

# Strategic Storytelling

## Video transcript

- [Rebecca] Thank you so much for being here today. I'm Rebecca Martin and I'm with the grant facilitation team at the Rutgers University, Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy. Thank you for joining us for this workshop on "Strategic Storytelling" provided today by Kristin Gardner and Joy Chia from the Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice.

I'm really excited for what they plan to share today. Before we begin, I have a couple of housekeeping notes. I'd like to let you all know that we will be recording today's training. We have enabled captions for the event, and there will be time for questions and answers toward the end of the conversation today.

So, please feel free to put your questions in the chat or to ask them directly if you'd like to. Any clarifying questions, please let us know and we can also ask this for you during the presentation. You should have received an email this morning providing a PDF of slides that will be used during the event, but if you didn't and you need them, then please let us know in the chat and we'll make sure to either post it or email it to you.

And then finally, I'd like to take a moment to express our deep appreciation to Peri Nearon and her team at the New Jersey Division of Disability Services for making this training and the entire training series of the IHC grant program possible. Peri was unable to attend today, but she reached out to share her enthusiasm for this training.

And I asked if I could share with you what she wrote, and she said, "Our work is only as good as our ability to clearly and concisely articulate why we are doing it and what we hope to do or achieve. Storytelling is a compelling and

impactful way to share information." And so, with that wonderful statement from Peri, I will give the floor to Joy and Kristin. Thank you.

- [Joy] Hi, everyone. Thank you so much, Rebecca. It's nice to see all of you. My name is Joy. I'm the executive director of Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice. And I'm really excited to be here. I guess I came to Astraea, which is a public foundation two and a half years ago, and I came here from private philanthropy where I used to give grants.

So, a lot of what we're going to talk today is, like, really grounded in my experiences, both as somebody who receives the stories that people tell, someone who often knows that the stories that are told on paper are not the same stories about what actually is happening on the ground and who has, like, sought to really translate that for different audiences.

And then now coming to you as somebody who, as the executive director, my job really is to frame why we do what we do and what we're going to achieve as an organization. So, I'm going to tell you a little bit about our organization because, you know, it's going to come up over and over again.

And the reason why I'm also telling you that, I can give you a brief sort of like snippet, is because you probably add to the pictures that you have as well. So, Astraea is 46 years old. We were started in 1977. And we started with a group of women who were lesbians and women of color who were sitting around a kitchen table and really were looking at the world around them and said, "You know, we really believe in the fights in the social justice, in the civil rights movements that we're hearing...we have and that we're working in but there hasn't been any place for us. We don't see our priorities and the needs of our communities being expressed."

And they came together and decided to do something about it. And what is actually really remarkable, I often think about, is that not only did they come together to see a problem and articulate it and then imagine that something could be different, they also put themselves in the position of having the agency to give out money to support the leadership that they wanted to have.

So, that to me is why we are a foundation for justice. We are a foundation that was started by lesbians. We do fund LGBTQI groups, but we fund so that we are moving towards a world where everybody, regardless of our identities, regardless of our race, our disability, our sexual orientation, our gender identity, our immigration status, our backgrounds really belong.

And so, I think it's really exciting for us to be here with you all because the inclusive and healthy communities that you're building are a part of the world that we're trying to do. I'm going to turn over to Kristin. Thank you so much.

- [Kristin] Thanks, Joy. I think that was really a beautiful story about what Astraea does and how Astraea came to be. I'm going to introduce myself and I'm going to build on that. I'm Kristin, I use she and her, and I'm the vice president of strategic engagement at Astraea. And that means that I get to tell our stories to raise funds and for our communications work. So, all of our communications work, in my opinion, is storytelling, and then we're taking those stories and looking for funding and really trying to bring our work to life.

I think that every organization, every nonprofit I've ever worked at is doing incredible work. And sometimes we're too deep in it and it's like we know what we're doing and we want to...we get overwhelmed by every piece of information that we have in our brain and every story that we've seen and every...in our case, every grantee that has had a win.

And so, sometimes those stories sort of come, from my experience, come out jumbled. And I'm really passionate about unpeeling the layers to reveal something that maybe isn't obvious on a website, isn't going to come through just sort of telling the basics of an organization's mission. I want to go back to Joy's beautiful story because I think you're going to hear from us two different styles.

And I think there's real value in that. I have a background in teaching public speaking to college students. And through that experience, I've seen... I've learned to encourage individuality. There was one time when I was teaching a public speaking class, I had to fill in for one of my primary professors.

And he had been doing this for 20 years and he was a legend. And I remember prepping for that trying to do him and I got up to the podium and I was like, "Wait, I can't do him. I have to do Kristin." And I think that's scary. And I think that sometimes when we're putting our own hat on and we're being ourselves, it's vulnerable and can feel shaky internally, but what other people are often reading is an authenticity that is approachable.

So, I'm excited for you to hear my voice and Joy's voice. I think that they're different and they're complementary. And I'm really excited to go to the next slide and walk you through what we're going to do today. Here's our headshots.

- We look like them, and we just like talking about them.

- They're, like, somewhat recent. So, we do mostly look like that. So, today, in this workshop, we're going to go through [crosstalk].

- To the next slide, please. Sorry. Sorry, Kristin, thank you.

- Thanks, Joy. We're going to go through the basics of storytelling. I think it's important just to be grounded in what is storytelling. I think everyone approaches storytelling from a different angle. And whatever we say today is not the end-all, be-all. It's just a grounding so that we're all centered. Then we're going to do, why is storytelling?

When I phrase it this way, I am joking about the why, but I mean, why is storytelling? Why do we story-tell? And I want to go through that with multiple lenses. And then we have some prompts to sort of help to start thinking through our own stories, how we want to tell them, what questions are we answering, and what are we hoping to accomplish?

And then Joy and I will each tell you a story about our work. And then after that, we'll work together to put some stories together. We're hoping to have a little bit of interaction, a little bit of a chat moment, putting your thoughts in a chat, maybe coming off mute and doing a little bit of live workshopping. So, with that said, we'll do...Joy will do the, what is storytelling? Joy.

- I am not on mute anymore, so thank you. So, you know, storytelling is many things, but I think the art and the practice of conveying events in words, right, and sounds, you know, you might improvise, you might have embellishment, you know?

And we use the words like storytelling because it's about when there is two elements of it. There is something that you are telling people, and so that's a communication tool. But also that these narratives have been used in every culture, right, as entertainment, education, it instills moral values.

We all, as a listener, also take different, like, individual lessons from each story. So, the crucial elements of each...of storytelling, you know, you need to have a class of characters, you need to have some kind of perspective in terms of narrative that's a setting and a theme. And so, these components engage your listeners, makes them kind of like imagine and be in the process with you, and like, bring stories to life.

So, there are certain kinds of stories, right? We have personal stories, we have instructional stories that, like, probably have clear lessons that we want to take out and have a little more directive, we have inspirational stories and then we have stories that are sort of branding. And the way in which we tell stories, so right now, what we're doing, so we're talking about storytelling using your voice as, like, in person.

