





NACHC's Storytelling Activity Guide Your Resource For Telling Your Community Health Center's Stories



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Allie

Rosie

Nash

Leo



Introduction

Everything starts with a story. As humans, we use them to communicate ideas, emotions, and information. Stories are essential to our learning and understanding. They have power, as they can enhance empathy and influence or change behavior. So, the ones we tell about our work and its value must be clear and well-told.

Your Story is Important. Community health centers are at the forefront of U.S. health care. You face numerous challenges in delivering care that require unique ideas and innovative thinking to solve. Health center programs and initiatives help reach the nation's most vulnerable populations. Still, many in the community know little about these creative solutions.



Illustrations by Storyset

The goal of this guide is to educate and inspire you to tell your community health stories to the broader community—to help reach more patients, support more physicians, and potentially, even raise more money and support for your programs. To be effective you will need some storytelling skills and tools to share your narrative.

Set aside time to absorb the information and complete these activities. Use the tools to learn how to plan your story. And when you're finished, use the Story Breakdown worksheet to flesh out the essential elements.



What is a Story?

A story is about how the things that happen affect someone in pursuit of a difficult goal, and how that person changes internally as a result. (Source: Medium)

A story is a depiction of a journey. In a story, we follow a character or a series of 66 characters on a journey as they pursue something up against certain obstacles. (Source: Reuters)

An impactful story usually involves empathetic and authentic people overcoming challenges, which can inspire, entertain, and inform audiences. (Source: Storyfirst)

These definitions differ slightly but stories generally contain character, conflict, and resolution.

> Stories can be shared in many ways. Here are just a few types of storytelling vehicles.



Blog



Broadway Show



Movie



Novel



Podcast



Poem



Short Story



Social Media Post





Television Show



Video



What is a Story?

YOUR TURN

Watch or read these examples of a story and try to fill in the blanks of this sentence that work for most stories.

Example #1: Video Clip from an episode of Seinfeld	
This is story about who (Character)	
experiences to try to	
get (Resolution)	Click Here to Watch
Example #2: Short Story "The Princess and the Pea" This is story about who	Click Here to Read
YOUR TURN Think about the projects in your own answer the questions below:	health center and
Project Name:	
Did this project try to solve an existing issue? If yes, which o	ne?

life?

How does the project solve the issue above or change patients/staff/community



Why do we Tell Stories?

When you think about stories in entertainment or our personal lives, their purpose is often to share an emotion or feeling—to make someone laugh, cry, or feel inspired; to generate sympathy or empathy; to think more deeply about their lives; or to share information.

Stories you tell about your work should have a goal-a mission-a reason for telling them. Nonprofits typically use stories to:



- **Educate** someone about a program so they can improve their life;
- Educate someone on an issue so they can use that knowledge to help others:
- **Inspire** someone to volunteer to help a cause; and
- **Inspire** someone to donate money or fund a cause.

A successful public health story can draw attention to an issue and encourage the audience to take positive action. A poorly told one, in contrast, can cause confusion, shame, or stigma, and even spread misinformation.

Before telling your Community Health Center story, ask yourself these key questions:

- What is the story you want to tell? What is the goal? Are you trying to:
 - Increase knowledge?
 - Change behavior or encourage someone to act?
 - Establish a personal connection or inspire a feeling?
- Who is your audience?
 - The general population or a target population (based on a health condition or demographics or something else)
 - Caregivers and/or family members
 - Health professionals
 - Health administrators or managers
 - Policymakers
- What do you want them to do after consuming this story?



Know Your Audience

All stories have a storyteller or storytelling vehicle and an audience to whom the story is being told. Knowing and defining your audience is critical to telling an effective story. If you don't speak your audience's language, your story will not be heard and understood.

Think about a scientist wanting to share information about climate change with a classroom of kindergarteners. If they share that story with scientific words and data, the children will not understand it. The story will go right over their heads. If they instead explain it with pictures and familiar words, such as "rain", "animals" and "ocean," the children will understand.

YOUR TURN

Watch this example of a public health ad campaign targeting teens to understand the dangers of cigarettes:

Why was this an effective way to reach teens?

Would it have been as effective if the intended audience was senior citizens?



Click Here to Watch

YOUR TURN Watch this commercial from the early 1990s:

Who is the audience they are trying to reach?

