

Session 4

Committing to Your Story

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Prior to Session 4

- Ensure that the following equipment/supplies are available and in working condition:
 - Lavalier (wireless lapel microphone), boom, and podium microphones with amplifiers.
 - Timing device to time each presentation.
 - (Optional) Video and/or Audio Recording equipment to record presentations.
 - Sufficient number of handouts ready for distribution. (*Find the “Power Punches” Prepare, Prepare, Prepare and Mirror, Mirror on the Wall*)
- Ensure that a volunteer or staff person is available to adjust the microphone for each participant and record presentations when appropriate.

Learning Objectives

- *Participants will identify the “power punches” in their stories and learn how to emphasize them through pacing, inflection, and voice volume.*
- *Participants will learn how to read their stories to discover which parts are awkward when spoken and what words might be difficult to pronounce, etc.*
- *Participants will make sure that their stories have recognizable messages and that each message suits the individual writer.*

Session 4 Schedule

- **Warm-Up Activity** (10 minutes)
- **Writing Exercise: Find the “Power Punches”** (45 minutes)
- **Break** (15 minutes)
- **Audience Etiquette** (10 minutes)
- **Read to Your Peers: *Showcase Story*** (30-45 minutes)
- **Lesson Review** (10 minutes)
- **PARTICIPANT Homework** (5 minutes)



Session 4

Workshop Activities

Warm-Up Activity*(15 minutes)*

Invite the participants to complete the following warm-ups to the best of their ability. If any participants cannot comfortably participate in one or more of these activities, consider revising or dropping the activity:

- A-E-I-O-U: Participants will make each vowel sound and sustain the sound for as long as they can.
- Head and neck stretches
- Counting from 20 to 30 and back in a “proper English accent.”

Writing Exercise: Find the “Power Punches”*(45 minutes)*

- **Distribute the *Find the “Power Punches”* handout** and invite the participants to form small groups of 2 to 3 to read their stories aloud.
- Assign a volunteer facilitator for each group.
- Instruct the members of the group to help each other identify which sentences, words, and phrases have the most power.
- Have them make notes of what strikes them as a listener or what captures their attention.
- **Encourage each participant to identify at least two “power punches” per story.**
- The end goal of this exercise is to identify what’s powerful about each piece, as a way to help the writer add emphasis to increase the story’s effectiveness. Explain that figuring out what’s powerful helps to determine what the meaning, or “point,” is.
- **Before the break, ask everyone to identify their “power punches” to their peers.**

Break*(15 minutes)*

Audience Etiquette*(10 minutes)*

Before the first run-through of presentations, initiate a large group discussion of proper audience etiquette during the showcase. Some examples:

- Audience members should silence their phones and refrain from talking, texting or shuffling papers.
- Do not interrupt the presentation in any way.
- Laughing, cheering, and clapping is okay as long as it is appropriate, as in laughing at a humorous moment in the story or applauding a particular idea expressed.
- Give your full attention to the speaker.

Read to Your Peers: Showcase Story ***(30-45 minutes)*

Review the “OMOD Peer Performance Questions” handout and instruct them on how to note strengths and possible areas of improvement in their peer’s performance. (See “OMOD Peer Performance Questions in Session 2)

Using their preferred microphone setup, invite each participant to present his or her story to the class and time each presentation to see if any cuts or additions should be made to the stories. Stories should be between 4 and 6 minutes in length.

Note: Be sure to identify any technical aspects (i.e. microphone setup (height, angle, type), PA (sound quality, volume, unintentional feedback), written materials (font, type-size, location, etc.) that may need to be changed.

At the conclusion of each presentation, take time for peers to offer constructive feedback.

Optional: Whenever possible, video or audio record these presentations and play them back to the speaker for self-evaluation and review.

****This is the most important activity in Session 4, so be sure to start no later than the midpoint of the class. If necessary, shorten one of the other activities, just not this one.**

Lesson Review*(10 minutes)*

Distribute the “Prepare, Prepare, Prepare” Handout and prompt a group discussion with the following questions:

- How did you feel presenting your story to the class?
- What worked with the microphones, and what was difficult?
- What feedback/comments did you receive?
- What should you work on and practice more?

And, remember to practice often and ask for constructive feedback from your friends, family, or peers.

Participant Homework:*(5 minutes)*

Distribute the homework assignment “Mirror, Mirror On The Wall” Handout and encourage participants to practice reading their stories aloud in front of a mirror at least once every day. **Any edits that need to be made should be made before Session 5 begins.**

Facilitator Homework: This week you have a lot of work to do to prepare for Session 5. You will find “Note for facilitators at the close of Session 4” after the Session 4 handouts. The “Note” details exactly what you need to do in order to ensure that you and the participants are ready for a productive Session 5. The coaching handouts you’ll need for Session 5 are also provided.

