



## PODCASTING FOR SOCIAL WORK

Melanie Sage, UBSSW, Fall 2018 Week 4

### FIRST, A TECHNOLOGY MEDITATION

Let us be learners together  
 Let us be help seekers and problem solvers  
 Let us notice our anxiety or frustration, name it, and manage it  
 There is no shame in not knowing, and a classroom is the perfect place to not know  
 Let us appreciate that times of growth are usually paired with struggle  
 Let us honor one another's gifts, and that we each bring different skills to the classroom  
 Let us be curious, excited, and open-minded about the ways this new learning will inform our work and our lives



### WHY SHOULD WE PODCAST?

Disseminate knowledge to public- no academic hoarding  
 Elevate voice of the social work profession: we have expertise to share  
 Improve our reputation regarding the scope and professional standing of our work  
 Produce information not just for the teacher/class, but for a broader audience:  
     • Reinforces impact and meaning of our assigned work  
 Transferable skill: Practice with technology is increasingly important for our field, and we will often be tasked with promoting or representing our agencies or clients in positive and professional ways



### YOUR TASK

- Practice assessment, intervention, and/or evaluation skills with technology through the use of storytelling or interviews
- Assess appropriate and important information to share
  - Advocate for understanding in how to intervene/work with a population, agency, or issue
  - Evaluate and promote best practices regarding a specific kind of issue
- Develop self-awareness, professional presentation, and peer consultation skills
- Peer review
  - Self-assessment
  - Professional self-representation for a public audience

### YOUR PODCAST ASSIGNMENT



**For your podcast** you will either interview someone about a topic relevant to families, discuss a topic relevant to families with a peer/s (up to 3 people), or present on a topic relevant to families. The content should educate listeners on the issue, increase listener empathy related to the topic, and be engaging storytelling.

The tone should be professional casual. Do not read a script. The audience will be your class peers, but should also include an external group (social work students generally, clinical practitioners, members of a specific community, etc- you choose).

### YOUR PODCAST REVIEWS

#### Good

- Good start with outline to listeners
- Explained professional jargon
- Good information- informative
- Tells a story: beg, middle, end
- Conversational
- Steady sound quality & Good editing
- Music/sound effects add to it
- No unanswered questions left hanging
- Catchy/clever introduction
- Implications for practice

#### Bad

- No back and forth- straight question/answer
- Sound quality up and down
- Boring- not engaging
- Too basic of questions
- Abrupt ending
- Choppy editing
- Too many pauses/oh's/mmm's
- Too rehearsed- interviewee didn't have to think

## TODAY WE WILL....

- ❖ Use the assignment rubric together to review a professional podcast episode
- ❖ Discuss what we like/don't like about podcasts we've heard
- ❖ Review features of storytelling for podcasting using resources from NPR
- ❖ Discuss ways to prepare for a recorded interview
- ❖ Choose a topic and begin developing an interview guide; get peer feedback
- ❖ Discuss technology and practice recording

## HOW DO YOU TELL A STORY FOR PODCASTING?



If your story or podcast episode  
doesn't promise something interesting at the beginning,  
fewer people will listen.

Be able to articulate why you're starting in the style and place you are. Why does it serve the story—and the listener—to begin this way?

1. Tightly focus your idea
2. Make that focus clear to listeners
3. Tell your audience what to expect (You'll learn XX or discover what happens to this character/place/policy/etc.)
4. Create a sense of movement or momentum

Excerpt from NPR <https://training.npr.org/audio/how-audio-stories-begin/>

## THE PODCAST SHOULD START WITH AN INTRO: WRITE IT FIRST BUT MAKE IT AFTER YOU'VE RECORDED

- The intro should be brief: 20-45 seconds (NPR's best were 33 seconds)
- Start with a sharp simple topical statement: tell people what you're going to talk about. Don't lead with names. Focus on what will interest the listener, not on you.
  - Don't summarize your whole story—leave a cliffhanger so people want to stick around and listen.
  - Tell people why they should care.
  - Explain your angle as it relates to your audience.
  - Be able to recite it like a story you're telling to a friend. Tone should match story (funny, serious, solemn, etc.)

Excerpt from NPR <https://training.npr.org/audio/what-npr-one-can-teach-us-about-radio-intros/>

## INTRO EXAMPLES FROM NPR

### Example:

1. Plastic bags are serious business and seriously divisive. Last year, California passed a law banning stores from giving out plastic bags for free. It was the first statewide ban of its kind in the country. It was set to take effect this July, but the plastic bag industry stopped that from happening. It financed a ballot measure to repeal the ban. Supporters of the ban say the bags contribute to street litter and ocean pollution. As NPR's Richard Gonzales reports, the state is set for a major battle on next year's ballot.

