

SWD podcast: **episode 73** [listening time: 18:11]

Rather read than listen? The full transcript for Episode 73 of the [storytelling with data podcast](#) follows.

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stand up

Welcome to *storytelling with data*, the podcast where listeners around the world learn to be better storytellers and presenters with best selling author, speaker, and workshop guru Cole Nussbaumer Knafllic. We'll cover a wide range of topics that will help you effectively show and tell your data stories. So get ready to separate yourself from the mess of 3D exploding pie charts and deliver knockout presentations. And with that here's Cole.

Hi, this is Cole, thanks for tuning in!

It's my oldest son, Avery's, first year in middle school. I can tell that changing classes and physically moving to different spaces throughout the day is good for him. He's also finding interest in some areas that I wouldn't have anticipated. He's been devouring the real novels they are reading in English class—I stress *real* because for me, this is a welcome relief from his fascination with *graphic* novels. Drama is the other surprise. One of the first projects was to develop a character—he had an incredibly fun time with this, determining a personality with strengths and flaws, deciding what the character looked like and wore, what accessories they carried. More recently, he's been learning a monologue. He is *really* getting into this. My husband Randy, who spent time in high school in “the theater” (I always poke fun at him for how he says that) has been helping him.

I was watching the mentoring take place on a recent evening. Avery would deliver, and Randy would provide his “notes”—points of feedback—and then Avery would run through it again. After one of the iterations, Randy said: “You know this. Become the character. Put the paper down. Stand up.”

Something about those words made it true. Avery stood up and suddenly, he *was* the boy whose dog actually ate his homework, convincing his invisible teacher.

It's one of those suggestions given to Avery that I want to focus on today: **stand up**.

This action isn't only beneficial when you want to take on a different persona—which is something we will talk more about, because there's interesting utility in that when we need to communicate in a business setting—but there is power in standing up that we can make use of in other ways, as well.

I'm going to share three broad scenarios in which you can reap tangible benefits from standing up: to bolster creativity, to increase concision—or, said another way, to keep things from being overly lengthy, and—finally—to present.

Let's jump in and talk about how standing up can **boost your creativity**.

When you are in a situation where you need to see something in a new light, approach it in a different way, or infuse creativity into the process, stand up and move to a different spot than where you typically work. It doesn't even need to be another room for this tactic to have a positive impact. For example, I work at a tall black desk that's in the center of my office. Most of the time, I sit in a tall chair behind my computer on one side of it. When I need inspiration, I'll stand up and walk to the other side of the desk. That's the side I encounter first when I walk into my office, so it tends to be a holding spot for stacks of books, paper, and other miscellaneous things. So I start by moving any stacks out of the way. Then I'm faced with a clean black surface. If I'm brainstorming, I'll get a stack of sticky notes or a piece of blank paper, if I need to sketch an idea, I'll use blank paper or get out a larger scale notebook. I remain standing as I work. There's something about changing things up in these subtle ways: facing the room from a different direction and standing while I work, that gives me a fresh perspective, allows me to generate ideas more freely, and to let go of the constraints that I tend to hold myself to. Once I've gotten what I need from the process, I move back around to my work side of the desk to realize my ideas.

I often stay in my office, because I like having all of my supplies close by, but you can imagine how you could also do this by moving to another room—remaining standing while you brainstorm on a whiteboard, or at a colleague's desk.

Speaking of colleagues, creating a situation in which you both are standing can be useful in a few different ways as well. If we continue with the brainstorming example, you can imagine where multiple people standing, adding ideas to a shared whiteboard or piece of paper and discussing can get everyone equally involved and contributing to the process.

Standing can also be a great way for **soliciting and obtaining certain kinds of feedback**. You might suggest going for a walk with the person you seek input from. This can be great for getting big picture directional feedback—you won't get bogged down with the details of a slide or graph, for example, because soliciting feedback in this way forces you to summarize details verbally and, as a result, you'll likely focus on the most important or critical parts. Also, if there is

something that is difficult for you or the person with whom you're speaking, sometimes that can be easier when you don't feel like you have to look at each other. When you're walking, it's acceptable to be looking forward or down, and generally to have less direct eye contact than you would feel compelled to in a more typical meeting environment. Because of this, pauses in conversation can also be more comfortable. This can allow you and the person with whom you're speaking to be more thoughtful before talking. This can be particularly useful for difficult conversations.

