



Opioid Safety Network

A project of the Public Health Institute

COLLIDING CRISES

*Using Persuasive Narratives to
Tell The Story of Overdose
Prevention under COVID-19*

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MICHAEL MILLER

President

Brown-Miller Communications

B.S. degree in journalism from
CalPoly, San Luis Obispo

As president of BMC, Mike directs
all activities of the award-winning
full-service communications firm
dedicated to helping clients
educate the public about critical
public health issues, such as
substance use disorders.



PAULA HAMILTON

Director

Brown-Miller Communications

M.S. and B.S. degrees in food journalism from the University of Wisconsin-Madison

With extensive experience as a journalist, Paula teaches clients how to effectively craft compelling messages and communicate them to a wide variety of audiences to bring positive attention to their issues.



AGENDA

- Apex of two competing crises
- How to break through the clutter
- Using a persuasive narrative
- Putting it all together
- Comments and discussion

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Understanding how shifting initiatives (COVID-19) can impact your narrative
- Develop stories that break through the clutter
- Understanding the power of persuasive narratives
- How to use a persuasive narrative

PAINTING A VIVID PICTURE (From Betsy A. Richard, Maine)

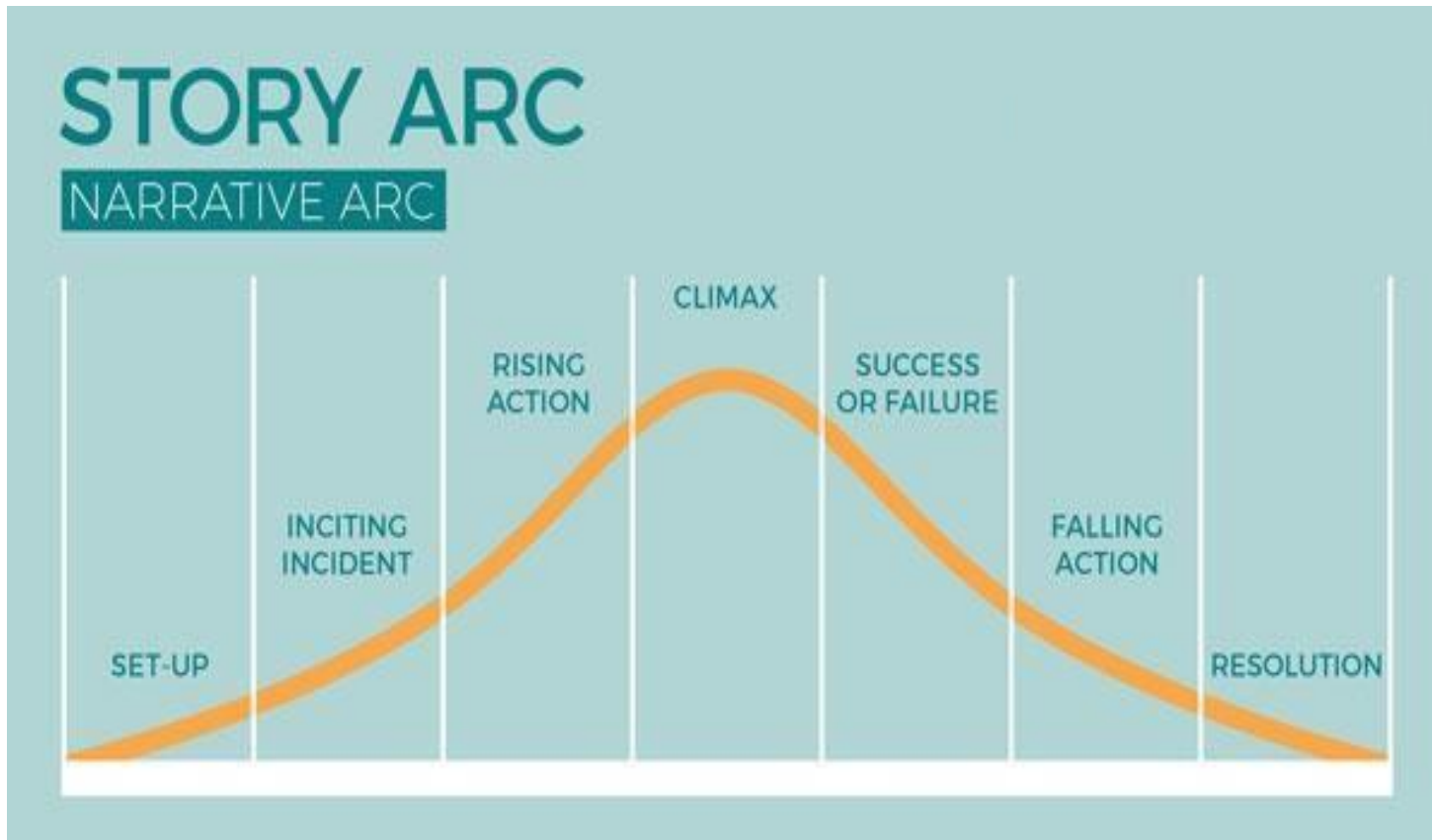
- In our rural county of 50,000 more overdoses are happening
- People who had been in recovery are struggling to stay in recovery
- People tell us they are using more
- The stimulus check gave them extra money for drugs
- During this stressful time, people are reverting to old behaviors
- Telehealth appointments lack the accountability of face-to-face interactions
- We train nurses and medical assistants to administer Narcan so ANYONE can access Narcan for free. The nurse meets the person in the parking lot or hallway, teaches them how to use it, provides literature and they leave without being charged for a hospital visit.

