



Exercise: **Become A Storyteller**

One of the best ways to excite someone's passion is through the art and practice of storytelling. Stories capture the essence of your organization's powerful work. I want you to learn to tap into your own authenticity and use your passion to move prospective individual donors into powerful relationships with your program.

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I want you to come up with a new story. A story from where you sit within your program. I don't mean you had to necessarily experience it firsthand, but you need to have been close to it and it needs to have touched you, personally. What have you experienced in your program that chokes you up, that makes you mad or hopeful, what is it that brings you to work every day with an unstoppable desire to do more for the young people you serve. This is the story you should tell. This is the one that will cause your prospective donors to stand in the gap with you, investing and involving themselves in the amazing, life-changing work of your organization.

There is no real formula for the activity of developing the story—your two-minute speech. I suggest you find an hour or two where you can sit alone without interruption. Get yourself into a space where you can be reflective. Light a candle. Play some music. Think about why you do what you do. Try to remember why you got involved in the first place. Think about those moments when the work is unbearably difficult—when you might be thinking about changing jobs—what keeps you there? What motivates you to tough it out?

Is there a person that comes to mind? A young person who said “thanks” one day? A kid whose life was a mess when he first came to your program and now he is succeeding in ways unimaginable? Is it a mentor who pops into your head? Is there a volunteer whose life has been changed? Make a few notes. Draw a picture. Let yourself feel the emotion you want to cultivate in the person you'll be asking.

When the story becomes clear (and it will), write it down and practice telling it. First, practice in front of the mirror. Then in front of a colleague or two, maybe a young person, practice in front of your significant other.

Ask them for their feedback. You want this story to be powerful. It needs to be brief—two minutes at most! And you want to tell the story in a way that will move even you every time you tell it. It can't be phony. I don't want you to pretend to cry. This isn't about making people feel guilty or sorry for the kids you're working to help. This is the real deal—heartfelt emotion turned into passionate commitment. You don't need to fake it. When it's real, you'll know it, and the people listening to you will know it, too.