



**A Hero's Journey:  
Making the Most  
of Your Training**

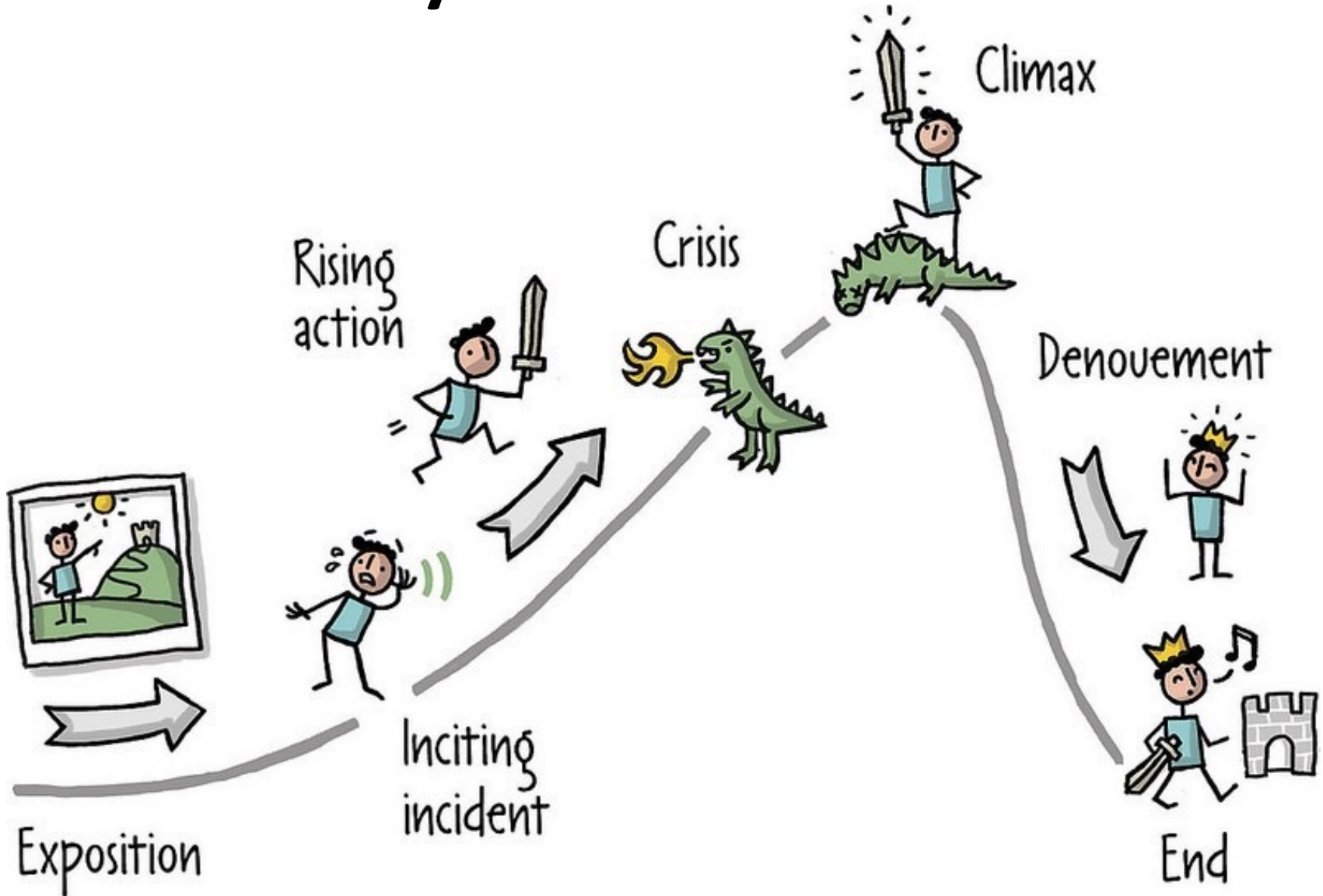
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# Journeys Encounter Conflict