WHY WOULD THE MEDIA CARE?

- Newsworthy
- Current
- Trending
- Crisis
- Community Impact
- **HUMAN**



UNDERSTANDING THE STORY ARC



FOLLOWING YOUR STORY ARC...

- **SET-UP:** Epidemic of overdoses and related deaths
- **INCITING INCIDENT:** COVID-19
- **RISING ACTION:** Stress, Anxiety, Opportunity, Isolation
- **CLIMAX:** Increased use, reverting to old behaviors, more overdoses
- **SUCCESS OR FAILURE:** Narcan Training and Easy Access
- **FALLING ACTION:** Increased safety and protections
- **RESOLUTION:** Fewer OD deaths



WHEN THE ARC FALLS FLAT

- Story is too sterile
- Facts and figures dominate
- Exhaustive detail
- Resolution doesn't feel concrete
- Audience doesn't connect



TAKING IT A STEP FURTHER – PERSUASIVE NARRATIVES

- Includes all the elements of a story arc, **but...**
 - Adds a soul
 - Provides a human perspective
 - Includes emotion
 - Offers a solution
 - Invites audience to move in a decisive direction



A PERSUASIVE NARRATIVE

Arlene was feeling good. 3 years clean, a steady job and a great support group. She was on the right path.

And then the pandemic hit. Overnight her world was turned upside down. She got laid off and the friends she'd relied on were suddenly out of touch. Facing tough times and possible eviction, the cloud of depression descended and eventually, those hard victories were forgotten when she scored with her old dealer. The added supplement money from the government helped pay for her habit for a while, until she OD'd one night and nearly lost it all.

Frightened, broke and depressed, she knew she needed help. **A Facebook post from a public health consortium told her about a free source of MAT (Medication-Assisted Treatment) from the hospital with no strings attached.** With that insurance policy in her pocket, Arlene was ready to give it a new try. She didn't love the new telehealth appointments, but she knew she needed the counsel and they helped her rebuild a support network.

It's still tough and she has her days, but she wants that good life back and Arlene's ready to fight for it.

DID IT WORK?

- Put a face on the crisis?
- Help people understand the situation?
- Make it real and relevant?
- Create empathy?
- Memorable and re-tellable?
- Offer a realistic first step?
- Invite action and collaboration?

TIME FOR DISCUSSION

PUTTING THE PERSUASIVE NARRATIVE TO WORK

- Where does it fit?
- How do you introduce it?
- Remember, this is the first step to building a relationship
- Know your audience, what matters to them, and tailor appropriately
- Different audiences may want to receive info in different ways (conversation, leave-behind, video, presentation, etc.).





CALIFORNIA

Opioid Safety Network

Center for Health Leadership & Practice

THANK YOU!

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after logging off*