You know, you want to talk about voice modulation, you have body language and gestures. And we do that because we want to connect with our audience. We want to connect with them both on an intellectual level and also emotionally. And the way in which we communicate is also important for storytelling. You have, like, the verbal, which is what we're doing now.

You have verbal like, you know, seeing my face. I have, like, the ability to show you different pieces. And then you can see my gestures, my body language because in written, something that is delivered via a document, which is often how we get grant applications. And then also via voice.

So, I'm going to move to the next slide. And these are the elements of storytelling that we're really going to spend time on. The central point is the characters, right? Like, who is in the story? Then we need to know some kind of plot, the sign of conflict, you know, like, what is it that kind of we're trying...

the problem that we're trying to resolve of the resolution, and then also the setting. And all of these elements combine to create a good...sort of like a good picture for your audience. Let me tell you a little bit about characters.

Like, you want to think about who you're talking about as part of the story. It's important that they're relatable to the audience that are there. You also probably want to have a sense that this person changes, like, the character has development. In terms of plot, you're thinking about structure and pacing.

For conflicts, you're thinking about types and importance. And then your resolution is that it has to make sense. It's satisfying, is logical, and it brings the characters and the plot, and the conflict into a larger picture that we all can understand. And then the setting, time and place, is important, I think, to bring your audience along so that they can be with you as you tell the story.

All right. To the next slide, please.

- Okay, my turn. So, why is storytelling? I want to think through, why do we tell stories? And if there's one thing that I want you to take away from my part of this is that there really is no right way or no wrong way. I'm going to say authenticity a million times and I think that that's going to be the key.

Even when I'm, like, writing down a story in writing, in an email, in a grant, I start with my own voice. Like, how can I translate this to be as accessible as possible? And I'm doing that because I want to come from a place of connection. I think we tell stories because we want to connect.

We want others to understand our passions, we want to have deeper relationships. If you want to, like, think through while I'm talking, the last time you told a story to a friend, it might've been about, you know, your family, it

might've been about work, it could have been about reality TV, which I just had a conversation about. But why are you telling that story?

That story was 100% to have a deeper relationship with someone, to share a piece of yourself. And then when we kind of pivot into our work stories, we want to increase empathy. Wherever we're working, we're doing something that we care about and there are probably elements that are unseen that deserve empathy, that deserve that spotlight.

And so, sort of again, peeling back the layers to find that story that's not being told because there's a lot of mission and a lot of jargon in the way. So, let's, you know, go into the storytelling piece. And then finding funding, that's the hardest part.

I've done a ton of workshops on elevator speeches because, you know, I manage fundraisers. And so, we talk a lot about, "Let's pause and what would you say right now about this organization?" And I think that that's often sort of the wrong way to think about it. I think that when you're writing a grant and when you're telling about your work, even if you're telling your family about your work, if you're coming from a place of like, "This needs to be perfect and I only have one minute to do it," it's going to get...it's not going to go deep and it's going to feel jumbled in your head.

And that is just something that I lived as a fundraiser for many years. So, I want to think through...when we think about the increasing empathy and the finding funding, there's a couple of questions that I always ask myself. I think about how I see this work.

How did I come to this work? What is my personal connection to the work? What is something that I see every day that I don't know that other people see every day? And what are some of the changes and that goodness that comes from your work? You show up every day and it is hard and your coworkers are probably frustrating, but why?

What is the change? Did you have a breakthrough with a client? Did you see...?

In our case, did we get to hear about a grantee doing something really

incredible? We often hear actually really hard stuff. We hear the things that our grantees are struggling with all over the world, but then we have moments of joy where they've either won something big or they're celebrating something small.

And they are our inspiration because they are showing up every day to their work that is complicated and oftentimes dangerous but they show up every day with passion and joy. And so, can we sort of take some of that on and share that externally? And then... Oh, okay.

So, here, we're going to go into some examples. Looking at my notes, we wanted to give some examples about this because I want to make it as real as possible. And I also want to say, every time we bring up work or we tell a story, that is a story, latch onto it, process it. We want to tell you a little bit about...more about our work and I want to tell you about some things that happened beyond what the paper says.

And actually what I want to do is turn it over to Joy, who has a beautiful little speech about some of our work, we talk about movement infrastructure. So, if we're funding organizations who are working on the ground with LGBT movements all over the world, then maybe part of our work is to build the infrastructure that allows them to do that.

And I think that those are kind of empty words sometimes. So, what is a movement? What is infrastructure? And Joy has beautiful words about that.

- Aw, thanks. What is a movement? What is infrastructure? And I think the grounding part for us is that, I want to tell you, like, there's also... I mean, we work in philanthropy, right? So, we're a public foundation and we work with philanthropy. So, there are three big jargony things here that, you know, are hard to connect to.

What is philanthropy? What do we mean by movements? And, like, what do we mean by infrastructure? Okay. You're getting this, like, live because, you know, we believe in authenticity. Okay.

So, Astraea is a public foundation that supports LGBT people around the world. And we work in philanthropy. And philanthropy as a sector has kind of some stories that we associate with it. Like, we think about philanthropy as something that, like, really rich white people do. Usually, a man made tons of money doing something and then starts a foundation and starts handing out money to build buildings or help and support social services.

But really philanthropy is rooted in the original Greek words that really mean, like, love of humankind. And so, to me, philanthropy is not just something that really rich foundations or people and governments do, but it's ways in which we as people come together to give of our time, our treasure, and of our talent.

So, when we say that we fund movements, what we are really talking about is that we're talking about the ability to bring people together to work towards something that they all agree upon, the shared vision, to be able to imagine something that's different from the world that we live in, and then see themselves as being part of a larger group that is seeking to move that.

You know, we often think about movements. You know, we might think about protests like a large number of people, like, on a street, and you can just imagine that we're there. And the first thing that we have to remember in that protest is that you are surrounded by other people who are asking for the same things and that there is a sense of relationship and there's a sense of community as well.

The second thing is that to me, philanthropy is not just the money that's being transferred for the social services or the things that we're doing, but it's the same as the woman who's on the street who's handing out water bottles who's made sandwiches so that the people who are in protests or who are asking governments and asking other people to change are able to be on the streets, stay there.

It's the same as the kids who are lining the road, who may not be part the protests, but who are, like, waving their flags and clapping and supporting and

telling people to keep going. All of these pieces to me as part of philanthropy because it's the time, talent, and the treasures. And our treasures go beyond these things.

And when we think about movements, I like to think about, you know, it's really helpful for us to think about the protests or large, big changes as if they're, like, one-off events. But these things don't happen overnight, you know? The ways in which history tells us stories that we like to champion individuals, we think that one great man makes decisions and things change, but really it's groups of people coming together and communities.

