

*By Sandra Millers Younger*

*A self-paced 5-step curriculum  
for mission-driven speakers,  
entrepreneurs, and nonprofit  
leaders with a powerful comeback  
story at the heart of their work.*

# THE COMEBACK STORY POWER PROCESS™



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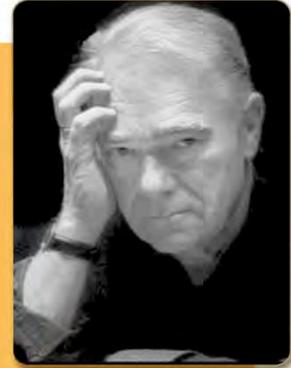
# Want to hear a story?

**W**ho doesn't? We all love a great story! That's why nothing builds trust and motivates people to take action toward growth and change more powerfully than a compelling personal story. ***A story like yours!***

Welcome to ***The Story POWER Process™*** – a self-paced, 5-step curriculum designed for mission-driven speakers, entrepreneurs and nonprofit leaders with a powerful ***comeback story*** at the heart of their work. This is for you if your mission is to help others deal with challenges you've already overcome!

“Storytelling is the most powerful way to put ideas into the world today.”

Robert McKee  
screenwriting professor



But maybe you feel a little hesitant about sharing your story. You're not sure it's good enough, or that you know how to tell it well enough. Or maybe it's just too personal, painful or messy to share. Maybe you think you don't even have a story—or you've got a million of them and don't know which one to tell.

***If any of this sounds like you, you're in exactly the right place!***

I'm Sandra Millers Younger, a career storyteller with two journalism degrees and 40 years of professional experience. I've written thousands of newspaper and magazine stories, plus a best-selling book featured by NBC's Dateline.

For the past 4 years, I've coached people like you who want to tell their comeback stories in powerful ways that make a difference in the world. And now in this home-study course, you can explore and unlock the power of ***your unique comeback story*** on your own, using the same Comeback Story POWER Process™ I use with my VIP clients in my 1-to-1 story-coaching programs.

***The Comeback Story POWER Process™*** combines my *four decades of journalistic story-crafting experience with 21st-century brain science* to help you strategically pinpoint, organize and wordsmith your unique signature story, plus additional teaching stories and client success stories—*all to create emotional connection with your target audience, motivating and enabling them to take action on your message.*

## After completing this unique home-study program, you will:

- ✓ Understand your “big why,” the **MEANING** behind your drive to serve and the motivation that will make you unstoppable in achieving your goals.
- ✓ Be able to use your own **Comeback Story to stand out from the crowd and create instant emotional connection** with your perfect prospects, so they “know, like and trust” you—enough to take action.
- ✓ Be equipped with a **portfolio of compelling “sticky” stories** to help your audience understand and retain your **MESSAGE** and/or product features.
- ✓ Know how to **choose and craft highly persuasive client success stories** to demonstrate the effects of your **MISSION**.
- ✓ Be ready to develop a **story-charged online presence** and **essential marketing copy** designed to attract and engage your perfect prospects.

“Having a story today is what really separates companies. People don’t just wear our shoes; they tell our story.”

Blake Mycoskie  
CEO, Tom’s Shoes



*The Comeback Story POWER Process™ is a unique program you won't find elsewhere. Congratulations for taking this opportunity to discover your own unique Comeback Story, polish your message, and take it the world.*

## The 5-Step Comeback Story POWER Process™

**P**inpoint your Comeback Story, the story that explains your passion to serve your audience and captures their attention by resonating with their own experience and desires.

**O**rganize your Comeback Story in a structure scientifically proven to change brain chemistry and effortlessly connect with your audience on an emotional level that builds trust and boosts sales.

**W**ordsmith your Comeback Story into a polished presentation.

**E**stablish a portfolio of “sticky stories,” chosen and crafted to enable your audience to remember teaching points or product features.

**R**ecognize and craft your most powerful client success stories.

## Module 1

# Pinpoint Your Comeback Story

### *In this module you will:*

- Learn why the ancient craft of storytelling has become a top 21<sup>st</sup> century marketing tool. (Hint: It's about science and technology.)
- Discover essential storytelling secrets professional journalists, novelists, and screenwriters use every time they sit down to work.
- Use the unique Comeback Story POWER™ discovery process to unlock the relevant pieces of your Comeback Story.
- Identify the major themes of your Comeback Story.



### *Stories are all about meaning and connection*

Telling and gathering stories is a uniquely human trait that's been in our DNA since cave days. Science has now proven that we humans process every bit of information through a “neural net” in our brains that automatically organizes data into stories.

Stories are our way of understanding the world, our means of connecting with others, a tool we use to educate and inspire. I like to say that stories are *our cultural currency*, linking the entire human species across time and space.

