Storytelling for Global and Public Health
Resource Pack
2025

Overview

Humans are naturally wired to pay attention to stories. Stories help us understand complex topics, connect with other people, as well as facilitate healing for both storytellers and audiences. Stories illustrate cause and effect, provoke emotions, make information more concrete and memorable, and can help change minds. In global and public health, storytelling is a powerful tool that can help practitioners, educators, and professionals communicate about health, advocate for health issues, and translate research into public health policy.

This resource pack was created with the intention of providing resources and tools for an aspiring storyteller to understand the power of storytelling in a global or public health context, craft their own narratives, and begin disseminating ideas in ways that affect health policy. The resource pack includes a curated selection of articles, videos, organizations, and more to support teaching and learning about storytelling for global and public health.

The Global Health Education and Learning Incubator at Harvard University supports interdisciplinary education about world health through the production, curation, and dissemination of educational public goods.

This resource pack includes:

- Storytelling as a Tool
- How To Tell a Good Story
    - Storytelling Elements, Tools, and Tips
    - Other Storytelling Mediums
- Translating Story Into Policy
- Places That Do This Well

Selected Resources
*indicates resource listed in GHELI's online Repository

STORYTELLING AS A TOOL

Video. The Power of Public Health Storytelling
The Power of Public Health Storytelling. Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health 2025.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KSlqGRsDeoU.

Article. The Art of Medical Narrative Writing
The Art of Medical Narrative Writing. Rx Communications 2024. https://www.rxcomms.com/learning/the-art-of-medical-narrative-writing.

* Article. Personal Experiences Bridge Moral and Political Divides Better Than Facts
Kubin E et al. Personal Experiences Bridge Moral and Political Divides Better Than Facts. Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences 2021; 118(6): e2008389118. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.2008389118.

* Article Series. Special Issue: Stories in Science Communication
Special Issue: Stories in Science Communication. Journal of Science Communication 2019.
https://jcom.sissa.it/issue/74/info.

> **Editorial. Storytelling: The Soul of Science Communication**
> Joubert M et al. Storytelling: The Soul of Science Communication. Journal of Science Communication 2019; 18(05). DOI: https://doi.org/10.22323/2.18050501.

> **Article. Science Stories as Culture: Experience, Identity, Narrative and Emotion in Public Communication of Science**
> Davies SR et al. Science Stories as Culture: Experience, Identity, Narrative and Emotion in Public Communication of Science. Journal of Science Communication 2019; 18(05). DOI: https://doi.org/10.22323/2.18050201.

> **Article. The Power of Storytelling and Video: A Visual Rhetoric for Science Communication**
> Finkler W and Leon B. The Power of Storytelling and Video: A Visual Rhetoric for Science Communication. Journal of Science Communication 2019; 18(05). DOI: https://doi.org/10.22323/2.18050202.

> **Article. Telling It Straight — A Focus Group Study on Narratives Affecting Public Confidence in Science**
> Brounéus F et al. Telling It Straight — A Focus Group Study on Narratives Affecting Public Confidence in Science. Journal of Science Communication 2019; 18(05). DOI: https://doi.org/10.22323/2.18050203.

> **Article. Students as Storytellers: Mobile-Filmmaking To Improve Student Engagement in School Science**
> Martin K et al. Students as Storytellers: Mobile-Filmmaking To Improve Student Engagement in School Science. Journal of Science Communication 2019; 18(05). DOI: https://doi.org/10.22323/2.18050204.

> **Article. Telling Stories in Science Communication: Case Studies of Scholar-Practitioner Collaboration**
> Riedlinger M et al. Telling Stories in Science Communication: Case Studies of Scholar Practitioner Collaboration. Journal of Science Communication 2019; 18(05). DOI: https://doi.org/10.22323/2.18050801.

> **Article. Who Doesn't Love a Good Story? — What Neuroscience Tells About How We Respond to Narratives**
> Cormick C. Who Doesn't Love a Good Story? — What Neuroscience Tells About How We Respond to Narratives. Journal of Science Communication 2019; 18(05). DOI: https://doi.org/10.22323/2.18050401.

