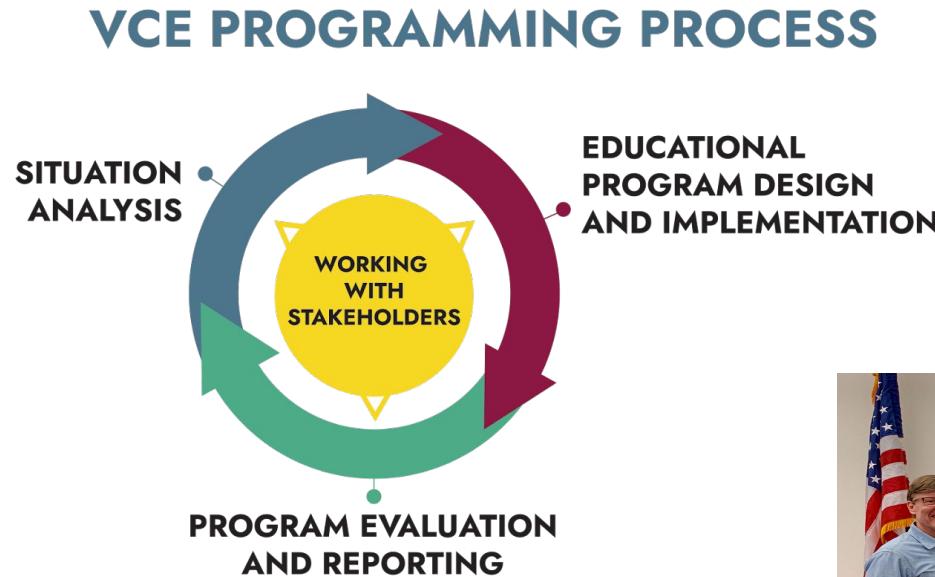




Engaging Stakeholders Through Inquiry, Story, & Presence

Facilitated by Eric Kaufman, Extension Specialist,
for Virginia Tech Data Science for the Public Good Program,
6/23/25

My Extension Story



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Session Overview

- Considering Stakeholders' Interests
- Uncovering the Power of Storytelling
- Principles for Humble Inquiry
- Expectations for Professional Presence (?)



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Stakeholder Communication



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Who Is the Primary Stakeholder?

- Virginia Cost of Living Dashboard
- VCE Program Engagement
- Solar Facilities and (Farm) Land Values
- Crop Progress Dashboard
- Dairy Processing
- Childcare

What do we know about the stakeholders' priorities?

Question Burst Brainstorming

What questions do you believe stakeholders may have about your topic?

Within the next four minutes, write down as many as you can—one per sticky note.

[Note: The more surprising and provocative the questions are, the better.]



Question Burst Brainstorming

What questions do you believe stakeholders may have about your topic?

<<04:00>>



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Organizing & Prioritizing the Questions

- What themes emerge from the questions?
- Which are most important, and how do they relate?



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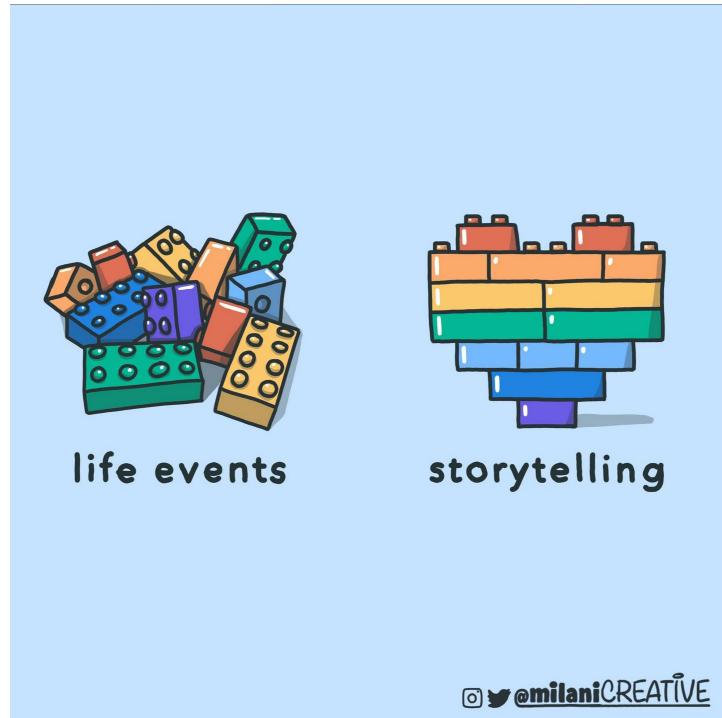
How do the questions start to uncover a story?



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What Is It About a Story?



What Is It About a Story?



Business Storytelling Made Easy | Kelly Parker | TEDxBalchStreet



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The Journal of Sustainability Education

ARCHIVES

EDUCATION SETTINGS

GEOGRAPHY

TOPICS

ABOUT US

FEBRUARY 5TH, 2013

Effecting Change through Storytelling

By Patricia E. Grace and Eric K. Kaufman



Photo by Tim FisherPoff, Office of Communications and Marketing, College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, Virginia Tech

Grace&Kaufman Winter2013

Abstract: There is evidence that the American agrifood system is a significant contributor to environmental, economic, social, and ethical-animal welfare damage to the earth and to society and is unsustainable, yet the worldview of a substantial percentage of the population conflicts with this assessment. A significant number of researchers, non-governmental organizations, and government entities assert that the detrimental effects of industrial agriculture must be addressed without delay and sustainable agricultural practices implemented.

The Journal of Sustainability Education (JSE) serves as a forum for academics and practitioners to share, critique, and promote research, practices, and initiatives that foster the integration of economic, ecological, and social-cultural dimensions of sustainability within formal and non-formal educational contexts.

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS



Patricia Grace is an independent scholar, living in Asheville, North Carolina. She earned her doctorate in 2011 from Virginia Tech's Department of Agricultural and Extension Education.