Would it have been as effective on a younger demographic?



Click Here to Watch



Remember, if you don't know who your audience is and how to relate to them, you won't be successful.



Know you Audience

Things to Avoid

People will often say they need to tell their stories to multiple audiences. For a community health center, for example, it might be patients AND funders, and they believe they can speak to both with the same story. A word to the wise: Don't do it! Pick your primary goal and primary audience and speak to that audience and that audience only. If it's a good story, the other audience may still come along for the ride. You may have to make a second version with the other audience in mind. Think about the scientist teaching kindergarteners about climate change. They would tell the story quite differently to teachers or parents—even though all these audiences are within the same elementary school community.

As Zig Ziglar famously said, "If you aim at nothing, you will hit it every time."

YOUR TURN

Think about a current project you have and answer the following questions.

What is your goal in telling the story of your project? (Why does this story need to be told?)

Who is your audience?

What do you hope your audience will learn or do after experiencing your story?

How will you define success? What will make this a successful story?





Character



Conflict



Resolution

All effective stories — from cave paintings to classic literature — must have strong **characters**, an essential **conflict**, and a successful **resolution** to the conflict.



Character

In every story, there is a hero or main character - someone to root for and follow throughout their journey. Audiences need strong characters in order to care.

These qualities comprise a strong main character to tell your community health center story:

- Someone who is open to talking, sharing, and expressing their emotions;
- Someone who is open to sharing their story initially with their provider or other staff;
- Someone who would be open to sharing their story publicly; and,
- Someone who can be introspective and reflect on their actions and choices.



PRO TIP

If your story is about a program and not a person, you can:

A - Have a person share a story about their experience with the program or

B - If it's truly about an object (i.e. building a mobile health clinic) use the object as the main character and the conflict can be the challenges the object faces (i.e. the challenges around building something that is effective and costefficient).





Character



Conflict



Resolution

All effective stories — from cave paintings to classic literature — must have strong **characters**, an essential **conflict**, and a successful **resolution** to the conflict.



Beyond just being a willing participant or an interesting person, your main character needs to want something. There needs to be a conflict - something needs to happen.

Otherwise, there isn't much of a story.

Anyone who has watched Seinfeld knows the show was not really about "nothing." There was a (hilarious) conflict emerging from each mundane situation. And it was often so ridiculous—and brought to life so powerfully by Jerry, Elaine, George, and Kramer—four unique and distinct characters—that we really cared about what happened.



PRO TIP

When in doubt regarding conflict, remember the three types of conflicts from English literature:

- Human vs. Themself,
- · Human vs. Human, and
- Human vs. Nature (or their environment)

Let's say you want to create a story about a program at your community health center that encourages patients to take their statin medications. You will want to find a patient who is not only willing to talk, but also has gone through a conflict. We need to experience their struggle and see how it gets resolved. Here are some possible example conflicts and characters for that story:

- Someone who is currently or had previously faced a challenge around taking a statin and overcame it (i.e., cost, remembering to take medication, side effects fears, worry about longterm use);
- A younger patient who struggled with the idea of taking statins for the rest of their life;
- A patient who experienced a heart attack and now takes statins;
- A patient who tried lifestyle changes first before taking a statin;
- A patient who tried statins years ago, had side effects and believes they are unable to take statins; and
- A diabetic patient who is concerned statins will increase their blood sugar.





Character



Conflict



Resolution

All effective stories — from cave paintings to classic literature — must have strong characters, an essential conflict, and a successful resolution to the conflict.



Resolution

A strong and satisfying story has a resolution-we see how the character changes or grows from that conflict. If there is no resolution, we do not feel called to do or feel anything.

In the community health center world, you might choose to tell success stories, showcasing a program in your center or showing a strong character whose situation was improved by their participation in your program. This kind of success story with a satisfying resolution will get people excited to participate in or support your program monetarily.



Think about a movie you might have seen that didn't have a satisfying ending. How did you feel?



PRO TIP

Sometimes you won't have a successful program and things don't work out the way you hoped. Does this mean you shouldn't tell the story? No!

You absolutely should tell the story but do so in a way that shows what your center learned or how you might do things differently in the future.

