

“I Need Help”: Storyboard Presentation

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Goal and Message

- The communication goal of the story is to promote the organization's new 24/7 crisis text line service and recruit volunteers to work as crisis counselors.
- The message of the story is that LGBTQIA+ youth struggle significantly with mental health and would benefit greatly from the 24/7 crisis text line service provided by the non-profit organization. The story is also meant to communicate the need for more volunteers to work as crisis counselors.

Target Audience: Description

The target audiences I hope to reach are people who want to support LGBTQIA+ youth through crisis counseling and LGBTQIA+ youth who would benefit from a text crisis line service.

Crisis counselors are typically white (67%), 40 years old, and are women (*Crisis Intervention Counselor Demographics and Statistics [2025]: Number of Crisis Intervention Counselors in the US, 2021*).

LGBTQIA+ Youth are majority white (64%) and the average age was 15.8 , with 23% living in the Southern United States (HRC Foundation, 2023).

Sources used for Target Audience Characteristics

- *CHARACTERISTICS OF A CRISIS COUNSELOR* – Institute Of Counseling. (n.d.). Institute of Counseling in Nigeria. <https://instituteofcounseling.org/characteristics-of-a-crisis-counselor/>
- Conron, K. J. (2020, September). *LGBT youth population in the United States*. Williams Institute. <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/publications/lgbt-youth-pop-us/>
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- HRC Foundation. (2023, August). *2023 LGBTQ+ Youth Report*. HRC Digital Reports. <https://reports.hrc.org/2023-lgbtq-youth-report>
- Tierney, A. (2024, July 3). *Topic: LGBTQ+ in the U.S.-Statistics & Facts*. Statista. <https://www.statista.com/topics/10961/lgbtq-in-the-us/#topicOverview>

Target Audience: Cultural Relationship

My story will involve an LGBTQIA+ individual and their struggle to find adequate mental health services, and the importance of getting those services with the specific qualifications mentioned for crisis counselors. This relates to the experiences of LGBTQIA+ youth who know the importance of mental health services but struggle to find adequate services.

Target Audience: Engagement

My story will grab the attention of prospective crisis counselors as it will grab the attention of those who care about providing quality mental health services to LGBTQIA+ youth, utilizing empathy and a nonjudgmental mindset to communicate the business need for more crisis counselors. This story will grab the attention of LGBTQIA+ youth as it speaks to their common experiences and further affirms the company's belief in the need for quality mental health services for LGBTQIA+ youth.

Story Outline: Delivery and Style

- The characters and their scenarios are fictional, although based on reality.
- The style will be an observational documentary, switching between three narratives.

Narrative Elements: Main Characters

- The first character is a white, trans girl named Olivia who looks to be in middle school or high school range. Her hair is pixie cut, and she is wearing gender neutral clothing.
- The second main character is a lanky high schooler named Mike.
- The third character is a young black girl named Ada, and her story is situated in her home church.

Narrative Elements: World of the Story

- The three main characters are LGBTQ+ youth in three settings; home, church, and school. I plan on presenting the first scene with the first character up until the climax of the story and then move onto the next story. Once the three have been told to the climax, I will go back and revisit them all, resolving them.

Narrative Elements: Beginning

- The opening scene for Olivia is her arriving at home to her dad reading at the table and her mom doing dishes. The inciting incident is when her father does not look up, yet pointedly welcomes her by the name Noah. She is visibly uncomfortable, and the mother in the background doesn't look particularly happy either, but Olivia continues up to her room without a word. The rising action continues as once she enters her room, she tosses her backpack on the ground and flops on the bed.
- The opening scene for Mike, who is in the boy's locker room after an unspecified sport or activity. The inciting incident is he is all by himself at his locker, while in the background, a group of larger boys seems to be making fun of him. The rising action happens when he simply puts his stuff away and starts walking toward the door, stopping as he passes a mirror
- The opening scene for Ada is as she is sitting in her church pew. She watches the pastor as he passionately finishes his sermon. The inciting incident is when she is distracted as the light through the stained-glass window casts a colorful rainbow shadow on the ground. She looks at it with a distant look of grief. The rising action starts after everyone gets up and starts talking to each other, and she slowly makes her way out of the sanctuary, seemingly unnoticed.

Narrative Elements: Climax

Then comes the climax for all three scenes. The screen would go black with this quote on screen; "The Trevor project estimates that more than 1.8 million LGBTQ+ young people (ages 13-24) seriously consider suicide each year in the U.S.- and at least one attempts suicide every 45 seconds" (The Trevor Project, 2021). Then it goes to another black screen saying, "But it doesn't have to be this way."