### **Your unique Comeback Story is the key to:**

- Understanding why you do what you do
- Standing out from the crowd
- Creating the “know, like and trust” factor essential to sales and influence.
- Attracting, engaging and persuading perfect prospects

### **Four great ways to use your Comeback Story to boost business:**

- Super short: In tweets, posts, 30-second intro
- Short: In a bio or “about me” statement
- Medium: In a talk, 5-10 minutes up front to establish credibility, vulnerability and emotional connection
- Long form: As an article or book chapter

## Chemistry Lesson

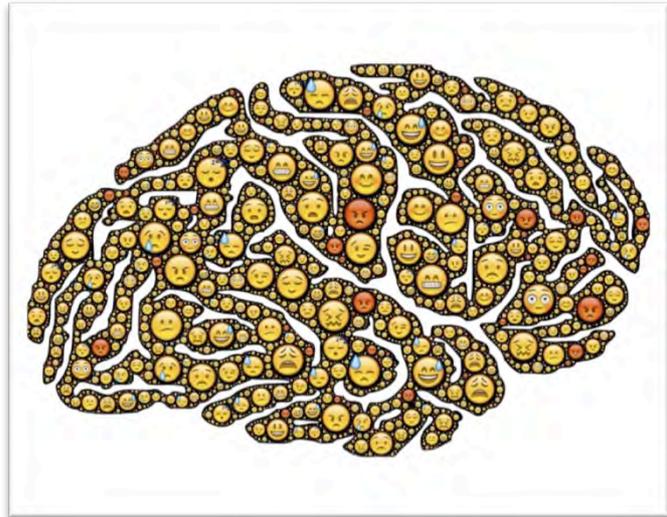
The right story, told the right way, can change our brain chemistry!

A landmark 2009 study by neuroscientist Paul Zak found that stories told with clear rising and falling action separated by a crisis or tipping point—a structure known as the narrative arc—cause a flush of cortisol, the stress hormone, followed by a surge of oxytocin, the bonding hormone.

Watch this supercool video: <http://bit.ly/1p2PHnl> You'll see that these biochemical changes indicate the listener has identified with the main character's struggle and become emotionally engaged in the story.

Emotional engagement is key to persuasion. In fact, we now know all decision-making happens in the limbic or emotional part of the brain, not the rational brain as we used to believe. Read this fascinating article on brain science and marketing: <http://bit.ly/1iOP9FR>

So, do you want to be persuasive? Tell a great story with a clear narrative arc.



## Your brain on stories

Recent advancements in brain science and imaging have proven what we've known all along: We humans LOVE stories. Brain scans show conclusively that facts and figures only engage the logical part of the brain, but the *whole brain*, including emotional and sensory areas, lights up in response to stories. Check out this fascinating New York Times article that explains how our brains respond to novels: <http://nyti.ms/2gZvwQ0>

Madison Avenue has long realized that stories sell! That's why the most unforgettable commercials—think Budweiser Clydesdales—are built around stories. In sales conversations, a well-told personal story creates just the right amount of vulnerability (without oversharing) to build trust and connection. Which is crucial to sales, since we only do business with people we know, like and trust.

Another big reason advertising has come to rely on storytelling is tech-related. In today's high-tech, digital society, old-school intrusive ads no longer work. It's just too easy to hit the mute button or click away from content we don't find interesting. So if you're an advertiser who wants to grab and hold people's attention, you wrap your message in the kind of content they DO find interesting—stories!

OK, I get it. Stories are powerful. But I've got a million. Which one should I tell?

Each of us is a bundle of stories. With every day, every incident, every thought, we're writing new stories and adding to the overall story of our lives. So when it comes to storytelling for business, or to further a cause we hold dear, which stories should we tell?

***The answer is easy: Tell the story your audience wants—or needs—to hear. And what they want to hear is the story of how you overcame a challenge similar to their own struggle. In other words, your Comeback Story!***

Strategic storytelling starts with laying out all the puzzle pieces of your own life and then choosing the pieces that correspond with similar themes in the lives of your audience. For instance, if I'm trying to sell a weight-loss remedy I discovered that worked for me, I'm going to choose the part of my overall life story when I struggled with my weight.

“To be a person is to have a story to tell.”

Isak Dinesen, author



When you choose the pieces of your story puzzle most relevant to your audience and then arrange those pieces into that narrative arc structure I mentioned, the one proven to shift brain chemistry, you're strategically crafting a powerful story that will create a sense of emotional connection and motivate your audience to take action on your recommendations.

**(Stay tuned for more on the mighty narrative arc in Module 2!)**



### “I DON'T HAVE A STORY”

I've had people tell me that. It's never true. Everyone has a story--a brilliant story! But sometimes we just can't see what's on the tip of our nose.

