

Crafting and telling difficult stories

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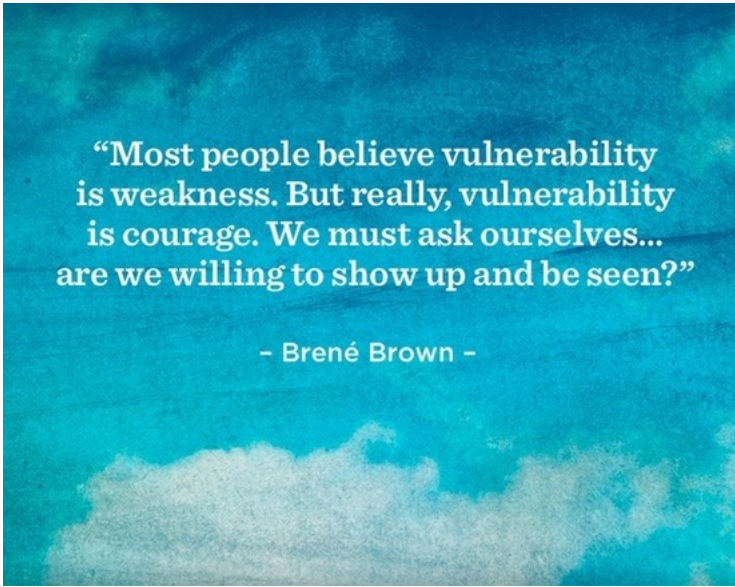
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What is a difficult story?

- Personally challenging
 - Emotionally fraught
 - Revealing
 - Something you've never done before
- Challenging content
 - Sexuality
 - Violence
 - Political
 - Transgressive
 - Language

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“Most people believe vulnerability is weakness. But really, vulnerability is courage. We must ask ourselves... are we willing to show up and be seen?”

- Brené Brown -

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Why tell difficult stories?

- Never the only one
- Empathy
- Breaks down barriers
- Reveals community needs
- Shines a light in the dark places
- Healing for teller and listeners

- Storytelling is truth telling

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Because we need them.

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Storytelling and listening connect us



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What are difficult stories about

- Personal stories (things that happened to you or someone you know)
- Historical stories (oppression, change)
- Traditional stories (content, context)
- Fiction and metaphor

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Considerations

- Other people's experiences
- Confidentiality
- Revenge, pity, and other hard feelings
- Truth and fiction

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The storyteller and the story

- Why do you want to tell this story?
- What does the story mean to you?
- What does it mean to you to tell this story?
- Who is your audience?
- Can you tell it safely?

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Exercise

Your difficult story or this prompt, “A time when you had to make a choice or a decision.”

The listener listens and does not interrupt

The talker talks

If there is silence or emotions, that’s okay

What happens in storytelling...

Switch

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The storyteller and the audience

- Who would you like to tell this story to?
- What would you like them to get out of it?
- Why do they need this story?
- Can you tell it safely?

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How do you want to connect with your listeners

- What are the images you want to leave with your audience?
- What are the emotions you want to evoke?
- What actions do you want to see?

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Exercise

Your difficult story or this prompt, “A time when you had to make a choice or a decision” *told for a imagined audience*

