

## Creating Memories Through Storytelling

Presented By Stephanie Holman

### Storytelling Tips

#### **I. How to select and learn a story.**

- 1) Remember, each story has a beginning, a middle and a clear ending.
- 2) Give details of setting and characters right away so listeners can create their own pictures.
- 3) Story often has a challenge or a problem for the characters to solve.
- 4) Pick a story you like. Keep choice simple, not too long.
- 5) Rewrite as needed to make comfortable for you to tell.
- 6) Decide if story will use props, sound effects, different voices, or participation. Participation can include the audience making sound effects, holding props, sing along, chant, etc.
- 7) What will pace and tone of the telling be?
- 8) Read aloud the story several times. Begin to tell without peeking at paper much. Then put paper away.
- 9) Practice aloud. Or use tape recorder, tell to a friend, tell while driving. Listen to tape of story to improve.
- 10) Tell the story to a group.

#### **II. How to tell a story to a group.**

- 1) Be aware of space you will tell in. Is it free of distractions? Is audience comfortable? Close enough to see and hear?
- 2) Do warm-up exercises.
- 3) Calm yourself, breath deeply.
- 4) Have an introduction prepared and use it--don't "wing" it. Use introduction to set the mood. Can be as simple as "I am \_\_\_\_\_ and I am going to tell you the story \_\_\_\_\_."
- 5) Make eye contact. Let audience know the story is about to begin.
- 6) Start. First lines are important. Let us know Who, What, and Where right away.
- 7) Don't rush your telling. Let the story be heart, let it take over. If the story is a good one, it will take over. The more comfortable you are with the story, the more you will enjoy the telling.
- 8) Watch volume, inflection, expression, pauses, and flow. Where and how to stand.

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Placement of hands.

9) During story, do not let minor distractions rob audience of story. Ignore all, unless something must be tended to for continuation of story. Then begin again as if nothing happened.

10) Your ending is the last thought you will leave listeners with, so make it solid. An ending can transition the listeners back into "reality." Could say, "And that was the story of \_\_\_\_\_ from \_\_\_\_\_."

11) After story, give listeners a moment to relax or take in the story, before you begin next story of activity. Perhaps ask questions about or discuss the story.

12) Note the story, date, place and any comments about the telling in a story journal.

## **Storyteller's Instrument: Warm-up Exercises**

Tour guides and storytellers can warm up their bodies physically and vocally to combat stress and allow them to be free of tension.

All of these exercises can be done moments before tellings.

### **Loosening Your Body with Tension Releasers**

1. Tense and Release: While sitting in a chair or lying down, lift one leg, tense and squeeze it as much as possible for ten seconds, then release. Do this with the next leg and then every part of your body. Bottom, back, arms, shoulders, face muscles, scalp and eyes. Notice the experience of "letting go" when you release the tension.
2. Neck and Head rolls: Drop your head over to one side. Touch your ear to your shoulder. Breathe deeply. Now drop your head down to your chest. Breathe deeply. Roll your head up to the other shoulder. Continue to breathe deeply as you roll your head back and around. Continue this smooth, slow rolling motion ten times.
3. Roll Down from a Standing Position: From a standing position, let your head bend forward, placing your chin against the front of your throat. Let the weight of your head pull you slowly downward, vertebra by vertebra. Keep the muscles of your hips loose and your knees bent. Let your arms, shoulders, and head hang heavily. Hang for a few seconds and then slowly roll up, finally allowing your head to rest in place.

### **Get Your Air Flowing: Breathing Exercises**

Gaining control of your breathing can help you to relax. The following breathing exercises will help control breathing.

1. Fill and Release: Fill your chest with air. Like a balloon, let your chest expand on all sides, pushing out your ribcage. Let all the air out through your mouth. Repeat this five times.
2. Yawning: There are two ways to induce a yawn. You can massage your jaw muscles. When they relax, you will probably yawn. The other way is to relax and let the soft pallet

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at the back of the mouth soften. You will Yawn. Yawning relaxes the vocal chords, mouth muscles and soft palate. Let your chest and stomach expand and your mouth open so that the air can get right down to the bottom of your lungs. Afterward, blow it out in a wide-mouthed yawn.

3. Breathing and Counting: Take a deep breath from your diaphragm while counting slowly to ten. After you have reached ten, slowly blow the air out while counting slowly to ten again. Repeat five times.

## **Vocal Warm-ups**

Try humming or some of these tongue twisters:

*Billy Button bought a bunch of beautiful bananas.*

*The sixth sheik's sixth sheep is sick.*

*Unique New York.*

*A big black bug hit a big black bear.*

*Six slippery snakes slid slowly south.*

*Red leather, yellow leather.*

*Good blood, bad blood.*

*Shy soldier.*

*Kick six sticks quick.*

(Ideas from Storytelling Tips and Tales by Mark Pierce and Karen Jennings, 1999)