Share your knowledge with others, a "silver lining story." Or maybe you need to share a story before it's been fully resolved. What then? You can wrap up your story with your current progress and hopes and goals for the future.

Bottom Line: Make sure your story has a clear resolution.



YOUR TURN

Now that you know even more about the main three elements, watch or listen to these stories, and share the following:



Name the main character and what makes them a strong character



Name the **conflict** and why it's compelling (makes you want to keep watching)



Name the **resolution** and why it is satisfying

Story #1: Community Health blood pressure This is a story about who experiences to try to get	(Character) (Conflict) (Resolution)	Click Here to Watch
Story #2: Herzing Univers This is a story about who experiences to try to get	(Character) (Conflict) (Resolution)	Click Here to Watch
Story #3: Storycorps pers This is a story about who experiences to try to get	(Character) (Conflict) (Resolution) or Answer Key, see page 22.	Story Corps Click Here to Watch





YOUR TURN



Who will be the main character of your story?



Why does this character make a strong character?



What conflicts will the character face during the story?



What resolution will they have?



The Interview: A Way to Your Character's Heart

We have talked a lot about ensuring you have strong characters and stories with conflicts, but how do you go about finding them? Is it just knowing something from reading their chart or talking to their nurse? Something they filled out in their paperwork? You need to go deeper, and the way to do that is through interviewing.

The interview for story-finding and telling purposes is a directed conversation, a series of questions that gets to the heart of the matter and taps into emotions and feelings. It gets after someone's "why" – what motivated them to act or behave the way they did.

While the interview is not complicated, here are some best practices to keep in mind:



Try to pre-interview someone before you "cast" them for your story. Make sure they have the qualities discussed earlier of both a strong character and someone who has a conflict.



Start with the end in mind. Think about the types of answers you are hoping they will share and create your questions around getting those answers.



How you ask your questions is critical! You are looking for stories rather than facts, so avoid asking one-word answer questions like "Did you like the program?" and instead ask open-ended questions that require more thought such as, "Why did you like the program?" Start your questions with words like "Why" and "How" or even "Tell me about X." This will ensure you get more than a one-word answer.



Gain your subject's trust by putting them at ease. Find a private location to conduct your interview and reassure them that whatever they share is "the right answer" because it is their story.



Be a great listener and remember this is a one-sided conversation. Use non-verbal communication (such as nodding, smiling, or other body languages) to show you are listening rather than interjecting with words.



Particularly for a video interview, ask the subject to include some of your question in their answer so it is easier to edit later.



Remember that silence is golden. People want to fill in the silence, so after the subject finishes answering your question, linger in the silence to see what else might come up.



The Interview: A Way to Your Character's Heart

Important Note

Interviews can be incredibly useful even when creating a blog or an infographic. Perspectives from the users can be added to static stories to enhance the message being shared. Always try to interview patients when possible. Even if an interview simply adds an understanding of how well a program worked, it will be worth your time.



PRO TIP

If someone has a great story to tell but may not be a strong storyteller, consider other people in their lives that might be able to help tell the story for them, such as a spouse, parent, or healthcare provider.

If someone's first language is not English, see if you can find a translator to help interview and transcribe afterward to incorporate diverse voices in two languages.

But beware: some providers like to use scientific jargon or "doctor speak" to tell their stories. Caution them to share ideas in layperson's language.

YOUR TURN Role Play Activity

Using the character cards at the end of this packet, find a partner and take turns both inhabiting a character and being the interviewer.

Before the role play, spend a few minutes writing up your question (if you are the interviewer) or getting into character (if you are the interviewee).

Make sure to pay attention to the goal listed at the bottom of the card and the kind of information you are trying to gather.



Planning Your Well-Crafted Story

You have figured out your mission and goal, you know who your audience is, and you have found a strong character (or characters) who has a conflict that is worth your audience's time that will have a satisfying resolution. Congratulations! Now, how do you put it all together in a way that will engage your audience and accomplish your mission?

It's all about structure. For a story to work, it needs a beginning, middle, and end.

For the beginning, you want to start with something strong that will bring people into your story quickly and grab their attention. This is called "The Hook."

- An intriguing first sentence in a novel.
- A dazzling Instagram image.
- A moving drone shot of some spectacular scenery.
- A powerful statistic.

Something that grabs your audience and makes them want to stay and know more.