Prior to graduate school at Virginia Tech, she retired from an 18 year career as an Extension Agent with the Florida Cooperative Extension Service. Her interests include sustainable agriculture, behavior change, and Community Based Social Marketing. [MORE](#)



Eric Kaufman is an assistant professor and Extension specialist for Virginia Tech and Virginia Cooperative Extension. Working within the Department of Agricultural and Extension Education, he coordinates a graduate certificate in Collaborative Community Leadership and provides support for an undergraduate minor in Leadership and Social Change. His doctoral degree is from the University of Florida, where he also helped coordinate an adult leadership program for the agricultural community. [MORE](#)

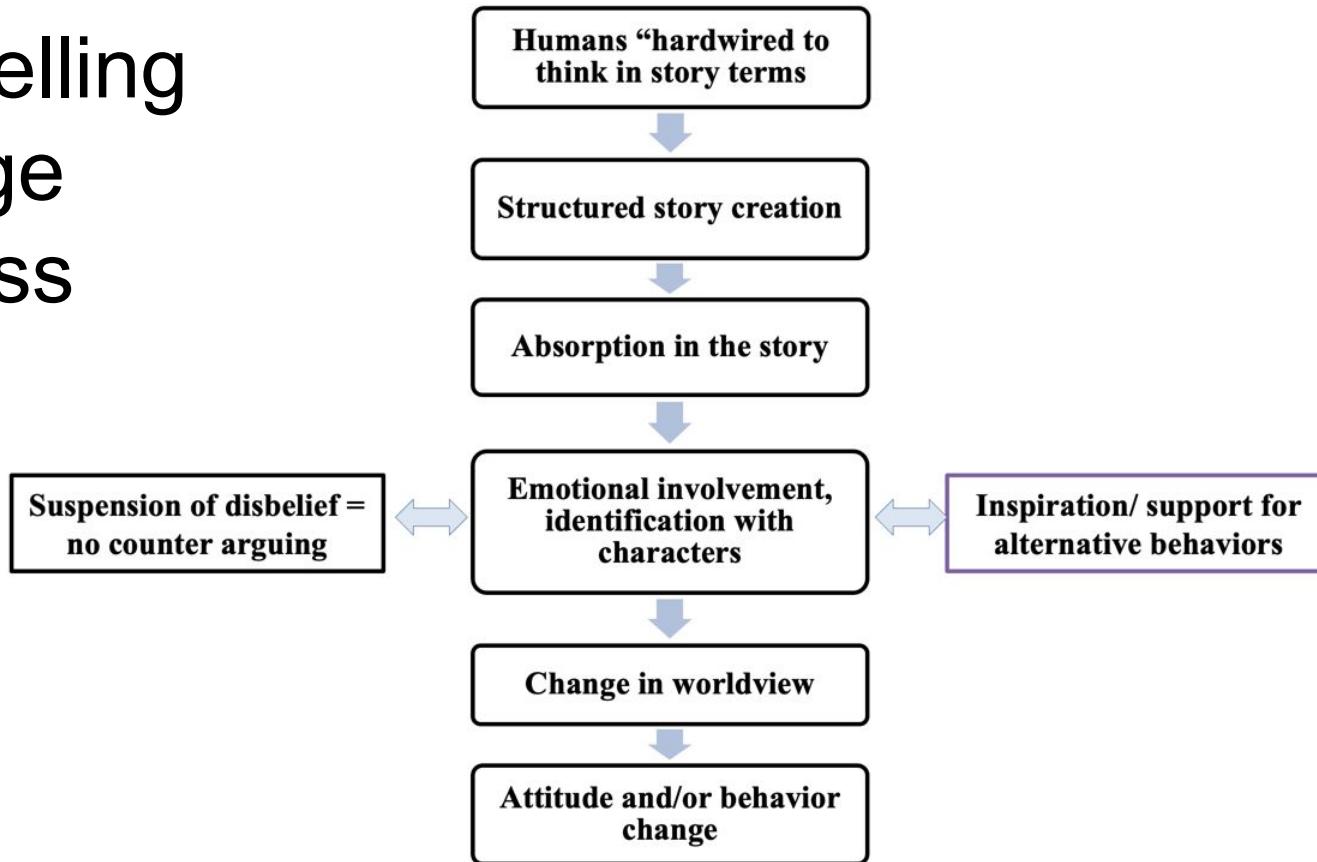
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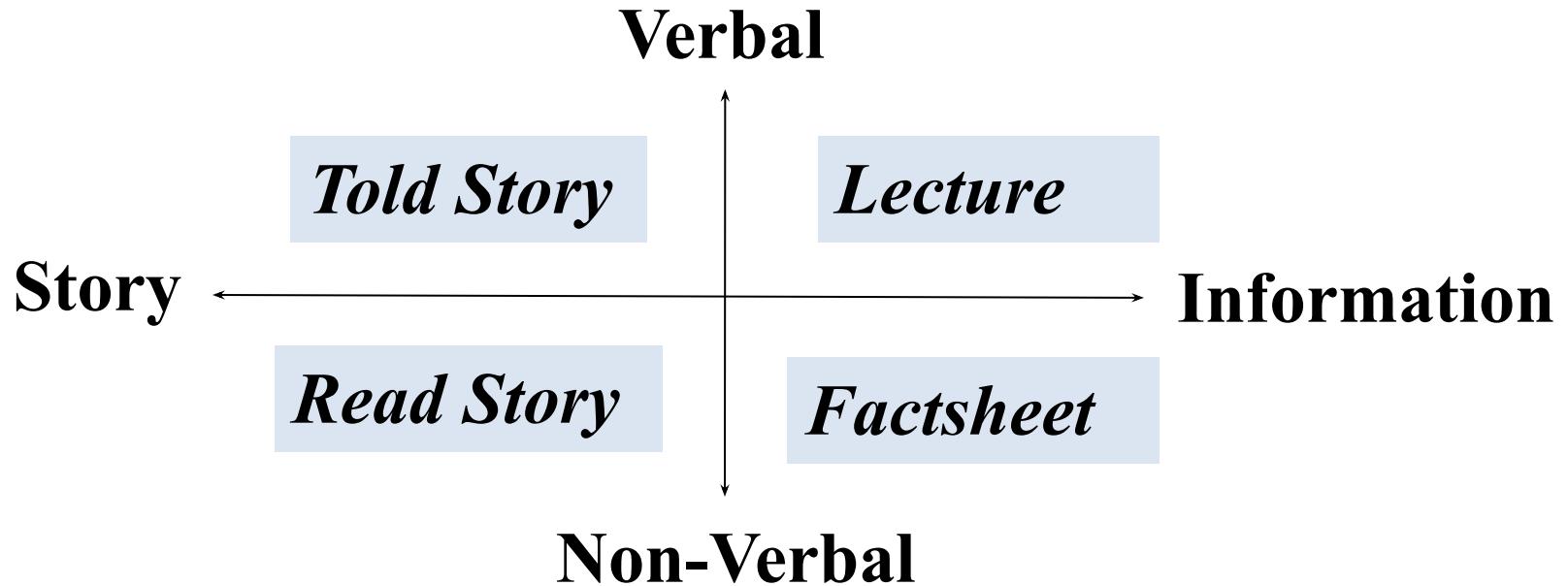
Prescott College