* Article. Storytelling and Evidence-Based Policy: Lessons From the Grey Literature
Davidson B. Storytelling and Evidence-Based Policy: Lessons From the Grey Literature. Palgrave Communications, Nature 2017; 3: 17093. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1057/palcomms.2017.93.

HOW TO TELL A GOOD STORY

STORYTELLING ELEMENTS, TOOLS, AND TIPS

* Communication. Storytelling Elements, Tools, and Tips
Storytelling Elements, Tools, and Tips. Global Health Education and Learning Incubator 2025.
https://repository.gheli.harvard.edu/repository/14587.

OTHER STORYTELLING MEDIUMS

* Communication. Storytelling in Other Mediums
Storytelling in Other Mediums. Global Health Education and Learning Incubator 2025.
https://repository.gheli.harvard.edu/repository/14588.

TRANSLATING STORY INTO POLICY

* Communication. Translating Story Into Policy
Translating Story Into Policy. Global Health Education and Learning Incubator 2025.
https://repository.gheli.harvard.edu/repository/14589.

PLACES THAT DO THIS WELL

* Organizations. Selected Storytelling Organizations
Selected Storytelling Organizations. Global Health Education and Learning Incubator 2025.
https://repository.gheli.harvard.edu/repository/14590.

Annotated Bibliography

STORYTELLING AS A TOOL

Video. The Power of Public Health Storytelling
The Power of Public Health Storytelling. Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health 2025.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KSlqGRsDeoU.
In this video, a panel of experts in the field of public health, hosted by the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, presents ways in which storytelling can be a powerful tool to raise awareness of the most pressing public health issues, as well as how individuals contribute to such narratives. In a conversation-style discussion, experts present their take on how narratives may serve as a way to organize our understanding of global health challenges and reframe them into actionable and relatable change.

Article. The Art of Medical Narrative Writing
The Art of Medical Narrative Writing. Rx Communications 2024. https://www.rxcomms.com/learning/the-art-of-medical-narrative-writing.
This article, published by Rx Communications, introduces the principles and practices of medical narrative writing, emphasizing the role of storytelling to enhance clarity, impact, and engagement amongst the scientific and non-scientific communities. Sharing narratives in medicine has been shown to improve patient care by promoting empathy and enabling a true connection between health professionals and patients. This article, therefore, focuses on how stories share a patient's experience through the healthcare system and promote a deeper understanding of their health navigation stories. The author highlights key elements involved in compelling medical narratives, such as ethical considerations, descriptive tools, the influence of storytelling in policy and practice, and lastly, how to leverage medical narratives to improve patient health outcomes.

Article. Personal Experiences Bridge Moral and Political Divides Better Than Facts
Kubin E et al. Personal Experiences Bridge Moral and Political Divides Better Than Facts. Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences 2021; 118(6): e2008389118. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.2008389118.
GHELI repository link: https://repository.gheli.harvard.edu/repository/14583
This article, published by the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, explores the persuasive effects of personal narratives compared to factual arguments in bridging moral and political divides. To do so, the authors employed a series of surveys to explore how the reception of opposing viewpoints may vary when presented as a lived experience versus objective data, such as abstract data or statistics. Findings reveal that people believe in the truth of both objective and subjective data in nonmoral disagreements; however, in moral disagreements, subjective experiences seem to be more accepted than objective facts. Lastly, the authors suggest that the integration of both personal stories with objective data around divisive issues may support a greater understanding and reduce polarization, especially when the facts are linked to identity and ideology.

Article Series. Special Issue: Stories in Science Communication
Special Issue: Stories in Science Communication. Journal of Science Communication 2019.
https://jcom.sissa.it/issue/74/info.
GHELI repository link: https://repository.gheli.harvard.edu/repository/14584
This special issue of the *Journal of Science Communication* focuses on storytelling for the communication of science to a general audience. The special issue includes an editorial, original articles, practice insights, and an essay about storytelling's role in science communication. Articles highlight stories as an integral part of culture, analyze key components that increase success factors in science storytelling, and explore methods for communicating science in different mediums, in different spaces, and to different audiences.

