

Craft a story of failure and persistence

Storytelling allows you to better understand yourself, practice empathy for others' perspectives, and influence the world around you in a positive way. It creates shared experiences and emotions, and builds connections. **A failure/persistence story is helpful for interviews and to bring humility and learning to tough situations.** For inspiration, check out the [Museum of Failure's](#) Virtual Tour (under the exhibitions heading, you can find the virtual tour link; you'll need to submit an email address but then you can access their archive).

Science demonstrates that the stories we narrate to ourselves have the power to influence our thoughts and actions. By being honest with ourselves as we craft stories, we can better understand our passions and purpose. In addition, by learning from challenging situations, and telling these stories to ourselves and others, we can build resiliency and confidence in our abilities. As you head into career fairs and farther into your college career in general, it's important to be able to articulate who you have become through your trials and tribulations so that when you meet the next challenge (or the "tell me about a time you failed" interview question), you are armed and ready.

Write a story about overcoming failure. The failure can be your failure (encouraged), someone else's failure, something's failure, etc. Usually there is something learned, a demonstration of persistence, or some sort of redemption from the failure, even if it's to remember to laugh and keep a sense of humor in tricky situations. Remember, your story must have transformation—anxiety to relief, being silenced to being heard, uncertainty to resolution, misunderstanding to being able to communicate.

Your story should be specific; it is natural to first write a general story. Make your story specific to a situation in your life (or someone else's or some thing's life) and what was learned. Work through these key quality story elements to craft a standout story:

Provide the context: Put boundaries around the life snippet you want to share about your stakeholder. Describe the "scene".

Center transformation: Make transformation the focus of your story. The person could share a hard decision, struggle, or mistake, but make the story about what they learned, or what changed about them or others as a result. Maybe they found relief from anxiety, clarity from confusion, meaning after experiencing chaos or loss.

Make it memorable: Include lots of emotions and details to make the story interesting and memorable. Help the listener see what you saw, hear what you heard, feel what you were feeling. Give enough details so we can imagine the setting and emotions. Try to put us into your (their/its) shoes.

Create palatable interest: Now that you have pieces of a story identified, can you create a “hook” or the beginning of the story that you might use as you entice listeners to engage with your story? Sometimes this beginning sentence or two foreshadows what happens at the end. Or, it can be something humorous or seemingly wild or out of the blue that could draw the listener in.