AASHE (Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education)

Storytelling Change Process



Research Treatments



Story Development Priorities

- Structure
- Plot
- Character
- Struggles
- Meaning
- Emotions
- Details
- Time sequence



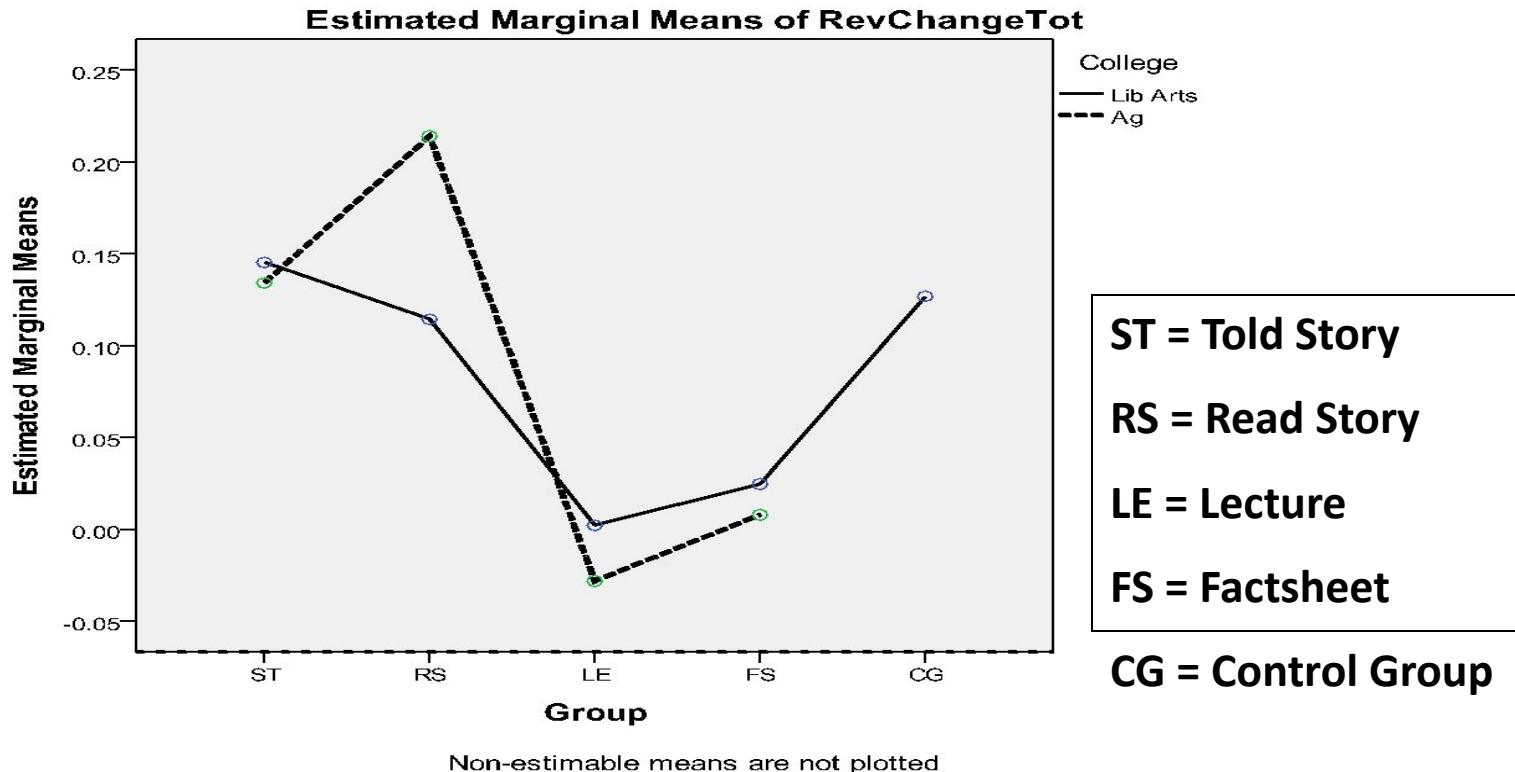
Visiting Jewel: A Porcine Tragedy



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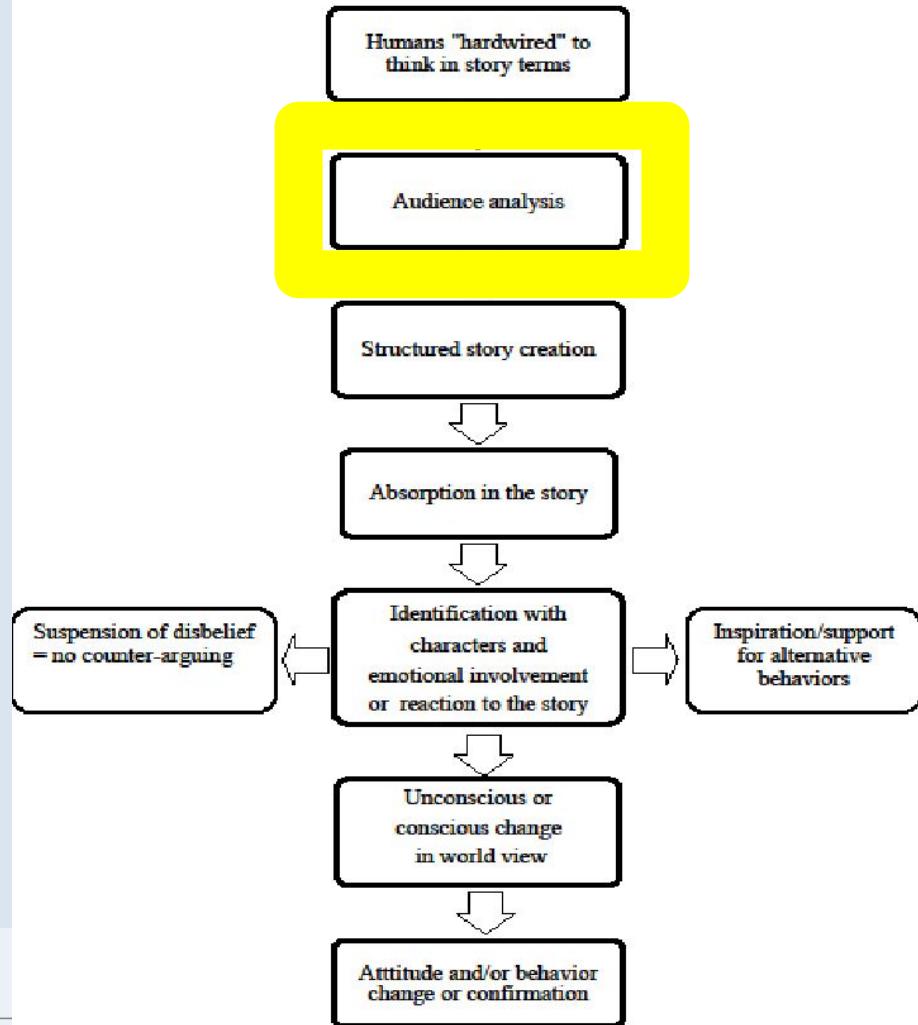
Change Scores by Treatment Group



Mixing of QUANT and qual Data

Treatment	High Change Group (+.25 to +.76, n=35)	Low Change Group (-.60 to -.12, n=34)
Story- Based Treatment (n=35)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">First-hand personal view made it meaningful.Vivid description made it real.Identification with narrator.Sadness, concern, & empathyBehavior change intention	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Information was biased/not true.People are uneducated about agriculture.Sadness, concern, & empathy.Angry about treatment content
Information- Based Treatment (n=29)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Sadness, concern, & empathyBehavior change intention	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Information was biased/not true.Prior knowledge of CAFOsWant to see change.Sadness, concern, & empathy

Revisions to the Storytelling Change Process