The listener listens and does not interrupt

The talker talks

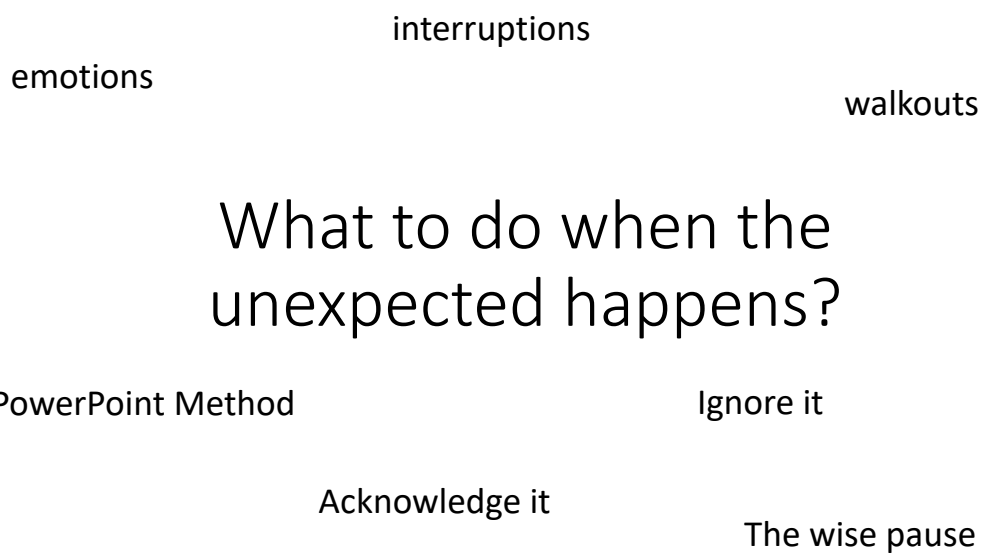
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It may have nothing to do with you

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Crafting considerations

- Body language and voice

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Body language

- Watch for anxious tells
- Craft intentionally

Voice

- Volume
- Tone
- Voices

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Crafting considerations

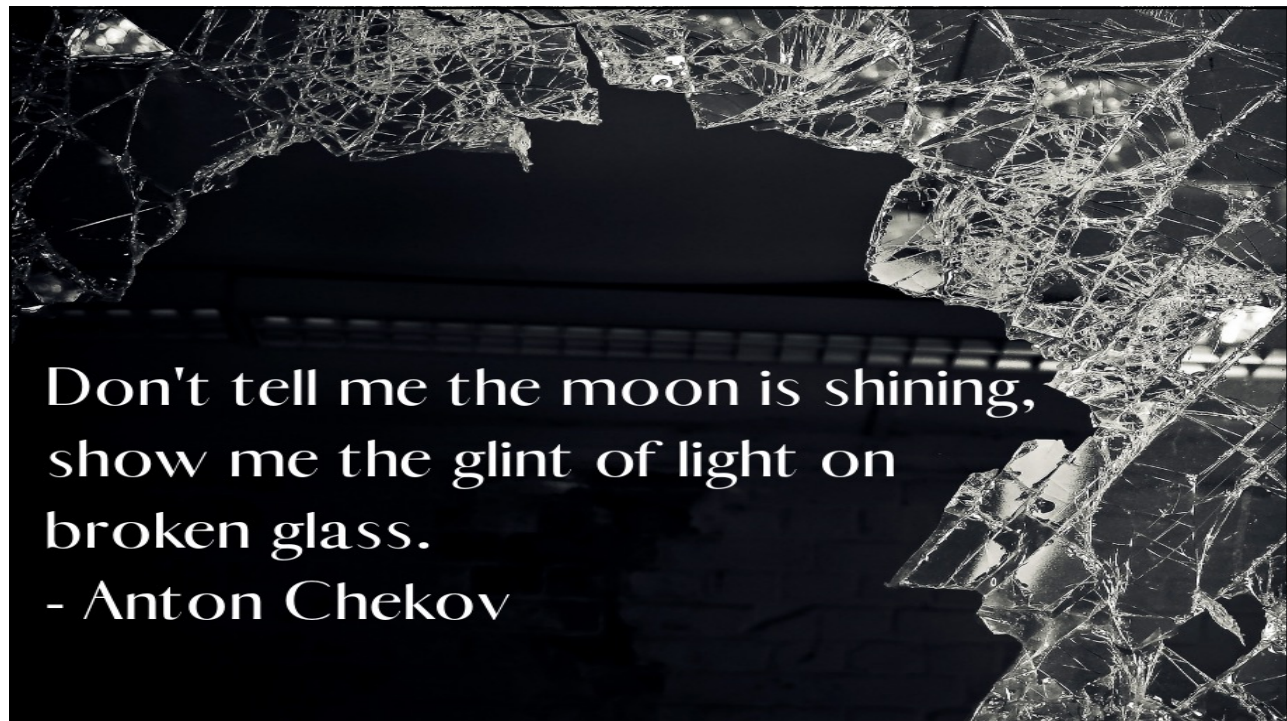
- Showing or telling

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Tells	Yesterday I got into a car accident.	Shows
		
Yesterday was terrible.	After yesterday, I will never forget the sound of glass shattering and metal pushing against metal.	The car skidded across the wet pavement, turned a full circle, then smashed into the wall. Glass shot up and showered the street, covering me with shards, and every head turned toward the thundering sounds.
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Exercise

Show one image from your difficult story.