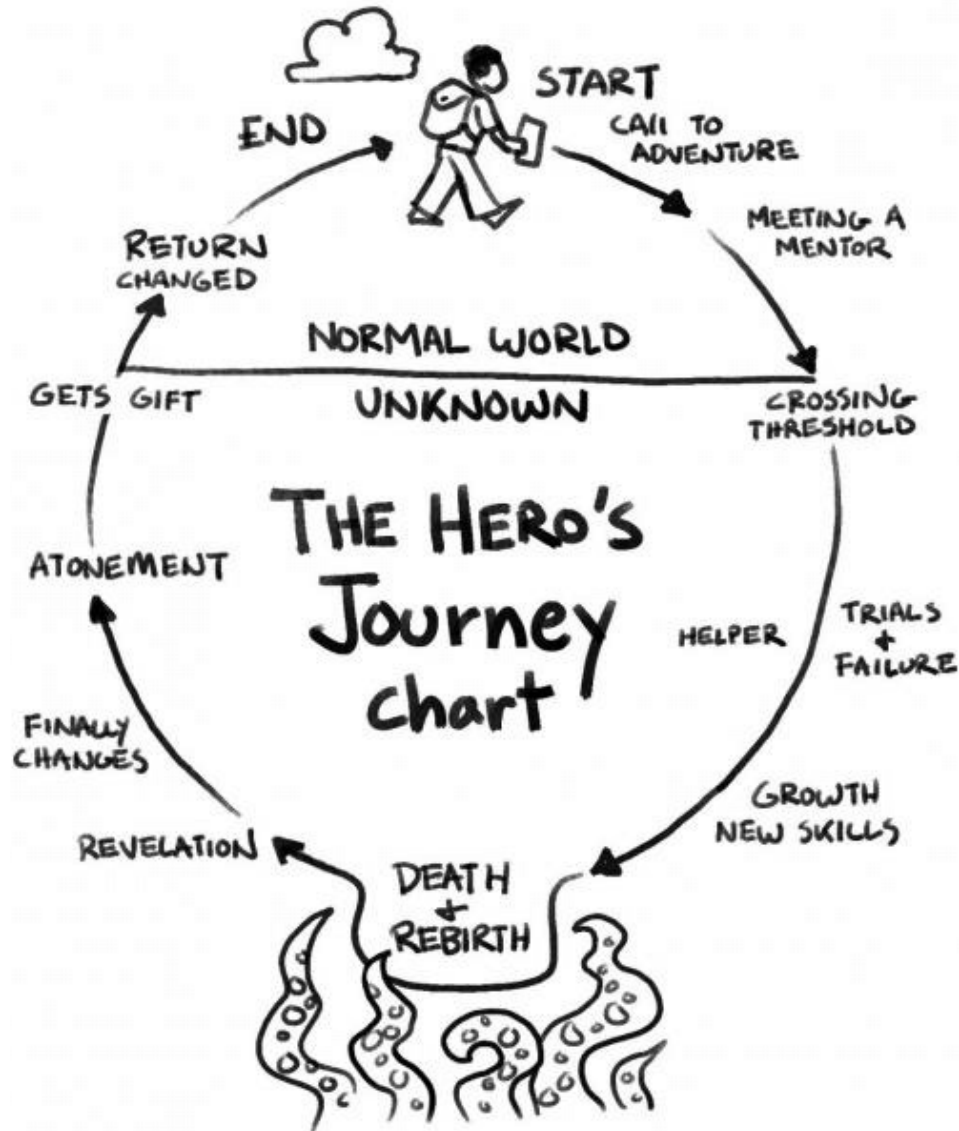


# Journeys Encounter Conflict

## 5 TURNING POINTS OF CONFLICT



# Resolved Conflict Leads to Growth



# Planning Your Journey

## Awareness

- Situation
- Training
- Self

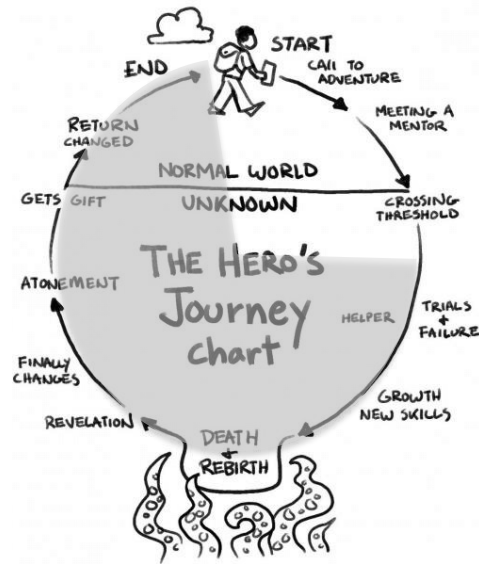
## Convincing Yourself

- Inner Dialogue
- Growth Mindset
- Inspiring Story

## Convincing Others

- Outreach
- Storytelling
- Networking

Just like you can be  
your own *harsh*  
*critic*, you can be your  
own *greatest*  
*advocate*.



# Building Awareness

Situation Assessment

Training & Skills

Self-Awareness

# Use the Scientific Method

Scientists learn a systematic process of observation, research, hypothesizing, experimentation, analysis, and sharing.

However, when facing a problem unrelated to research, scientists abandon the scientific method.

Scientists need to apply this process to their research progress, career advancement, and professional development.

# Use Your Training

## *The PhD*

Creates opportunity and potential  
Hones critical thinking and problem solving skills

## *The Postdoc*

Refines research and professional skills  
Develops an independent investigator

## *The Training*

Select correct problem  
Critical examination  
Thorough analysis  
Eloquent communication



# Evaluate Your Skills



THE NATIONAL POSTDOCTORAL ASSOCIATION'S

## CORE COMPETENCIES



### DISCIPLINE-SPECIFIC CONCEPTUAL KNOWLEDGE

An overall understanding of implications of work on broader field, the importance of innovation & creativity, & grasp of cultural, language & technical discipline-specific knowledge.

- Analytical approach to defining scientific questions
- Design of scientifically testable hypotheses
- Broad based & cross-disciplinary knowledge acquisition
- Interpretation & analysis of data



### RESEARCH SKILL DEVELOPMENT

Ensure that postdocs are adequately equipped to carry out independent research, whether in bench- or non-bench related professions.