Once you grab your audience, it's time to build the story. Give enough background information about the main character so people will care about them. Then introduce conflict, sharing how your character was at point A and hit a roadblock in getting to point B. This is typically the conflict and often happens in the middle of your story. Every story is different. Sometimes the story is more about the journey and the resolution becomes shorter and more simplified. Other times, the story leans more on the successful resolution and the journey is less of a focus.

At the very end of your story, you want to leave your audience with some directive, a call to action, the goal of what you were communicating with your story. We call this "The Jab." It's something that pushes people to action. It might be to get involved, donate money, or use new knowledge to do something differently. The Jab could be a strong closing quote from your main character, an image that encapsulates success, or a graphic that quite literally tells your audience what you want them to do.



Planning Your Well-Crafted Story



The Storyboard

This series of blank squares with empty lines underneath allow you to think about the imagery of your story and the order in which you plan to place it. They are the "scenes" of your story, whether it's a video, a blog, an article, or a series of social media posts. This type of organizer is great for visual storytelling, of course, but also works wonderfully for envisioning text-heavy pieces. You can make your pictures simplistic (stick figure drawings) or sophisticated (using actual photos or images off the web if you do not enjoy drawing). The empty lines underneath can be simple text describing what's happening in each block.



The Script

Though this is typically best used in video storytelling, it could also work well in other storytelling vehicles where there are visuals and sound, such as a social media post. In the left-hand column under "Video," you'll describe what the viewer is seeing, and on the right side under "Audio" what they are hearing, whether it's music, the natural sound of the action, or the voice of an interview. This script can be as detailed as you want. We recommend creating an aspirational script, what you would ideally have your character say, to help guide you. It's an excellent way to create a roadmap.



Illustrations by Storyset



Illustrations by Storyset

Samples of a storyboard and script can be found in the Appendix



Planning Your Well-Crafted Story

YOUR TURN Order this story

Below are the elements of a story in random order, with the goal of the story to get patients to join an addiction support group. Rearrange the scenes and put them in an order that makes for a strong story using the storyboard template or script template at the end of this packet. Add a strong Hook and Jab if it doesn't exist. Once finished, see if there is an alternate way to order the story that also works.

 Anthony was prescribed opioids for his back pain and became addicted
 Anthony attended his community health center's opioid support group once
 Anthony wants to feel better and how he felt before his accident
Anthony saw his doctor, who is concerned about the addiction getting more severe
 Anthony has worked in construction for 20 years. He is married with two teen boys
Anthony is concerned about being stigmatized for having an addiction
Anthony injured his back while working 3 years ago
Anthony's family steps in to encourage him to get help



Incorporating Data

In health care, data is often required to show progress: the number of patients who have lowered their A1C; the percentage of doctors prescribing statin drugs regularly; quantifying the change caused by your health center through data can make your story stronger.

If you know your story lends itself well to amplifying results with data, make sure you are measuring relevant numbers at key points that show change over time, and ideally improvement in health outcomes.

- What was the situation when or before the program began?
- What is it now?
- What did your program do to bring about these results?

For example - "We've helped bring down teen cigarette use from 23% in 2000 to less than 5% today." -The Truth Initiative

Let's say your health care project aims to increase the number of patients from a certain zip code who see their primary care doctors. You should start with a baseline number of how many patients see a primary care doctor before you can know at the end of your project if that number has increased. You might also state at the beginning of the project what the goal of the project is. For example, "To increase the number of patients seeing their primary care doctor from zip code 12345 by 20%." At the end of the project, you can then measure how many people are seeing their doctor from that zip code and if your intended percentage went higher or lower.

Data is a useful tool to show change and success, but the personal story, hearing how a program affected someone in a meaningful way, will always be the most important and persuasive element.



Incorporating Data

If data from your own project is not easily available, there are several other reliable resources from which you can pull. Here are some reliable sources:



Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

County Health Rankings & Roadmaps - Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality

Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services

National Center for Health Statistics

Kaiser Family Foundation

YOUR TURN

Think of a current or upcoming program or project that you would like to promote.

Using the Story Breakdown Worksheet on the next page and the knowledge you've gained from this guide, fill it out to help plan out your next story. And know that your work will have an even bigger impact when you share that story with others!