For example: I once met a wonderful woman who felt her life had been too boring to be interesting to anyone.

And yet, this same woman went on to say she'd sailed around the world on a boat she and her husband built themselves—and ran into PIRATES along the way!

So go ahead, tell me you don't have a story worth telling. I won't believe it.

Now I'm not saying everyone has a pirate story in their back pocket. But I am saying you have a brilliant story to tell, whether you know it or not!

As “Out of Africa” author Isak Dinesen put it: “To be a person is to have a story to tell.”

# Ready to discover *your* Comeback Story?

OK, you've got the basics. So let's find your own unique Comeback Story. We'll start with my signature ***Comeback Story Discovery Questionnaire***.

Answer the following questions. Use a separate sheet of paper so you'll have plenty of room. Take your time. Dig deep, especially on those last three questions. They're the toughest—and the most important. So be brave, honest, and thoughtful, and try not to censor yourself. Your job right now is to put all the puzzle pieces on the table. I'll help you choose the ones you want to share later in the process.

Don't be surprised if you feel a little emotional at times along the way. That's a clue you're getting to the REAL story. You may even discover, as many of my clients do, the "big why" behind your work in the world.

## ***Comeback Story Discovery Questionnaire***

### ***Tell us about your business or organization:***

- What's it called?
- Who are your ideal clients? What's their need or problem that you address?
- What's the transformation you offer them?

### ***Tell us about you as an entrepreneur, nonprofit executive or business leader:***

- What led you to start your current business or nonprofit?
- What do you love about it?
- What frustrates you about it?
- Why do you think customers/clients choose to work with you?

### ***Tell us about you as a person:***

- If you could solve any three problems in the world, what would they be and why?
- What are the top three significant events (tipping points) in your life and what did you learn from each?
- What three people, living or dead, have been most influential (good or bad) in your life and why?

***Now it's time to connect the dots.*** Which of your three top problems does your work address? What lessons learned from your major influencers relate to your work? What tipping points relate to your work? And how does all this relate to the needs and experiences of your ideal clients? Jot down your answers. We'll get back to them in Module 2.

**Want to work with Sandra one-to-one? [Info@StrategicStorySolutions.com](mailto:Info@StrategicStorySolutions.com)**

## Great work! Now let's find the themes in your story.

Let's focus for a bit on your three answers to each of those last three big questions. That's nine answers, aka story puzzle pieces, in all. Your next step is to look at the "whys" behind each of those nine data points, which will give you even more pieces.

**Notice: Do the same reasons pop up more than once?** If so, you could have discovered a theme!

**Another clue: Notice who's missing and ask yourself why.** For example, one of my clients listed her mother but not her father among her influential people. This may or may not have been significant, but it raised a flag, so I asked: "Tell me about your dad."

As it turned out, she had never felt he approved of her and spent much of her early life trying to please him, even choosing a college major and career that didn't appeal to her because she thought it would make him happy. Sacrificing her own desires in an effort to win the approval of others became a theme in her story, a challenge she had overcome.

Notice also if your influential people are historical figures you've never met face to face (like Jesus or Buddha). If so, ask yourself why the real people in your life didn't make the list. Remember, a person can be influential in a positive or negative way.

"There is no agony like  
bearing an untold  
story inside of you."

Maya Angelou  
author and poet



And don't forget that sometimes the briefest or most random interactions can be forever influential. Was there a doctor or teacher or even a taxi driver, for instance, who showed up in your life just long enough to do or say something that opened your mind to a whole new way of thinking? If so, they may have been more influential in your life story than people you've known forever.

**Notice what's missing.** Another of my clients told me one of his influentials had been important because she accepted him for who he was, which begged the question: *Who didn't* accept you? Turned out that judgmental person had been far more influential in this client's life than he thought—or wanted to admit. Even if so, keep in mind that painful experiences often become turning points in our stories that lead to positive outcomes.

**Now, think about how your puzzle pieces relate to your business or organization?** Are you working to help others facing the same or similar challenges you've overcome? Are you striving to do for others what someone once did for you?

## Module 2

# Organize Your Comeback Story

### *In this module you will:*

- Learn the three basic story elements.
- Become aware of the No. 1 secret of unforgettable stories.
- From all the story puzzle pieces you listed in Module 1, Identify those most relevant to your audience, based on the problem you can solve for them.
- Choose and arrange nine final puzzle pieces to build your own narrative arc--the story structure scientifically proven to create emotional connection, indicated by a change in brain chemistry!

### Story Elements

Every good story contains three basic elements, and so should yours!

- Characters: Who's in the story? Who's fighting whom?
- Setting: Where are they?
- Plot: What challenge does the hero of the story face?