And so, movement and infrastructure supports us as people to come together. It supports us to come together both to imagine something that we want to do that's different. It brings us together to decide how we're going to get to that different future. And it also brings us together to practice what it means to make the decisions so that we can get to that future.

All of those things are really important. And so, the work that we do to fund communities and movements is to be able to move all of our resources, to be able to mobilize them for people who share the same ideas, and then distribute them to the people who are on the ground working towards our new futures.

- How's that, Kristin?

- I approve. That was great.

- Okay.

- And my favorite, I've heard this story twice now or this explanation of my favorite character in this is the woman handing out sandwiches. It feels so real. I get such a visual of we've seen that, we've seen the photos, sometimes we've experienced that personally, and it makes it so real. It really does make it feel grounded in the realities of generosity.

So, love that. Joy, you have the next slide, but you did just talk a lot so you can hand it to me. Totally your call. You want me to do it? Okay. So, I'm going to

keep... This is a little bit of a theme for me, but we're going to think through prompts.

We want to just sort of on its face, what you do, what I do no matter where I'm working is I raise money and I tell the stories of the organization. Depending on my positionality in an organization, those stories change. So, most of the time in my role now, it's like I'm sitting down, I'm having lunch, I'm just telling a story to someone.

You know, I have teammates who are writing our stories, writing our grants, I'm looking at them and I'm looking at our comms, but what I need to think through every day is, what do I do and why do I do it? So, what is your why? What is it that keeps you sort of motivated? What do you think about when you wake up?

Sometimes that first thought is, "I'm really tired and I don't want to do this today." But then, what is that second thought that gets you out of bed? And then what do you want others to know about your work? What is that unseen piece that you really want to keep sharing over and over again? For me, that unseen piece here at Astraea is really that we can talk...I think that the word philanthropy doesn't sound exciting or accessible to a lot of audiences.

I also think even people who are in philanthropy and really familiar with it, we all start to get a little bit, like, we're bored of it. We're bored of this word because what we're really doing is we're moving money. And that's a complicated thing to do. Literally, the finances, the mechanics of moving that money are difficult. In our case, we're moving it to regions around the world.

Oftentimes, they're very restricted. And I think there's something really interesting there for me around how we as an organization are actually making that happen. And then of course, we always have our grantees and the work that they're doing and thinking about what they're doing when they're waking up. They're waking up and saying, "Another day, you know, let's plan another demonstration," and they're putting themselves sometimes in harm's way because they so believe in what they're doing, and it is the glue.

We don't actually accomplish anything without activism. We don't see progress without the people who keep waking up every day and continuing to do it. And so, if I circle back to what do I do, being a fundraiser is sometimes awkward. You know, I have to tell people that I'm raising money and then they don't want to talk to me.

And I'm not the most exciting person in the organization to talk to because I'm not the expert in the work. I'm not moving the money. However, I get to build that bridge. And so, I get to wake up and I get to think about how I leverage my positionality, oftentimes, how I'm leveraging my privilege to really connect dots. So, I'm connecting money to the movements.

And how that money really moves doesn't have to be my business and I'm comfortable with that. So, sort of full circle, what am I doing, what am I, Kristin, doing and then what is this organization doing, and why do I care, and why do I keep plugging in and doing my piece of it? I did want to take about five minutes.

Time isn't a thing. So, we'll take however many minutes it takes, but I would love to take a minute or two to put some thoughts into the chat. I want to know, like, five words, what do you do? And it can be funny and simple. I think it's a starting place though, to just break down, what would you tell your grandma that you do?

Anyway, I just would love to, you know, let's pull up out of the Astraea world and I would love to know who's in the room and what it is you're doing every day.

- Thanks, Kristin. I can tell everybody that I tell my grandma that I help people.

- I didn't know.

- [inaudible] my grandma. I don't think that my grandparents have any sense at all of what it is I do. But like, getting down to the bottom of it, I feel like really important.

- I see, "I help my organization raise money." Same. And I don't know if that's your experience, Amanda, but sometimes that's the most crucial place to start. That's what I do, but that's also where people's eyes glaze over. Bring people together to help.

I love that. I would love to know more about what that looks like. Anyone else? Oh, we got some good ones. Okay. Lead a group that teaches people with disabilities and older adults how to safely use public transportation to get where they need and want to go. That is beautiful.

Try to fill voids in disability and justice in healthcare and safety issues. Big thinker, moment maker. I love it. As a case manager, I'm a little bit like a GPS. I guide families to the resources they need and try to help them access them, I love the GPS metaphor, and share historical knowledge so they understand our mission further.

Yes, that's so important being grounded in our history. I work to assist individuals with disabilities stay independent. I bring people and local nonprofits together to answer community needs. Love that. I think these are all beautiful starting places. Real clarity around what it is you're doing.

Create accessible environments for health and wellness opportunities for individuals with disabilities. I help late or undiagnosed individuals with ADHD learn about how their diagnosis affects their day-to-day functions and helps them create personalized systems to help them manage their symptoms. I lead teams that do social science research about the workforce and education.

We all just read and write for a living. Feel that. When I think about each of these, we help seniors stay in their homes with the delivery of a daily nutritious meal and a well-check. When I think about each of these, I immediately think about the characters that are inherently built-in and the stories that you can tell where, you know, yes, I am organized.

Let's pick one. Actually, we'll just do this. We help seniors stay in their homes with the delivery of a daily nutritious meal and well-check. I don't know what your role is in your organization. And it doesn't super matter, but there is a

story there. There is someone receiving a meal whose life has been enriched and changed for that.

And it kind of starts to write itself. And even if you are the person who raises money and maybe doesn't...executive director so you're not, like, delivering the meals, right?

- You're like the fixer of everything. Yeah.

- Sometimes the executive director is, like, stuck up here, not getting to see...not getting to attach to the work, not getting to be personally invested in the way that sometimes we hope to, but you know that there are incredible...there's incredible impact that's happening every day. Collaborate with public health organization in New Jersey to work towards better health outcomes and conduct community collaborative research.

I love it. Keep 'em coming. Let's come back to these. So, do keep them coming. There will be more time to sort of start here and start to place some other pieces around it. But the next slide are some rules of storytelling. And I'm not going to lie to you, I mostly made these up based on my own experience.

So, absolutely, it has to be authentic. I tell teams that work for me that sometimes things are awkward, and when they're awkward, they're charming. So, don't worry about being imperfect. I think about times when I've listened to someone speak and it's really overly polished and I'm not feeling connected to them as a human.

Those are less impactful than when you're kind of awkward or, you know, maybe you forget a word or you stumble, but we're connecting as humans and there's more there. And I think there's so much value in always remembering to just show up as yourself. When you're telling a story, make it personal. If you're the ED of an organization that is delivering meals, then what is...like, how do we make that personal, how do we tell this...how did you land here, and what is sort of your personal experience with the work?

