.

Let's talk about YOU...the teller. You are now working to actually tell the story you have been working on. What is the correct style? Do I need to be "bigger than life" when telling a story? Can I tell a story "more gently"?

Storytelling is a fluid experience. You will tell stories using your own style in your own way. You will tell stories differently to different groups. If you are a low-keyed-style storyteller, you may need to show more energy if telling a story to young children. Or if you are highly animated you may choose to soften it for the CEO Annual Sales meeting (or maybe not!)

**You do not need to be like any other storyteller you have ever heard!**

There are some skills however that can be learned. Learning a few of these will greatly enhance whatever style of storytelling you choose.



# Seek and Speak our Story

## Telling Your Story - Skills



Telling a story is FUN! You now have a clear idea of your message and outline. You have an audience, and you are ready to go. Now you can start playing with methods for expressing individual parts of it more effectively. As an individual telling your story, you have some tools available to you that can help your story “come alive.” There are various techniques you can use to enliven up the basic storyline. Try each of these to add “color” to your story.

**Keep eye contact** – One of your primary goals is to connect with the audience.

**Be heard and understood** – Your stories will be meaningless if the audience cannot hear you...or if they cannot understand you. Practices telling your story to a friend or two before you tell it to a large audience. Focus on volume and articulation.

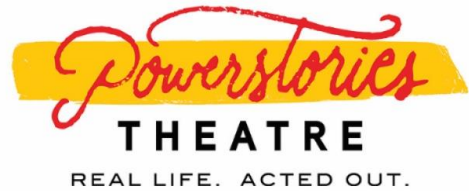
**Practice your pacing** – Beginning storytellers often speak too fast because they want to get the story out and are afraid, they will forget it. Or some beginning storytellers speak too slowly which means they are trying to memorize the lines. Work to tell the story at a comfortable pace.

**Use pauses** – Build a pause or two into your story. A perfectly placed pause can be more thought-provoking and dramatic than a superbly crafted word, phrase or sentence. Explore the use of pauses. They are POWERFUL!



# Seek and Speak our Story

## Telling Your Story - Skills



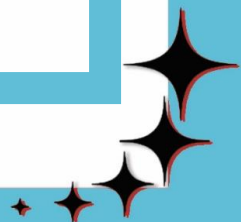
**Use inflection** – Play around with HOW to say a word. This can be important and help your audience know the true meaning of your story. HOW you say the word can be JUST as important as the words you choose to say.

**Understand word sounds** - Words sound like what they mean. When you speak your words, let them sound like what they mean. Think about words and attach a way to say them. .

**Display emotion** – A storyteller is not necessarily an actor, but we do want to give hints to the audience about the feelings of the people in our story.

**Use your body** – Use facial expressions, gestures, and body language to animate certain points, rather than simply stating the points out loud. Use facial expressions and body language to depict a character. For example: Gestures - you may intend for there to be the perfect gesture during your story. Place it in the story. Practice it. See if it works? Does it add or subtract from the story?

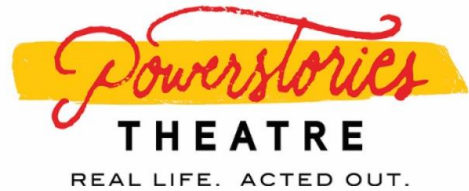
**Add dialogue** – Nothing works better in a story than dialogue to get the listener's attention, convey the personality and feelings of the characters and lend a sense of immediacy and authenticity to the events taking place.





# Seek and Speak our Story

## Knowing Your Powerstory



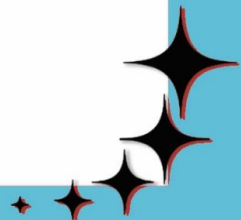
Knowing your story helps you claim your power. Power can be defined as your ability to make something happen. Power is independence. Power is influence. Power is impact.

Knowing your story is important in many ways, and for everyone, there is a different reason. You may want clarity on happenings that have influenced your life, you may want to capture your unique view of events, or you may need to teach others your truth. There are *many* equally important reasons for knowing your own personal story. Each of them leads to you claiming your power. Here are just a few more. Your powerstory helps you...

- Identify and value your strengths,
- Learn about others,
- Add more thoughtfulness to your life,
- Increase courage and confidence,
- Move into action,
- Understand the role passion plays in your life,
- Reconnect to your work or life mission,
- Realize the meaning of your life.

