

Three Stories that Connect: Humor, Trauma, Beauty

When you want stories which connect with your audience, create an emotional bond without making them feel “sold.”

There are three paths to forging an emotional and memorable connection:

- 1) HUMOR** – Laughter is the “low hanging fruit” of empathy. Everyone loves to laugh. With humor, you can quickly establish rapport, trigger memorability, and create alignment. People love to share the joke, so a hilarious story has a long tail.

There are many types of humor: slapstick, situational, ironic, sarcastic, etc. Choose carefully. Andrew Dice Clay can make a career of being offensive; your organization can't. Your funny stories should be neither offensive nor too casual. Your audience should feel you are laughing with them, not at them, or invite them to laugh at you. *Caution: don't leave them with the impression that you are foolish or untrustworthy.*

- 2) TRAUMA** – You can also capture someone's attention through a shocking, distressing, or disturbing experience. The feelings may not be pleasant, but they are powerful, memorable, and create urgency. In many ways, trauma is the most flexible of the three paths. It may tug the heartstrings and evoke sadness by presenting a tragedy. It may induce disgust by depicting an outrage, moral failing, or physically repellent situation. It may shock and frighten the audience by illustrating a danger to themselves or others.

Trauma requires a careful hand; you want to rouse people, but avoid truly hurting them or they'll run from you! Miss the mark and they will see you as manipulative and fake.

- 3) BEAUTY** – This is the subtlest and most challenging of the three paths. Beauty evokes what is best, most enjoyable, and moving to us. Poetic language, striking color and form, and graceful movement can stimulate a pleasing sense of calm or peace. The physical or intellectual attributes that create those responses can vary widely from person to person. For that reason, beauty is best used for smaller groups with similar tastes or shared interests.

****Note that what is one person's beauty may be another's trauma or humor, so test carefully before you broadcast.***