- Research techniques & laboratory safety
- Experimental design
- Data analysis & interpretation
- Statistical analysis
- Effective search strategies & critical evaluation of the literature
- Principles of the peer review process



### COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Postdocs should master communication skills which ensure that messages are heard & understood by the appropriate audience.

- Writing (scientific publications, grants/applications, career documents)
- Speaking (presentations, interviews)
- Teaching
- Interpersonal Skills (style, negotiation, reviews/feedback, networking, conflict resolution, media management)



### PROFESSIONALISM

Postdocs instill and enforce the virtues of honor, integrity, compassion, cooperation, reliability, & enhance the perception of this work in society.

- Workplace professionalism (diverse teams)
- Institutional professionalism (connecting at/across/with institutions as employees or representatives)
- Collegial professionalism (engaging as a citizen to scholarship)
- Universal professionalism



### LEADERSHIP & MANAGEMENT SKILLS

Postdocs should understand which leadership styles are appropriate for any given time & situation increase performance & productivity. Leaders must also be able to competently manage projects, budgets, & staff.

- Management Skills (research staff management, project management, data & resource management, general management)
- Leadership Skills (Identifying & clarifying goals, motivating/inspiring others, serving as a role model)



### RESPONSIBLE CONDUCT OF RESEARCH (RCR)

The pursuit & advancement of knowledge depend on openness, honesty, objectivity, & trust. Therefore, postdocs are responsible for upholding & engaging the ethical norms of their fields.

- Data ownership & sharing
- Publication practices & responsible authorship
- Research with human subjects or animals (where applicable)
- Identifying & mitigating research misconduct
- Conflicts of interest

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# Align Your Skills

## Research Skills

- Knowledge of Discipline
- Lab & Experimental Skills
- Responsible Conduct of Research

## Transferable Skills

- Communication
- Professionalism
- Leadership & Management



# Assess Yourself

**SKILLS:** what you are good at?

**INTERESTS:** what you enjoy doing?

**VALUES:** what matters most to you?

- Analysis of activities, ideas, and motivations
- Affirmation of strengths and competencies
- Awareness weaknesses and gaps

# Inventory Your Experience

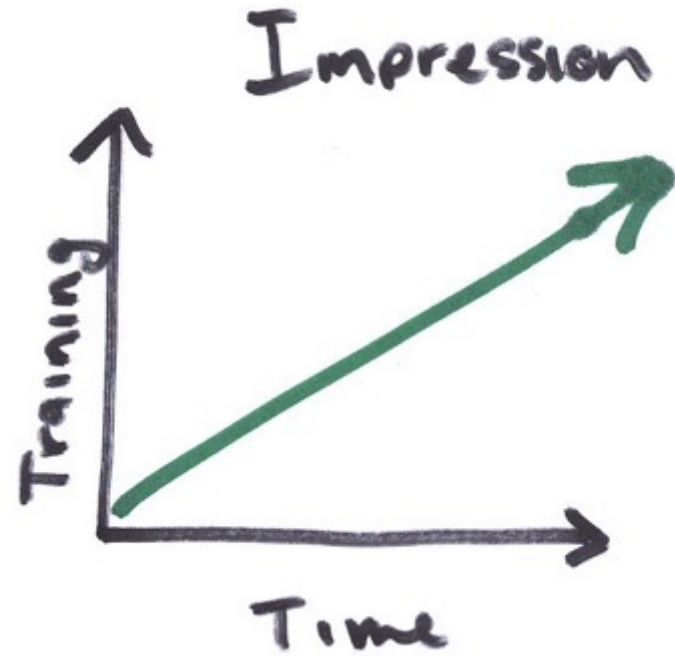
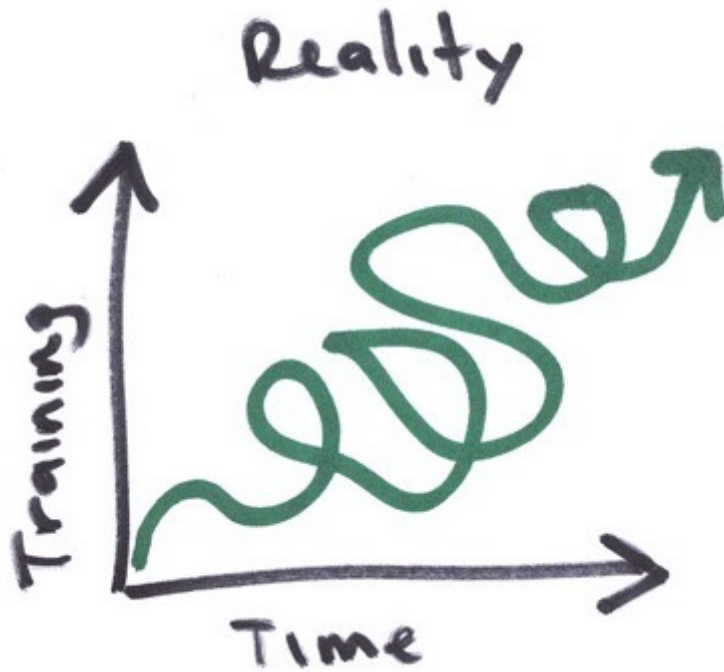
- Everything you know about science
- Everything you know about technology
- Technical skills
- Computational skills
- Grant writing skills
- Manuscript writing skills
- Interpersonal skills

