



Handout

Being constructive at every stage of the story process

Reporters can incorporate constructive journalism techniques into many steps of their work as they move from story idea to final product and beyond. Here are some ideas how to do that:

1. Developing an idea, choosing a topic

- Brainstorm using the PERMA Method (Positive emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, Accomplishments).
- Engage the community to see what's important to them.
- Look at data for inspiration, be on the lookout for “positive deviants”.

2. Desk Research

- Look for protagonists that really represent an issue, not outliers. Are they engaged, making a difference?
- Look for multiple sources with different perspectives to add nuance. Are they surprising? What is their motivation for participating?
- There are multiple perspectives to a story. Ensure the whole picture is being explored, not just the negative or expected aspects.

3. Interviewing

- Listen actively to build trust.
- Try the looping technique to ensure understanding and find what matters to people.
- Add future -oriented questions to learn where things go from here.

4. Writing/editing

- Fill out a story with context and nuance.
- Include a variety of voices to bring in fresh perspectives.
- Language use should be carefully considered – the goal is to inform, not to inflame or create fear.
- Pictures and headlines should be carefully considered.

5. Publication/community

- Publish on social media and ask for input and feedback.
- Moderate social media channels to ensure a constructive environment.
- Answer questions from the audience; respond to constructive comments.
- Ask community members what stories they want next.

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