Good plots are full of conflict as a hero battles a villain to achieve an ultimate goal.

Dramatic tension builds to a crisis, and the hero seems doomed. But that crisis, or tipping point, gives way to resolution and success!

This structure is called the NARRATIVE ARC. It's been around forever; in fact, it's the basis of an ancient and archetypal story structure called "The Hero's Journey."

Here's a terrific video that tells how this ancient story structure supports many of today's most popular books and movies.

<http://bit.ly/1gZfvkY>

### *The power of paradox*

You should hear my friend Frank's Comeback Story. He begins by introducing himself as the mayor of his town. Which he is. And then he says: "I'd like to tell you about something that happened to me when I was in prison."

From that moment, Frank commands the full attention of the room. Why? Because he's given his audience seemingly contradictory information to ponder. How can a mayor, a respected community leader, also be an ex-con? It doesn't fit the expected pattern.

So the logic-loving part of the human brain immediately launches a valiant attempt to solve the mystery. Not only will Frank's audience now hang on every word he speaks, they're likely to remember his message for a long, long time.

Frank has hooked his audience with the power of paradox—the No. 1 secret of unforgettable stories. Listeners can't help but focus on Frank's story, "From Inmate to Mayor," because we humans are curious—and cautious—by nature. We're programmed to notice and investigate anything that varies from the norm. It's a survival thing. (Get Frank's book! <http://amzn.to/2i3boZh>)

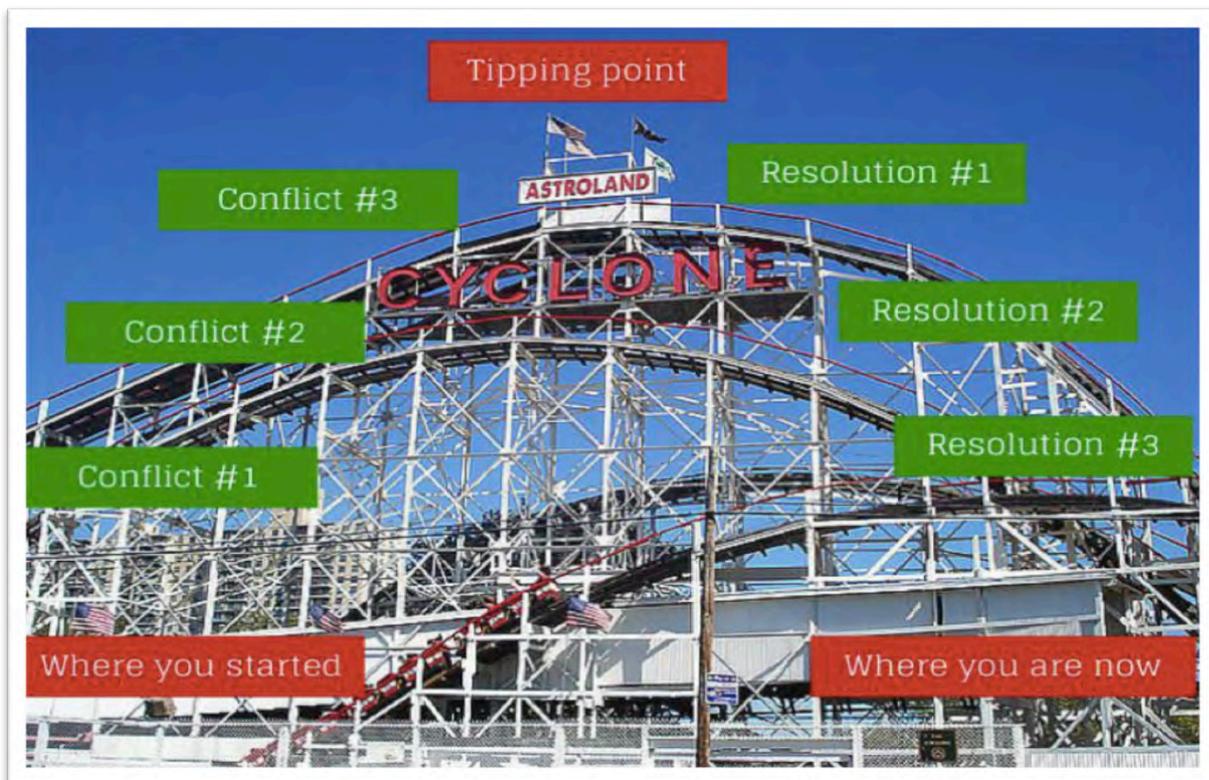
**Watch for elements of paradox you can use to make your Comeback Story unforgettable.**

## How a good story is like a roller coaster ride.

Let's dig deeper into the NARRATIVE ARC, that magic story structure scientifically proven to change brain chemistry and create emotional connection with your audience, empowering them to take action on your recommendations! (See page 6.)

