

Stories of Crisis

These are the first lines of stories that feature you or someone else is confronted by a problematic and difficult situation of high stakes and you or they must figure out how to make it through.

1. "My (friend/client/colleague/etc) didn't know what to do." Then tell the story of the crisis they faced.
2. "My (friend/client/colleague/etc) was stuck." Then tell the story of the crisis they faced.
3. "My (friend/client/colleague/etc) looked at me with (terror/fear/torment/etc) in (his/her) face." Then tell the story of the crisis they faced.
4. "My (friend/client/colleague/etc) was on a deadline and was out of options." Then show what they needed to achieve and why they had been unsuccessful to that point.
5. "I looked down at the (document/piece of paper) and realized that something needed to change." Then tell the story of what that document represented and the challenge you faced in response.
6. "I stared at (other person in the story) and couldn't believe what (he/she) had just told me." Then tell the story of whatever revelatory news the other person delivered to you.
7. "When I heard that (devastating news) had happened, I knew everything would be different." Then tell the story of what happens in response to the devastating news.
8. "I was standing (in/next to specific location) when I found out that (devastating event)." Then tell the story of the crisis you faced.
9. "My (group of people) and I were stranded in (place) when I realized that (devastating news)." Then tell the story of how the group of you got out of the crisis you were in.

Stories of Hardship

These are the first lines of stories that, rather than featuring someone encountering a concentrated conflict in the shape of a specific crisis, instead feature someone generally experiencing struggle on an ongoing basis.

10. "My (friend/client/colleague/etc) was about to give up on (desirable result) when he/she came to me for help." Then show how you helped them.
11. "My (friend/client/colleague/etc) had tried everything he/she could think of to (achieve desirable result) but to no avail." Then describe the difficulties they had faced to achieve what they sought to achieve.
12. "I had reached the limits of my patience." Then describe the situation that tested

you.

13. "I was fed up with how my (situation) was going." Then describe the situation that caused you distress.

14. "I couldn't stand how hard it was for me to (action)." Then describe the task that caused you difficulty.

15. "My family and I were no longer able to (desirable result)." Then explain how your family struggled to achieve or enjoy something you all wanted.

16. "We were out of options." Then describe the group you were in and what you had unsuccessfully tried to achieve as a group.

17. "After my (number) attempt to (achieve desirable result), I realized I needed to make some changes." Then describe the new direction you went in to achieve the goal mentioned in the first line.

Stories of Inspiration

These are the first lines of stories that feature an unlikely or surprising situation and set up some kind of discovery in response.

18. "I had no idea I could (achievement of great goal) until I (encountered seemingly random situation)." Then describe the improbably way the situation led to the achievement. a. Example: "I had no idea I could sing until I was taught how to hammer a nail."

19. "When I was (a boy/a girl/young), I was unsure of whether I would ever (achieve great goal)." Then show how you wound up achieving it.

20. "When I was (a boy/a girl/young), my (father/mother) took me to (place) to (achieve goal)." Then show what happened when you and/or your parent attempted to achieve the goal.

a. Example: "When I was a boy, my father took me to the supermarket to pick up some produce."

21. "I had never heard of (random thing) until I (experienced a particular situation)." Then show what happens when you encounter this random thing. a. Example: "I had never heard of butter tarts until I visited Canada with my family for the first time."

22. "I first learned about (topic) the first time I encountered (seemingly unrelated situation)." Then show how the situation led to your learning what you did. a. Example: "I first learned about compassion the first time I encountered a Washington lobbyist."

23. "Of all the (group of things) I've encountered in my life, the one that stands out the most is (specific example from group of things)." Then explain why that particular thing stands out as it does. a. Example: "Of all the animals I've encountered in my life, the one that stands out the most is a farmyard pig named Arnold."

24. “My first step in becoming (noteworthy achievement) was actually (surprising action).” Then explain how the unlikely first step led to the achievement. a. Example: “My first step in becoming a chess grandmaster was actually learning how to play the harmonica.”

25. “My (friend/client/colleague/etc) looked at me and I could see in their face that something had changed.” Then show what events had led to their transformation.

Stories About Scientific/Research Studies

Studies often get a bad rap for being dry and difficult to follow. But there are many studies with surprising developments or discoveries, and these make for very compelling openings to speeches.

26. “The authors of the study looked at the printout and then looked at each other in stunned silence.” Then share the unlikely data that came from their study before then explaining the larger context of what they sought to discover.

27. “The authors of the study couldn’t believe what they were reading.” Then share the unlikely data that came from their study before then explaining the larger context of what they sought to discover.

28. “When (name of person) reported to (his/her) boss what they had discovered, (his/her) boss only stared at them.” Then share the unlikely data that came from their study before then explaining the larger context of what they sought to discover.

29. “When (name of author of study) and (name of author of study) (conducted a surprising measurement), they realized that (surprising result).” Then share what the authors discovered in response to this anomalous measurement. a. Example: “When doctors Mike Grisham and Stacey Edwards read the MRI of one of their specimens, they realized that it was completely free of cancer.”

30. “It wasn’t until (name of author of study) and (name of author of study) conducted their study on (topic) that the field of (industry) got its first big break in (achieving of large goal).” Then share what led to this breakthrough. a. Example: “It wasn’t until Doctors Mike Grisham and Stacey Edwards conducted their study on enzyme production in cells that the field of oncology got its first big break in stopping metastatic cancer.”

31. “The authors of a study on (topic) were unable to make a breakthrough until they (achievement that led to breakthrough).” Then share how they came to the breakthrough and what its implications were. a. Example: “The authors of a study on enzyme production in cells were unable to make a breakthrough until they switched from studying mice to studying – of all things – venus flytraps.”

32. “The (governing body) earned a lot of criticism from the public for funding a study on (topic), until, that is, it revealed how they could (achieve significant outcome).” Then share what the study was and how it would enable them to

achieve what is described in the first sentence. a. Example: “The State of West Virginia earned a lot of criticism from the public for funding a study on database management in hospitals, until, that is, it revealed how they could send people home from knee replacement surgery in only two hours.”

33. “No one could have predicted what the authors of a study on (topic) were about to learn about (achieving a desirable result).” Then share what the study was for and how they wound up learning what they did. a. Example: “No one could have predicted what the authors of a study on plant growth were going to learn about eliminating metastatic cancer.”

34. “When (name of author of study) and (name of author of study) conducted a study on (topic), they set out to ask one question: (provocative question).” Then describe what the study was and how it answered the question. a. Example: “When Doctors Mike Grisham and Stacey Edwards conducted a study on enzyme production in cells, they set out to ask one question: “could we see the end of metastatic cancer for good?”

Games for the Speaker to Play with the Audience

Remember how you always wished your teacher would play a game with your class instead of make you sit and listen to a lecture? Deep down, this desire doesn’t go away when we become adults. The following are stems for setting up a game. Of course, the game itself will need to be created as well.

35. “I’d like for us to play a little game.” Simple, straightforward, and likely to get everyone to perk up right away.

36. “While I usually just start into the dry lecture, today I think it would be more fitting for us to play a game.” This infusion of humor will both invite people into a playful mindset but also get them invested in you because of your self-deprecation.

37. “Close your eyes.” Some games are more internal or mental, and this unexpected command will get everyone’s attention.

38. “I’d like for you all to stand up.” You may have a game you can play that gets them out of their seats, and like with #37 this invitation will surprise your audience.

39. “How many of you remember (game from childhood)?” Sometimes you might have a game that resembles a game from childhood and you could introduce it by having them draw up their memory of that game.

a. Example: “How many of you remember Chutes and Ladders?”

40. “I have a game for us to play, and the winner of the game will get (prize).” To keep things interesting, you may even offer a reward for winning the game.

a. Example: “I have a game for us to play, and the winner of the game will get a \$50 Amazon card.”

41. “I have a simple game for you to play, all you need to do is (action).” You may wind up starting off with such a simple game that the task itself is highlighted in the first sentence.

a. Example: “I have a simple game for you to play, all you need to do is start clapping as hard as you can.”

42. “The last time I played this game with an audience, (unexpected outcome).” You can build anticipation by establishing a possibility of surprise and help the audience to get invested in playing.

a. Example: “The last time I played this game with an audience, the group in the next room over came by and asked us to keep it down.”

Demonstrations

A close cousin of games, sometimes it’s very powerful for a speaker to start with a demonstration of some kind, such as a science teacher demonstrating what happens when they mix several chemicals together. While that would get messy in a keynote, there are other ways to operate through the lens of “what happens when” something takes place on stage.

43. “I’d like for everyone to look at this (object/image).” If you have a game that includes a prop or an image of some kind, this can be a compelling first sentence of your talk to show what happens when... a. Example: “I’d like for everyone to look at this picture of George Washington.”

44. “I have with me a model of a (object).” Sometimes a demonstration can be done with the use of some kind of three-dimensional object.

a. Example: “I have with me a model of a human lung.”

45. “Close your eyes while I (take specific action).” Similar to the game that starts with the audience closing their eyes, this could lead to you having a demonstration with sound.

a. Example: “Close your eyes while I play you a song.”

46. “On the count of three, I’d like for everyone in the room to (take specific action).” This opening draws everyone in by counting them in, which can create a sense of community.

a. Example: “On the count of three, I’d like for everyone in the room to make a sound like Tarzan.”

47. “(sing lyrics to a song).” If you sing and the topic of singing somehow relates to your talk, this can be rather arresting for an audience expecting you to speak instead.

a. Example: “On my own, pretending he’s beside me...”

48. “I’d like to conduct an experiment with you all.” It can be rather compelling to enlist your audience in some kind of exploration, where instead of telling the story of a study they become the study itself.

49. “Take out your phones.” This can be rather arresting because having a phone out seems anathema to a captivating speech. Then have them engage with their phone in some way to make a point.

50. “I’d like for you to turn to the person next to you and (take specific action).” A classic, though this becomes a cliché if you ask your audience to do something predictable. Consider something unexpected instead.

a. Example: “I’d like for you to turn to the person next to you and say your favorite movie quote at the same time.”

51. “Everyone, take out your phones and capture this QR code with your camera app.” Then, take them through a real-time survey using software like Slido and capture their information so as to show it to them on the screen.

Stories with Deliberate (and Playful) Falsehoods

At the heart of this device you’re simply telling a story that leads the audience astray – you say something that isn’t true or completely incongruous with reality and come clean either immediately after or later on. The catch, though, is that these stories will likely start much like those of the Elephant: tender on the outside but devious on the inside. As such, in some of these prompts I’ve drawn on some of the same first lines as those for the Elephant but offer a different kind of description that leads to misdirection.

52. “My (friend/client/colleague/etc) didn’t know what to do.” Then follow this sober statement with the reveal that they were stymied by a silly, mundane, or otherwise frivolous decision (e.g. “He didn’t know if he should get prime rib or the lobster ravioli...”).

53. “My (friend/client/colleague/etc) looked at me with (terror/fear/torment/etc) in (his/her) face.” Then share how their negative reaction was based on something silly or frivolous (e.g. “Then, she said to me, ‘What if I actually like black jelly beans after all?’”).

54. “I stared at (other person in the story) and couldn’t believe what (he/she) had just told me.” Then share a statement that is supposed to be revelatory but actually turns out to be totally believable (e.g. “It turned out that, against all odds, his favorite flavor of ice cream was vanilla...”).

55. “I had reached the limits of my patience.” Then describe a completely ridiculous situation that should be easy for anyone to navigate but tested you anyway (e.g. “For I had spent a solid seven hours trying to get to the next level of Candy Crush...”).

56. “We were out of options.” Then describe a completely ridiculous situation in which you are laboring over a problem that is of very low stakes or doesn’t even need to be solved (e.g. “For even though we had labored over every known variable of nail polish for our night out, nothing seemed to match our outfits...”).

57. “When I was (a boy/a girl/young), I was unsure of whether I would ever...(achieve absurd goal).” Then show your experience of trying to achieving it.
a. Example: “When I was a boy, I was unsure of whether I would ever...find out how many licks it takes to get to the Tootsie Roll center of a Tootsie Pop.”

58. “When I was (a boy/a girl/young), my (father/mother) took me to (place) to...(achieve random and silly goal).” Then show what happened when you and/or your parent attempted to achieve the goal.
a. Example: “When I was a boy, my father took me to New York City to... find out how much a jelly bean weighed.”

59. “My (friend/client/colleague/etc) looked at me and I could see in his/her face that something had changed.” Then reveal that this change is because of something frivolous, random, or absurd (e.g. “He...had gone from being a ‘tastes great’ guy to being a ‘less filling’ guy.”).

60. “On (date), I (achieved amazing outcome). *Pause* Actually, that’s not true at all. All I did that day was (mundane thing).”

a. Example: “On November 12, 2018, I summited Mt. Everest. *Pause.* Actually, that’s not true at all. All I did that day was order a pizza.”

61. “I am the (exceptional title).” Then carry on this conceit for several moments before coming clean.

a. Example: “I am the president of the 4th largest company in the world. I started in the mailroom twenty-three years ago and slowly worked my way up to become president two years ago. *Pause.* Actually, none of that is true.”

62. “One day that stands out most of all in my life is the time that I (achieved amazing outcome).” Then share a story that turns out not to be true.

a. Example: “One day that stands out most of all in my life is the time that I ate 30 hot dogs in 10 minutes.”

63. “I knew my life would be different when (random, unexpected thing happened).” Then share a story that turns out not to be true.

a. Example: “I knew my life would be different when I was chased down by a crazed fan who thought I was Paul McCartney.”

64. “Of all the things that have happened in my life, the one that stands out most of all is the time that (random, unexpected thing happened).” Then share a story that turns out not to be true.

a. Example: “Of all the things that have happened in my life, the one that stands out most of all is the time that I was mistaken for the Cuban dictator Fidel Castro.”

Simulations

Perhaps the most ambitious device of everything in this program, a simulation is the act of creating a real-time experience for the audience so as to foster an emotionally significant response. While any of the speaker types can find a way to do a simulation in line with their personality, I’ve placed this in the Monkey category because some of the simulations are messing with the audience, though others are simply an example of a truly unexpected device.

A simulation can be such a great variety of things that we’ll only skim the surface below. What may be even more significant, however, is that the first line will only have as much value as the idea itself. This is why I’ve provided an example that describes a simulation that could then be applicable, though why the audience would be doing the thing in the example would depend on the speaker’s message. Please note, though, that the simulations themselves are often interchangeable with the first lines that precede them.

65. “I’ve decided that I’m not going to give this talk, so instead I’m going to (unexpected action, such as ‘take a nap’).”

66. “Because I’m an ambitious (guy/girl/man/woman/person), I’d like for everyone to (unexpected action, like ‘get up out of their seats’).” Then have them do something that requires them to do more than merely listen, such as take a step to the right so as to be standing in front of the chair of the next person over.

67. “Please stand.” Then have them do something that requires them to do more than merely listen, such as play pat-a-cake with the person next to them.

68. “On the count of three, I’d like for everyone to (unexpected action, like ‘blow a raspberry in the palm of their hand’).”

69. “I know that I’m supposed to come out here and talk about (speech title), but instead I’m going to talk about (unrelated topic).” Then talk about this seemingly unrelated topic so as to foster discomfort in the audience – until you finally come clean. Example: “I know that I’m supposed to come out here and talk about empowered leadership, but instead I’m going to talk about pillow cases.”

70. “I would like a volunteer.” Then bring the audience member on stage and conduct something with them that sets up the context for your talk’s topic (e.g. If your talk is on nonviolent communication, prompt them to say particularly incendiary things to you).

71. “I’m going to come out to you guys and pick someone to come join me on the stage.” Then bring the audience member on stage and conduct something with them that sets up the context for your talk’s topic.

72. (Host introduces you and you don’t come out because you’re seated in the audience with everyone else). Then, after several moments of awkwardness and tension, you stand up in your seat and join the host on stage. (Note: if you use this kind of device, be sure to connect it to your talk’s topic, such as speaking on dashed expectations and this becomes relevant to how they all had expectations of where you were going to show up in the room.)

73. (Host introduces you, you walk out onto the stage, and don’t say or do anything for several moments). Then, you finally reveal what the significance of that silence was, in a way that’s relevant to your talk’s topic (e.g. If it’s 7 seconds of silence, then you can say how 4 people in the world just died of heart failure in that time).

74. (Host introduces you, and you start the talk from the back of the room instead of the stage). This becomes particularly powerful if your undermining their expectations of where to see you fits into your topic – such as if your talk is on distraction and everyone turning around all of a sudden to see you distracts them from something else that you set up on stage at the same time.

75. (Host introduces you, you come out seemingly ready to start your speech, look out at everyone, and run off stage.) This becomes effective if this relates to your topic, such as suddenly collapsing in the face of a daunting or overwhelming task.

76. “I’m going to come down into the audience and ask a few of you some questions.” Then go into the audience and gather some information in real time so as to give the audience a first-hand account of research in action.

Stories of Memorable Interactions

Perhaps the most straightforward way to bring out your theatrical side is through the reenactment of a memorable interaction. This doesn’t necessarily lead to a zany, irreverent

display of acting chops, for not all of theatricality is over-the-top. In the following opening lines, the theatricality comes out simply through the act of portraying the interaction in real time. For this reason, some of these examples include not just one line but multiple sentences. Please note, though, that it is unnecessary to use reenactment in the first 7 seconds to be fully theatrical.

77. "I stood and stared at (noteworthy person). 'I'm sorry,' I said, 'could you repeat that?'" Then describe the surprising thing that the person just said to you.

a. Example: "I stood and stared at my mother. 'I'm sorry,' I said, 'could you repeat that?'"

78. "I don't believe you,' I said. And I'm not sure where you get off making that kind of accusation." Then provide context for who was speaking to you and what their intent was.

79. "I stood there, paralyzed with fear." Then show what you physically looked like in your state of apparent paralysis before then describing what situation had you so afraid.

80. "My first step in becoming (noteworthy achievement) was actually (surprising action). The problem was, when I (took surprising action), I looked like this." Then show what you looked like when taking that action before explaining how the unlikely first step led to the achievement.

b. Example: "My first step in becoming a chess grandmaster was actually learning how to play the harmonica. The problem was, when I played the harmonica, I looked like this (then blow into the harmonica in a completely bizarre way)."

81. "My (friend/client/colleague/etc) looked at me and I could see in their face that something had changed. 'What is it?' I asked. And then (she/he/they) looked at me with (emotion) in their eyes." Then show what events had led to their transformation.

a. "My sister looked at me and I could see in her face that something had changed. 'What is it?' I asked. And then she looked at me with joy in her eyes."

82. "I was just so (agitated/frustrated/other struggling feeling) with (person), that I had to (physicalize agitation that gets reenacted)." Then explain what caused you this much distress.

a. Example: "I was just so frustrated with my father, that I had to punch the air a dozen times just to calm down."

83. (Suddenly ducking or otherwise moving in response to something you're about to describe.) "I had to (action) or else (bad thing that would happen)." Then provide context for this moment that you've just reenacted.

a. Example: (Suddenly ducking out of the way.) "I had to duck or else the drone was going to collide with my face."

84. "I stood there, on stage, terrified of what I was there to do." Then describe how you were speaking publicly and had to fumble your way through a speech or talk.

Stories of People Who Sound Different Than You

Perhaps one of the most noteworthy ways for someone to bring out their most theatrical side is to reenact dialogue with those who sound different than you, perhaps because they come from a different region of your country or they're from a different country altogether.

My own personal weakness is the Scottish accent, which means that I'll find any excuse to incorporate that into my speaking – and to several of these examples.

85. "I looked at the (person with an occupation) and asked, 'Can you help me?' And (he/she/they) looked back at me and said (in a foreign/other accent), 'I'm sorry, I cannot help you.'" Then describe what have to do without help.

a. Example: "I looked at the person at the concierge desk and asked, 'Can you help me?' And he looked back at me and said (in a Scottish accent), 'I'm sawr-ay, I cannae help yooo.'"

86. "Wherever I looked I saw (type of people). And they were all saying the same thing: '(common phrase of a certain region or country)'." Then explain the significance of your situation in that region or country.

a. Example: "Wherever I looked I saw Scottish people. And they were all saying the same thing: 'No' my Brexit!"

87. (In a foreign/other accent) "You're going to have to (action) that." Then describe your reaction to this command. a. Example: (In a Scottish accent) "You're gonna have to pay for that."

88. (in a foreign/other accent) "(local greeting), can I help you with something?" Then describe why you're there talking to that person. a. Example: "Bon journo, can I help you with something?"

89. "I looked up and (person) looked back at me. And then they said (number) very fateful words: (statement said in a foreign/other accent)." Then describe what unfolds in response to this interaction. a. Example: "I looked up and the casino's pit boss looked back at me. And then he said six very fateful words: (in a southern American accent) 'You'll have to come with me.'"

90. "I had no idea how hard it would be to (take action) until I went to (country) and was greeted by (person) who asked: (provocative question in foreign accent)." Then describe why you were in that country and why the person said what they did. a. Example: "I had no idea how hard it would be to film my documentary until I went to France and was greeted by the customs agent who asked: 'Are yeeu sure yeeu want to come stay here, monsieur?'"

91. "The first time I ever tried to (take action), it was while being observed by my (foreign quality) (figure) who said: (significant statement in another kind of accent)." Then explain why you were taking that action and what was at stake.

a. Example: "The first time I ever tried to ride a bike, it was while being observed by my German headmistress who said (in a German accent): 'This is your only chance to ride, Michael. Ride now or never again will you try.'"

92. "I wasn't willing to admit to myself that I was bad at (action) until my (person with a different accent) said to me: (profound thing they said)." Then describe the fallout from receiving this revelation. a. Example: "I wasn't willing to admit to myself that I was bad at sports until my Russian father said to me (in a Russian accent): 'I sink we huv seen enough of 'dat.'"

Reenactments of Favorite Scenes

Once in a while, you find a person who would dish out lines from movies and other pop culture simply because they just love the content so freaking much. This is, of course, what you would get if you ever met me and I, well, forgot all of my social skills. But the upshot is that reenacting a scene from a movie, TV show, or some other body of work can be an endearing way to start a talk.*

93. "The first time I saw (movie/TV show/other media) I was taken with (moment from media), when he (takes action in scene). (Repeat line like character.)" Then describe why that scene is relevant to your talk.

a. Example: "The first time I saw Monty Python and the Holy Grail I was taken with the scene of Dennis the Constitutional Peasant, when he debates on the merits of Arthur extracting Excalibur. (like Michael Palin) 'Strange women lying in ponds distributing swords is no basis for a system of government.'"

94. "My life changed when I first saw (movie/TV show/other media). Particularly the moment when (character takes specific action). (Reenactment of moment.)" Then describe how that media impacted you. a. Example: "My life changed when I first saw The Big Lebowski. Particularly the moment when Walter discovers that the guys after the Dude are nihilists. 'Say what you will about the tenets of national socialism Dude,' he says, 'at least it's an ethos.'"

95. "Do you remember that moment in (movie/TV show/other media) when (character takes action)? (Reenactment of moment)." Then describe the significance of why you brought that media up.

a. Example: "Do you remember that moment in So I Married an Axe Murderer when the Scottish father makes fun of the younger brother? 'Look a' the size of tha' boy's heed. Ah'm no' kiddin', it's like an orange on a toooothpick.'"

96. "I remember how surprised I was when I first saw (person) in (movie/TV show/other media). (Reenactment of moment)." Then describe the significance of why you brought that media up.

a. Example: "I remember how surprised I was when I first saw Christopher Walken in Pulp Fiction: 'This watch was on your daddy's wrist when he was shot down over Hanoi.'"

97. "Lots of people talk about the (famous scene) in (famous movie/TV show/other media), but my favorite moment was actually (less famous scene), when (character takes action): (Reenactment of moment)." Then describe the significance of why you brought that media up.

a. Example: "Lots of people talk about the farting scene in Blazing Saddles, but my favorite moment was actually when the bad guys are stopped by the toll both. 'Now we need a ****load of dimes!'"

98. "Have you ever seen (movie/TV show/other media)? You know that scene where (character takes action)? (Reenactment of scene)." Then describe the significance of why you brought that media up.

a. Example: "Have you ever seen the movie Spaceballs? You know that scene where the chestbuster comes out of John Hurt's torso like it did in Alien but then busts out into song? (singing) 'Hello my baby, hello my honey, hello my ragtime gaa-aal...'"

99. "People often talk about how a parent or a teacher really influenced them, but

I was most influenced when (character takes action) in (movie/TV show/other media): (Reenactment of scene).” Then describe the significance of the insight that comes from the media.

a. Example: “People often talk about how a parent or a teacher really influenced them, but I was most influenced when Yoda teaches Luke in The Empire Strikes Back: (in Yoda voice) ‘Do. Or do not. There is no try.’”

100. “My earliest memory is not of a moment with one of my parents or siblings, but seeing (movie/TV show/other media) when (character takes action): (Reenactment of scene). Then describe the significance of that memory.

Bonus openings

101. “You may have heard the story of the fox and the grapes...” Then tell the story of how his lack of success led to the expression ‘sour grapes.’

a. As an Owl: “You may have heard the story of the fox and the grapes. Well I have a little game for us to play inspired by Aesop’s famous fable.”

b. As a Bird of Paradise: “You may have heard the story of the fox and the grapes. Where (imitating the fox) the fox lurks along below some vines of grapes...”

102. “I’m unsure of the best way to tell this story.” Then share the elements of the story as well as why you’re struggling through it.

a. As an Elephant: “I’m unsure of the best way to tell this story. For to be honest I don’t exactly come off in the best possible light.”

b. As a Monkey: “I’m unsure of the best way to tell this story. For to be honest, I’m not sure how to not intimidate you all because I come off in such a mad-crazy-stupid awesome way that you’ll all hate yourselves comparatively.”

103. “I’m sure you’ll agree that this is a difficult time for all of us.” Then capture why everyone in the room might be sharing in these difficulties.

a. As an Elephant: “I’m sure you’ll agree that this is a difficult time for all of us. Never before have we been rubbed quite so raw when it comes to the flawed way we address race in this country. But there was one particular incident that stands out from recent memory that changed everything for me.”

b. As a Bird of Paradise: “I’m sure you’ll agree that this is a difficult time for all of us. And it’s been particularly stressful for certain members of my community, for when I approach them and ask them something simple, they (imitating their reaction) jolt to attention as if I startled them.”

104. “There’s a scientific study from (time period) that has always fascinated me.”

Then describe the study and its implications. a. As an Owl: “There’s a scientific study from the 50’s that has always fascinated me. In the study, the research scientists placed 30 people in a room...”

b. As a Monkey: “There’s a scientific study from the 80’s that has always fascinated me. In the study, the lead scientist placed three children in a room and told them not to speak for the next 60 minutes. But as it turns out, the ‘lead scientist’ was my dad and the three children were me and my two siblings...”