2. After nearly a decade of self-imposed silence, Monica Lewinsky is making herself heard. People are still parsing the details of her TED conference speech last week. It seems, in some ways, to be getting the point she wanted: to have the aftermath of her affair with President Bill Clinton considered from her point of view and to position herself as an advocate against cyberbullying. Her talk was titled "The Price Of Shame."

**TAPE OF MONICA LEWINSKY:** There is a very personal price to public humiliation. And the growth of the Internet has jacked up that price.  
HOST: Jessica Bennett spent time with Lewinsky while she prepared for her TED Talk and wrote about Monica Lewinsky's return to the public eye in this Sunday's New York Times. Jessica, welcome to the program...

Excerpt from NPR <https://training.npr.org/audio/what-npr-one-can-teach-us-about-radio-intros/>

## STORIES HAVE STRUCTURES: HERE ARE SOME

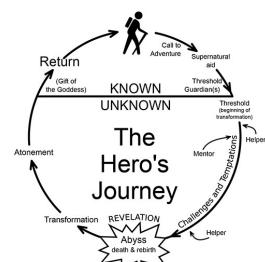
Stories have multiple acts where the story shifts:

1. A real person facing a problem > expert talking about the problem > back to the real person
2. Problem > solution > complication > future of the problem
3. What is this thing and why does this thing happen? > a personal look inside the thing > understanding of the motivations/why > reporter explains it to outsiders

Pick a pattern, draw some circles on a piece of paper (3-4ish) and label each. What questions, explanations, research etc will help you move through a structure to tell your story?

Excerpt from NPR <https://training.npr.org/audio/you-asked-how-do-you-tell-a-story-in-3-acts/>

## ANOTHER STORY STRUCTURE: THE HERO'S JOURNEY



## START YOUR STORY

Once upon a time: Transports listeners to a time and a place, signals a story about change.

*Isn't that crazy?: Builds on natural curiosity by presenting surprising information. (Eric Whitney achieves a humorous version of this – in a [story about patient records](#))*

*Cinematic/descriptive: The beginning of the story functions as a camera, swooping in to set the scene. You could use this approach if the setting is central to the story. (Sarah Jane Tribble zooms in from a "wide shot" in [this story](#) about the Amish and vaccines.)*

*The mystery: Self-explanatory, my dear Watson! The goal of the story is ask a question and seek answers. (Often used by our Science Desk; case in point – [The Mystery](#) of the Slithering Rocks of Death Valley!)*

*The illustrative character: One person's story is used to interest the listener in a bigger idea (e.g. the child migrant crisis, the Iraq War, the mortgage crisis)*

*The personal: The host/reporter begins on a personal note, explaining his/her interest or what they want to discover (NPR's Jasmine Garsd builds her own "[invisible boyfriend](#)")*

*The quest/journey: Promises to take the listener somewhere. It could be a literal place or an idea. (NPR's Hansi Lo Wang [goes to Chinatown](#), on a "quest" to solve a dilemma about the Chinese New Year)*

Excerpt from <https://training.npr.org/audio/beginnings-where-do-i-start-my-audio-story/>

## START YOUR STORY



✓ Solve a mystery or unravel a compelling question- why do we need x? how does x work? Don't give away the answer too soon.

Express curiosity ("I was dying to know how x deals with the problem of x and this was my chance to find out")

✓ Consider ambient noises (background or few second recording of waiting room sounds, etc) or rich descriptions (describe in detail what you see, hear, smell, feel)

✓ Jumping right in to the story is typically the best start unless there are technical details that need to be explained before-hand to help people understand why they should care.

"First, in order to understand X, I need to explain Y"

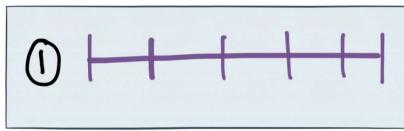
"When you hear x, you probably think about y. But there's another way to understand x...."

✓ Avoid self-reference. You're making this for someone else, not yourself. Use "I" only when describing your unique experience or take.

Excerpt from NPR <https://training.npr.org/audio/how-audio-stories-begin/>

## STORY STRUCTURES

### 1. The flatline story



This is the structure of a lot of stories we hear on the radio. It's a series of quotes from people (the vertical lines) commenting on one topic (horizontal line). He said. She said. Critics disagree. It has a beginning and an end, but gives us little reason to keep listening.