In practice, the narrative arc looks—and feels—a lot like a roller coaster hill. Excitement and tension build as you climb toward the top, where everything shifts, and then gravity creates momentum that carries you back downhill in a wild rush.

*You're already familiar with this story structure from novels and movies, where it often presents as a version of that timeless tale, **The Hero's Journey**.*



Things start out innocently enough, but then our hero is called away from an ordinary life to slay a dragon or meet some other seemingly impossible challenge.

Along the way, the hero encounters a series of obstacles—**points of rising conflict**—before finally facing the ultimate trial—**the crisis or tipping point**—where everything's at stake. This is the point when James Bond seems doomed.

Of course, 007 always finds a way to escape certain death and neutralize the villain in a series of clever moves—**points of resolution**—that quickly dissolve the dramatic tension, and the story ends with our handsome spy once again enjoying his posh, playboy lifestyle.

**Ready to shift a little brain chemistry and craft an unforgettable Comeback Story guaranteed to attract, engage your target audience and and persuade them to take action? Then let's build your very own narrative arc!**



## Building Your Narrative Arc

Crafting a powerful narrative arc—the skeleton of your Comeback Story—takes only nine of those puzzle pieces you uncovered in Module 1. Look back at the roller coaster illustration to see which pieces you’re looking for and how they fit together. The trick is choosing the right nine pieces. Here’s how.

***First of all, remember your Comeback Story is the part of your overall life story that’s most relevant to your target audience.***

So look back at your Story Discovery Questionnaire. What urgent need, pain or problem do you solve for your people? What happened that led you to discover that solution? ***In other words, why do you do what you do?*** That’s the story you want to tell.

Now let’s get off the roller coaster and think of your narrative arc as a Christmas tree. Imagine gifts at the bottom, a star at the top, and a collection of favorite ornaments in between.

Sure, you could throw a jumble of stuff on your tree. But if you want to create an overall artistic effect, a real stand-out statement that attracts attention, delights and inspires, you’ll want to strategically choose and place each ornament.

## Trimming Your Tree

Here’s how to use the holiday tree analogy to build your narrative arc. Keep in mind that just as each ornament is an individual work of art, each puzzle piece in your overall Comeback Story is a little story all its own.

Start at the top with the star—the tipping point of your story. To find it, ask yourself:

***“What happened that changed my life in a profound way? What forced or convinced me to change course and led to where I am now?”***

Now decide which of your other puzzle pieces fit with this tree-topper. What series of incidents, or little stories, ***best*** explain the struggle that led to your success?

***Once upon a time . . .*** The gift at bottom left—where you started—is usually a happy “when life was easy” story.

***And then . . .*** The three ornaments leading up toward the star are each a step in the escalating struggle. And the three ornaments coming back down are three steps you took to arrive where you are now—represented by the gift at bottom right.

Use the worksheet on the next page to build your own narrative arc!

## *The Comeback Story POWER™ Organizing Process*

Use these questions to build a powerful narrative arc, **strategically designed to connect with your target audience**. Your narrative arc will become the outline for your completed Comeback Story. Keep in mind: **You've gotta talk about your struggle. Because your struggle led to your success. And your struggle is the part of your story your audience will most relate to.**

Sharing tough times as well as triumphs will assure your audience that you're "one of them," that you understand their pain, that they can trust you to help them. So let's get started. First, watch this fun video I made for you at <http://bit.ly/2jlaNOt> and then answer the questions. Use a separate sheet to give yourself plenty of room.

***Where did you start out? Before your tipping point, or perhaps when you were a young child:*** What was your life like? What was great about it? What did you love to do? What were your hopes and dreams?

***Where are you now?*** What has your life's journey taught you that might help others? What do you offer the world through your work? What urgent need or problem do you solve for your audience? (Don't be modest!)

***What was the tipping point that led to where you are now, doing the work you do in the world?*** See the questions in the blue box on the previous page and use these additional prompts to help you find your tipping point:

- The worst day of my life was . . .
- I'll never forget the time . . .
- As hard as it was then, I wouldn't be who or where I am now unless . . .

***What happened between where you started and your tipping point?*** Think of two or three incidents that show how things were getting worse and worse, leading to a crisis. These are your "points of rising conflict."

***What happened between your tipping point and where you are now?*** What were two or three steps you took to recover from your crisis that led to a solution? These are your "points of resolution."

### **"MY STORY IS JUST TOO MESSY"**

Sometimes clients say to me, "But Sandra, my story is so painful; it's just too messy to tell."