Tell what you know. So, I think that goes back to being personal. I think I cannot tell you a story... I'm going to tell you a story from a job that I had previously where I worked in education equity. I'm not going to tell you a story about how I worked with a kid and we made progress because that's not my story.

I visited the schools and I got to know our students, but not in the same way. So, the story sort of comes out from my own standpoint. Share what makes you excited. I think that is the thing that's contagious. The thing that lights you up, the thing that you're like, "Yeah, that's what makes this special and what makes me excited."

Always incorporate that into your story. Connect the dots and I just mean come back full circle. When you start out with a piece of a personal story, you tell your organization story and you come back and connect them. And then at the end of the day, there aren't any really real rules. So, also don't be obsessed with the rules.

A lot of these notes come from my own experience of, you know, I look at the elements of a story and I see characters, plot. I'm like, "Oh, my gosh, what's a character and what's a plot?" And I start to take it too seriously and then I lose it. I lose the magic that can come out of a story that's personal. Okay, I've said a lot of words.

I'm just going to pause for a second. And then I'm going to dive into my own story. I used to work for an education equity nonprofit in New York City. I'm telling this story because I think there's a fun personal element to it. And Joy will tell a story about Astraea and, you know, how many stories can we hear about philanthropy? So, I just wanted to cast a wide net.

So, I worked at this nonprofit doing education equity. You know, I have my own...of course, I went to school. But that's sort of, like, where it starts and ends for me. I think that education is super important. My mom was an educator, however, I do not have students...I do not have kids. I do not have,

like, currently overly personal connection other than just, like, I care about the future.

So, a story that I often told funders when, you know, asked, how did you land here? Why do you work here? Here it goes. You ready? My mom was a teacher for my whole life. And as a kid, I didn't... I'm not making this up.

I really just didn't want to go home and be alone after school, so I took the bus to her school every day through high school. I even had a car. And I would still go to her classroom after work... after school because, I mean, I was just a weirdo and I just wanted the company, frankly. But that means I spent a ton of time around teachers and I spent a ton of time around education. But I still to this day don't necessarily feel like I can speak to what goes on in the classroom.

What I can speak to is what goes on outside of the classroom that is unseen and is truly transformational. Because I think a good teacher, I think a passionate teacher can sort of see where there are cracks and attempt to fill them, but I also think that teachers are really spread thin. They can only do so much. In my mom's case, she became the technology teacher.

And I just want to pause for, like, laughing at that because she's not a tech person. But she was teaching technology, and that meant that she got to sort of like know all of the students at the school. They rotated through her class as an elective. And she started noticing that kids were being dropped off super early in the morning. Their parents had to go to work.

They didn't have another option. And so, the students would get dropped off, and then sort of like loiter. They would follow her around. She has that kind of energy that you just want to follow her around. And at the same time, she had this dream as the technology teacher to start a news network at the school. So, she wanted to do a live stream news network every morning with a little news update with students. So, she connected these dots.

She wanted the students that were arriving early to have an outlet, and this became her little band of news kids. She wrote grants to get equipment. She

plugged the kids in based on their interests and based on their skillsets. So, some of them were running with cameras and some of them were on screen and they got to help write the news stories.

And I think that there's just no way to overstate the power of that. Someone saw them, believed in them, gave them this opportunity that didn't exist before, and invested time into them that was outside of the classroom. I think again, not every teacher has that kind of capacity. I think that we shouldn't expect teachers to have that kind of capacity.

I think that different schools are resourced differently. And so, in the case of the schools where I was working, they are resourced differently. And our mission was to put full-time mentors into classrooms to be there from the first bell until the last bell. And when I would visit the schools, because I was a fundraiser, I wasn't getting to see it every day.

I didn't have a personal connection to one student who, you know, I got to tell a story about. So, I would go and I would get to watch just so that I could be connected to the work. And I would see the mentors that were part of our mission arrive when the students were arriving for school and high-five them in the mornings and then I would see them sit down with them during lunchtime and have deep conversation.

This is where they would find out about their...what was going on at home, what was going on in their friend groups, who had a crush on whom. And they really were just sort of having this sort of mentor but kind of peer relationship. And I got to see those same mentors work inside of classrooms with students who needed personalized help that the teacher can't always get to when the teacher is teaching an entire classroom.

Finally, our mentors run afterschool programs. So, they really were there from start to finish. And the afterschool program was completely free and they ran personalized tailored clubs based on the students that were in the afterschool program. So, one time I was there and their club that they were running was Water Club.

And I was like, "What is Water Club?" And ultimately, they just did science experiments that involved water. And so simple, but they got to play with water. They had so much fun. They were elementary school students. And so, when you see an extra adult in a building, in a school building who is investing their capacity above and beyond what a teacher has capacity for, then we know that students are given more opportunity.

They're given a platform to share their whole self and they feel a bit more wrapped around. And the research showed, from that organization, incredible growth and opportunity based on having had this mentor that was with them from the first bell to the last bell.

And I think that I got to see that, but I also think back to my mom and I think back to pre the first bell when she wanted to invest something extra in her students. And this was many years ago, so I now get to see some of the results of that. Some of these students are adults now who have followed their passions and who still credit the opportunity to get to do the news network with a lot of how they got to navigate their life moving forward.

So, there is truly...it's hard to put a value on a deep personal, above-and-beyond relationship with an adult in a school building outside of the classroom. Okay.

- Oh, that was awesome. Thanks, Kristin. I mean, I really... So, as I was listening to you, I was very absorbed, right, in this. But I also was just sort of like thinking, you know, what were you doing to kind of connect everything? So, like, going back to our rules, right? So, the first part is that you had a clear cast of characters.

And I kind of like this, that you imagine like you have your mom and the kids, and then as the story kind of went along, we substituted the image of your mom to the mentors. And so, the setting is a school, it's something that's familiar, we understand. And that was super authentic.

I mean, I really got a sense of who you were and your personality and also what was important to you. I like that you said what you knew and what you

didn't know, right? To say like, "I don't know what's...like, I'm not a teacher, but I do know about, like, what's happening outside of the classroom." And that was, like, a really nice frame for this conversation because all the examples that you gave were things that the mentors were doing outside of the classroom.

I mean, I guess, I don't know if you knew that you were doing this, but, you know, one, you did a really nice job to connect to the mission of the organization that you were working with, but that talking about the clubs, like Water Club, was really funny. It was a funny bit, but it also kind of brought me to remember that, you know, it was tailored to the interest.

So, your mom tailored this new story thing to the interest of the kids that were following her around. So, there's an aspect of sort of like seeing the kids and seeing what they would be good at and kind of like caring enough to tailor it to that. So, I really liked how you started off with you and your mom and then ended with that. And I thought it was a really nice way of kind of bringing to life something that could have been like, I work for an education equity place and we fund people to be inside schools and support kids so that they can have support in classrooms and out of classrooms.

And, like, that could have been like a different way of seeing what it is that you just said. So, that was really awesome. Thank you.