- Skills/Expertise
- Titles and affiliations
- Education
- Community service
- Awards and honors
- Memberships
- Publications
- Languages
- Interests

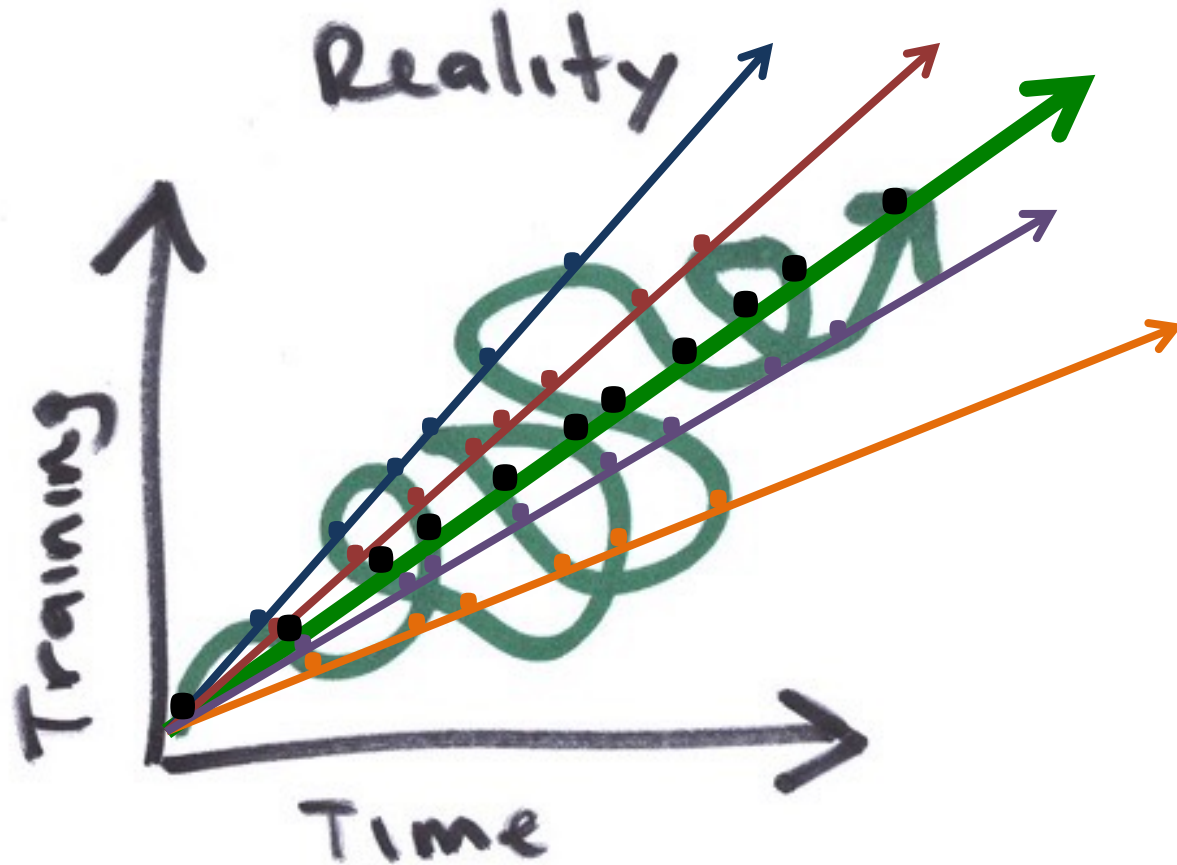
# Recognize Transferable Skills

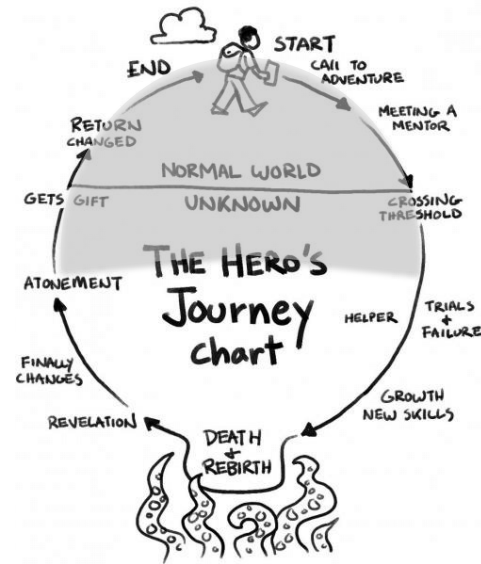
- Research, publication, and project management
- Planning, organizing, and presenting events
- Networking and relationship-building
- Collaboration, teamwork, unified goalsetting
- Budgets, inventory, and workflow
- Priority, time, and resource management
- Supervising, training, and managing people
- Leadership, service, and outreach
- Teaching and mentoring
- Independence

# Create a Trajectory



# Refine Your Trajectory





# Convincing Yourself

Inner Dialogue  
Growth Mindset  
Inspiring Story



# Recognize Pain Points



- Professional
  - Inactive network
  - Unknown career target
  - Unpolished career story
  - Unsure of marketable skills
- Personal
  - Analysis paralysis
  - Unrealistic expectations
  - Exhausted, jaded, or burnt out
- Project
  - Near end date
  - Incomplete achievements
  - Little or no mentor engagement

# Engage Your Inner Dialogue

What just happened? What is possible? What can I learn?

