

## Don't talk excessively about your issues



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We all have mental tapes that play over and over in our minds. If they are positive narratives, there's no major downside other than they're unnecessarily using up our brain-energy. (Here's a post I wrote titled [An untrained mind--don't think the same thing twice.](#)) If our mental tapes have a negative or painful storyline they will eventually adversely affect our mind, emotions, and behavior.

In this post I want to focus on the downsides of *verbalizing* those redundant stories. It's one thing to clutter our own minds with these anecdotes. It's another thing to clutter our conversations with them.

Analyze your conversations and notice if you tend to tell the same thing over and over again. If so, perhaps you should tidy up your speech; delete the old stories and identify some new ones. Here are some areas to explore.

### Pain from the past

I have an acquaintance who continually tells the same story of her struggle to escape from an ultra-fundamentalist family of origin. The first time I heard the story, it was interesting (though it took too long to tell). The second time, not so much. I started overhearing her tell the story in other conversations. Even when she met someone for the first time she would find a way to work the story into the conversation. It seems to have defined her life, and with each telling, the story becomes more deeply engrained in her persona. For those who have heard the story before, the retelling is tedious.

## **Current challenges**

One of the delights and benefits of close relationships is being able to share our joys and struggles with each other. I like the phrase “A sorrow shared with a friend is halved; a joy shared is doubled.” But sometimes we belabor our sharing.

For instance, it’s not necessary to share the minute details of your medical issues; I certainly want to know what’s going on, but I don’t need to know the dosage of each medication. I truly enjoy hearing about your grandchildren (as I enjoy telling you about mine), but not too much. The trip you took years ago sounds fabulous; can we talk about something else?

### **Truncate your stories**

Reader’s Digest is an American general-interest family magazine, founded in 1922 and published ten times a year. Until 2009 it was the best-selling consumer magazine in America. It’s known for its concise writing style; all articles are short and to the point. We’ve even developed the phrase “give me the Reader’s Digest version” to indicate when we prefer a brief synopsis.

In summary, let’s rethink which personal stories should be in our oft-recited repertoire, and when we do share them, let’s make the “Reader’s Digest version” our default setting. [Here’s a post I wrote on succinct communication.](#)