- Thanks, Joy. Thank you. I really appreciate it. And I think that, yeah, when we look... sometimes the work is just the work, and sometimes we're really excited about it. And when we think about our own personal intersection, that's when I think a story can really come to life. Okay, Joy, I want to hear yours.

- Like, tend to, like, personal... Sorry, is there a question? Oh, if there is a question, please feel free to raise your hand and we'll have somebody come through and just like let us know.

It's just, like, for the moderators. We can't really see the chat, but we can stop at any time. Okay. So, look at the slide.

Remember the rules: authentic, personal, tell what you know, what makes you excited, and connect the dots. Okay. I guess Kristin gave me the assignment to tell you a story about Astraea. So, Astraea, right, remember, is a lesbian foundation for justice. And it's really important that we work...I mean, like, for me, that we ground our work in justice because a lot of people assume that all we do is support lesbians.

So, I'm just giving you some context for this. Okay. One of the things...the most important things for me about what Astraea does is that we are funding people to make decisions about their lives and to impact the policies and the processes and the communities and context that impact the way in which we're able not just to live, but really to thrive.

And a really important aspect of that is seeing us all as people, not just, like, in tiny boxes in terms of identities, but seeing that all of those identities come together. So, I am Asian, I am a lesbian, I identify as a woman and she/her pronouns, I have a disability, I'm a mom, I have a kid, not multiple, just one, I am a migrant.

All of these things really factor into who we are and how the world treats us. And so, for Astraea, what we do is that we support organizations that recognize all of the ways in which people show up and come together and also recognize that we have important spaces in the world to have agency to change the world that we're in.

One of my favorite grantees is a group in Guatemala that is led by women and non-binary people, some of whom have disabilities and the others are allies. They also identify as queer and all these aspects of themselves are brought to their work.

They are working with the Guatemalan government to ensure that sexual and reproductive health services and policies, as they're created, contemplate all of who they are.

They want to ensure that the policies recognize that people of different, like, sexual orientation and gender identities are able to get comprehensive and

competent services. They want to make sure that people with disabilities are visible in policies, that they're counted in data, that policymakers recognize that people with disabilities should, and I mean, should have healthcare that covers, like, sexual and reproductive rights.

And they are also standing in the rooms with government officials to demonstrate that not only is this something that should happen, but that the voices of the people who are most impacted should lead how policy is made. I also love that this is a group of Guatemalan activists who are not based in cities.

You know, they grew up... A majority of them are outside, like, in rural areas and some of them come from indigenous backgrounds. And all of that that they bring together is a way of them having able to translate to other people what it is that they want and what the communities want, and also what their priorities are.

I love that Astraea can fund this group. We fund this group not just because it's advancing LGBT rights. We fund this group because it's advancing a world where all of us can belong. And I also say that the reason why it's important that we fund in the way that we fund is because we're asking them...giving them flexible funding.

We're not asking them to tick a box and say like, "Oh, we're only going to fund this part of your work that advances LGBT rights," or, "We're not going to fund only this part of the work that funds the work that you do with women or this part of the work that you do with people with disabilities." Because we know that we bring all of these identities together. And so, for us, our work is to take the ways in which people see us in boxes to get those resources and then transform them so that we can give flexible funding to groups like this Guatemalan group so that they can make decisions for themselves about what's important so they can react to the opportunities they have, and so that they can really support and advance their communities.

So good, thank you.

- Was it the first time you heard this story, Kristin?

- It is. I've definitely heard of this grantee, but I think that it is my first time hearing it from you and from your own personal standpoint. It brought to life a lot of things that I know to be true about you but I also think maybe have already come through in this one workshop. Intersectional identities, you sit at the intersection of multiple identities and that is the thing that you really value about the work that this group is doing.

So, you're making it authentic and you're making it personal. And I think it's important that it's clear that it's not made up. It's clear that Joy didn't just decide that this is the story she was going to tell because she needed to tell a story. She really does value intersectional identities. And the work around...I took some notes.

So, the work around advancing a mission, advancing a vision, advancing work, because sometimes we don't want to talk about it in the terms of a vision and a mission. But the work that has to be done on the ground, advancing that holistically. And we're doing that through flexible funding. And I do know about Joy that one of the things that she loves most about her job is the sort of magic that we do with our money.

We're taking money from a source, lots of sources. And sometimes those sources aren't as flexible as we want to be. And so, we get to sort of, like, take that funding and do some magic and then give it back out in a really flexible way. And so, Joy really brought that home. And I think that your excitement about the mission of that organization really comes through, and again, doesn't feel forced.

So, that was really good. Thank you. Do you like our pep talks to each other? This is, you know, feminism or whatever. I'm looking at what's next, Joy's slide. So, we're going to go back. The next slide is we're sort of going back to the prompts that we're asking ourselves about what it is that we do personally, why do we do it, what keeps us motivated, and what do we want others to know about that work?

In the case of Joy's story, it was I think she really want... I mean, I'm going to put words in your mouth, Joy. Like, I think you really do want people to understand that we're not just giving away money, but we're sort of doing something with that money by transforming it into flexible funding so that our grantees can do what they need to do with it. What would I want you to know about the work of the organization I worked for before?

I think it's that unseen piece of the high-fives in the hallway, of the talking in the cafeteria. I could tell you about pull-in and push-out or push-in and pull-out tutoring, that sort. Tutoring.

See, this is already not authentic. I could tell you about that. I think a lot of organizations do tutoring and mentoring really well, but I think the special thing was the high-fives in the hallway and being embedded in the classroom. So, what is it, essentially, that's making your work so special that you're here doing it? We did want to dedicate time to workshopping this. And I'm wondering, Joy, if you have a vision about that, how we might go about doing that.

- Well, I think that we have really good foundational pieces like all of you even in the chat, like, to go back to what it is that you say you do. I think what we would... Like, some prompts. Like, use that as the beginning point so that this is how you would say that you do your work. And then think a little bit about a character.

Formulate who it is in a story that you want to tell about it. And then we could actually just try. Like, if anybody would be brave enough to tell a story, a lot of this is just practice. A lot of it is kind of figuring out for yourself the story that you tell yourself and how you want to communicate it.

So, we can do that prompt and then we can also answer any questions. How's that? So...

- I think that's great. Yeah. No, go ahead.

- Oh, no, no. So, I'm thinking, Rebecca, do you want us to answer questions first so that people have time to process and think and maybe gather up their courage to be Guinea pigs, or would you like us to do it the other way around?

- It's okay to do it either way. I think if people have questions that they want to ask, we could do that first, and kind of maybe those questions will be helpful then when going through the prompts themselves. But if nobody has questions right now, then maybe we could give it a go with someone. So, questions, do you have questions?

If so, you can feel free to unmute and ask them yourself. You can raise your hand if you feel more comfortable that way. You can put it in the chat. Oh, I see one. We have Andrea Castro.