Articles from the issue include:
- Storytelling: The Soul of Science Communication
- Science Stories as Culture: Experience, Identity, Narrative and Emotion in Public Communication of Science

- [The Power of Storytelling and Video: A Visual Rhetoric for Science Communication](#)
- [Telling it Straight- A Focus Group Study on Narratives Affecting Public Confidence in Science](#)
- [Students as Storytellers: Mobile-Filmmaking To Improve Student Engagement in School Science](#)
- [Telling Stories in Science Communication: A Case Studies of Scholar-Practitioner Collaboration](#)
- [Essays: Who Doesn't Love a Good Story? – What Neuroscience Tells About How We Respond to Narratives](#)

Article. Storytelling and Evidence-Based Policy: Lessons From the Grey Literature
Davidson B. Storytelling and Evidence-Based Policy: Lessons From the Grey Literature. Palgrave Communications 2017; 3: 17093. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1057/palcomms.2017.93.
GHELI repository link: https://repository.gheli.harvard.edu/repository/14586
This article, published by *Palgrave Communications*, owned by *Nature*, highlights the role of storytelling in evidence-based policymaking. Analyzing 'grey' literature—which, unlike peer-reviewed literature, can come from government, academics, business, or industry and is not controlled by commercial publishers—the author pulls out practical insights and lessons for how researchers and scientists can leverage storytelling, along with the psychology and group dynamics of decision-makers, to shape public understanding, influence decision-making, and advance policy agendas.

HOW TO TELL A GOOD STORY

STORYTELLING ELEMENTS, TOOLS, AND TIPS

Communication. Storytelling Elements, Tools, and Tips
Storytelling Elements, Tools, and Tips. Global Health Education and Learning Incubator 2025.
https://repository.gheli.harvard.edu/repository/14587.
GHELI repository link: https://repository.gheli.harvard.edu/repository/14587
These resources explore the elements of a good story, including structure, narrative, and audience. Storytellers may find these resources helpful while conceptualizing and crafting their stories.

- [Storytelling Handbook](#) (2022). This publication from the World Health Organization discusses why stories matter for communicating about health, provides worksheets and guidance for developing stories and multimedia, and explores how to measure and evaluate story impact.
- [The Features of Narratives: A Model of Narrative Form for Social Change Efforts](#) (2021). This report from the Frameworks Institute explores how the narratives we tell influence our views and actions. The report discusses the elements of narratives and how to develop and test counter narratives that change our perspectives.
- [Strategic Storytelling for Public Health Messengers Toolkit](#) (2020). This toolkit from Public Health Reaching Across Sectors (PHRASES) provides background, guidance, and worksheets to help those working in public health develop strategic stories for a public health campaign.
- [A Good Story Well Told: Storytelling Components That Impact Science Video Popularity on YouTube](#) (2020). This article, published in *Frontiers in Communication*, analyzes which storytelling elements help boost interest and engagement in science videos on YouTube.
- [Randy Olson: And, But, Therefore](#) (2013). In this TED Talk video, scientist-turned-filmmaker Randy Olson introduces the And, But, Therefore framework for creating story structure.
- [A Guide to Scientific Storytelling](#). This guide discusses how to use storytelling to make people care about science stories.

After mastering the basics, storytellers can continue to hone their storytelling skills and learn from other storytellers. The following resources provide a variety of insights, tips, and further links on storytelling.

- [5 Reporting and Storytelling Lessons From the Current Moment](#) (2025)
- [How To Tell Better Stories](#) (2023)
- [Storyboard 75: The Big Book of Narrative, Devoted to Excellence in Journalistic Storytelling](#) (2013)

OTHER STORYTELLING MEDIUMS

Communication. Storytelling in Other Mediums
Storytelling in Other Mediums. Global Health Education and Learning Incubator 2025.
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GHELI repository link: https://repository.gheli.harvard.edu/repository/14588
We often think of storytelling as a piece of writing or stories told orally. However, stories and narratives can emerge in all kinds of media. The list below aims to provide a selection of resources on how storytellers can use mediums other than writing, such as video, audio, photography, and data visualization, to create narratives and reach a wider audience.

