

MOBILIZING SHARED VALUES: STORY OF SELF

WHY AM I CALLED TO
LEADERSHIP?



STORY OF SELF

Goals for This Session:

- Learn how to tell a story of SELF in a way that communicates your values
- Learn how to coach others by giving feedback on their story of SELF

What is a Story of Self?

Public leaders face the challenge of enabling others to “get” the values that move them to lead. Effective communication of motivating values can establish grounds for trust, empathy, and understanding. In its absence, people will infer our motivations, often in ways that can be very counterproductive. Telling our story of self can help establish firm ground upon which to lead, collaborate with others, and discover common purpose.

Every one of us has a compelling story of self to tell. We all have people in our lives—parents, grandparents, teachers, friends, colleagues—or characters we love—whose stories of challenge influence our own values. And we all have made choices in response to our own challenges that shape our life’s path—confrontations with pain, moments of hope, calls to action.

The key is to focus on our choice points, those moments in our lives when we experienced the influence of our values on the choices we made that have shaped who we have become. When did you first care about being heard, about others, about abuses of power, about poverty, about injustice? When did you feel you had to act? Why did you feel you could? What were the circumstances—the place, the colors, sounds—what did it look like? The power in your story of self is to reveal something of those moments that were deeply meaningful to you in shaping your life’s trajectory—not your deepest private secrets, but the events that shaped your public life. Learning to tell a good story of self-demands the *courage of introspection*—and of sharing some of what you find.

Incorporating Challenge, Choice, and Outcome in Your Own Story

Ask yourself questions to focus on choices you made along the way that brought you to this point in time as a leader. Once you identify a specific choice point, dig deeper by trying to answer the following questions

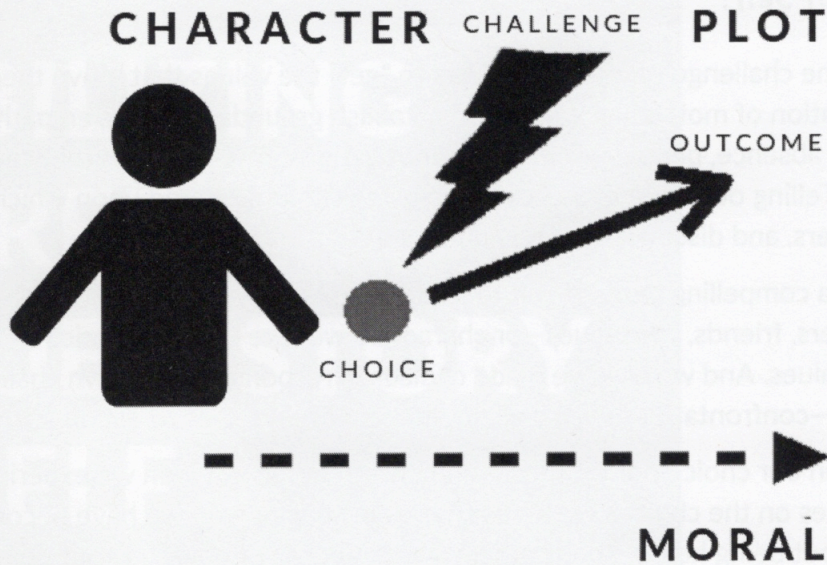
Challenge: Why did you feel it was a challenge? What was so challenging about it? Why was it your challenge?

Choice: Why did you make the choice you did? Where did you get the courage (or not)? Where did you get the hope (or not)? Did your parents’, grandparents’ or others life stories teach you how to act in that moment? How did it feel?

Outcome: How did the outcome feel? Why did it feel that way? What did it teach you? What do you want to teach us? How do you want us to feel?

A word about challenge. Sometimes people see the word challenge and think that they need to describe the misfortunes of their lives. A struggle may be of your own choosing—a high mountain you decided to climb, not only a valley you managed to climb out of. Any number of things may have been a challenge to you and be the source of a good story to inspire others.

Story of Self Grounds your Story of Now and Story of Us



NARRATIVE STRUCTURE



WORKSHEET: DEVELOPING YOUR STORY OF SELF

Before you decide what part of your story to tell, think about these questions:

1. Why am I called to leadership in this community?
2. What values move me to act? How might they inspire others to similar action?
3. What stories can I tell from my own life about specific people or events that would show (rather than tell) how I learned or acted on those values?

What are the experiences in your life that have shaped the values that call you to leadership in this community?

FAMILY & CHILDHOOD

- Parents/Family
- Growing Up Experiences
- Your Community
- Role Models
- School

LIFE CHOICES

- School
- Career
- Partner/Family
- Hobbies/Interests/Talents
- Experiences Finding Passion
- Experiences Overcoming Challenge

ORGANIZING EXPERIENCE

- First Experience of organizing
- Connection to key books or people
- Role Models

Think about the challenges, choices and outcomes in your story. The outcome might be what you learned, in addition to what happened. Try drawing pictures here instead of words. Powerful stories leave your listeners with images in their minds that shape their understanding of you and your calling. Remember, articulating the decisions you make in the face of challenges ultimately is the way to communicate your values.

CHALLENGES	CHOICES	OUTCOMES