- [Andrea] Hello. You'll forgive me, hold on one second. Let me start my video. My question is regarding sort of describing what one does when you do a lot of things. I consider myself a multi-preneur.

And one of the wonderful things about being neurodiverse is the ability for me to focus on multiple projects at the same time. How would you suggest somebody who is dipping their toe in several projects to tell a story about why they do?

- Can I take a first stab at this? I love this question. I also am neurodivergent. I'm going to say that I'm going to be a multi-preneur.

I love that. I mean, and then also in my role as executive director, like, I do everything. I'm almost accountable for everything and I also have to jump in when it's there, right? So, I think for me, you know, what is the...it comes down to the core story of all the things.

What's all the things that...? What's in common between what you might have done an hour ago and what you're doing two hours from now? Like, what is the threat? And I think that that actually really warrants us thinking about it because it's really easy for those of us who are neurodivergent to just kind of

like jump from task to task, but understanding what the threat is is really important.

Sometimes I think about this. We've been doing a lot of jigsaw puzzles at home and, you know, I like to have a container. So, I'll do, like, all the edges first, and then my daughter just wants to put the pretty things together first. And sometimes it feels, in your case, I mean, in the case of moving from things to things, that we're moving from it pretty parts of the jigsaw puzzle to pretty parts.

But really, all of that sits in the container and a picture. So, when you tell a story, you probably want to keep that picture because it's important to tailor it yourself because then you know how you're investing your time and your priorities as well. You set that frame and then you might want to zoom in into one parts of the pretty pieces or two, but at least...not at least, but the story is contained and there's a real trajectory between that.

I answered your question with a metaphor because that's how I do think.

- [crosstalk].

- That's very on-brand. Kristin, do you have anything you want to add?

- Oh, I did, but it just flew out of my head. Oh, yeah. So, I think that I just wanted to add to what Joy said. I think that it is true that we are carrying our why always no matter what we're doing at work, outside of work. And so, I think that is one piece that you could get really clear on, sort of sitting down, looking at that common thread, and thinking about what it is about you that put these pieces together in the first place.

For me, it's so annoying, but I'm a people-centered person. Whatever I'm doing, it's 100% for a people-related, a relationship-related reason. And that could be a good jumping-off point to start to tell the story of how all pieces come together.

- I love solving problems in a good puzzle.

- That's your [crosstalk].

- As it turns out, it's like my thing. We have a question in the chat. And I'm going to turn this to you, Kristin. It's a question, how do you tell a compelling story within the confines of a word-restricted or question-directed RFP?

- I think it's such a hard question. I know why you asked it. And it doesn't have the clearest answer. And again, I think it's like, what is the method that each of us uses to get to where we're going? So, you know, take my answer or leave it, but what I always start with is trying to figure out the thing that I think is most compelling.

Like, whatever the question is asking, what's the piece of it that makes me the most excited? And I sort of have this multi-step process where I'm writing down everything that I...bullet points, I'm a bullet-point person, I think it drives some people crazy, but bullet points of, what do I want to say about this?

What are the key elements? Then I'll turn it into a paragraph and then I'll just start removing words that I think are extraneous. Take it or leave it. But mostly, I just think that...like, I think that both of these questions are really related because...and I think I said this at the top of the workshop, it is so reasonable to get overwhelmed by all of the things that you know you're doing, that your organization is doing.

I want to tell you about five grantees just popped in my head, plus this other thing that we did, plus this research that I want to tell you about. It's all important and it's all compelling. And I often find myself when I'm sort of like, what's a story I've been doing lately? And I want to tell you everything, and it gets, like, jumbled. And so, to have really real clarity around how you want to answer this for this funder, what are they interested in?

And then choose from your menu of your top five favorite things that are happening that you want to talk about.

- Yeah, I'm going to answer this from the perspective of someone who gives grants because I think that this is...it's an important question, right? For any

RFP, like, they're telling a story. They have a story that they're trying to tell as well. So, the first piece that I think you want to be able to do is unpack who is it that's...like, who's the audience?

If you can do any research about who's reading it, that will be really great because it also kind of like sets the tone of, like, connection, right? This part of telling a story is not just the communication. The one-way communication is that you want to ensure that someone is receiving it. So, do the research, as Kristin said, understand why I care about something. So, oftentimes in the RFP, that will be visible.

Like, if it's a well-written RFP, there's context information that's theirs, is like, you know, we care about inclusive and healthy communities. There's probably something in there that tells you why they chose the words healthy and inclusive and communities. There's also probably things about what they're looking for in terms of change, right? It's that are we looking for something that is very concretized and that has detailed support services and it wants you to list all the things that you're doing so that we have really good numbers because numbers are also part of the story.

Or, is it more about advocacy, policies that you want to change? Or, is it more about, like, changing the communities that you're in? So, like, what you choose to tell your...how you choose to tell your stories, be it your numbers, indicators, a personal story about an individual, or a story of how something happened, like a policy change happened, matters to the RFP as well.

I guess I have other tips. One is that you can never go wrong becoming very clear from any beginning that you know who you are and why you do it. Having that packed, I mean, it's very important because it's going to also set a discipline for you.

So, make sure that every time you answer a question, your answer relates to that. It shows who you are and it shows why you're doing something. I think the word restrictions are there. I mean, they're frustrating and annoying, but

word restrictions, I think, exist...I mean, can be a good discipline to ask you to really hone in on what is the most important thing in a particular question.

So, someone might say...I know it could be an open-ended RFP that's like, "Tell me about your strategic plan." I hate that kind of questions because I'm like, "I could tell you this for, like, days." But what it means is that it forces me to be like, "This is who we are, this is why we're doing it, and here are the three things that we are doing to make sure that is tied to the whys and the who we are."

That is, to me, the way in which I would answer that. And that's a compelling story too, because you know that the cast of characters is the organization, there's some kind of conflict about the problem that you're trying to solve, and you're resolving it by having a strategic plan that puts into action the way in which you're seeing the world in order to resolve that conflict.

So, even in the mini 250-word sort of piece, you can think about the way that the story is being told.

- I just want to add one thing to tie your answer together, Joy, with mine because I think you have a grantmaker and a grant writer. I think about a Venn diagram of, like, what it is that we're doing and why and what's exciting, and then what is the grantmaker asking for, and then where's that overlap because...

So, I think it's important to do that research to understand what they're asking for and then I think it's also important to already know in your head on a piece of paper why and what's most compelling. It's super easy to then just go down a path, I know that you all know this on this call, to go down a path where you're asking for something that isn't super aligned and you're trying to fit the grantmaker's language or you're trying to extrapolate their expectations.

Like, kind of constantly being clear on who you are and what you're doing and why and what the grantmaker is wanting.

- We have an example. You know, we answer RFPs. So, there's actively an RFP that we as an organization are working on from the U.S. government. And, you know, in my sort of spitballing phase, it's like, why don't we do this? Why don't we go and say let's apply for money for the mental health services of people who are LGBT?