Becoming a Data Storyteller



Making data mean more through storytelling | Ben Wellington



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Making an Impact



Making data mean more through storytelling | Ben Wellington



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Beyond Data Visualization



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Making an Impact

Data Story Telling

- Connect with People
- Try to Convey One Idea
- Keep it Simple
- Explore the Things You Know Best



13:06 / 14:18



Making data mean more through storytelling | Ben Wellington



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Where to Start



The Power in Effective Data Storytelling | Malavica Sridhar | TEDxUIUC



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Aug 30, 2018

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Problem & Pursuit



Business Storytelling Made Easy | Kelly Parker | TEDxBalchStreet



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Breaking Through the Noise



Why Data Storytelling Matters to All of Us | Jia Hwei Ng | TEDxUTulsa



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Storytelling Can Make or Break Your Leadership (Gothelf, 2020)



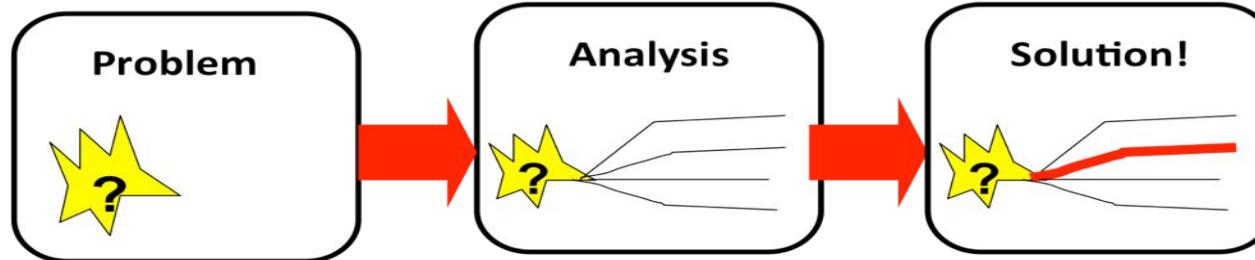
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Secret Language of Leadership

(Denning, 2007)

