SHARE YOUR RESEARCH: HOW TO GIVE A GOOD TALK
HANDOUT: STORYTELLING TECHNIQUES

There are different storytelling techniques or strategies you can use to share individual stories on vignettes in your talk. Using these will help you connect and engage with your audience to help you meet the goal(s) of your talk and help your audience to remember your core message. You can use more than one at the same time.

- **Paint a scene to transport the audience.** Use your words, slides and body language to paint a vivid picture of what happened, what you saw, felt or experienced to bring the audience to that moment with you. Think about how you can bring the audience along with you on the journey of your research.
- **Make it personal.** Don’t be afraid to bring yourself into the story. It’s OK to share your emotions and struggles with your audience. To tell them why your work matters to you so much. Making your research personal can help make a complex or abstract concept tangible and accessible.
- **Build empathy.** Empathy is the ability to understand and share the feelings of another. Storytelling can help your audience feel empathy for you or the subject of your research (e.g., a shark, like in the video or the people who will benefit from your work), and thus care or appreciate more the relevance of what you are doing.
- **Create suspense.** Stories (like your research) have tension: a specific and unresolved question. You can use that to your advantage to create suspense and keep your audience interested and engaged during your talk.
- **Show, don’t tell.** Instead of just telling your audience about something that happened during your research project, show them by using vivid descriptions of that one time in the lab or narrating the play-by-play of how you felt when you finally got that key piece of data that helped you prove your hypothesis.

Use your Framework (audience, goal and core message) to help you decide which types of stories and storytelling techniques to use in your talk. You should think about which types of stories and techniques could make your core message more memorable to your specific audience, based on what you know about their interests or expertise. You should also think about which stories and techniques are better suited to help you meet your goal. For example, if your goal is to convince a hiring committee that you are the right fit for the job, you might want to use a combination of stories of struggle and success to show that you are able to overcome obstacles and learn. To tell those stories, you can mix making it personal with creating suspense about your results. Something else you should consider when choosing story types and storytelling techniques is your speaking style. Some people feel comfortable with making the talks very personal, while others do not. While we encourage you to try things out of your comfort zone, think about types of stories and techniques that fit your speaking style best.