NACHC STORYTELLING ACTIVITY GUIDE

APPENDIX





Story Breakdown Worksheet







Goal: What do you want to achieve with this story? What is your goal?



Audience:

Who is your audience? What do they need to know?



Emotions:

How do you want your audience to feel?



Main Character(s):

Who can best tell this story? Why will they make a strong character?



Conflict/Conflicts:

What challenges in this story make it compelling for your audience to watch?



7 Resolution:
How will the conflict be solved?



Hook:

How will you begin the story? What's the



How will you end your story? What do you want your audience to do next? (CTA)



Storytelling Vehicle(s):

In which way(s) will you share this story? (Audio, Video, Blogpost, Social Media,



図 Other Elements to Gather/Include:

Fig. Photos, videos, audio interviews, etc.



Data Points to Share:





Answer Key



Page 4, Example #1:	: Clip from an episode o	of Seinfeld	
-	·		executives who don't
This is a story about _	George Costanza	who experiences	understand his show
	(Character)		(Conflict)
to try to getthe	e show on the air		
(F	Resolution)		
Page 4, Example #2	: "The Princess and the	Pea"	
This is a story about	a Princess	who experiences	a bad night of sleep
-	(Character)		(Conflict)
to try to get to becor	me the Prince's wife		,
	Resolution)		
·	,		
Page 11, Story #1:	CHC story about contr	olling blood pressure	finding ways to
			control her blood
This is a story about _		who experiences	pressure
	(Character)		(Conflict)
to try to get	healthy		
(F	Resolution)		
Page 11, Story #2:	Harzina I Iniversity		
1 ugc 11, 5tory #2.	ricizing Oniversity		going back to
This is a story about	Von	who experiences	1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1
, <u>,</u>	(Character)		(Conflict)
to try to get a job	and improve his life		,
	Resolution)		
`	,		
-			
Page 11, Story #3:	Storycorps Personal S	tory	rupping quickly seroes
This is a start shout	Amy	who oversioness	running quickly across a field
This is a story about _		who experiences	
to tru to got on unov	(Character)	a and rare hannings	(Conflict)
	pected treat of ice crean	ranu rare nappiness	-
	Resolution)		



Appendix



Storyboard Template

Page: of Date:		www.educationworld.com
Project Name:By:		Education World © Copyright © 2009 Education World

Appendix



Script Template

VIDEO	AUDIO
This is where descriptions of what you would see visually would go	This is where things that are being spoken or can be heard are shared.
	ALL CAPS FOR VOICEOVER TEXT
	"Italics and regular upper and lower-case writing for soundbites from interviews."
	((music)) – double parentheses for music cues or other sounds

Appendix



Additional Resources

Video Editing

While most professionals work on some version of Adobe Premiere Pro, there are many basic and often free options for editing video. Our favorite in this list is Canva, which can easily add graphics to your videos.

https://www.canva.com/

https://www.apple.com/imovie/

https://www.movavi.com/

https://animoto.com/k/welcome

Audio Recording & Transcription

Otter - https://otter.ai/ is an incredible app you can use on your phone or desktop to simultaneously record and transcribe audio.

For iPhone users, the Voice Memos app (in the Extras folder) works well for audio-only recording.

For Android users, this article lists apps you can try:

https://www.androidpolice.com/best-voice-recorder-apps-android/

Audio Editing

Audacity is the leading free audio editing tool https://www.audacityteam.org/

Photography

For examples of great photography in healthcare:

https://www.rebeccadrobis.com/PORTFOLIO/Healthcare/thumbs

For tips on framing and taking better photos:

https://photographypro.com/take-better-photos/

https://www.signatureedits.com/essential-photography-framing-tips-ideas/

Writing

Grammarly is a free app that can correct your writing in emails, Word documents, texts, etc. https://www.grammarly.com/

Hemingway is like Grammarly but with the goal to shorten your sentences.

https://hemingwayapp.com

For users of Microsoft Word, make sure you turn on Microsoft Editor when writing.

When you need to replace existing words with stronger ones, use Thesaurus.com







CHARACTER CARDS









MEET ALLIE





FAMILY: MARRIED, THREE TEENAGERS

OCCUPATION: PEDIATRIC ER DOCTOR

BACKSTORY:

Allie works the night shift several times per week at a small hospital in a remote mountain town. Her hours are grueling, but she chooses the night shift so she can spend time with her teens before and after school.