**Here's the truth: the more painful your Comeback Story, the more the world needs to hear it! But that doesn't mean you have to revisit, much less disclose, every detail.**

If your story feels too painful to share, I strongly encourage you to work with a professional story strategist. We know how to get the point across in a powerful way without creating awkward feelings for either you or your audience. Contact me to explore your options: [Info@StrategicStorySolutions.com](mailto:Info@StrategicStorySolutions.com)

## Module 3

# Wordsmith your Comeback Story

### *In this module you will:*

- Learn how professional writers come up with rough drafts.
- Discover ways to test your finished story for clarity and impact.
- Learn 12 guidelines professional writers use to create polished copy.
- See an example of a highly successful Comeback Story in action.

### *First things first—a shitty first draft*

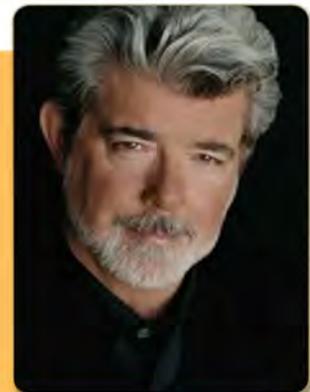
Now it's time to transform your narrative arc into a full-blown Comeback Story. Which means you've gotta write it all out. I know what you're thinking. Facing any writing assignment, even with the best of outlines, can be a tad intimidating. It's no different for professional writers, believe me.

So if you're feeling a little queasy about this next step of the Comeback Story POWER Process™, welcome to the club and good luck. But don't despair! There's good news, too. It's the secret of all great writers. (But you didn't hear it from me.)

***Great writing hardly ever starts that way. In fact, writer and writing mentor Anne Lamott, author of “Bird by Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life,” says any writer’s first task is to produce “a shitty first draft.”***

“A special effect without a story is a pretty boring thing.”

George Lucas, filmmaker



Here's how to do it: Sit down at the keyboard; turn off your browser and phone; set a timer for 20 minutes; turn on some focus music if it helps; and just dump out the thoughts that come into your head as you re-read each step of your narrative arc.

Don't stop to make any changes; just keep your fingers moving. If you prefer, you can record yourself telling your story. Whatever works for you. Rinse and repeat once or twice a day for as long as it takes—in total writing time and word count—to flesh out your entire narrative arc.

OK. Done? Congratulations! You've got a rough draft of your Comeback Story. Now let's polish it into a final product.

## OK, so I've written a rough draft of my Comeback Story. Now what?

Now we edit and rewrite for clarity, flow and impact—a critical phase of the writing process for all writers. The challenge here is that we can't always recognize where our own writing needs revising.

One way around this obstacle is to read your story out loud. Wherever you find problems or just stumble over words, that's where your reader will lose you.

"People are hungry for stories.  
It's part of our very being."

Studs Terkel  
author



Refer back to your narrative arc to be sure you've included all your "Christmas ornaments" and to help you find and weed out any extraneous material you may have added to the arc. Then use my editing tips on the next page to further polish your work.

Finally, try out your complete Comeback Story by asking for feedback from one or more trusted colleagues. And if you still don't feel 100% confident that your final, polished story is polished enough, don't hesitate to hire a professional editor.

**Want more help?** Sandra offers one-to-one VIP Coaching Programs for clients ready to invest in themselves and their business, and dig deep to discover their most authentic Comeback Story. Sandra is a master at connecting dots most of us can't see for ourselves. You'll walk away with greater clarity about why you do what you do—plus a professionally written Comeback Story! Contact: [Info@StrategicStorySolutions.com](mailto:Info@StrategicStorySolutions.com)

## FOR EXAMPLE . . .

What does a successful Comeback Story sound like? Check out this modern classic from one of my favorite mentors, Brendon Burchard (starts at 2:37): <http://bit.ly/2juJrOJ>

Brendon's used this story for years, and he uses it everywhere! From the stage, in media interviews, in training videos, on his "about me" page and even on his home page.

As you listen to Brendon's story, think:

- Does it contain the three key story components?
- Does he use a narrative arc structure?
- Is he both vulnerable and credible? Does he share enough of his struggle to connect emotionally and win your trust?
- Has he weeded out all extraneous or distracting information to keep his main storyline clear?
- Does he use vivid description to show rather than tell what happened?
- Does his story contain a clear message and a powerful ending?

# Editor's Checklist: 12 Steps to Polish Your Comeback Story

True confessions. I used to be a newspaper editor. And a magazine editor. And a freelance copy editor. My job was to transform imperfect drafts into ready-to-publish articles. Yes, I will correct your grammar in mid-sentence. Just ask my kids. But now my editorial OCD works to your advantage. Because . . .

