

The Power of Narrative



Narratives

break

barriers

Introduction

- Storytelling is one of the most **powerful tools** to convey the importance of an issue.
- A personal narrative **brings life** to a situation.
- But why do narratives **fail**?




Barriers in Storytelling

- The environment is not welcoming
- Viewing the storyteller in some other aspect (age, disability, etc.) rather than as an expert in their story
- Lack of preparation for the storyteller and/or the venue

This often boils down into a **preconceived bias** against the storyteller.



Imagine This...




Imagine you've told a room of professionals about your background and experiences in an effort to add your demographic's perspective to the conversation. When you finish your talk and are approached by audience members, rather than further discussing the content you presented or the points made, your identity within a certain demographic is diminished or stated to be the exception.

How would that make you feel?



Putting it Together

We all know this experience, especially in disability work.



This is a barrier to youth advocates when it comes to sharing their narratives, seen for their youth rather than well-rounded individuals with meaningful stories and experiences, that when included purposefully advance the work we do as a whole.

Narrative Methods



The Big Three

1 Storytellers are experts

When someone tells their story, they are the expert in the situation

2 Know your audience

What are the goals and wants of the audience and how does that tie into the narrative?

3 Use audience's reasoning

Take the preconceived thoughts of the audience and use in the narrative.



Audience 101

- Know the general theme that ties the audience together to bring relevancy to your narrative.
- Meet the audience at their level
- Use audience skepticism as a way to meet the audience in the middle, rather than shutting them out



Self-Confidence

01

Expertise

No one else knows your own story better than you

02

Be Unexpected

Practice unexpected events to keep your line of thought on track

03

Practice

Practice what your story is both to other people and yourself, like in a mirror.

04

Find Support

Find the people in your space that will support you and give you guidance

Case Studies

YETI Member Cadence Russell



Cadence Russell

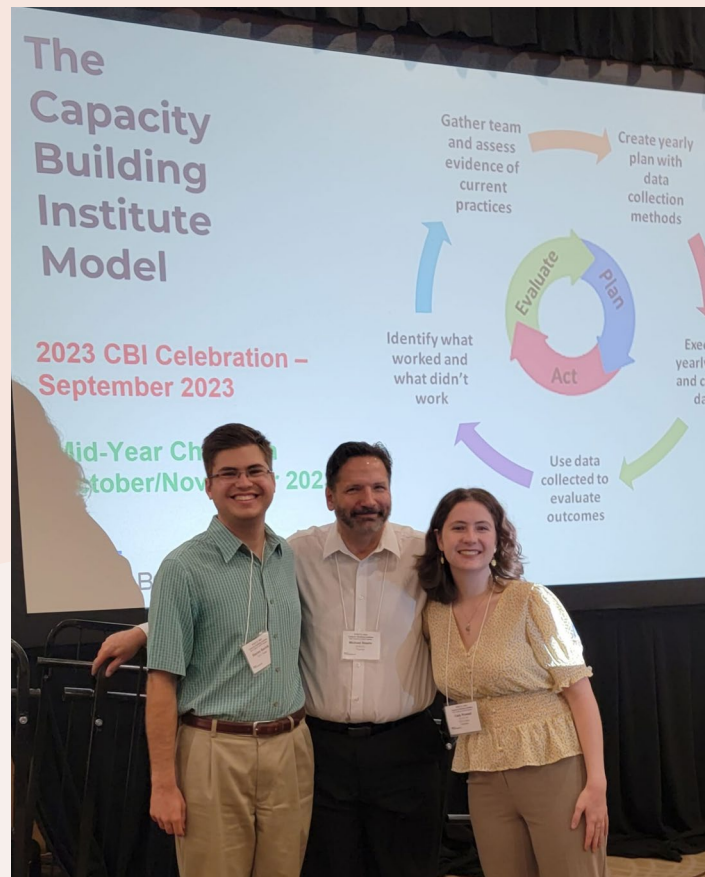
- Born and raised in Austin, TX
- Started advocacy work on her own on social media before becoming involved with YETI by chance
- Since joining YETI in early 2021, Russell has become very active in disability advocacy and transition work both through NTACTION and at her own university






Russell (right) with Michael Scanlan (?) (left) and Valerie C. Williams (center), Director of the Office of Special Education after Williams and Russell's Q&A panel on transition at the 2023 CBI.

Russell Cont'd

- In 2023, Russell was asked to be a speaker at the Capacity Building Institute
- Russell did not receive transition services, and used this fact at CBI to highlight that students are still flying under the radar.
- That part of her story was emphasized over other parts because of its relevance to the audience



Russell (right) at the end of CBI 2023. Michael Stoehr (center) serves as an adult ally on YETI and Daylan Bachik (left) served with Russell on the Texas state team.



+ “Storytelling is the key to a better future, not just for us but for all people who want to make a difference.”

—Sean Spence



Conclusions

Storytelling is Powerful

Life

Disability work is nothing without life and meaning behind it, which is where storytelling comes in.

Change

Regardless of what outcomes you get, it is always a positive change on some level.

Even if you can't see the results IT STILL HAPPENS