What do I want? What are my choices? What do I do now?

What assumptions am I making? What are the facts? What is the truth?

What are others thinking and feeling? Am I responsible? Who's fault is it?

What is wrong with me? What is wrong with them?

Am I a failure? Do I belong? When will they find me out?



# Doubt Spiral to Growth Mindset

## Doubt

- Reactive, judgmental
- Problem-focused
- Know-it-all, inflexible
- Presumes limits and scarcity
- Win/Lose relating
- Fears feedback
- Conflict and failure averse
- Critical, close-minded
- Unworthy imposter

## Growth

- Proactive, accepting
- Solution-focused
- Comfort with ambiguity
- Possibilities are unlimited
- Win/Win relating
- Embraces feedback
- Conflict and failure is growth
- Appreciative, open-minded
- Worthy contributor

# Be Open Minded

- Remain open to all possibilities
- Stay in the moment
- Say yes more than you say no
- Contribute and help out
- Go above and beyond
- Never apologize for doing the right thing
- Learn from happy accidents
- Lean on friends and colleagues

# Promising Pivot Points



- Professional
  - Activated network
  - Clarified career target
  - Polished career story
  - Honed marketable skills
- Personal
  - Prevent analysis paralysis
  - Set realistic expectations
  - Build resilience
- Project
  - Established deadlines
  - Completed achievements
  - Improved mentor engagement

# Change the Story You Tell Yourself

## Steps

1. Write out your current self-dialogue
2. List words/phrases that invoke a reaction
3. Check their veracity of these words
4. Imagine what a supportive story says
5. Replace the untrue/negative words
6. Compose a new and accurate story to tell yourself

## Create a Hero origin story

### *Feelings*

- Emotive
- Optimistic
- Future-focused
- Confident
- Inspiring

### *Foundations*

- 20/20 hindsight
- Motivation
- Resilience
- Growth mindset



# Be the Hero of Your Inner Story

## *Negative*

I am a poor postdoc without retirement benefits, misunderstood by the world, fighting uphill against obstacles, with a PI who hates me. I'm all alone and have few career options, struggling for leftovers.



**Confidence**  
**Accuracy**  
**Inspiration**

## *Accurate & Inspiring*

I am a thoughtful and hardworking postdoc with an intellectually challenging project that has potential for great impact. While this period in my life and training are difficult, I have the tools, motivation, and resources to see it through.



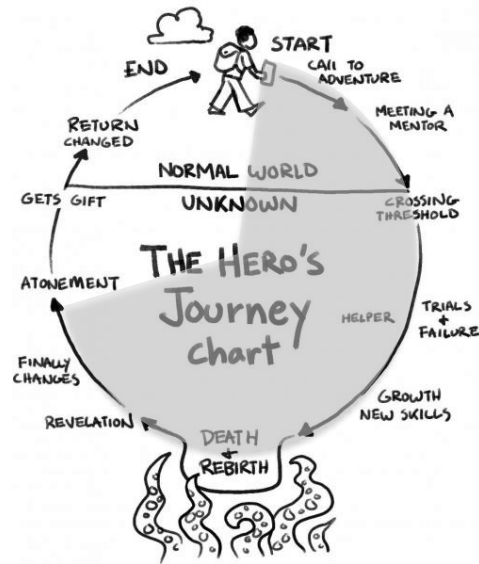
**Emotion**

**Optimism**

**Future-focus**

## *Optimistic & Future-Focused*

I will be a successful project management professional with incredible benefits, independence, and overcoming challenges with a supervisor who supports me. I will be at the center of a giant network with opportunities for growth and advancement.



# Convincing Others

Outreach  
Storytelling  
Networking



# Importance of Sharing Your Story

Dear Jim,

I hope this message finds you well. You may remember me. I met with you once to review my resume and have attended a few of the post-doc career development events. I also ran into you a couple of times on the bike trail!

I want to share with you some good news: after a somewhat long(ish) process of networking and interviewing, I recently accepted a position at Momenta Pharmaceuticals. I started a few weeks ago working as a Scientist in the Translational Research group.

I saw that you will be leading a seminar on "crafting your story for career transition" in the coming week. I can tell you first hand that for me, it was all about finding and refining that story! In the end, my skills were secondary as compared to what my particular "story" was and how it distinguished me. I truly believe that attending the many post-doc sessions, helped me craft this story.

I want to take this opportunity to thank you for all the work you do. Know that it does make a difference, even if people just sit and listen -- as I have often done. Something always sticks.

If there is anything that I can ever do to help other post-docs transition, please don't hesitate to reach out.

Best wishes,  
Amal

3.19.16

# Create P-A-R Stories

*Describe your experiences systematically*

- **Problem:** Describe a problem/challenge YOU faced
- **Actions:** Describe actions/approaches YOU undertook to address problem
- **Result:** Explain measurable results/impact of YOUR actions

Practice communicating your achievement.

