

'Why your story sucks

until you learn how to tell it'

1. PODCAST script

ANNOUNCEMENT: *(Music)* This is a podcast from Theatre from A to Z, made for the Erasmus+ project 'DEPART': Designing online Educational Products and ART.

(end music)

Highlights of Gaby's story, with background music..

GABY: On October 15, 2015, I arrived in Belgium, alone. I was 30 years old at the time and had chosen to exchange my sunny homeland Mexico for the rainy, cold Belgium.

I had already studied in Mexico for four years, now an additional two years, for the same degree.

What a fucking country!

GREG: Are you a newcomer and do you want to learn how to share your story in a smooth and fascinating way, then you have come to the right place.

Jingle

Introduction + music

GREG: *(thunder and people talking in the background)* As long as man has been alive, stories have been told, around the fire, during meals, with friends or family. They connect people, they are educational and they give you a "feel good" feeling. Both the narrator and the listener. With this free online manual you will learn to communicate better in Dutch, English or any other language. Your confidence will get a boost. You will encourage others to better understand people from different backgrounds.

The stories should be about something you experienced yourself, here or in your home country, about the difficult adjustments, or the cultural differences.

Using this guide, you will use those negative emotions to create a new positive story.

Sound: doing

GREG: Step 1. Choose a personal adventure or setback from your life, something that was strong enough to change your life in some way, a game changer, and write that story down.

Sound of a landing airplane.

GABY: First of all, the master is only given in Dutch, so I first had to take a year of Dutch lessons.

Secondly, my Mexican diploma was not accepted in Belgium. I had to redo Drama for the last two years.

"You Belgians think we still live in the trees! *(fade out)*

GREG: Write down how old you were, where you were, with whom, ... What happened? Were you unhappy, frustrated, sad, or alone...? Describing these matters in detail, but concisely, creates empathy in your audience. They recognize themselves in your story and think, "I know that." Only then will they listen with interest.

Sound: doing

GREG: Step 2. Reread your story a few days later. This time not from the negative experience, but now from the strength you have built up after all this time through the incident.

Forget the battle you fought then. People tend to see the bad side of everything, but when we write down our story and look back at it with "a new look", we can try to read the story from a different perspective.

What positive things have arisen as a result? Did it make you stronger? More determined? Are you doing things now that you never dared to do before? What are those positive things that led to your change?

Sound of thunder

GABY: When I got this news, I did not sleep. Should I return to Mexico, or put my pride aside and take that admission test?

I chose the latter. It was better than returning to Mexico and never being able to teach. And maybe I could learn something else. So I took my entrance exam, and I passed... Of course!

GREG: Describe what you did to change your situation, to get out of it? Describe everything you did to turn the situation around. Be specific again. Dare to be vulnerable and be authentic.

Sound: doing

GREG: Step 3. Ask friends or family if they think you have changed since the event, and how? People are very critical of themselves, and do not always see the good sides of a setback. Others look at you differently than you do.

Now rewrite your story from that different perspective, from the strength.

GABY: I have to admit that the training was very educational in the end. I learned new ways of making theatre, and I got my degree in theater pedagogy.

Some of my colleagues became good friends, my social network grew and I even got job offers as an actress, in Dutch.

I also got to know a wonderful man, he is French speaking, so I am now learning French.

GREG: When rewriting your story, use the 3 steps: before your setback, during, and after.

Sound: doing.

1. **Before:** Where were you, how old, with whom, ... What happened? How bad were you? Unhappy, frustrated, sad, alone, ...?
Describing these matters specifically in detail, but concisely, creates empathy in your audience. They recognize themselves in your story and think: "I know that!". Only then will they listen with interest.

Compilation of Gaby's misadventures

Sound: doing.

2. **During:** What did you do to change or get out of your situation? Describe everything you did to turn the situation around. Be specific again. Dare to be vulnerable and be authentic.

Compilation of Gaby's changes.

Sound: doing.

3. **After:** How did the incident affect your life? How did you deal with it? What were the consequences? Why is it better now than before?

Compilation of Gaby's effects.

An important tip: be specific, describe details (see, hear, feel, smell, taste, ...) and keep it concise, max. 10 minutes. Don't make it a novel.

Now enjoy the final story of Gabriela.

GABY: On October 15, 2015, I arrived in Belgium, alone. I was 30 years old at the time and had chosen to exchange my sunny homeland Mexico for the rainy, cold Belgium. In Mexico I had studied for four years and obtained a master's degree in drama, acting was my life. But in order to also teach, I wanted to obtain an additional master's degree in theater pedagogy in Belgium. First of all, the master's is only given in Dutch, so I first had to take a year of Dutch lessons. Secondly, my Mexican diploma was not accepted in Belgium. I had to redo Drama for the last two years. But I didn't want that. I had already studied in Mexico for four years, now an additional two years, for the same degree. "You Belgians think we still

live in the trees!" I said to my friend. In addition, I also had to find work and earn money to pay for my apartment, food and clothes.