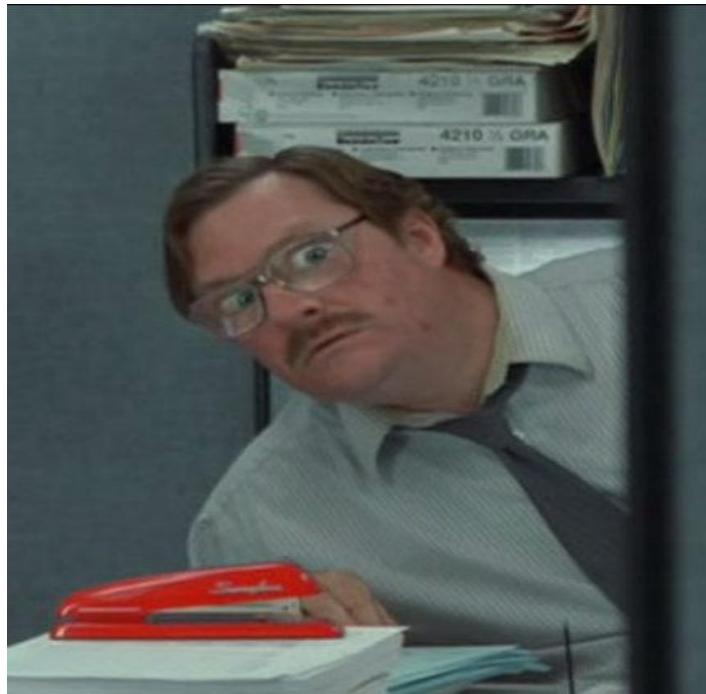
The western intellectual tradition



Effective presentation to get action

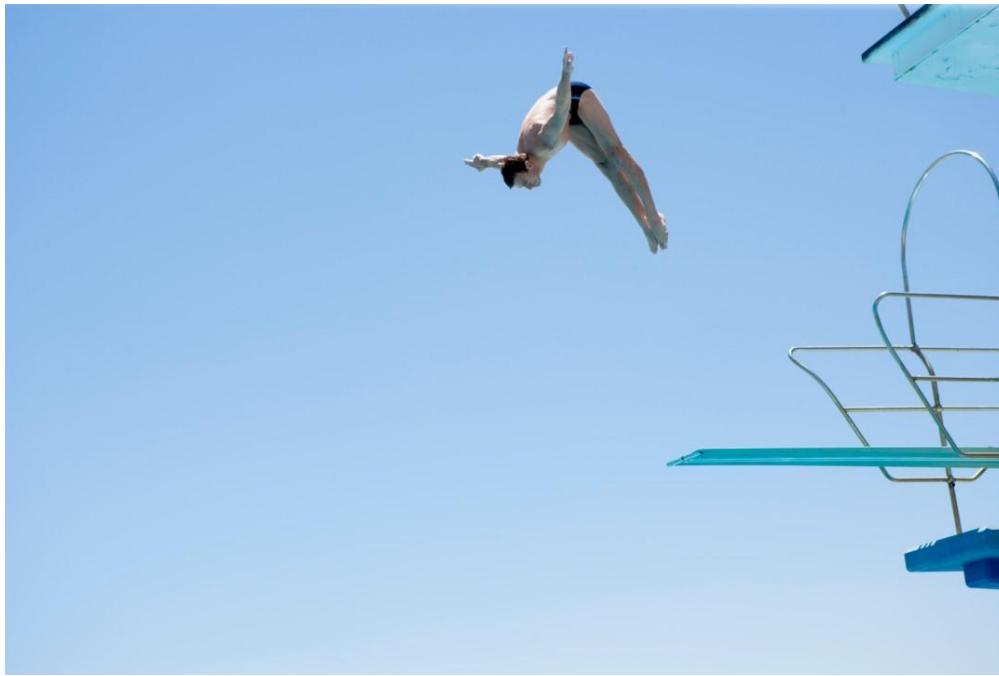


How Steve Denning Discovered the Power of Storytelling



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Do You Have a Springboard Story as a Starting Point?



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Stories Are More Than Stories



Business Storytelling Made Easy | Kelly Parker | TEDxBalchStreet



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Effective Story Characteristics

1. Audience-specific
2. Contextualized
3. Human-centric
4. Action-oriented
5. Humble

HBR VIDEO:

Storytelling Can Make or Break Your Leadership

Video produced by Emeritus

Based on the HBR article, "Storytelling Can Make or Break Your Leadership" by Jeff Gothelf
(October 2021)