Narrative Elements: Conclusion

The scene comes back to Olivia as she stares at her phone. It displays a text helpline page. She sighs and lies back down on the bed, initiating the falling action as she opens her text messages and sends a simple message of 'I need help'

Flashing to Mike, we find him sitting on a bench outside of school. He leans back, closing his eyes, the camera focusing on his phone, which is open to a text message sent by him to an unknown number simply reading "I need help", signaling the falling action of his story

The scene then shows Ada starting to walk out of the church before an older woman walks over to her and starts talking to her. As the music starts to fade out, you can hear her being told, "Are you okay?" signaling her falling action

The screen then fades to black, reading, "Help is here for you," then displaying the crisis text help line on screen, providing the end to each of their stories. Then another screen appears, saying, "If you have a heart for LGBTQ+ youth, we would love volunteer crisis counselors. After all, they can't get help if no one is listening."

Channels

- I plan on using Instagram and YouTube as the primary channels for the message
- I'm choosing YouTube and Instagram because they are popular among the youth and support the length of the message.

Cultural Representation

LGBTQIA+ youth have a diversity of perspectives and could have multiple reactions to the communication message. One possible response is interpreting the depiction of LGBTQIA+ characters as overly simplistic or relying on stereotypes, such as the hairstyle and struggle with mental health as marking their identity as Queer. This could come from a general suspicion of depictions of LGBTQIA+ characters in popular media, as it has often been handled poorly. Another potential reaction to viewing the message is the desired effect of establishing an emotional connection with the viewer that affirms their experiences and shows them that they are not alone and there's help for them.

Cultural Representation

- One area that I need to be careful about in the narrative is oversimplifying or relying on stereotypes for the LGBTQIA+ characters. Some biases that I encountered while creating the story were particularly in the depiction of the trans woman. I come from a Christian background, and so learning the pronouns and how to refer to trans women correctly was a learning curve for me.
- One recommendation for reducing cultural misrepresentation in the narrative is researching what common stereotypes are in popular media. Another way to avoid bias is to learn from Queer people. Be willing to simply sit and learn for a while.

Story Effectiveness

- Several elements of the narrative align with Walter Fisher's Narrative Paradigm as a communication theory. In the Narrative Paradigm, "characters are created to guide the audience along, simultaneously serving the purpose of enacting the plot, while also leading the audience to the final message" (Stache, 2017). The characters in my narrative serve to bring the audience on an emotional journey that brings them to the final call to action that highlights the communication goal.
- The greatest strength of using a story to convey my message is the emotional connection that is possible. It also has greater potential to change the beliefs and behaviors of those influenced by strong emotion and personal connection with characters and their situations. A potential limitation of using a story for my message is that it can overly rely on emotional persuasion rather than rational persuasion. This can cause some to be suspicious of an emotional narrative.

Story Effectiveness

The call to action in the story is when the text on screen first recommends LGBTQIA+ youth who are struggling to reach out through the crisis text line advertised. The second obvious call to action is a later text on screen, when the recommended action is to contact the non-profit if you are interested in being a volunteer crisis counselor who wants to make a difference in young LGBTQIA+ youth.

Story Effectiveness

- The strongest persuasive strategy that I employed is Pathos. Facing friction in your support network because of your identity will always be an emotional topic. I used Pathos because it not only helps show and not tell the audience the importance of the topic, but also creates an emotional connection and provides an example of concrete impact, which are both important for a non-profit organization
- Another strategy I used was an appeal to social needs, motivated by negative motivation (Persuasive Strategies, 2023). I used this strategy because all of us can relate to needing a socially supportive environment, and showing the negative motivation is a good motivator for the audience to take action

References

- *CHARACTERISTICS OF A CRISIS COUNSELOR* – Institute Of Counseling. (n.d.). Institute of Counseling in Nigeria. <https://instituteofcounseling.org/characteristics-of-a-crisis-counselor/>
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- Persuasive Strategies. (2023, July 18). <https://socialsci.libretexts.org/@go/page/18486>
- Stache, L. (2017). Fisher narrative paradigm. In *The sage encyclopedia of communication research methods* (Vol. 4, pp. 576-578). SAGE Publications, Inc, <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781483381411.n205>
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- The Trevor Project. (2021, December 15). *Facts about LGBTQ youth suicide*. The Trevor Project. <https://www.thetrevorproject.org/resources/article/facts-about-lgbtq-youth-suicide/>