# Example: Failure is Learning Opportunity

## **Problem (P)**: Define the failure in three parts

- 1) Missed a fellowship grant deadline
- 2) Unsure of internal processes and deadlines
- 3) Had a competing deadline for a publication

## **Actions (A)**: Share the actions that lead to missed deadline

- 1) Plan was not SMART AF
- 2) Did not prioritize or say no to other things
- 3) Did not delegate or ask for help in time

## **Results (R)**: Talk about results and impact of missing the deadline

- 1) No fellowship grant
- 2) Delayed project
- 3) Postponed manuscript

## **Lessons Learned**: Share what you learned and will do differently in the future

- 1) Completed project management course; 2) Incorporated realistic time management & prioritization; 3) Familiarized self with administrative process; 4) Built collaboration with shared accountability

**S** – *Specific* – Is it focused and unambiguous?

**M** – *Measurable* – How do you know if you achieved this goal?

**A** – *Achievable* – Considering difficulty and timeframe, is this goal attainable?

**R** – *Relevant* – Why is the goal significant?

**T** – *Time-bound* – Did you specify a deadline?

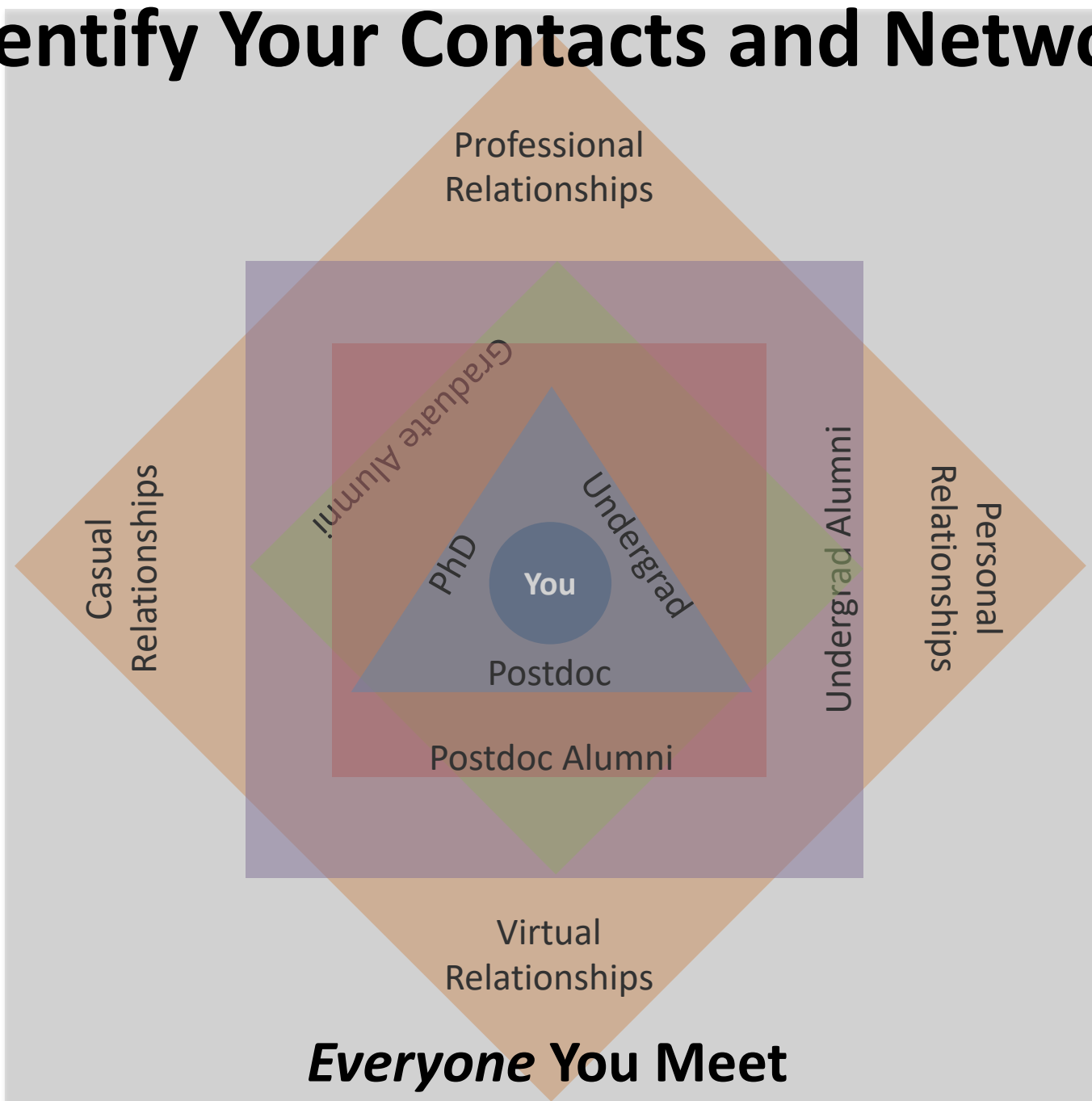
**A** – *Accountable* – How will you stay on task?

