



# free-range THINKING™

free-range thinking™ is a monthly journal of best practices, resources and generally useful stuff for public interest communicators who want to reach more people with more impact



## A New Rx for Impersonal Healthcare: Stories

We've all been there: we visit the doctor's office because we're feeling unwell only to sit with our physician and feel unheard. In the name of efficiency and under the pressure of rising costs, healthcare across America has become less personal and more transactional, resulting in what often amounts to a dehumanizing experience for patients and providers alike.

Dr. Ira Byock believes it doesn't have to be this way. A renowned expert in palliative care, he has seen firsthand how tending to the personal, emotional, and spiritual needs of patients can significantly improve the healthcare experience. In 2014, he founded the [Providence Institute for Human Caring](#) to expand this "whole person" model into all branches of healthcare.



Dr. Ira Byock

Dr. Byock recognizes that shifting the paradigm will not be easy, but he believes he has the right tool. "Stories have the power to expand what we consider to be possible," he says. "They work at the level of imagination." In partnership with [StoryCorps](#), Dr. Byock and the Institute have launched "Hear Me Now," a storytelling initiative that seeks nothing less than to change the culture of healthcare in America. [Full story](#). *Please note: Apple Mail users may need to scroll down manually.*

## Who Told It Best? Find Out December 15th

If there's one question we hear more than any other during our storytelling workshops and webinars, it's this: "Who does it best?" My default answer, which never fails to disappoint, is "It depends." There are so many different kinds of stories to tell and so many different ways to tell them that it's impossible to give a concise answer. But since this question has arisen so consistently over the years, we finally decided to spend a few months scouring the web to identify some of the best storytellers in the public interest community.

On December 15th (11a-12n PT/2-3p ET) we will offer a one-hour webinar showcasing exemplars from the US and all over the globe. Join us and be inspired by outstanding storytelling from the [Nurse-Family Partnership](#), [Playworks](#), [City Year](#), [Encore.org](#) and many others. Tuition is just \$49.50 per person and group discounts are available. Grab your seat [here](#).



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Over the initial two-year phase of the project, "Hear Me Now" will be comprised of pilot programs at six different Providence hospitals. At each site, there will be a point-person who reports to Lindsay Flacks, the Institute's full-time Hear Me Now coordinator. StoryCorps will train up to a dozen staff members at each site to facilitate and record stories.



Lindsay Flacks

Following the StoryCorps model, the newly trained staff will facilitate 40-minute conversational interviews between pairs of storytellers. These storytellers will come from every role in the Providence healthcare experience, including patients, family members, hospital administrators, doctors, chaplains, and social workers.

A typical story might feature a patient and spouse talking about what they went through during care. All-in-all the project aims to record more than 200 stories in its first two years.

Many of the 40-minute recordings will be distilled into 2-3 minute versions. StoryCorps will edit 10 of the interviews. Providence has forged an agreement with Alaska Public Media to edit some recordings in that market, and is seeking

similar partnerships with other NPR affiliates and universities. As Flacks puts it, finding these partners will be "both a challenge and an opportunity to build relationships with people in the community."

Concurrent with the recording and editing process, Providence is creating an online portal where the recordings can be heard. Site visitors will find the 2-3 minute versions on a landing page and will have the option to hear the entire 40-minute recordings if they want to go deeper into a particular story. Though the project only began in September of this year, Flacks says they have already recorded several compelling stories that clearly demonstrate what whole person care means.



Providence staff gets facilitator training from StoryCorps

Dr. Byock and Flacks see an abundance of places where these pieces could be useful, including increasing caregiver and patient satisfaction, philanthropic fund development, and, most immediately, to build internal buy-in. "While many people like this idea," says Byock speaking about whole person care, "they haven't quite wrapped their heads around it. So if we can give them an example of a story or two that gives them a visceral sense of what we have in mind, that's highly valuable."

As the project is only in its nascent stages, there are still many aspects yet to be defined and navigated. We at The Goodman Center are excited to watch this project evolve and believe that it has the potential to both shift the culture of healthcare while also demonstrating the power of story as a change agent.



**HEAR ME NOW**  
in Partnership with StoryCorps<sup>®</sup>

"We're trying to bring sophisticated change theory, methodologies, and data to accelerate health system change to meet the needs of a 21st century population," Byock says. "But in so doing, we don't want to lose the soul of healthcare, which is the human interactions that were always the impetus for healthcare back in antiquity and remain so today."

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## Upcoming online classes at The Goodman Center

<p>RUN BETTER WEBINARS</p> <p><b>The Webinar on Webinars</b></p> <p>December 12 11am - 12pm PT</p>	<p>TELL BETTER STORIES</p> <p><b>Storytelling: Tapping the Power of Narrative</b></p> <p>January 5, 12, 19 &amp; 26 9am - 10am PT</p>	<p>PRESENT BETTER</p> <p><b>Why Bad Presentations Happen to Good Causes</b></p> <p>January 10 &amp; 11 11am - 12pm PT</p>
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Click on the class title to read more!

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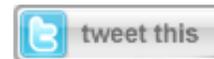
*free-range thinking* is written by Andy Goodman and Celia Hoffman. To read back issues, download free publications, and to learn more about our work, please visit [www.thegoodmancenter.com](http://www.thegoodmancenter.com).

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