

# A Flame Story: Your Story Your Voice

**A Flame story is a personal story that's true, about you and told in a few;** within 5 to 10 minutes. Less is more. This story is about facing a challenge and coming out the other side with a new understanding about yourself. It's about transformation in your life, or your circumstances. It can be epic or minute. Funny or gripping, poignant or demanding, always human and entertaining.

**Master your story; know it and memorize it.** Create, write, tell it. Rewrite, share it, rework and learn it. Not necessarily word for word, but know it well enough that you can relax and enjoy yourself on stage without notes. Remember this is your story. You lived it and you can tell it. (You are welcome to read it on line for Zoom Flames)

1. **A Flame story needs high stakes!!** – What's at risk? What's the potential reward? Why is this circumstance important to you? If you can't answer these questions for your story, move on to another idea.
2. **You need A HOOK:** a first line that sets up the importance of the story and makes the audience sit up and listen. Make your listeners lean in. Not "This is the story about the time I fell down the stairs and broke my leg".
3. **You need A BUTTON:** a final line that closes your story, cleverly, touchingly, provocatively, or any number of other adjectives. Don't preach or teach or moralize. Leave us with questions.

#### 4. Remember

- **The Setting** – Where is this story happening? Paint it with words and take us there. It's another character. What music was playing? What wallpaper? The setting gives the audience hints to the year, society, neighbourhood, ecosystem you are sharing.
- **The characters** – Who's the story about? You and ? Not too many characters. Make sure everyone you mention is needed to tell your story. Give of characters names so we can follow them.
- **The plot** – The narrative arc, beginning, middle and end. Or head guts and feet. Don't give away your ending until you get there. Create a journey that keeps unfolding.
- **Start with Action.** Don't explain what your story is going to be about. Jump into the middle of it.
- **First Person Present Tense!** Live it while you're telling so that it has momentum. Tell it through your 10 year old or 70 old eyes. This connects you with details deep in your memory and imagination.
- **The Details** – Detail is much more interesting than generalization. This creates and universally relatable story Describe things in threes.
- **Use all 5 senses.** Take your audience on a multi-sensory trip. The more they see, feel, taste, smell and hear, the more they live your story with you.
- **"Has to be true, but make your facts dance."** How did it all look through your eyes. Don't confuse "facts" with "truth." We all know that truth is multi-faceted and memory is ever changing. This is your story.
- **Surprise, Suspense and Twists**– reveal information sparingly and as late as you can.
- **Dare to take your audience somewhere they've never been.** You are a unique human. Do it your way.
- **Seed information** early in the story so that you can come back to it
- **Use repetition,** judiciously and purposely in 3's.
- **Start your story later and end your story earlier than you think. Reveal, evoke, engage, leave questions unanswered.**

5. **A great story is** Interesting, authentic, entertaining, given as a gift with no strings attached, told in the first person, told in the present tense, let's the audience fill in their own blank.

#### 6. . A Flame story is not

- An Inside joke
- A lesson or a sermon (although the rules work do work well for teaching and preaching.
- Literary. It should sound like speaking it, not reading it.
- Cliché (People tune out)
- Self-consciously clever
- Monotonous, meandering, monotone, condescending,
- Self-indulgent. Self-pitying.
- **The Flame is not for therapy but it can be therapeutic.** If you are still angry, depressed, vengeful or haven't come to a terms with the subject of your story, the Flame is not a good place to your story. The audience will worry for you.