Harvard Business Review



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Importance of Curiosity



The most important skills of data scientists | Jose Miguel Cansado

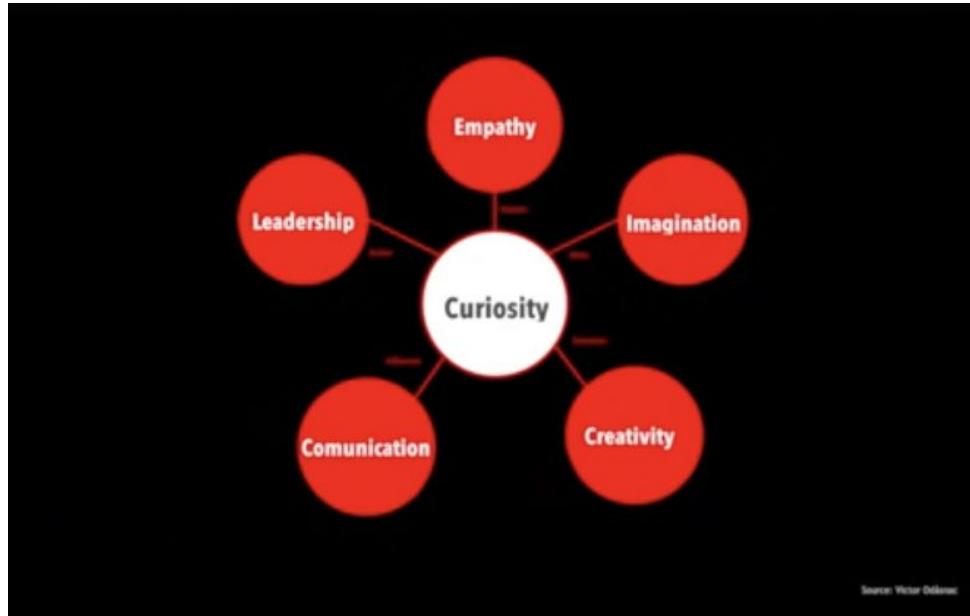


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Importance of Curiosity



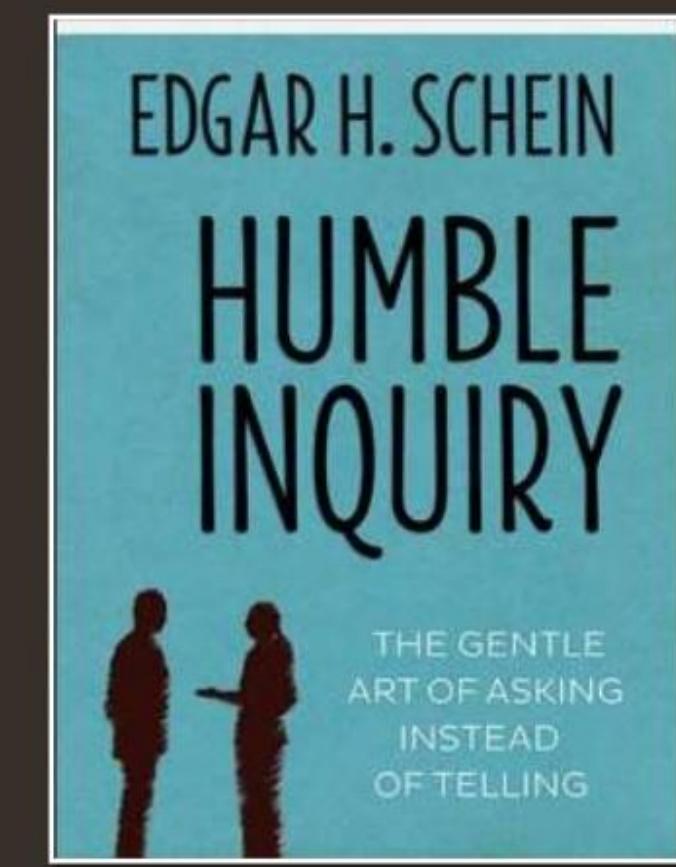
The most important skills of data scientists | Jose Miguel Cansado



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“Humble Inquiry is the fine art of drawing someone out, of asking questions to which you do not already know the answer, of building a relationship based on curiosity and interest in the other person.”

The Art of Asking Questions - © Karen N. Johnson, 2014



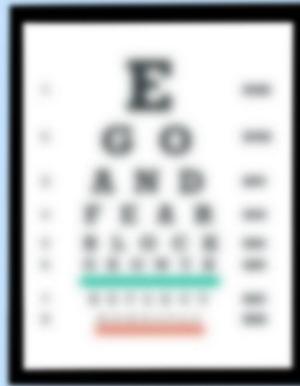
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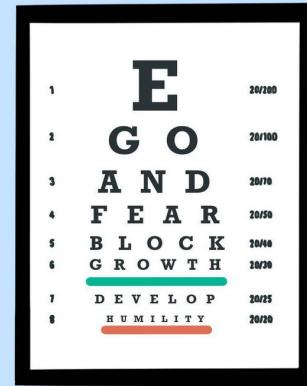
Ask, Listen, Focus

1. Ask respectful questions
2. Listen attentively
3. Focus on the people

How you ask is critical!



VISION FROM
ARROGANCE



VISION FROM
HUMILITY

Principles for Better Questions

- Traditional, divergent-thinking techniques can help unlock new questions and new territory.
- Most productive questions are:
 - open (vs. closed)
 - short (vs. long)
 - simple (vs. complex)
- Descriptive questions best precede speculative ones.



Principles for Better Questions



- Shifting from simple questions to more complex produces better breakthrough thinking.
- Questions are annoying and distracting when they don't spring from a deeply held conviction about what the group wants to achieve.
- Questions are toxic when they are posed aggressively.

Focusing & Framing a Data Story



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Structuring a Data Story



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The Discovery Journey

STORYTELLING WITH DATA II

HH PENETRATION %

YEAR

MATURE MARKET?

1983

with Paul Smith

The "Discovery Journey" Method

A man in a dark shirt is speaking.



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The Power of Presence



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How to Improve Presence



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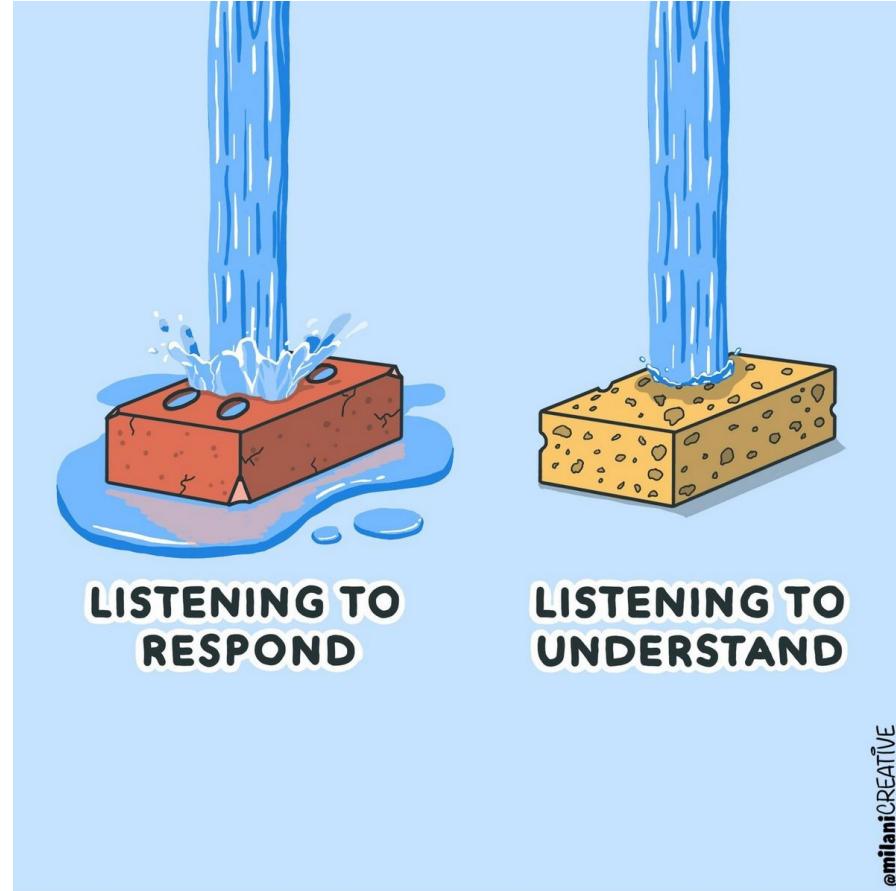
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Professional Presence

- Dressing the part
- Tailoring the message
- Maintaining neutrality (i.e., apolitical)
- Honoring different perspectives
- Prioritizing learning & self-improvement