## STORY STRUCTURES

2. Take your flat story and give it an arc



Try to have a question that drives listeners through the story. The question should be one that your listener might be curious about. And you need to promise and deliver an answer that is surprising in some way. Think of it as a sales job. You're selling the story hard and giving your audience — even those who don't care about the subject — a reason to listen until the end.

Excerpt from <https://training.npr.org/audio/understanding-story-structure-in-4-drawings/>

## STORY STRUCTURES

### 3. Divide your story into "acts"



Even with a strong question, the listener wants to feel a sense of movement. That's why we divide the journey into scenes. For podcast stories, you can do this by following the rule of threes: Beginning, middle, and end. Or visit three different places. In a simple story covering an event, you could do this by arriving early and asking people, "What are the stakes?" and then afterwards asking the same people, "What does it mean?" or "What has changed?" This creates a sense of chronology and makes it feel as if something has happened in your story.

Excerpt from <https://training.npr.org/audio/understanding-story-structure-in-4-drawings/>

## STORY STRUCTURES

### 4. Now give your audience some signposts



Now that you have an interesting story arc with scenes to create movement, don't let the audience get lost. Tell them where you are going and why you are going there. Signposts directly tell the listeners why they should keep listening. Sometimes, signposts break up your big question into smaller steps (*First, we have to figure out this...).* Signposts can recap what we've learned this far. Or they can help you raise new questions in the middle of your story.

Excerpt from <https://training.npr.org/audio/understanding-story-structure-in-4-drawings/>

## EXAMPLES OF SIGNPOSTS



- Explanation of motivation behind the story:** We're talking today about XX (opiates), and we could not ignore the infrequently-discussed impact on XX (grandparents)... (Translation: Heads-up! This is interesting!)
- Clear statement of the episode's driving question:** Should xx (grandparents cut ties with their children) to xx (provide safety for their grandchildren?)
- Interview with grandparents
- Guidance for what's to come:** "We think there is an answer."
- Interviewer discusses complexity of the issue.
- Articulation of a bigger theme:** "To get to our final verdict, we are going to need to go deep into the nature of xx (addiction) itself."
- Introduction of the characters:** "Let's hear from both sides. In one corner, explaining xx (the child welfare agency's perspective), we have xxxx..."
- Summary:** "Just to recap the arguments on xx (the agency concerns)..."
- Transition:** "Now, let's hear from an expert on xx (family reunification)..."

Excerpt from <https://training.npr.org/audio/understanding-story-structure-in-4-drawings/>

## ADD SOME ZIGS AND ZAGS TO YOUR STORYLINE

### Add some zigs and zags to your storyline

Even if your story structure is solid, your piece will be better if you add little surprises along the way: catchy writing, moments of interaction, provocative questions, flavor, personality.



Why? The brain is a prediction machine; it evolved to predict the future (*Is that a sabretooth tiger running towards me?*). We get delight from things that are structured in patterns, but we can also get bored with patterns. When a pattern is briefly interrupted, we react with surprise. And surprises can tickle our brains.

Think of your story like music. A balance of structure and surprise that draws you from the beginning to the end. And makes you want to listen again.

Excerpt from <https://training.npr.org/audio/understanding-story-structure-in-4-drawings/>

## LET'S LISTEN TO A STORY TOGETHER



- What is the specific focus of this piece?
  - Did the piece make us care?
  - Are the stakeholders all here? Are their points balanced?
  - Is all the information here? Is there too much information?
  - Is the piece written for the ear?
  - Are there scenes in this piece? Visuals?
  - Is every bite unique, dynamic and interesting?
  - How could more sound and more scenes improve this story?
  - Is the structure of this story the best it can be?
- <https://www.npr.org/2011/07/05/137627840/these-days-family-trees-look-more-like-a-forest>

## BRAINSTORM BEFORE YOU START:

1. Who is my audience?
2. What is my story about? What do I want them to know or understand? What question/s will the story answer?
3. Why were you drawn to this story? What is exciting about it?
4. Who does this topic impact? Does it cause/solve problems?
5. Identify the tension- what are the different sides of this story?
6. How do you want this story to impact listeners? Why should they care? What do you hope they will do with the information?
7. What is this story NOT about?
8. What jumped out to you from your recording?
9. Is the story fair to (perhaps unspoken) multiple sides? Will anyone feel like you've misrepresented the issue? Can you address this as part of your story?

## DISCUSS RUBRIC AND TIPS/BEST PRACTICES



- Equipment
- Software
- Music/audio
- Consent form