- Podcasting and Audio Storytelling Guide (2025). This guide from the University of Michigan library provides an overview of how to get started creating audio stories and podcasts, including information on the types of podcasts, the recording and editing process, useful equipment, hosting and distribution, and other available resources.
- Yes, You Can Cram Your Story Into a One-Minute TikTok. Here's How. (2022). This article from NPR discusses tips for creating shortform videos that grab attention quickly and tell stories in only one minute.
- How To Create a Photo Essay (2022). This guide discusses the topic of photo essays or stories, which tell a story through a collection of images and captions.
- Move Beyond Simply Showing Data With SWD Makeovers. This collection of guides provides tips and best practices for incorporating storytelling and communication principles into data visualizations.

TRANSLATING STORY INTO POLICY

Communication. Translating Story Into Policy
Translating Story Into Policy. Global Health Education and Learning Incubator 2025.
https://repository.gheli.harvard.edu/repository/14589.
GHELI repository link: https://repository.gheli.harvard.edu/repository/14589
Stories can be a powerful tool for advocates and researchers to translate research into policy: Stories illustrate cause and effect, provoke emotions, and make information more concrete and memorable. These resources explore storytelling as an advocacy tool and provide tips on not only how to get started with advocacy storytelling (such as writing an Op-Ed or policy memo) but also how to start disseminating stories and participating in science policy.

- Storytelling as an Advocacy Tool (2020). This resource from Swipe Out Hunger discusses how to collect and leverage stories for advocacy.
- Evaluating Personal Narrative Storytelling for Advocacy: A Literature Review Prepared for Living Proof Advocacy (2019). This literature review published by Wilder Research explores why storytelling matters for advocacy, the core components of an effective advocacy story, and how to evaluate the effectiveness of narrative storytelling.
- Global Mental Health Communications Toolkit (2015). This toolkit from the Mental Health Innovation Network provides mental health researchers with guides and templates to better communicate their findings to stakeholders, including policy-makers.
- Op-Ed Writing: The Basics. This topic portal from the Op-Ed Project provides a guide to getting started in Op-Ed writing, including the basic structure of an Op-Ed and writing an attention-grabbing lead. The Op-Ed Project also offers resources on pitching and submitting Op-Eds for publication.
- Communications Consulting and Resources. This topic portal from the Harvard Kennedy School provides resources to assist students with writing and communication, including Op-Ed and policy memo writing, pitching and publishing, as well as public speaking and persuasion.
- CommKit. This toolkit from the Broad Research Communication Lab aims to help improve communication in the biological sciences. The science policy section includes guides on elevator pitches, policy memos, presentations, Op-Ed and letter writing, attending policy meetings, and making public comment on pending regulation.

PLACES THAT DO THIS WELL

Organizations. Selected Storytelling Organizations
Selected Storytelling Organizations. Global Health Education and Learning Incubator 2025.
https://repository.gheli.harvard.edu/repository/14590.
GHELI repository link: https://repository.gheli.harvard.edu/repository/14590
The best storytellers learn from other storytellers. This collection includes a non-exhaustive list of organizations that do storytelling well or provide other helpful information or resources.

- The Open Notebook. The Open Notebook is a resource dedicated to science journalism, providing pitching resources, email-based courses, blog articles, and annotated "Storygrams" to educate about the art and business of science writing.
- The Moth. The Moth is an organization that holds live storytelling events in cities across the U.S., Australia, and the U.K., broadcasting the best stories on radio and podcast. Explore the Moth's Storytelling School for activities and prompts.
- Story Collider. Story Collider aims to show how science is connected to our everyday lives through storytelling. Story Collider holds live storytelling events in the U.S., Canada, and U.K., and recordings are often shared on the Story Collider podcast.
- Nieman Storyboard. Nieman Storyboard is a publication aiming to provide insight into the craft of non-fiction storytelling. The publication includes articles and podcasts on craft, interviews with writers, and story annotations from authors.
- FrameWorks Institute. The FrameWorks Institute publishes research and resources on how people think about social issues, hoping to change conversations through reframing narratives.
- Storytelling with Data. Storytelling with Data provides many helpful tutorials and guides on creating effective data visualization that tells a story. The organization also provides exercises and monthly challenges for learners to practice making better visuals with.
- Health Story Collaborative. Health Story Collaborative is a patient-centered initiative to share stories about health, illness, and healing to harness the therapeutic power of storytelling.