**F** – *Fortitudinous* – How will you face adversity?

# Tell Interconnected Stories

	PAR-A	PAR-B	PAR-C	PAR-D
Problem solving		X		X
Leadership	X		X	
Teamwork	X			X
Communication		X	X	
Drive to achieve	X	X		X

# Identify Your Contacts and Network



# Reach Out to Others

- Include something personal and verifiable
  - saw them speak at a conference
- Say something nice that is true
  - their research really impressed you
- Clearly excited to meet that specific person
  - not just anybody
- Include just enough background info
  - to demonstrate fit and understanding of needs
- Mention the name of a mutual connection
  - could easily be vetted
- Do not make an outrageous ask
  - specific, open-ended, and easy out

# Invite ~~Cold~~ Warm Contacts

Dear John,

**Referral**

**Compliment**

In a recent conversation with Sarah Duncan regarding my career development, she told me that you had a great success in industrial career after your postdoc at Harvard. She suggested I contact you to schedule a meeting as she felt you would be able to furnish me with valuable advice and information.

**Clarify**

Please understand I do not expect you to have a position or be aware of any openings at this time.

**Career Story**

Presently, I am a research fellow at HMS's New England Primate Research Center, Laboratory of Translation Phenomics under the advisory of Dr. Eric. I am working on human/primate genetics and neurodegenerative diseases including Huntington's disease (HD). I used high throughput sequencing and bioinformatics analysis software to develop better primate disease models. I also found new target for Huntington's disease and running proof of concept studies.

I have Diploma in software development, MS in Biomedical Sciences, and PhD in Pharmacology & Toxicology. I have strong practical experience in neuroscience, molecular biology, genetics, pharmaceuticals and computation expertise for combinatorial approach to find innovative biomarkers and therapy for neuropsychiatric diseases.

**Mini Bio**

I would like to discuss how I can transitions from academia to industry, what in my background would industry be interested in.

**Conversation**

**Control**

I will call you the week of 14th to arrange a time to meet. I know your time is valuable and I promise to be brief.

Many Thanks,

# Have a Conversation

- Practice your intro story
  - “Tell me about yourself...”
- Turn the interaction into a conversation
  - Ask what makes their job appealing
  - Inquire about what advice they wish they were given
- Aim to engage, not impress
  - Let them talk, be interested, highlight common ground
  - Speak confidently yet humbly
- Deploy PAR stories for in depth questions
  - “Describe a time when you faced adversity...”
  - “Talk about a time when you solved a problem...”
  - “Explain your recent paper or greatest accomplishment...”



# (Net)Work Intelligently

Make everything you do multi-purpose

Unify diverse aspects of your training

Share your interests

- Department seminars and functions
- Career workshops & panels
- Seminars with external speakers
- Job fairs (even, if you're not looking)
- Introduce yourself and exchange contact info
- Reach out to speakers, even if you can't attend
- Stealth network: mentors, colleagues, alumni, friends...AND church, daycare, salon, gym, transit

