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English 110- I

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The Role Narrative Plays in Our Life: Connections, Insights and Healing

From the second you are born, our story begins. As life goes on, we build and add to our story. For some people, they are lucky enough to publish their narrative. But not all **narratives** have to be published in order to be important. All narratives are important and should be shared. Understanding my own life as a story has guided me to strongly believing that narratives help both yourself and others through hard times because they allow for connections and insights from others.

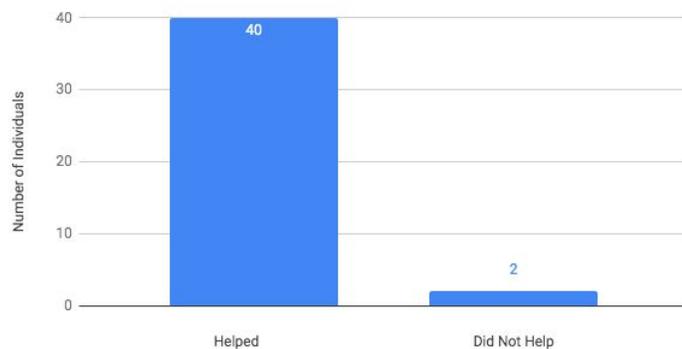
Sharing your narrative can build connections that will help you through difficult times.

After surveying my fellow classmates,

I feel even more confident about this belief. The graph depicts this evidence as it shows the drastic contrast between people who feel that hearing narratives during hard times, actually helped them recover/ get through it.

Majority of classmates felt strongly about this and could even relate it back to personal experiences.

Individuals View on Narratives Helping Them Get Through Hard Times



Most times, we do not realize how much hearing and sharing narratives can play a role in our lives. Sharing your story can be done through speeches, newspapers or just an old fashioned conversation. It was not too long ago that I experienced, first hand, my brother affected by someone else's narrative. My brother was diagnosed with **epilepsy** about a month ago. He recently visited USM to listen to a man who also suffers from epilepsy. He believed that sharing his story could help others in many ways. Making connections and being more informed about the disorder were two ways he was able to help my family. David had hopes for inspiring others with epilepsy and teaching them more about what should be expected. I was able to **interview** Connor a couple days after his visit to USM. One particular statement that stood out to me was him saying, "I was really discouraged and hurt *at the beginning* because flying was my life and that's the kind of major that is specified for that one job". Through this, I learned that once you have a seizure, no matter if you never have another in your lifetime, you are restricted from operating an airplane. Although, I took notice to "at the beginning" and later on asked him about it. After hearing from others who suffer from the disorder, he told me how it "opened [his] eyes to new opportunities" and how his outlook on life changed. Similar to what David said, his life is not completely over, he cannot let this disorder control his life. David's story inspired my brother to switch majors



(from aviation) to finances. He took away information that he will be able to use for the rest of his life.

It is common to hear people tell you to “get it off your chest” by sharing what is wrong. In fact, many holocaust survivors have shared their narratives at colleges and institutions all over the world. This experience allows healing as it opens up thoughts that have been pushed away for years. Others are able to provide their input and question parts of the story that can open new feelings and perspectives when looking back on your own story. Julie Beck’s “Life’s Stories” explores the benefits of looking at life as a narrative. She shares, “the way someone imagines his future seems to affect the way he sees his past, at the same time as his past informs what he expects for the future.” Many of these veterans, as well as the man with epilepsy, have experienced really tough times in different ways. Their outlook on life is affected by what they have gone through in life. However, as they let out their story, they are in fact healing themselves. If you think about it, that is all that therapy is. Just trying to get you to spill what has built up inside of you to relieve the pain. I can confidently say that many people who speak their story have a new/ positive outlook on life.

“No one can tell your story better than you can. Chances are, you will help others and yourself in the process.” -Christopher D. Connors

Narratives are also good for revealing character which can open up a new area to make connections. Galen Strawson in “I am Not a Story”, passionately discusses our lives as they are “naturally non narrative”. He goes on to introduce Erik Erikson, a developmental psychologist and his thoughts that “various selves... make up our composite Self. There are constant and often

shocklike transitions between these selves...”. Many people can admit that they have more than one self as you are a “different” person with your friends than at work. However, Strawson takes this idea and rants on about the relationship between how their narrative is told and their character. For instance, if you are constantly “lying” about your story, that is good evidence that you probably lie about more in life. This is also true when it comes to people who are open and honest with their narrative. With this being said, many people use this to create connections and make acquaintances. If you can assume someone's character through their narrative and how they tell their story, you may find yourself considering this person an acquaintance or even a friend. This new friend has the potential of helping you through rough times. Sometimes, it is not only about relating to the *story*, but also relating to the *person*.

If you think about it, these stories that we hear actually become a part of our own as they guide us and heal us. We are constantly hearing narratives as they are used to teach us, connect with others and even heal us. Life as a narrative comes naturally and is something that can be used in many ways but most importantly, they can help. Both the person telling their story, as well as the listeners, are influenced by the narrative. Not only will it bring new insights and healing to the person telling the story but it will also cause people to find meaning in it with hopes of using it to get through similar, difficult situations.

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