Session 4

Detailed Activity Instructions

Session 4: How to conduct the Warm-Up Activity**Here are the basic instructions for this activity:**

1. Ask everyone, including participants, volunteers and staff members, to stand, as they are able, in a circle facing each other.
2. Lead the class in the following warm-up exercises. Some of these will be familiar to the participants from earlier sessions. If you know that any participants cannot comfortably participate in one or more of these exercises, consider revising or dropping those activities.
 - a. Sing each vowel (A, E, I, O, U) loudly as a group and hold, or sustain, each note for as long as you possibly can.
 - b. Roll your head down in front of you and all the way around. Roll your head the other direction. Lean your head back as far as you can.
 - c. Try shoulder rolls. Lift your shoulders up and roll them forward. Now roll them backward.
 - d. Count from 20 to 30 and back down in a "proper English accent."
 - i. (*Note:* You will need to demonstrate this first for the participants. Or you can ask the group if anyone can do a good proper English accent, and if someone volunteers, have that person demonstrate for the class instead. The English accent is less important than the clear pronunciation of every syllable.)

As the facilitator of this activity:

- Do your best to keep this upbeat and fun.
- Remind participants that this will help them speak clearly when they share their stories.

Session 4

Handouts

Session 4 Handout

Find the “Power Punches”

A “power punch” in your story can be:

- **a passage written with emotion** that the audience can relate to
- specific details, **meaningful descriptions that help your audience “feel”** what you are saying
- **words that provide listener with insight** into who you are
- the part of your story that **people will remember**
- **a fascinating first line** of your story

Now that you’ve got your story, it’s time for you to begin getting comfortable with reading and performing it.

- ✓ Read your story out loud, line by line, at least twice each day to get the “feel” of what you’ve written.
- ✓ Start looking for sentences in your story that you could make into “power punch” moments.

Three ways to bring out the power punches in your stories:

1. Add some detail to give us more information

Instead of “I wasn’t like the other kids.”

Try: “I was born with one eye that didn’t form. I learned how to take my “fake eye” out when I had a class I didn’t like, like math or science. It was a real attention-getter.”

2. Say what people won’t usually say out loud:

“When people stare at me and my boyfriend in the mall, I want to ask them, ‘What are you looking at?’ You’ve never seen two people with disabilities before?”

3. Find the power punch moments are “hiding” in your story.

Instead of: “I got stuck with the job of mopping the floor.”

Ask yourself: Why? How did that feel? What’s wrong with that job?

Try: “I volunteered to help with the clean up crew, and I did so well that I got stuck, permanently, with the job of the mopping the floor. But it’s not a bad thing because I just got a job mopping floors at night, and now I have my own money.”

Session 4 Handout

Prepare, Prepare, Prepare

- Practice your speech out loud 3-4 times a day.
- Practice in the shower or in front of a mirror.
- Videotape yourself or ask your friends or family to listen and offer you feedback.
- Pay attention to how fast you speak. Slow down if necessary.
- Remember, you want your audience to hear every word.
- If you can, memorize key parts or the general order of your story.
- Get plenty of sleep the night before your presentation.

Session 4

Participant Homework

Session 4 Participant Homework Assignment:

Mirror, Mirror On The Wall...

Now that you have a complete draft of your story, the next step is to practice reading your story out loud everyday – or as often as you can. Here’s a technique to help you remember your body and feel more confident when presenting your story:

The Mirror Technique

Stand, or sit as upright as you possibly can, in front of a mirror (the bigger, the better). Take a deep breath and face the mirror confidently. Smile and read your story.

Remember to speak slowly and clearly. Project your voice as though you are speaking to a room full of people and look up frequently to engage your imaginary audience.

If using a mirror is difficult for you, then try presenting your story to a friend or family member OR make an audio or video recording of yourself reading your story and listen back or watch yourself. Many phones and computers have some kind of recording technology, so take advantage of it if you can!

The mirror technique can be a huge confidence builder, **and if you do this every day, you can’t help but to engage your audience when the showcase finally rolls around.**

In addition, repeating your story every day will help you to memorize your story. You don’t need to know it word-for-word, but you should be as familiar with your story as possible.