And it was really great that my colleagues, including Kristin, sort of like drew me back because she said, "Who are we and why do we do this work?" We don't have expertise, we don't do mental health work. Why would we...? Like, how does that fit into our story about ourselves? So, I could have created any kind of story to answer the RFP, but, you know, thinking through, does that story, like, make sense?

Is it logical? Will it get too complicated for us? That was all different elements to even just thinking about whether or not to answer this word-restricted question-directed RFP.

- Can I ask you a question?

- Please.

- You both just sort of mentioned noting the language in the RFP. And so, I want to know, when you're telling your story from an authentic place and kind of being true to who you are and what you're doing, how much do you tailor your language to maybe match the way that things are being talked about in the RFP? Or, do you not?

I think especially in the disability realm that so many of us work in, there are different terms that are used by different groups and there's a lot of variation. And so, how do you go about that when you're looking for funding or how does it affect your considerations when you're giving your funding?

- Start with Kristin.

- You know, there's, like, several answers here and one answer that's just really real is that here at Astraea, I think we do too much tailoring our

language. We have a grant with the European Union, why are words hard? And when I read that grant, I can barely understand it.

So, we've, like, tailored our language so much that I'm like, "Hold on, I have to clear my day to digest this." And I think there's real value in that. You know, we know that the audience is different. And I'm also sort of working with my team to find a line there. So, you know, I'm kind of answering this, but also in the same boat as you.

And then I know that, you know, when we're talking about language, we're talking about, like, the LGBT community is also a community where our language is always changing. So, a funder may be asking for something and we're like, "Okay. We actually don't talk about that in this way." And we'll reflect that in our proposal. And sometimes it's a matter of taking what they've asked and sort of you acknowledge it in the proposal and you correct it also.

This also happened a lot when I worked in education equity. You often hear, you know, funders...our donors always wanted to talk about, like, the underprivileged kids. And so, you know, we've obviously never put that in our proposals. We stuck to our own language and our own guidelines. Sometimes though, sometimes I would take the opportunity to kind of correct that even for the funder in the proposal by saying, "You know, we measure resources in different ways and our students have tons of resources in these ways and then in other ways, their schools are just not resourced."

Clearly, I don't have a clear answer for you, but it's a constant...it's worth constantly calibrating. It's worth working with your development team to have them constantly be aware of that and to understand the relationships with the funders well enough to know, is this a funder where we really need to be a bit more mindful about mirroring that language, or is this a funder where we can sort of start to do some corrective actions?

And then Joy, as a grantmaker, you probably have other perspective.

- Well, I was going to sort of answer this actually from our point of view as grant seekers. So, I want us to be placed in the position of, like, having power and agency. Not all of us have the privilege of not chasing every RFP that's out there, but some of us do.

And all of us have the choice to know why we're doing something, even if we feel as if we have to pursue every opportunity. And it's important for us to know that the words that are being used in an RFP reflect a positionality that may or may not be aligned with yours and your organization.

I noticed in the prompts that you all described, you know, you all had different specific ways of describing the work that you do. I would encourage you to keep doing that, but explain why you are using a particular word, you know?

Have that be part of who you are. When I choose to call myself Asian, I am linking to a particular identity that contextually makes sense in the U.S., but I grew up in Singapore, and in Singapore, I mean, most of us are Asian, but my primary identity at that time was Chinese.

All of these things change. But I can gear that answer to whoever is that's the audience because then they understand where it is that I'm coming from. But if they were going to use a different term to describe who I would, maybe I wouldn't want to be communicating with those people.

So, like, think through a little bit first about the power of language and also our own power and agency to say, "You know what? Is this a clue to us that we are not aligned in the values that we have?" The second thing that I would say as a grantmaker is that it's actually more important to me not to use the words that you describe yourself, you know, like, you say big words like own disability, but that I'm seeing words that tie to my strategy, right?

So, like if I wanted these funding groups that are doing advocacy at the local and municipal level to increase inclusion of people with disabilities within the community, what I'm looking for is language that reflects that strategy. I'm looking for the words that are...I'm looking for a sense that your stories are community-centered, that your programming is community-centered.

I'm looking to see that you're not segregating people. You know, like you could be providing the same service, but how you do, it's really important. So, that to me is how I would tailor it, is what are the keywords that are being reflected in the RFP and see if you can think about the strategy and the political positioning of the person who is asking for grants applications.

- Thank you. Do we have any other questions anyone would like to ask? I can't see the chat at the moment. So, Andrea, do you see anything that's...? Okay, I see some head shakes.

So, if you want to spend a little time workshopping this, I think we're good to do that.

- Sure. Do we have any volunteers? Anybody wants to go back and tell a story for all of us and just, like, practice it?

- And maybe you would go through, like, prompt by prompt so it's not something that they just have to demonstrate.

- Oh, yes. Sure.

- Absolutely. And I think even if you just want to answer one of those questions, I think that's the start to the story.

- [Adrian] This is Adrian. For me, the story is about changing the story. So, you know, it's the same story and the story can get boring maybe to me, but it's whoever we're telling that story to, how do we change and reframe that story so it connects with them, right?

And so, you know, I could go through a story and I won't now. But I think that's, for me, the challenge and the excitement is reframing and refocusing your story to who needs to hear it and how they need to hear it and the why, right?

- Yeah, thank you so much. I went up to your answer, right? You can say that like...am I correct that how you described what you did was that you would try

to fill voids in disability and justice and healthcare and safety issues, am I connecting the right voice with the right word?

- Yes. Yes, you are. Yes.

- Great, thank you. You're right. I think what I'm hearing from you is that the stories that are told about people with disabilities, about communities that are affected by disabilities and the injustices that exist, there are these big stories that are often told. And what you're trying to do is that you're trying to change the way that people see and do things.

Am I right?

- Yes. Yes, you are correct.

- Okay. So, may I just ask you that, you know, so there's a lot to unpack in your one sentence, so do you...? Who are the characters in any story that you tell? Like, who are you centering in the story?

- So, it depends on where I'm telling my story, right? So, if I am in my community and doing community outreach work, I want to tell my personal, personal story with my son and my family and how that connects into the community and other families like me, right? If I'm telling that story in my work and the hospital work that I'm doing, which often focuses on safety and the safety of people with disabilities, I tell that story in a way...

And I don't like to compare the typically developing neurodiverse people with people with disability, but there is an inequity there.

And I talk to that personally in that inequity of safety, right? And I don't know how to say it well, but I do tell that story about how people with disabilities are inherently not as safe in this world as everybody else.

- And the reason why they're unsafe is because people see them in a particular way and tell stories about them in a particular way. And what your job is, is to change that story so that they become more safe?

- Yeah. And to add to that, like, typically, safety education, that's really where I'm focused on, is focused on ableist mindset, like escaping from a fire or, you know, it's just they don't think a person with vision loss or hearing loss or autism, right? So, for me, it's about telling the story of how that situation, right, of the fire or whatever affects a person differently than it would, you know, a non-disabled person.