The listener listens and does not interrupt

The talker talks

If there is silence or emotions, that's okay

What happens in storytelling...

Switch

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Crafting considerations

- Sensory detail

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Exercise

Your difficult story with some sensory detail.

The listener listens and does not interrupt

The talker talks

If there is silence or emotions, that's okay

What happens in storytelling...

Switch

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Crafting considerations

- What to tell and what to conceal

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Teller	Audience and other factors
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Intent• Personal process• Time passed	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• As expected...• ...or not• Setting• Context

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Crafting considerations

- Metaphors

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Metaphors

- Fairy tales and myths
- Symbols in your story

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Crafting considerations

- Content warnings

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Content warnings

- Context
- Audience
- Your level of comfort
- Be prepared, practice
 - Brief
 - Simple
 - Pause after

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Crafting considerations

- Relief—humor, comments, and pacing

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Humor, comments, and pacing

- Relieves tension
- Offers a break

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Humor, comments, and pacing

Humor and comments

- Break the fourth wall
- A comment to the audience
- A warning
- Recognize their response

Pacing

- Pause after something difficult
- Repeat things as needed
(audience may not catch it the first time)

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Crafting considerations

- Endings

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Endings matter

- Audience safety – how should they feel at the end
- Teller safety
- What to expect afterwards

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Exercise

What do you want to leave your audience with?

How will you achieve that?

The listener listens and does not interrupt

The talker talks

If there is silence or emotions, that's okay

What happens in storytelling...

Switch

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Remember...

- Who you are telling to matters
- Your motives matter
- Leave room for their experience and reflection
- Give the audience and yourself a way out back into safety.

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Change happens

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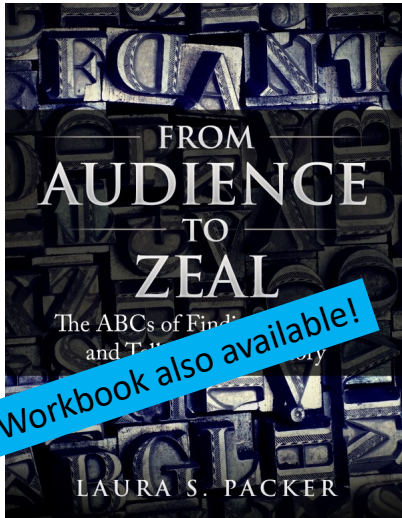
How do you get to Carnegie Hall?

- Practice
- Listen
- Get listened to

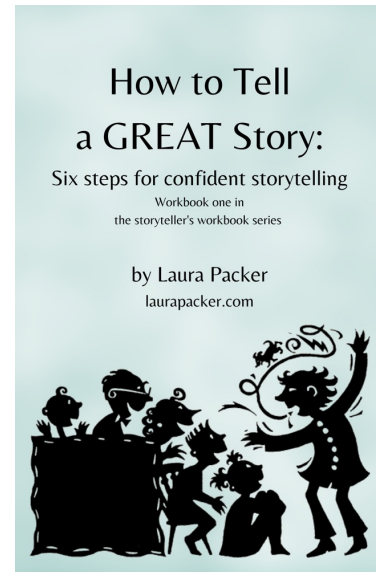


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Free 20-minute
discovery calls
available at
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Thank you

- FEAST
- You

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- Hear a free folktale at <http://www.facebook.com/laurapackerstoryteller>
- Find her book "From Audience to Zeal: The ABCs of Finding, Crafting, and Telling a Great Story" at amazon and from booksellers everywhere
- How to tell a scary story class <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/how-to-tell-a-scary-story-a-storytelling-class-for-anyone-tickets-421539294377>
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