When Listening, Intent Matters



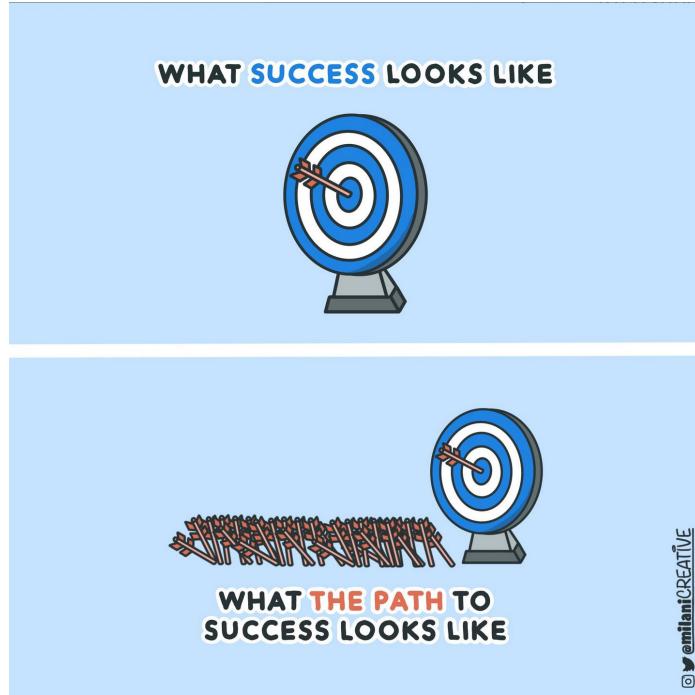
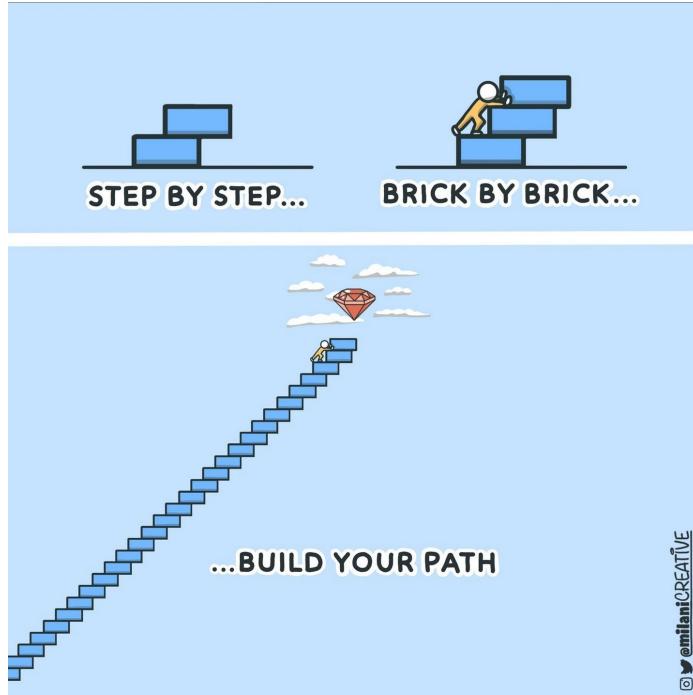
@milanicCREATIVE



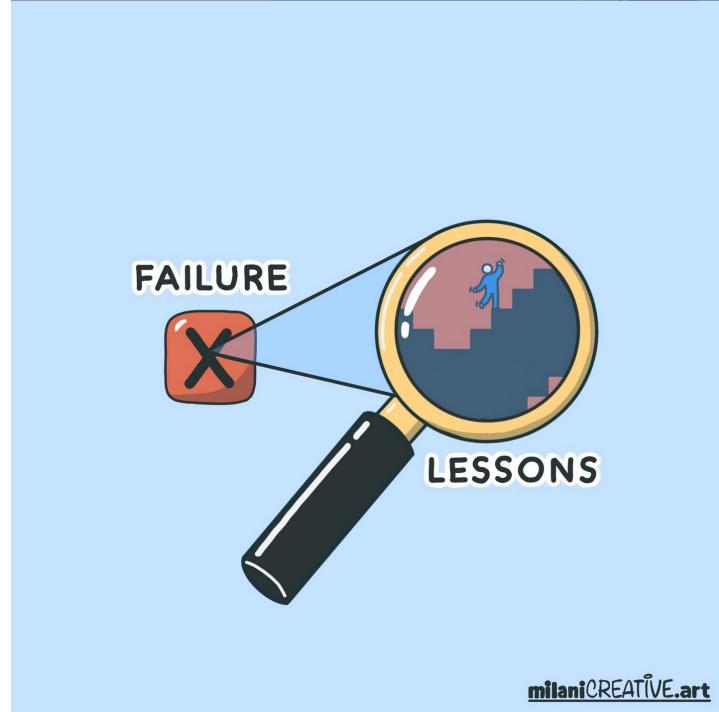
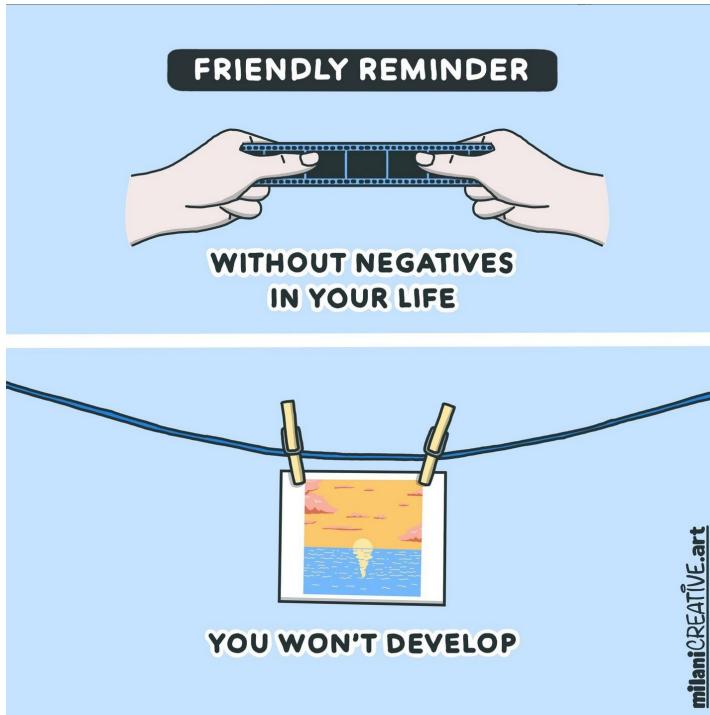
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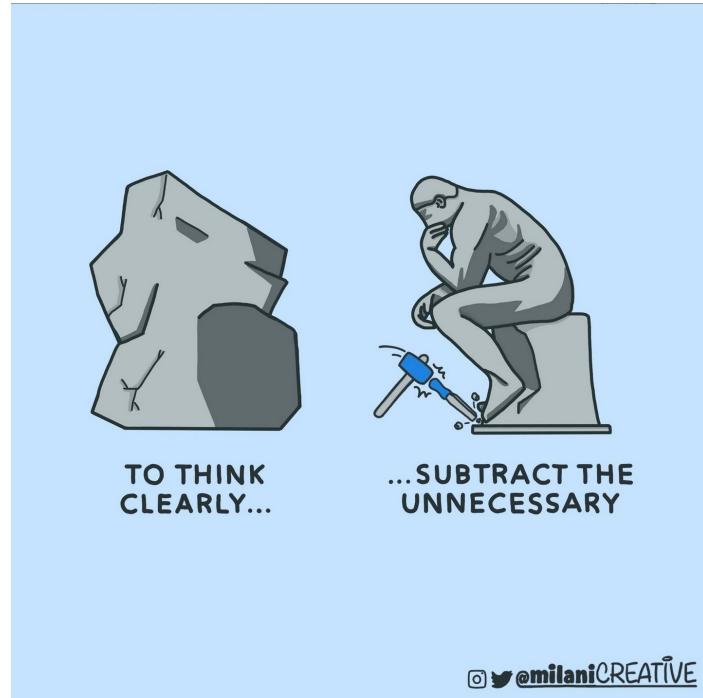
Progress with Persistence