*Here are my top 12 steps to perfect-as-can-be copy.*

1. Will your story resonate with the **needs of your audience**? When you share your story, will they hear theirs?
2. Are you **credible**? Is it clear you know what you're talking about? Does your story explain how you got to be so good at what you do?
3. Are you **vulnerable**? Does your story sound authentic? Without oversharing, have you revealed the struggle that led to your success?
4. Do you start with an **intriguing intro** and end with a **powerful clincher**?
5. Is your story **well organized**? Do points build in a logical sequence and follow **the narrative arc** structure—from where you started, through rising conflict to a tipping point, through resolution, and end where you are now?
6. Does your story **flow**? Is it easy for your audience to follow? Have you used **transitions** to bridge between points? Have you “cut to the chase,” kept to an appropriate length, and weeded out irrelevant, confusing, contradictory or otherwise distracting information?
7. Do you “**show**” rather than “**tell**”? That is, do you “act out” each incident in your story instead of just summarizing what happened?
8. Is each sentence built around **strong nouns and verbs**?
9. Have you **cut out soft spots**, such as extraneous modifiers and weak repetition? Have you eliminated inappropriate slang and jargon, limp words like “was,” “have,” and “very,” and fancy words you never say?
10. Have you mainly used **active voice** rather than passive voice?
11. Have you checked grammar, style, punctuation and spelling for **errors**?
12. Is your story **free of libel and unwarranted bias**? That is, have you refrained from blaming or dissing people who played a role in your story?

## Module 4

# Establish a Portfolio of “Sticky Stories”

### *In this module you will:*

- Learn why stories are so effective in persuasive communication, including teaching, coaching and advertising.
- Understand the power of stories to add perceived value to goods and services.
- Recognize examples of sticky stories in action.
- Establish your own portfolio of sticky stories to persuade and sell.



### *Ancient wisdom meets 21<sup>st</sup> century science*

Throughout history, great wisdom teachers have used parables, fables and even riddles to convey profound truths they wanted their students to remember. These wise ones knew—ages ago—what 21<sup>st</sup> century brain science has now proven: Stories are the mechanism that enables our brains to learn and remember.

Information wrapped in stories sticks in our minds, making a good tale much more persuasive, impactful and memorable than facts and figures alone! That’s why it’s so important to use “sticky stories” in business to explain message points we want prospective clients and customers to know and remember.

What’s more, well-crafted stories can add perceived *significance and value* to goods and services. Check out the Significant Objects Study (<http://significantobjects.com/>) to find out why a tacky gold-spray-painted bunny candle sold for \$112.50 on eBay!

“Stories are such a powerful driver of emotional value that their effect on any given object’s subjective value can actually be measured objectively.”

Joshua Glenn & Rob Walker  
authors



Bottom line, using stories to express ideas or describe product benefits is a powerful way to *explain, persuade and boost retention*. In fact, some of the best teachers—and advertisers—rely almost completely on storytelling!



## Stories Stick in Our Minds

Look at the powerful storytelling in this unforgettable Guinness beer commercial, which won the Advertiser of the Year Award at the 2014 Clios, the Oscars of the advertising industry: <http://bit.ly/1pNJAvS>

Here's a print version of a great sticky story. Notice how this Coldwater Creek catalog copy *puts the reader/customer into an appealing story* she could perhaps experience—by buying a plain white skirt!

### ***The Livin' Is Easy Gauze Skirt***

*PRODUCT DESCRIPTION: Lemonade, anyone? This skirt is stylish enough for a southern veranda, without any of the social-circle fuss. Elastic waist. Imported.*

**OK, it's your turn. Jot down a story—true or imagined—for each of your products, services or message points. Focus on features, benefits, and examples.**

**Bonus tip:** What other stories might you tell—about your inspiration, your work, your studio/office, your process—to add layers of interest to your work? Here's an example to get you started: <http://bit.ly/1dsxGAy>

## Sticky Story Shortcuts

You don't have to tell a complete story to achieve the full effect of storytelling. Just referring to a well-known story or suggesting pieces of a narrative can be enough. The human brain naturally fills in the blanks.

Most people, for example, know the fable about the race between a hare and a tortoise—how the rabbit was so cocky he decided to take a nap mid-race and ended up losing to the slow but steady tortoise.

Just reminding an audience of the moral of that famous tale—"slow but steady wins the race"—is enough to remind them of the entire story. And voila! Instant sticky factor!

We use similar narrative shortcuts all the time. See if you can think of a few to illustrate your product features or message points.

Hint: Story shortcuts often begin with "like," or "as." For instance:

*"You'll feel like a Top Gun pilot in this classic leather flight jacket."*

*"Ditch the doughnuts; learn to love carrots as much as Bugs Bunny."*

## Module 5

# Recognize and craft powerful client success stories

### *In this module you will:*

- Understand the role powerful testimonials, i.e., client success stories play in proving the value of your goods and services.
- Be able to recognize key characteristics of effective testimonials.
- Learn the RAVES method to craft persuasive testimonials.
- Develop your own portfolio of powerful testimonials.