# Sharing Your Hero's Journey

## Awareness

- Situation
- Training
- Self

## Convincing Yourself

- Inner Dialogue
- Growth Mindset
- Inspiring Story

## Convincing Others

- Outreach
- Storytelling
- Networking

**Authenticity**

**Reality**

**Empathy/Sympathy**

**Credibility**

**Community**

**Trust**

**Influence**

# Sharing Your Hero's Journey

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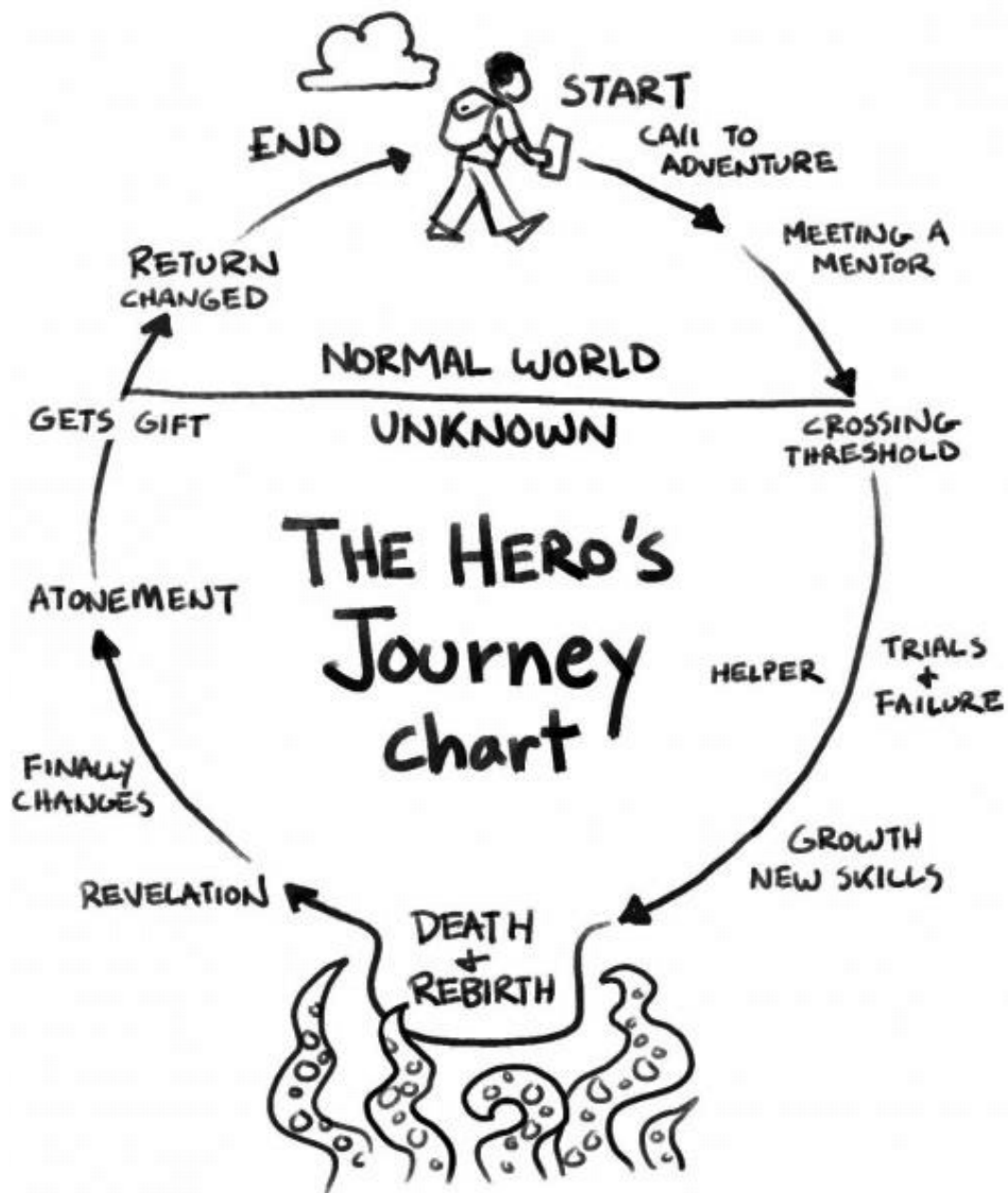
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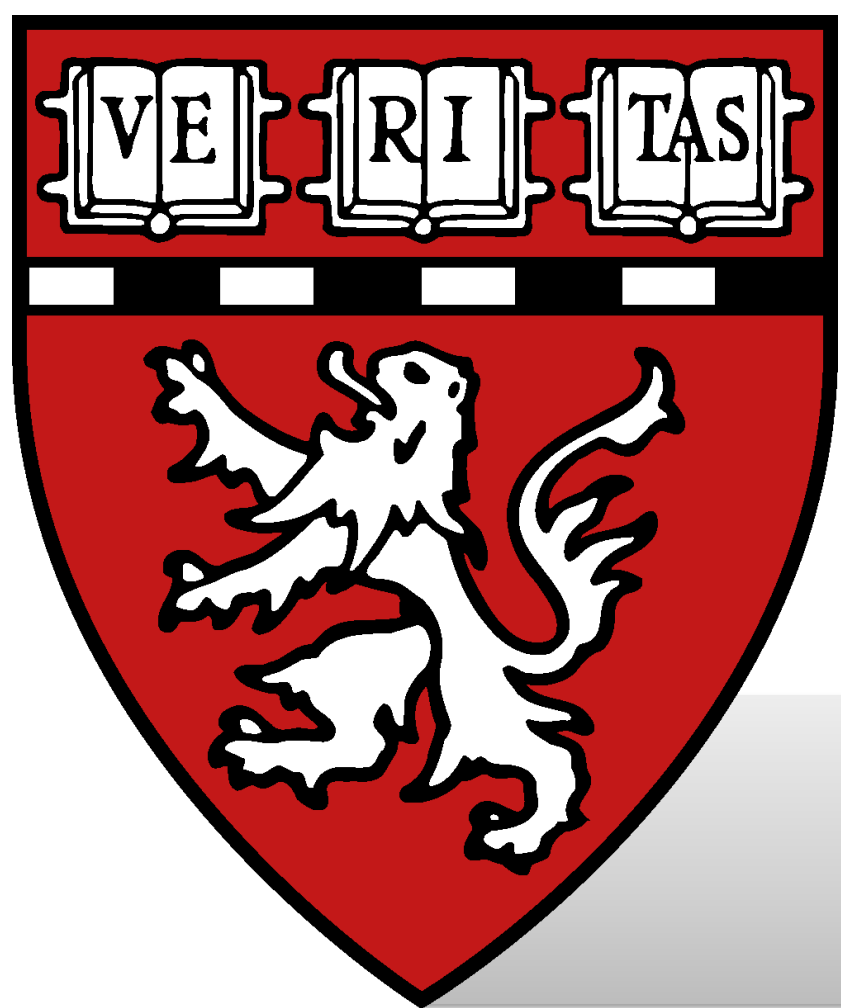
- Inner Dialogue
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## Convincing Others

- Outreach
- Storytelling
- Networking

When others hear  
your *story and vision*  
they are compelled  
to be your *advocate*.





**Thank You!**



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