But after a year of Dutch lessons I was really humiliated: I had to pass an entrance test for the theater school. like I was a novice. I already had a fucking master's degree and ten years of professional experience as an actress!

When I heard all that, my life stopped...I couldn't believe it. What a fucking country! When I got this news, I did not sleep. Should I return to Mexico, or put my pride aside and take that admission test?

I chose the latter. It was better than returning to Mexico and never being able to teach. And maybe I could learn something else. So I took my entrance exam, and I passed... Of course!

I have to admit that the training was very educational in the end. I learned new ways of making theatre, and I got my degree in theater pedagogy. The techniques are very helpful and I still use them every day.

Some of my colleagues became good friends, my social network grew and I even got job offers as an actress, in Dutch. As a result, I earn well and I am financially independent.

My family and friends are proud of me, and to be honest, I am a little bit too. I got to know myself better.

I also got to know a wonderful man, he is French speaking, so I am now learning French. Every new language enriches my life. Our daughter, Paloma, is trilingual: French, Dutch and Spanish. She makes me so happy. Through her I get to know even more the power of positive thinking.

Finally, I hope that my story can be a source of inspiration for other newcomers.

GREG: Thanks for listening this podcast, I wish you good luck!

jingle

This podcast was made by Rudy, Jana and Ditmar Goes, Gregory Van Damme and Gabriela Leguizamo Gomez.

2. About the podcast and telling stories

WHAT?

Young newcomers tell (or sing) positive, inspiring, real-life stories about themselves, their homeland, the "move", the adjustments, the difficulties, the cultural differences, but always from a positive angle, giving hope and inspiration to both other newcomers and natives, in Dutch.

'Being vulnerable' in the stories leads to understanding and empathy from the listeners. The 'narrators' are coached in the making of their stories by professional actors and possibly musicians.

HOW?

- Step 1. The '*Why your story sucks*' podcast is a first online guide to turning a poorly told story into a strong one.
- Step 2. In subsequent stories, the process is omitted. We only hear the story **before and after**.
- Step 3. The finished stories may appear online on the DEPART website.

TARGET GROUP

young newcomers (20-35 years old): immigrants, refugees, expats, who learn the Dutch or another language,...

SOCIAL SKILLS

are mainly in the domain of personal development.

1. Language skills (The ability to speak, read, write and understand a foreign language)

People with this skill:

- Function well in society because they can express themselves well orally.
- Can express their opinion in a conversation.
- Can convey a message convincingly.
- Can ask specific questions to get information.
- Understand what others are communicating to them.

2. self-confidence (A strong sense of self-esteem and abilities)

People with this skill:

- Present themselves with self-awareness, be present.
- Can articulate unpopular views and fight without supporters for what is right.
- Are decisive, able to make the right decision despite uncertainties and pressures from within and without.

3. Optimism (Proactivity and perseverance)

People with Skill for Optimism:

- Steady toward their goals despite obstacles and setbacks.

- Operate from the hope of success and not from fear of failure.
- View setbacks as the result of manageable circumstances and not as a personal shortcoming.

4. Adaptability (Flexibility in responding to change)

People with the ability to adapt:

- Be flexible with diverse demands, shifting priorities and rapid change.
- Ensure their response and tactics are adapted to changing circumstances.
- Are flexible in their view of events

5. Self-assessment (Know your inner resources, qualities and limitations)

People with this skill are:

- Aware of their strengths and weaknesses.
- Reflective, learning from experiences.
- Amenable to sincere commentary, new perspectives, continuing education and self-development.
- Able to show a sense of humor and perspective about oneself

6. Communication (Sincere listening and convincing information)

People who have this skill:

- .Are good at give and take and use emotional signals to better tailor their message.
- Tackle difficult situations directly.
- Be a good listener, seek mutual understanding and welcome a full exchange of information.
- Promote free communication and are open not only to good news, but also to bad news.

7. understanding of the other (Understanding the feelings and points of view of others)

People who have this skill:

- Are alert to emotional cues and are a good listener.
- Demonstrate sensitivity and understanding for the other person's point of view.
- Offer help based on their understanding of the other person's needs and feelings.

8. Juggling Diversity (Creating Opportunities Using Diverse People)

People who have this skill:

- Accept and appreciate people from different backgrounds.
- Understand a different world view and are aware of group differences.
- See diversity as an opportunity and create an environment in which diverse people can thrive.
- Resist bias and bigotry

9. Collaboration (Working together with others towards a common goal)

People who have this skill:

- Knowing how to maintain the balance between concentration on the task to be performed and attention to the mutual relationships.

