

Deb: How did you first become involved in storytelling, and what drew you to this art form?

Peter: When I was in first grade my teacher, Mrs. Upton, read a book called My Father's Dragon to the class. On my report card missus Upton remarked on how I was completely sucked in by the story, as if the entire world drifted away. I've always loved stories and have a rich history of my parents telling me stories and me being captivated by them. About 15 years ago a friend came into town from Chicago and invited me to A Moth Story Slam. When I got to the venue, I realized that I had a story that met the theme. I put my name in the hat not expecting to be called and low and behold, I told a story on stage. It wasn't that good, but no one threw Rotten Tomatoes at me and I loved it. I've been doing it ever since.

Deb: Can you share a little about your creative process when crafting a story? How do you decide what to include or leave out, and how do you develop the arc of the narrative?

Peter: I think the whole point of storytelling is to connect with others through describing the human experience. When I'm writing a story I first look at the narrative arc what is interesting about the story what is most exciting. Generally I start in that moment. I find that many storytellers try and give a lot of background about their story, and this bores the audience. Audience members are really smart, and they can stand to be confused a little bit and catch up later. So I always start in the middle of the greatest action of my story. Secondly I look for areas where I can be vulnerable, where I can share of myself in a way that people can see themselves in my experience even though that were very different. When I'm telling a 5 minute story, I try and start in a really poignant place and take it to something funny and then back to poignancy. Or the other way around... When I'm workshopping a story with some friends I asked them to look for areas where I might be attempting to make myself look good and cover up from the ugly parts (that are what we relate to and other human beings but might be embarrassing to say) and add those to my story.

Deb: Do you have a particular story that stands out as especially meaningful or impactful to you, either as a storyteller or as an audience member?

Peter: Honestly, my favorite story is almost always the one I am listening to in the moment. I do have some ones that I love, but mentioning them it's just a tiny, minuscule representation of all the amazing stories that are out there in the universe.

Deb: How do you see storytelling evolving in the digital age, and what opportunities or challenges does this present for storytellers?

Peter: For me, storytelling is a primal art invented in front of the earliest campfires. It is our human connection that makes storytelling valuable. So other than the invention of amplification and other tools to distribute information about storytelling events, I'm not all that interested in technology and storytelling. Ultimately it is an act shared with other human beings in the same space at the same time exploring human connections.

Deb: What advice would you offer to someone who is interested in getting started in storytelling, either as a hobby or as a potential career path

Peter: I believe that we are all profoundly and deeply connected, storytelling is not an act of great performance or perfection. Rather a raw sharing of emotion and connection. If you can create a narrative arc that allows people to see a transformation you can tell a story. So, my advice is just to start telling stories. Start small with your family and friends. When you are comfortable with that there are numerous open mics. I suggest that people get up and trying to tell a story on a stage. Storytellers are forgiving people and want other storytellers to be successful (even in storytelling competitions) so storytelling open mic is a great place to start. It's a loving environment that welcomes all. So just give it a try

Deb: You've told stories on The Moth stage many times. How does it feel to share your personal experiences with such a wide audience, and what has been the most rewarding aspect of this experience for you?

Peter: Wow, that's a big question. I remember her being at a moth slam and I was ninth in the lineup of 10 storytellers, and I told an awesome story. It was hysterical, deeply touching, and had an amazing timeline. The audience was transfixed, and my scores were amazing. I was sure that I was going to win the slam. And then the 10th storyteller got up, a young man who shared a deeply personal story that incredibly moving. The young man was not an accomplished storyteller, he was clearly very frightened to be on stage and his whole body was shaking as he told the story. But the story... It was amazing and it was clear that he had to get it out in the world. The emotion was palpable and I was the first person to jump out of my seat to give him a standing ovation. Technically, my story was superior. But emotionally... His was amazing and he deserved to win. It showed the magic of storytelling that transcends technique and experience focusing on the importance of the transference of emotion and the sharing of the human experience. After the show a

group of young women came up to me and told me how much my story meant to them and allowed them to see some important events in their lives in a completely different way. I will never forget that night, it epitomizes what I love about storytelling.

Deb: How do you approach the task of telling stories that are deeply personal or potentially vulnerable? What role do you think vulnerability plays in effective storytelling?

Peter: There is no effective storytelling without vulnerability. If we cannot share of our human experience deeply, then others cannot see those secret things that we all think are ours exclusively, our shame our rage our joy our fear. When we are vulnerable in our storytelling and brave with our vulnerability people recognize themselves and the profound connection that we all share with each other and the rest of humanity is lifted up and becomes tangible.

Deb: Can you talk about any upcoming projects or performances you have in the works, or any other ways that you're currently involved in the storytelling community?

Peter: My company, [True Bearing](#), is focused on helping organizations get clarity on who they are, articulating their purpose and values, so that they can tell stories, the stories that weave all of us together, and connect with those who matter most. I am primarily focusing on fixing our broken recruitment systems and helping companies create the ability to have everyone in in the organization be able to tell stories about culture, purpose and values. By telling those stories they can connect with other amazing people who share the same values and purpose generating aligned and human workspaces.

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