- Awesome. Thank you. I think I have a hand. Andrea, is that your hand from now or from before? Ah, great.

- Oh, no. I was able to lower my hand later on too. I just wanted to say thank you so much for the work that you do. Thank you so much, Adrian, for the work that you do. And as a neurodiverse person, I wanted to explain sort of how my story came to be. I don't know if we're still doing that, the prompts.

- Please.

- So, I'm just going to pull that up again.

- Okay, that's fine, how you described yourself. Yeah.

- So, what do I do? Essentially, I help those who are late diagnosed or suspect that they have ADHD fully understand how ADHD comes to play into their day-to-day functions. And that means into relationships, into job performance, into self-awareness and self-reflection, all of those things really.

Our neurodivergence plays a big part in how we connect with others and with ourselves. And my why is because, well, I've always been an overachiever. I've always been the type of person to be very much type A just do-it mentality. And if you don't have an understanding of why it takes you longer, for example, my growing up was...

it took me significantly longer to do what others did, but I couldn't tell others that it took me significantly a lot longer because that would affect their view of me. And it was always a matter of masking and hiding. And in that hiding and masking, I was doing myself a huge disservice because I was also internalizing those feelings that I'm not enough, that there's something wrong with me, and

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that I just had to create systems for something that I didn't really fully understand.

So, the why came about actually in 2019 where I was pursuing a master's program. I was acting as VP of operations in a tax firm. I was doing a lot. I was commuting for a master's program.

I was commuting to going full-time in a master's program plus full-time work, plus also starting a foundation. It was kind of a mess, but I didn't realize that because I had normalized that. I was at the point that I had normalized that this is what I should be doing, this is how I reflected to myself that I was doing...that I was good enough. But, you know, I never really got a chance to take pride in what I did because of my neurodivergence.

I always had that internalized feeling that I'm not good enough, that someday the imposter syndrome would kick in. Then I developed panic disorder. I was having five panic attacks a day. And this was just honestly my body shutting down, my body saying, "Enough is enough. We cannot continue to do this."

And my why was, "Holy smokes." I mean, I had to completely start from zero and reevaluate the systems that I was putting into place to say that I'm trying to adopt systems that work for others that do not work for myself, and then I'm penalizing myself for those systems not working. So, I came back to understanding what really works for me, what works for my brain, and also understanding that ADHD does not affect everyone the same way.

Cultural differences, exercise, just mindset, a lot of things come into play of how your ADHD manifests, and exploring those differences and learning that one system that works for one person will not necessarily work for another. And what keeps me motivated is that in ADHD, we're always dopamine-seeking and always looking for the next thing.

ADHD is its own dopamine-seeking. It's learning how, the why, the where, how can I do and why is it no longer working, and how I can change it. We are constantly in flux. And that's what keeps me motivated in that, one, learning how to undo that negative self-narrative that we've adopted because of us not

understanding how our brains work and also canceling the narratives others have formed of us because of not understanding how our brains work and trying to put those accommodations in place, and also for self-advocacy, knowing what you need and not being afraid to ask for it, for those accommodations, and not feeling guilty for asking for those things.

And, you know, if you had even a parent or a loved one or a partner really understand how it is that why your executive function is not working today, rather than you being perceived as lazy, you're saying, "Oh, how can I structure a strategy so I can supplement whatever is lacking in this area?" So, that is for me keeps me motivated.

And what do I want others to know about my work? It's constantly changing as we become more cognizant of how ADHD is more prevalent, how many people were left behind. And I love seeing the light in people's eyes when they realize I'm not the problem, you know, there is an explanation of why I've suddenly had these things happen to me or why I've had difficulty in achieving certain parts in my life story or what I've wanted to accomplish.

And knowing to establish those systems and seeing them work and just seeing that day and night difference of how community really is the game changer in managing ADHD. I guess that's me going through my story.

- That was great. Thank you. Thanks for volunteering. Thanks for telling the story. Thanks for, like, going through the prompts. You know, I think it was clear. Like, you had

[inaudible] through for all of us, right? Some of the rules of the art. There was a clear conflict, the conflict that you expressed, I mean, several actually, but essentially the large one of, "I want to do all of these things, I have been trying to do them in a certain way and it doesn't work for me, and how have I then gone through a journey to resolve that?"

And there's been ups and downs with that. So, that's really great. I think it's very clear that you're deeply motivated that it's very personal and that you

connect with the people that you work with in a very personal way is super authentic in the story that you shared. The why is also very clear.

One thing that I would...like, a tip that I would say in the circle back is that I would circle back to, "And therefore, that is why I want to help other people to do this," right? Like, it's there in your story. You tell a story about how you've resolved the systems, and then you say, "And my personal story is the reason why we're moving into a quick... I realize how important community is. My work is to build the community, to provide people with support systems to better understand themselves, and then also come up with...to build the skills to be able to create and recreate and recreate these personalized systems to help them manage their systems the rest of their lives."

There's something here that your story is really... I say, like, come back so that it's like the package is really clear. Thank you. Kristin, do you have any comments?

- Thank you.

- No, I thought that was incredible. Thank you. And my only note would've been exactly what Joy has said and sort of naming that this is your story is one of many, and that is why you do this work. Every story is different. And then that's where in a longer conversation or in writing, then you can lift up... peel back that second layer of, like, "For example, I've seen this happen in other lives as well."

But it was incredible. I'm actually so inspired. And I think that's all we want, right? We want people to feel connected to us and to feel, you know, like we come away with a deeper understanding, and that is what you accomplish. And also, I know we have two minutes left, so I think that was an amazing place to end. I really am grateful for your sharing.

- Thank you so much.

- Thank you so much for the pointers. I really appreciate that.

- Of course. Well, back to you.

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- This was fun.

- Rebecca, are you going to close us out?

- Yes. I just wanted to thank you both for being here again, and thank you, Andrea, for that great demonstration at the end. We really appreciate your willingness to be open and share. And also you, Adrian. Joy and Kristin, this blew my expectations out of the water. I think you did a really fantastic job today, and I really appreciate your time and the effort that you put into this for us.

If anybody...I just realized that your slides don't have any contact information for you all. So, if anybody would like to get in contact with them, please send me an email. I'm the person who's always emailing you about the event. So, you can just send me an email and I can connect you with them as well. Thank you again. I think you're creating the opportunity for this ripple out through New Jersey and all the work that we're doing.

And, you know, the more that we can really highlight the importance and how connected we are with our work in increasing inclusion in New Jersey is really important to moving the needle and creating the change that we want to see. So, thank you so much. We're deeply in your debt.

- Thank you.

- Thank you.

- Have a great day, everybody.

- This was fun.

- Bye all.

- Bye.

- Thank you, everyone, for being here.

- Bye-bye.

- Bye.