**A recent survey taken of a group of elderly people indicated that their major life regrets were:**

- **Not Taking More Risks**
- **Not Reflecting More,**
- **Not Contributing More.**



# Seek and Speak our Story

## Listening to a Powerstory

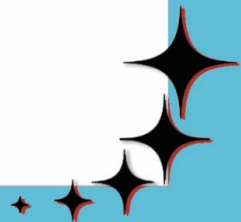


Listening is at the heart of telling a good powerstory. If we increase our capacity and willingness to listen to ourselves and others, we will become better at telling our personal stories. To discover our own stories and to tell them in a meaningful, resolved, and colorful way, we need to listen to ourselves and others.

First, we listen to our inner selves to find our powerstory. We listen to what our deep memories and creative voices have to say to us once we've silenced our mind's surface chatter. Ask what are the truths I have learned about this situation? What is the experience I desire to share? Then listen and begin to record.

Second, we gain a heightened appreciation for what type of storyteller we want to be by listening to the stories of others. If we consciously quiet our mind and judgments to listen to others openly and freely, then we will learn more about the joys and conflicts of human life. And, isn't that the material of a good personal story? Plus...the other benefits of increasing your listening skills are even more important. You will make this world a better place to live (and become a better teller of personal stories to boot!) That's a great combination.

**To speak is to sow: to listen is to reap.**  
**Turkish Proverb**



# Seek and Speak our Story

## Telling a Powerstory



What does it feel like to tell a Powerstory?

Telling a powerstory is giving a gift to the audience. It is giving them a piece of you all wrapped up in your thoughts and resolutions.

Others who have taken this course and have told their story to an audience have said it was an extremely satisfying, validating, and self-affirming feeling. Many also said it was nerve-wracking. But, when they remembered that they were giving a “gift” to the audience, it allowed them to relax. The power of giving was stronger than the fear of speaking.

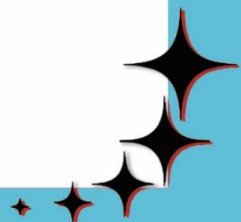
Numerous people have reported it was the beginning of a new and glorious time in their life. Yes...it can be that powerful. One woman who tells a story about her breast cancer told the group that telling her story “was the beginning of her seeing herself as whole and healthy again”.

One feeling may be FEAR when you think of telling your story to others. Many people have that familiar feeling...so you are not alone. You may be asking yourself questions like the following:

- How can I possibly make a meaningful and colorful story when I don't have a really clear memory of all the details?
- Once I start my story, will I be able to finish talking about something so private?
- What if the audience does not “get” my story and it is meaningless to them?

Our goal again is to concentrate on the fact that we are giving this story to others. What others have said *most often* is they experience an overwhelming feeling of power and connection with others. We often go through life, wanting and craving those exact feelings. Telling your own Powerstory WILL allow you to feel validated, appreciated, welcomed, and connected with the human race. You will feel like you are a part of something greater. Alive!

**Stories heal because we become whole through them. In the process of discovering our story, we restore those parts of ourselves that have been scattered, hidden, suppressed, denied, distorted, or forbidden.**  
**Deena Metzger**



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## CONGRATULATIONS



You are now ready to tell your story to the class and receive input from the facilitator.

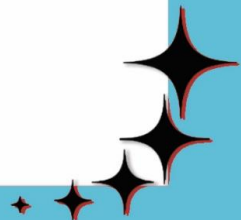
Your facilitator will assist you in building a very good personal story. All input is designed to help you tell a more clear, meaningful, and colorful Powerstory.

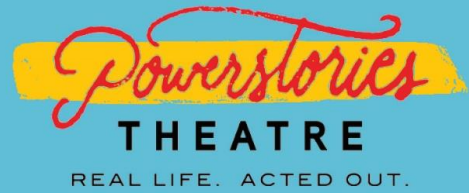
Remember...great storytellers tell the same story over and over and over. Finally, one day they say "Wow...I nailed it!" So, please be kind to yourself with this process.

Congratulations for recognizing you have experienced something worth telling. You have a story to tell....and many, many more. Remember that the discovery and the telling of your story create newfound success, invests your life with more meaning, opens minds and hearts, and connects us more vitally with each other.

Your story is ready to be honored. Bravo! Bravo! Bravo!

Relax and enjoy telling your story...and listening to others.





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