Learning from Experience



The Power of Simplicity



Other Questions for Consideration

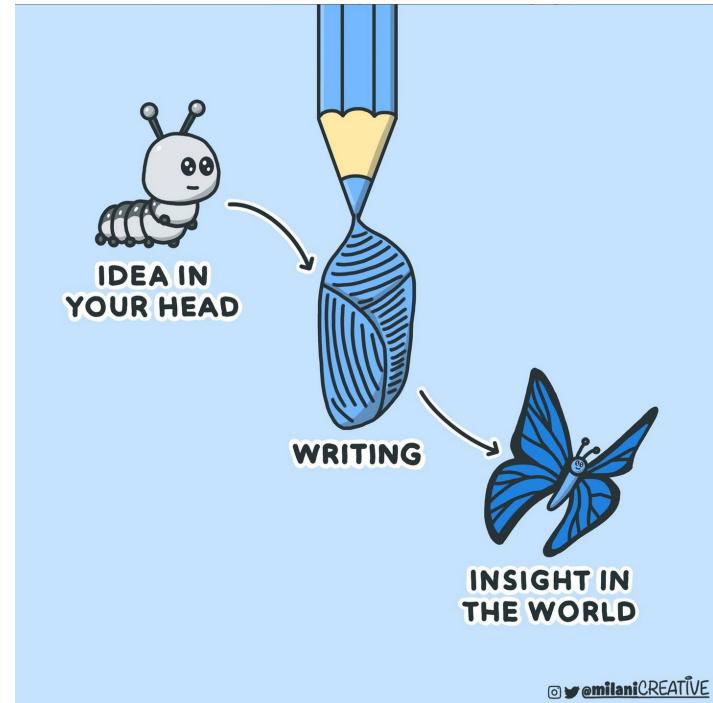
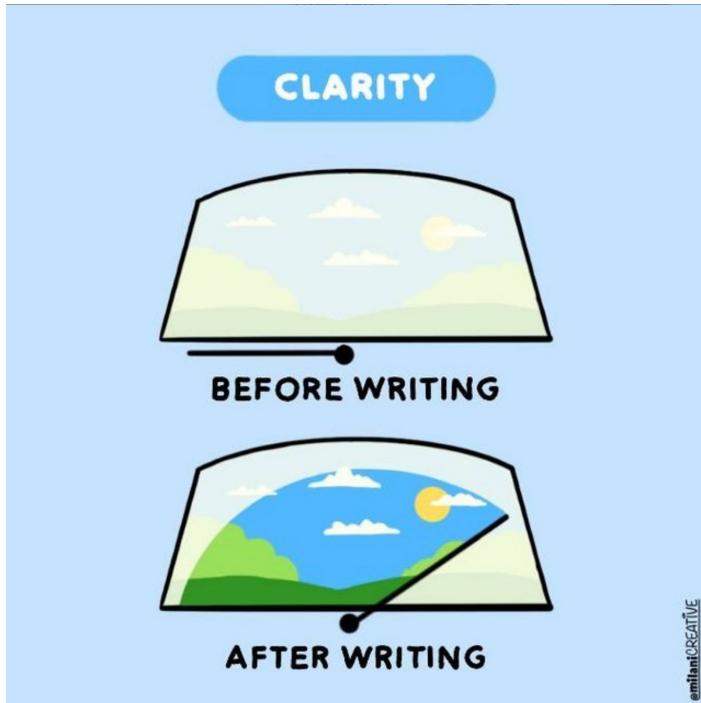
- How can we best prepare for our meeting?
- What are some good ways to ensure we don't seem too biased (during presentations)?
- How do we react if our stakeholder is completely disappointed with our work?
- How much should we show in our presentation, since have a lot we can show?
- How much detail do we go into about the specifics of what we did vs. just the results?
- How much detail do we give about our analysis, especially with the math?
- What information do they expect, because this is a mid-term check-in?
- How long do we present? How long for questions?



Growth Mindset



Clarity from Writing



Debriefing Insights Gained

What are your takeaway points from this session?

What questions remain?



Thank you!

Let me know how I can help

- Eric Kaufman
 - EKK@VT.Edu



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