“Story is the vehicle we use to make sense of our lives in a world that often defies logic.”

Jim Trelease  
read-aloud advocate



### *The RAVES method to guide and craft terrific testimonials*

Marketing experts tell us there's no more powerful way to convince prospects of your value to them than with recommendations from raving fans.

Your signature story tells how *you* benefited from the solutions (goods or services) you offer. Testimonials prove your solution works for others, too. Take a tip from supersites like amazon.com, yelp.com and tripadvisor.com that depend on reader reviews (aka testimonials) to educate and persuade prospects.

But there's a knack to structuring and crafting an effective client success story. So I've developed an easy process--the **RAVES** method for terrific testimonials--to help you nail it every time. The secret is thinking of a client testimonial as one of those makeover TV shows. They're all built around "before and after" stories, with the bulk of the episode devoted to the process leading up to some amazing transformation.

**Take the same approach to help happy clients express the value of your work and craft their testimonials into powerful client success stories.**

Don't be afraid to coach clients to use this "then-now-and-how" structure when you ask for testimonials. Even with guidance, some people tend to ramble, so you may need to shorten or excerpt a testimonial to fit available space. Never change the meaning of the words though! And ask approval re: any edits you may make.

## Here's an example of the RAVES method in action . . .

Read through this lovely client success story by my client and business mentor Lisa Sasevich, and then we'll break it down into each step of the RAVES method.

*"I wanted to inspire my audiences to say "yes" to possibility by talking about my own journey in a more vulnerable way, yet without oversharing.*

*Sandra helped me organize a powerful signature story. Now I can easily connect with audiences at a deeper emotional level than ever before, with an authenticity that builds trust and boosts sales success."*

**Lisa Sasevich, CEO, The Invisible Close**



**R**emind us what things were like BEFORE, that is, why your client needed your help. *"I wanted to inspire my audiences to say 'yes' to possibility by talking about my own journey in a more vulnerable way . . ."*

**A**dd pain points or concerns. *". . . yet without oversharing."*

**V**iew the process leading to transformation. *"Sandra pointed out relevant experiences and themes from my past I'd never noticed, and helped me organize these events . . ."*

**E**mphasize the results. *". . . a powerful signature story that explains my passion to make a difference by helping others realize their potential."*

**S**ummarize the client's success, the "happy ever AFTER" ending of the story. *"Now I can easily connect with audiences at a deeper emotional level than ever before, with an authenticity that builds trust and boosts sales success."*

So there you have it, an easy way to remember how to structure and craft terrific testimonials.

### Wondering when to use the RAVES method?

- Convert it into a set of questions to ask clients when you gather testimonials, either written or recorded.
- Use it as a guide to edit long, rambling or disjointed testimonials clients may send you unsolicited. (Again, always ask for approval when you change their wording.)
- Keep it in mind when you're writing or recording testimonials for others.

**Bonus Tip! Take advantage of opportunities to share your own success stories with your mentors.** It's a nice way to thank them for all they've done for you, while creating positive visibility for their work and your own!

# Congratulations!

What great work! You've dug deep and courageously discovered your unique Comeback Story, the signature story that explains why you do what you do, sets you apart from the crowd, and can effortlessly connect you to your perfect audience at a deep emotional level that builds trust and boosts sales.

Best wishes to you as you tell your story to create business, benefits and global impact.

Your life is your story! Make it a great one!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sandra Millers Younger". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial 'S' and 'Y'.

### *Sandra's Story*

Sandra Millers Younger grew up in the U.S. South, where people still swap stories over fried chicken, apple pie and sweet tea. At the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill and at Syracuse University, where she earned degrees in English and journalism, Sandra studied stories — what makes the great ones great, how to find them, and how to share them in powerful ways that make a difference in the world.

She's since told thousands of stories as a journalist, culminating in her best-selling book, *The Fire Outside My Window: A Survivor Tells the True Story of California's Epic Cedar Fire*, featured on NBC Dateline. Now, as founder of Comeback Solutions Intl., Sandra works with disaster survivors, emergency professionals and other mission-driven leaders to transform disaster into opportunity and loss into legacy.

Get Sandra's book at:

[www.SandraMillersYounger.com/books.html](http://www.SandraMillersYounger.com/books.html)

Contact her: [Info@StrategicStorySolutions.com](mailto:Info@StrategicStorySolutions.com)

*“Storytelling is the most powerful way  
to put ideas into the world today.”*

*Robert McKee, screenwriting professor*