On the topic of difficulties, when you're **feeling stuck** on a project or other work, this is another great point to stand up. Stretch. Go get a drink or a snack. Do something to get physical and temporal space from the challenge. Go for a walk. Let some time pass. Have you ever been in the middle of something difficult or tricky and then found that a solution or great idea struck you when you were doing something totally different, when you least expected it? That's your subconscious at work. You can intentionally create circumstances that are conducive to this magic. I actually wrote more about this idea in a recent blog post, which I'll link to in the show notes.

Let's shift to a fully different reason to stand: because **you want to be—or have others be—concise**. Standing can force concision in some interesting and useful ways.

That's typically the premise behind **standing meetings**: to keep them short. I think these can be common for teams that need to be on the same page at a regular cadence. For example, in my prior life in banking, when we were doing due diligence to assess an acquisition and needed to assess things and come to a decision in a short amount of time—sometimes a matter of days, the project team would start each day with a stand up sync, which forced people to focus only on the critical things so that everyone could quickly get back to their work.

You can make use of this idea to encourage individuals to be brief even in cases where people are typically seated. For example, at a team meeting, you might ask individuals to stand when they give their respective updates. Or in a mixed group where you need people to introduce themselves—we encounter this sometimes at smaller, longer workshops, where there aren't so many people, so you want people to get to know each other because they might need to work together for a day or more. But at the same time, you don't want to spend a ton of time on it. There's nothing worse than person after person sharing everything in detail about their job, when a 1- or 2-sentence summary would suffice. To prompt pithiness, have people stand up when they introduce themselves. You can help this along even more if you're the one facilitating or guiding the group, by letting the first one or two people know to keep it brief so they act as a model for others to follow. Or if you know the group, be thoughtful who you have kick that process off, or start with your own super brief intro.

Another place I'll encourage standing during workshops is when people are giving each other

feedback. I don't know the psychology behind it, but observationally, it seems to promote a more even dialogue back and forth between people vs one person controlling the conversation, which seems like it happens more often when the pair or group is seated. Maybe there's something to the physical change in space and shift in perspective that we talked about in the context of creativity boost, too? I'm not sure, but I've seen enough that I now encourage people to stand up and move to a different part of the room during partner feedback.

It sounds funny, but standing up and talking through ideas by *yourself* can be useful as well. This is something I talk through in depth in episode 6, say it out loud, as well as in Chapter 9 of my latest book, SWY; I'll link to both of those in the show notes. I'll highlight the benefit that's relevant to our current topic here: and that is to help achieve concision. Stand up. Say your point or talk through your communication out loud—like Avery in my intro story—without the aid of a script, data, or your presentation. Simply speak and listen to yourself. Do it a few times, refining and improving each time. The way you ultimately communicate to others on this topic will be better as a result of it.

That brings me to my top reason to stand up: **to communicate**. Before I talk about that, let's take a quick break.

[COMMERCIAL]

Welcome back! I recently recorded a video highlighting one of the top tips that has had a positive impact on my career, and which I recommend for anyone who'd like to improve how they present, and that is to **stand up**. I'll share a clip of audio from that recording that details the benefits of standing up for better communication:

[VIDEO AUDIO EXCERPT]

I hope you enjoyed that clip on the benefits of standing up to communicate. If you'd like to hear more about building confidence for standing up to present and related viewer Q&A, I encourage you to check out the full video on the SWD YouTube channel. I'll link to that in the show notes.

I'll leave you with the simple advice you've heard throughout today's session: stand up. Standing can help you get a creativity boost, foster concision, and present more effectively.

Before I wrap, a couple of quick updates:

- As you heard earlier, we've set our **2024 calendar**, which includes an 8-week online course beginning in January, shorter virtual workshops that will teach you to make stellar slides and great graphs, and our in-person masterclass in London in April and Seattle in September. Learn more and register at storytellingwithdata.com/workshops. Use the

code podcast10 at registration for 10% off registration price

- We have an **exciting new perk for premium members** in our SWD community: access to all solutions in the exercise bank. This means many hundreds of example approach, including those from the SWD team. Learn about the many perks of premium and go premium today at community.storytellingwithdata.com/premium.
- We're down to our final few mugs, coasters, and posters in the **SWD shop**. These make great gifts for the data-driven in your life. Act fast if you'd like to receive yours before the holidays. storytellingwithdata.com/shop
- If you were sad to miss the **mini-workshop** we ran in October, or want to rewatch or share, you can find the recording at storytellingwithdata.com/goodtogreat. More generally, check out all of the great content on our YouTube channel at storytellingwithdata.com/YouTube. Be sure to subscribe to never miss a new video.

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