NOTE FOR FACILITATORS at the close of Session 4:

You have **two big tasks to complete** before next week's Session 5 workshop. **Ask your volunteers to help if you need assistance.**

Task Number One: Prepare an order-of-the-show for the Showcase

- **Make sure you have a readable copy of the story each person will use**, and in its most recent version.
- If the story still needs development, **make an appointment to work with individuals, or groups who have ensemble pieces, during the week** (in person, by phone, email, etc.) to get the story ready for practice during Session 5.
- **Prepare a show lineup to use in Session 5:** "Generating Draft of Showcase Lineup" in the OMOD Teaching Resources section of this manual, will provide some strategies and ideas for arranging the stories your participants have written into a coherent presentation with a theme and a message.
 - **Note about changes to stories: Try not to make any substantive changes in anyone's writing after Session 4.** Session 5 is the only opportunity for participants to practice with their peers and get feedback, and changes at the last minute are rarely effectively incorporated into a performance.
- **PRINT** the showcase lineup and give it to participants to review while you present it to the group. Be prepared for lots of questions.

Task Number Two: Prepare individual coaching notes for use during Session 5

- **You need to prepare 3 documents per participant for Session 5 Coaching:**
 - a copy of the story for the participant (in whatever format is best for them)
 - a reading copy for the Session 5 coach who will work with that participant
 - the individual coaching form for each person, with your comments (see coaching template and example form)
- See "*Coaching Performance with OMOD Participants*" on the next page for information on how to coach from page to stage.

Coaching Handout for Use by Session 5 Coaches

COACHING PERFORMANCE with OMOD PARTICIPANTS

In OMOD, coaching and “editing” are part of the same process. “Editing” is collaborative process in these workshops, no red pencils here. And “coaching” can also include suggesting revisions to the piece. It’s a fairly painless flow once you know it.

Much of the time, coaching involves **actively listening** that leads to **imagining a “Best Story.”** A “best story” is one that is understandable to the audience, expresses exactly what the participant intended to say and is presented well enough to make their point. The same story can be a “best story” one day and a not-so-good story the next, depending on delivery.

A good coach should:

- identify the **places in the story that have the most impact** (collaboration w/writer)
- **understand what “the feel” of the piece is** (funny, poignant, confrontational, sad)
- look for **places where the story needs more detail** in order to be understandable
- think about organization of the story and how it impacts intended meaning
- know the personal investment of the writer (Does the writer care about this story?)

Imagine:

- ✓ Ways to improve the story by sharpening delivery (hitting the power punches)
- ✓ Ways for the story to come alive through use of voice, intonation, pauses, facial expression, gestures, movement (remember the body!)

ALWAYS:

- ❖ **Be supportive:** no room for negativity on any level
- ❖ Look for **changes participants are willing to make**
- ❖ **Respect the story,** make suggestions, don’t take over!
- ❖ **Remember: Nothing is ever perfect and nothing ever needs to be!**

COACHING Template: author/title

Date: _____

Coach: Read these instructions, then ask the writer to read the latest draft of the showcase story. Use your Reading Draft to follow along and make notes. Participant reads through the piece at least twice during the workshop. Give your feedback after the second reading and discuss changes that might improve the piece. List issues that arose during the reading in the space below so facilitator can support her best performance.

PLEASE TIME the 2nd Reading. Should be under 5 minutes. **Time:** _____

You will have approximately 45 minutes for the coaching session.

- ✓ **Power Punches: Listen for which parts of the piece have the most energy:** where the writer makes you laugh, or creates a lively connection with you, or poses a compelling question. *Mark those things on your draft to review with your writer once the reading is finished.*
- ✓ **Pay attention to moments** when the writer has difficulty with the wording, the wording might need to change. Also, pay attention to the parts that are really good, and give that feedback as well.
- ✓ **Think about these parts of performance:** Voice volume, posture, speed of speaking, eye contact. Do any of these need work?

Once you have given your feedback, ask the writer to read it again, incorporating and responding to your suggestions.

Discuss: How might participant *use body movement or pauses or other small performance tools* (slowing down before important words, raising or lowering volume, speeding up tense parts of the piece) to enhance delivery?

_____: (facilitator comments here)
Facilitator's name

-
-
-

What else came up during the coaching activity: (Session 5 coach comments here)

Coach: _____

EXAMPLE: COACHING INSTRUCTIONS: 4/2016 JM London

Date Writer Title

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Participant name: (facilitator comments, prepared before Session 5)

- Think about making and sustaining eye contact briefly with audience.
- Check your rate of speech; you tend to read slowly.
 - Pick a paragraph and practice consciously reading more quickly. How does that feel? Could you do it for part of the piece? All of it?

What else came up during the coaching activity: (Session 5 coach comments)

- *trouble pronouncing a few words; we changed the words*
- *had trouble with stand mic, so practiced with lavalier; seems to work better*
- *didn't change her voice for the funny parts; practiced changing the tone of her voice and those parts were funnier*

Coach: