

Worksheet Story of Self

Telling Your Story of Self

A critical part of being a founder – or a great scientist – is being able to articulate for others who you are, where you come from, and what challenges have shaped the life choices that led you to where you are today. If you're asking others to follow you, they need to know why you're worth following. Simply saying "follow me" is not enough. Others will know they want to follow you if they see in you someone who has faced challenges, someone who can act in the face of uncertainty, and someone who will make choices based on principles and values. As a leader you must tell people who you are and why you're there.

As a founder, you will tell your story constantly: to potential recruits, investors, customers, teammates, the press, etc. Telling your story is a skill. It requires critical reflection on your life, your values, and how those values were shaped. It requires connecting that story to what you're doing right now.

Stories are not developed in a quiet corner. They're developed in relationship to others—you tell your story, pay attention to the way others react, and continually make choices about which parts of your story help to motivate and encourage others to act.

Reflection:

Take time to reflect on your own story. Go back as far as you can remember. Focus on challenges you had to face, the choices you made about how to deal with them, and the satisfactions or frustrations you experienced. Be detailed and specific. Why did you make those choices? Why did you do this and not that? How did your reaction to those challenges shape who you are? Did those experiences impact what matters to you? Keep asking yourself why.

What brought you to do this research? When did you decide to focus on this specific problem? Why? Why? Why?

Tips for Brainstorming:

- Start with the beginning, then focus on present day, then connect the dots
- Determine the challenge, the choice, & outcome you want to focus on for this story.
- Add 1 -2 specific details that will help people connect to what you're describing.
- Keep it short -- you only have two minutes.

1. Story of Self Origins

A: List some big hardships you've faced or key moments in your life when you stepped up to face adversity (or failed to):

B: When/Why did this happen?

C: What are the particular details that you remember, how did it feel, what did it look like, what did it sound like, what did it smell like?

2. Story of Now

A: How did you decide to pursue your current research/company?

B: What about your past connects to your motivation to start this research/company?

C: Which hardships or key moments (challenge, outcome, choice) are strongly connected to where you are today?

Piece together the most compelling permutations

Beginning – End. Start with the beginning of the story and jump straight to the end.

Define some of the moments in between

How do those middle-moment outcomes explain the current situation? What's the causal linking?

What are some juicy details, emotions, vivid imagery of those middle points?

How Stories Work:

Stories motivate others by invoking our emotions.

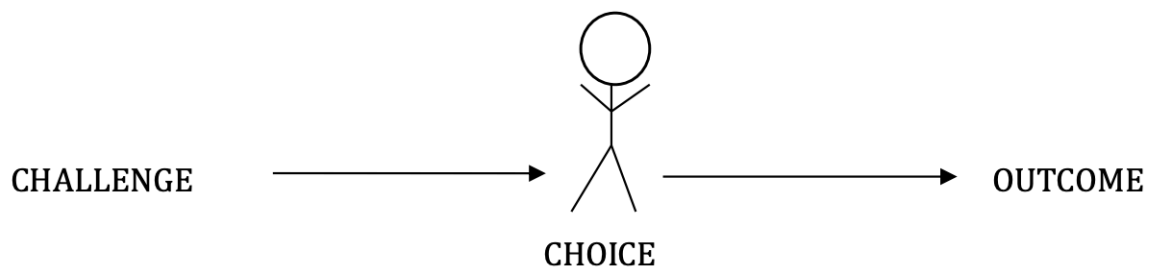
Emotions inform us of what we value in ourselves, in others, and in the world. They enable us to express our values in a motivational way to others. Good stories appeal to our hearts.

Some emotions inhibit action, but other emotions facilitate action.

Action is facilitated by urgency, hope, a sense that you can make a difference, solidarity, and anger. Good stories can make us feel urgency, hope, and other emotions because we can identify with the character in the story.

Stories convey the values of the storyteller when we know what the challenge she faced was, what choices she made in response, and what the outcome was.

The outcome gives us hope. Because we can empathetically identify with the storyteller, we can “feel” the moral or outcome. We not only hear “about” someone’s courage; we can be inspired by it. The key focus in your story is on choice points, moments in your life when your values were formed because you had to choose in the face of great uncertainty. When did you first care about being heard, about concern with others, about the power of technology & science, about entrepreneurship, about solving big problems? Why? When did you feel you had to do something about it? Why did you feel you could? What were the circumstances?



Your story is most powerful when it's ultimately connected to the story of what you're doing now (your company/ PhD research), what you want to do, and how others can join you in that.

Your story should also communicate why and how you're going to create a huge positive impact in the world. Your story should also move people to action by painting a detailed picture of how things might be different if we act, giving us the hope that if we act now we can make real that better future.

Space to write your story: