



ASSOCIATION OF ESD PROFESSIONALS

HOW TO

CRAFT YOUR ELEVATOR PITCH





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A GUIDE TO CRAFTING YOUR ELEVATOR PITCH & TELLING YOUR ESD STORY... QUICKLY!

INTRODUCTION

We don't typically like to make universal statements, but as ESD professionals, we are, without exception, passionate about our work. We care deeply about sharing tools for violence prevention and empowerment, and we tend to have a lot to say about our methodology, movement, and mission.

The challenge, when there is so very much to say about a complex topic we care about deeply, is staying succinct and efficient in our communication about said topic. Not everyone has the time (or desire) to hear the long-form story of empowerment self-defense and why it is so fascinating. Whether you are chatting with your neighbor, making a statement at your town hall, applying for a grant, presenting to potential clients or collaborators, or sharing about your work at a dinner party, less will quite often be more.

Concisely articulating the importance of empowerment self-defense can significantly influence perceptions, ignite interest, and ultimately change lives. Of course, summarizing the complexity of ESD into a brief "elevator pitch" is a challenging endeavor. Distilling the myriad benefits, life-changing stories, and transformational impact of self-defense into a few words is no easy task, but it is absolutely worthwhile to try.

Nailing your ESD elevator pitch can help you raise awareness, inspire action, expand your ESD practice, broaden the reach of ESD, and ultimately make your communities safer and more resilient.



WHAT IS AN ELEVATOR PITCH?

The “elevator pitch” is a popular concept in the business world that describes a concise and compelling summary of a product, idea, project, or even person. This summary is meant to be short enough to fit into the space of a hypothetical elevator ride—30 to 90 seconds—where you want to “pitch” someone your idea or project. The assumption is that the hypothetical listener does not have the inclination to make more time for you, so your goal is to quickly generate curiosity and a desire to know more.

Naturally, it is impossible to give someone all the information in such a short amount of time, but if you capture their interest, the stage is set for a longer conversation. At the very least, they may want to take your business card or give you their contact information.

The elevator pitch is really about making a strong first impression by choosing your words with intention and telling a focused, impactful story in a short amount of time. Furthermore, the process of crafting your elevator pitch is excellent practice for honing your storytelling skills, getting clear about your “value proposition,” and elevating your communication around ESD!

WHAT IS A VALUE PROPOSITION?



A value proposition in ESD is a concise description of the benefits you or your organization is delivering to clients, students, and participants who take your classes, do your training, and otherwise benefit from your services.

We hope the process outlined below will prove thought-provoking, fun, and fruitful and will serve you well the next time you wish to tell someone about your work in ESD. Maybe it will even open doors to exciting new opportunities.

Consider the elevator pitch we create below as a template, which you can tailor according to the specific circumstances of a given listener, context, and available time.

ELEMENTS OF A GOOD STORY

We all tell stories, every day, all the time. We are natural, innate storytellers. You are a natural storyteller.

Need proof? Tell a friend or coworker a quick story about something you did today (even what you had for breakfast or how you got to work), and pay attention the next time someone tells you a story about their day, weekend, or latest adventure.

Ask yourself, What made your or your friend's story engaging? What kept you interested as they were speaking?

YOU WILL PROBABLY NOTE SOME OF THE FOLLOWING ELEMENTS IN THESE GOOD STORIES:

- **Detail.** You don't just tell someone that you ate breakfast. You tell them that your granola was homemade, the avocado was so perfect, the sourdough was divine, or the coffee was especially rich and satisfying. The story is in the details.
- **Specificity.** We connect with specifics. Cliches like, "a kid in a candy store" or, "waking up on the wrong side of the bed" are, by definition, overused and thus are less impactful. Instead, be specific. The surest way to make your story effective is to speak or write with precision about what you know to be true (and perhaps mix in a few choice statistics).
- **Being Concise.** Did you go on for five minutes about the incredible avocado toast you ate for breakfast and notice your friend's eyes start to wander? The most effective stories—the ones that keep people engaged from start to finish—are appropriately succinct and to the point.
- **Framing.** Why are you telling this story? Do you know that your friend is a foodie, and therefore sure to be interested in your breakfast? Is the information you want to share (for instance, about ESD) vital knowledge that everyone should have? Frame your story in terms of why it is relevant to the person you are talking to, and they will be more likely to truly listen.
- **Selection.** Be selective about what you include in your pitch. Try out the suggested exercise below to understand the importance of selection for effectively telling any story.



SUGGESTED EXERCISE: EVERYTHING IN THE ROOM

To get your storytelling juices flowing, take 5 minutes to write down (in a journal, on your phone, or on your laptop) everything about the room or space where you are right now. Try to use all five senses: What you see, physical sensations present in your body, sounds, smells, and even tastes. Everything goes. If you notice it, include it in your "story." Set a timer for two, three, or five minutes and do not stop writing until it goes off.



Notice that it is actually impossible to note down everything about your space. If you wanted to tell someone about the room, it would likely be quite boring (and long and inefficient) to tell them about the color of the curtains, size of the space, the many sounds you can hear at this moment, all the things you are feeling, and the opinions you have about the aforementioned details.

In order to tell an effective story about the room, you would have to be very selective about what to include. We do this all the time, in all of our storytelling. The trick is to make the process of selection conscious rather than automatic.

In our case, you and your ESD work are the room. So, what is the story you want to tell? Which details will you choose to include? Which can you leave out without losing the essential message? What is absolutely critical for people to know about the room? What is interesting, not only to you, but to others?

In essence, which of those details are the story and which are noise?

Keep this selection process in mind as we begin to construct our elevator pitch.

CRAFTING YOUR ESD ELEVATOR PITCH

This is not your typical elevator-pitch writing process, but we believe that this particular creative exercise can help articulate the soul of your ESD project, as well as the nuts and bolts. The whole activity should only take about 15-30 minutes.

We hope you will give it a try; you may be surprised by the results!

STEP 1A || CLARIFY YOUR INTENTION

Before you begin crafting your elevator pitch, think about your intentions, your goal in sharing it. There could be many different situations where you wish to share your elevator pitch, but for the purposes of this and the following exercises, let's imagine one specific situation, listener, and reason for sharing.

For instance, you could imagine pitching your ESD class to a local shelter because you would like to hold free ESD classes there, or pitching to a school administrator because you want your ESD class to be included in the curriculum. Or perhaps you would like your ESD course and other work to be featured on a podcast. Choose something relevant to you and your organization.

Take three to five minutes to reflect or journal on the following question: Why are you telling this story (about you and your ESD work)? What is your ultimate goal? Dig in. Don't stop with your most obvious answers or the thing you always say. Understanding why we are speaking, sharing, or engaging makes us far more effective. Without having a clear articulation of our "why," we will struggle to deliver our story with power.





START WITH WHY!

Need more inspiration? Check out this abridged Ted Talk by marketing consultant, speaker, and author, Simon Sinek, “[Start With Why.](#)” The talk is focused on marketing, because that’s what he does, but the ideas really apply to anyone or any organization wanting to present themselves more effectively.

STEP 1B || Stream of Consciousness.

For five uninterrupted minutes, write in your journal (or on your phone or laptop, but writing by hand is especially effective for this exercise) in a “stream of consciousness” style. This means you write down everything that pops into your head, even if it doesn’t make sense, sounds silly, or is repetitive. If you can, write continuously, without ever stopping the movement of your hand or fingers.

The invitation: Write down “everything” about yourself using statements that begin with “I am_____,” “I + active verb,” “I believe,” and “I create.”

Call Out Box: Play with words to try to say the same thing in more than one way. ie. “I am an ESD professional,” “I teach empowerment self-defense,” “I believe in the power of self-defense to change lives and empower people,” “I create unique empowerment experiences through the practice of self-defense.” “I run an ESD organization dedicated to fostering personal autonomy.”) Hopefully you can jot down at least 20-25 statements.



STEP 2 || CHOOSE THE HIGHLIGHTS.

Take a moment to read through what you have written (ideally aloud), and star, highlight, or circle the phrases that (in your opinion) get at the core of your passion, vocation, and/or vision for your ESD work.

STEP 3 || GET FEEDBACK.

If possible, ask a friend or colleague for five minutes of their attention, and read your favorite statements (the ones you just selected) aloud to them. Work together to select the three to five that are most compelling.

STEP 4 || PUT IT ALL TOGETHER.

Now, journal, type, or even move around Post-It notes to link those three to five statements together into a coherent story. You might find that there are multiple versions of the story that work for you. Hold on to those variations!

STEP 5 || PRACTICE.

Don't stop there. Take time to practice your pitch (or pitches!)—in front of a mirror, filming yourself on your phone, or with a supportive friend for an audience—and find your natural delivery style. The trick is to leap from what you have on the page to the phrasing and language that feels right in your mouth.



LAND THE DELIVERY



None of this preparation counts for much if we don't land the delivery. How we tell our story—posture, tone, body language, etc.—is just as important as what we say. A few key points to keep in mind:

- **EYE CONTACT.** THIS CAN MAKE ALL THE DIFFERENCE IN ENGAGING YOUR LISTENER.
- **CONFIDENCE.** SPEAK WITH AUTHORITY. YOU ARE AN EXPERT. OWN YOUR PASSION!
- **AUTHENTICITY.** YOU ARE THE EXPERT AT BEING YOU. SPEAK FROM THE HEART AND LET YOUR UNIQUE PERSONALITY COME THROUGH. ONE OF THE MOST EFFECTIVE TOOLS FOR EFFECTIVE PUBLIC SPEAKING IS AUTHENTICITY. HONESTY ENGENDERS TRUST.
- **ENERGY.** WE KNOW YOU ARE PASSIONATE ABOUT ESD. MAKE SURE THAT IS CLEAR IN YOUR TONE, BODY LANGUAGE, AND CHOICE OF LANGUAGE.

PRO TIP

There is a fine line between confidence and arrogance. If you are genuine in your delivery, you will likely find that balance gracefully and effortlessly. We know that you know your stuff. That will come through naturally when you speak about your area of expertise.



CONCLUSION: THE FIRST STEP IS REALIZING YOU CAN DO IT!

Mastering the art of the elevator pitch is a valuable accomplishment for ESD professionals—and anyone looking to communicate the essence of their work concisely and effectively! We hope this guide will help you to distill your mission, vision, and passion into a brief and compelling narrative. And, we invite you to consider key elements such as detail and specificity, being concise, framing, and selectivity in all of your ESD communications.

As you practice and refine your pitch, remember the big picture: What are your goals for your ESD work? What do you want to achieve when you tell new people about it? Your elevator pitch is another tool for your tool belt as you work to amplify your impact and turn your dreams into action.

Want feedback? Remember that you have a whole community of ESD professionals cheering you on—within the Association and beyond it. We would be honored to support you as you grow and develop your ESD practice.



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