- Collaborate with other people and consult on plans, information and resources.
- Promote a friendly and helpful atmosphere.
- Find and stimulate opportunities for collaboration.

10. involvement (aligning with the goals of a group or organization)

People with this skill:

- Make sacrifices readily to achieve a greater goal for the organization.
- Experience the big task itself as meaningful.
- Use the group's principles when making decisions and clarifying choices.
- Actively look for opportunities to fulfill the group's task.

THE SCIENCE BEHIND STORYTELLING

Storytelling is not only the oldest art form, it also touches the highest form of our consciousness.

Evolutionary biology argues that storytelling has been instrumental to human evolution. Language and the ability to tell stories gave us the opportunity to pass on positive and negative experiences to our fellow man. At the same time, we developed the ability to imitate the experiences of others. This allowed people to learn risk-free: you didn't have to eat that one poisonous berry yourself if someone else had already gone through the painful experience and managed to tell this graphically. With the ability to tell visually and listen attentively, the human brain enables us to protect us from harmful experiences, and thus to survive.

Our brains are programmed to mirror other people's behavior

Putting it into the other is literally a matter of nerves. Neuroscientists have shown that when we hear a person talk about an emotional event, we physically take over this experience. The areas that become active in the narrator's brain also become active in the listener: as if we were actually experiencing the story ourselves. In our brains, so-called 'mirror neurons' create the emotions that we pick up in the story. We can have empathy for the fictional characters because we experience the same feelings 'physically'. So we don't just listen to a story, our brain ensures that we see it in images and we feel the emotions.

Emotional stories affect our brain chemistry

When we hear a story, we are unconsciously relating it to our own experiences. Our memory searches for a similar experience and the insular cortex is activated in our brain. This part of the brain plays a role in mapping experiences and also in raising awareness of basic emotions such as anger, fear, horror, happiness and sadness. Once we hear a compelling story, the insular cortex stimulates the production of a number of important chemicals:

- *Cortisol*: stimulates our attention;

- *Oxytocin*: correlates with feelings of care, connection and empathy. The more oxytocin one produces, the greater the chance that one will exhibit positive empathic behavior;
- *Dopamine*: helps greatly with memory and information processing. You could say that dopamine creates a cognitive Post-It note that reads: 'Remember this'. Thus, we remember emotionally charged events better than neutral events;
- *Serotonin*: inhibits feelings of anxiety, depression and impulsivity.

Emotional stories thus stimulate the production of crucial chemicals that open people up to personally experiencing projected emotions.

WHY YOUR STORY SUCKS!

Newcomers often have tall tales they want to share. Stories that sometimes float on conflicts from a troubled past: . difficult challenges, decisions, homesickness, loss, ... We can use those old debris, often negative emotions, to build a new, strong, but positive story. Those "pimped up" stories now become hopeful messages for others.

This podcast wants to challenge newcomers to inspire others with their stories to navigate the unknown areas of life in a positive way.

- Storytelling leads to more self-confidence.
- One acquires a greater impact in one's own work/private community.
- It inspires, motivates and encourages others to create more harmony.
- The storytellers learn how to use their story to strengthen their leadership.
- Professional coaching by T-AZ, to make the story as accurate as possible and to tell or sing as beautifully as possible.
- Chances of the stories going viral as a podcast.
- Possibility of the story appearing in an audio or reading book.

THE PROCESS (see podcast)

1. Choose a personal adventure or setback from your life, something that was strong enough to change your life in some way, a game changer.
2. Write this story down.
3. Try to reread it now, not from the negative experience, but from the strength you have built up from the incident after all this time. Forget the battle you fought then. People tend to see mostly the bad side of things, but when we write down our story and look back at it with "fresh eyes", we can try to read the story from a different perspective.
4. What positive things have arisen as a result? Did it make you stronger? More determined? Are you doing things now that you never dared to do before? What are those positive things that led to your change?

Ask friends or family if they think you have changed since the event, and how? People are very critical of themselves, and do not always see the good sides of a setback. Others look at you differently than you do.

5. Now rewrite your story from that different perspective, from the strength. Use 3 stages: before, during and after.
6. Before: (empathy) Where were you, how old, with whom, ... What happened? How bad were you? Unhappy, frustrated, sad, alone, ...? Describing these things specifically, in detail, but concisely, creates empathy in your audience. They recognize themselves in your story and think, "I know that." Only then will they listen with interest.
7. During: (credibility) What did you do to change your situation, to get out of it? Describe everything you did to get out of the situation. Be specific again. Dare to be vulnerable. Be authentic.
- 8.
- 9.
10. After: (life lesson) How did the incident affect your life? How did you deal with it? What were the consequences? Why is it better now than before? Or not?

Tip: be specific, describe details (see, hear, feel, smell, taste, ...) and keep it concise, don't make it a novel, max. 10 minutes.

GOOD LUCK!