HEALTH CHALLENGE:

Allie has recently gained 20 pounds, mostly around her middle, due to the stress of being a frontline worker during the pandemic, eating sugary foods to stay awake, and the metabolic changes of peri-menopause. She has a family history of heart disease and is a secret smoker.

HEALTH TRIUMPHS:

Allie confided in a coworker who told her about a community health center program that encourages doctors to follow their own good health advice. She decides to give it a try and learns simple, doable skills to help her eat a healthier diet and move more. She joins a Zumba class and commits to filling half her plate with vegetables. Within several months she has lost nearly ten pounds.

CHC CONCERNS:

Allie has made strides toward reducing her cardiac risk but is still smoking several times per week.

HEALTH HOPES:

The community health center hopes they can encourage Allie and others to build upon new skills that support their health and continue reducing their risk of heart disease.





Interview Allie about what would inspire her to prioritize her own health.





MEET ROSIE





FAMILY: SINGLE MOM OF TWO YOUNG GIRLS

OCCUPATION: DAYCARE CENTER EMPLOYEE,

WORKS FULL-TIME

BACKSTORY:

Rosie immigrated to this country six years ago, leaving most of her family and only connecting with some family friends when she moved to the area.

HEALTH CHALLENGE:

While her job is active and she likes to keep active with hikes or trips to the park with her daughters, Rosie is 60lbs overweight. She shared with the care team that her schedule does not allow her time to always cook meals at home and that she is consistently looking for bargains at the market, making purchasing fresh fruits, vegetables, or healthier options limited.

HEALTH TRIUMPHS:

Rosie has seen her doctor regularly and has started participating in the Food Farmacy program at her health care center, where she is given vouchers every two weeks to pick healthy produce from a mobile unit at the center and can take classes about how to cook healthy meals.

CHC CONCERNS:

The doctor is concerned she has risk factors for Type 2 Diabetes; her A1C is at 6.1.

HEALTH HOPES:

She wants to live a long time to be able to raise her two daughters and give them a better life.





Interview Rosie on her successful participation in the Food Farmacy initiative.





MEET NASH





FAMILY: LIVES ALONE

OCCUPATION: RETIRED

BACKSTORY:

Nash is a retired schoolteacher. He is a widow who lives by himself in an apartment in a downtown area. He doesn't have a lot of family nearby and no longer drives.

HEALTH CHALLENGE:

Nash has the beginnings of liver disease, after many years of suffering with alcoholism and being overweight.

HEALTH TRIUMPHS:

Nash recently had Covid and was treated in the hospital, where he saw a doctor for the first time in a long while and got a referral to a program at his local community health center to participate in a lifestyle modification group program to support him with the tools he needs to lose weight and manage pre-existing conditions.

CHC CONCERNS:

If Nash doesn't start this program soon, he is heading towards chronic liver disease, which cannot be reversed.

HEALTH HOPES:

The community health center is a short bus ride from Nash's apartment, and he seemed interested in participating in the program. He went to his first meeting last week.

PARTNER CHALLENGE



Find out what made Nash want to participate in the program and how he thinks it may help to impact his health.





MEET LEO





FAMILY: SINGLE; LIVES WITH HIS

BROTHER AND SISTER-IN-LAW

OCCUPATION: UBER DRIVER

BACKSTORY:

Leo recently immigrated to the U.S. and is sharing an apartment with family to save money and get established in a new city.

HEALTH CHALLENGE:

Leo is grateful for his family's hospitality and his sister-inlaw's homestyle cooking, which reminds him of home, but living in an urban area has exacerbated Leo's asthma.

HEALTH TRIUMPHS:

Leo's family pointed him to their community health center for asthma management. He has been given a daily medication, a rescue inhaler, and asked to download an app on his phone to track triggers and get treatment reminders. Leo begins to breathe easier.

CHC CONCERNS:

While Leo initially used the app, he dropped off once he began to feel better.

HEALTH HOPES:

While Leo's use of the app is not consistent, he does keep his appointments and seems committed to managing his asthma.





Interview Leo about his asthma and what benefits he got from using the app and receiving text check-ins. What might make him stay with the program?



