

Telling your story

A storytelling guide about our relationship with air travel

One of the most powerful ways we can quickly establish trust, rapport and connection with its new community - as well as attracting newcomers in droves - is demonstrating human, vulnerable dimensions of a more aligned way of life. These suggestions also apply when guiding micro-influencers, collecting video and other forms of storytelling, and inviting community members to blog, share their experiences.

Often, sustainability or climate personal stories, like other transformational narratives, are variations on the classic storyline:

Amazing Grace, How sweet the sound

That saved a wretch like me

I once was lost, but now am found

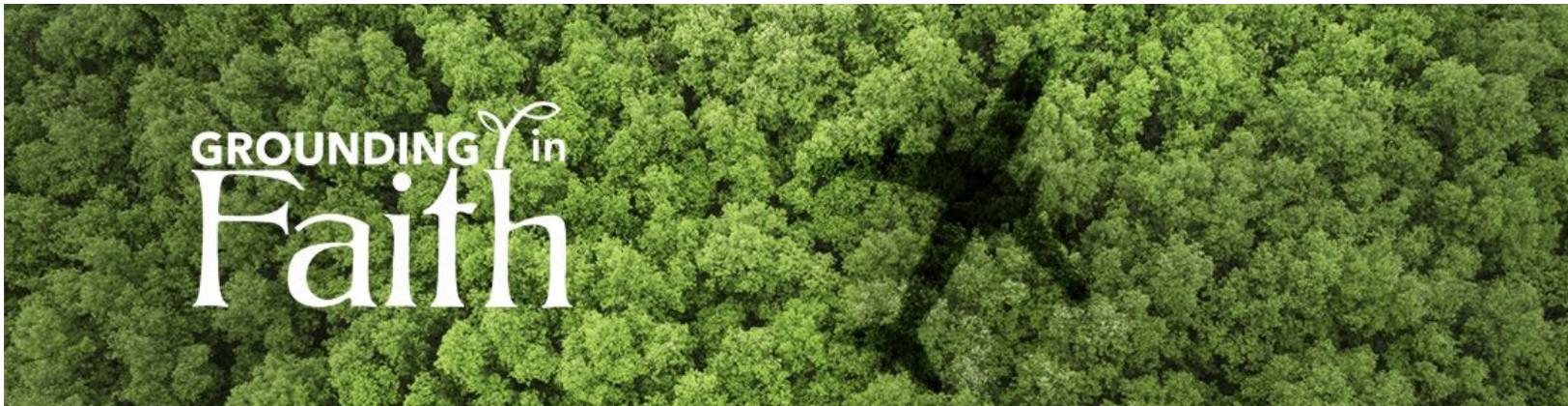
T'was blind but now I see

In other words: I was once a frequent flier (**wretch**), who loved my exciting globe-trotting lifestyle, but then x happened, I saw the light (**now am found**), I'm helping the planet, and I feel reborn and excited and passionate (**now I see**).

This may all be true. But if our stories are only success stories, they leave out the key ingredient of relatable challenges, dilemmas, pain points, and if/how these were resolved or negotiated. Not everyone we are communicating with can relate to a purely aspirational narrative.

Humans process information most quickly, thoroughly and subconsciously through relatable stories. Relatable stories are empathic ways of communicating with people.

Relatable storytelling means that we show up fully, as messy, aspiring, sometimes contradictory, complex and complicated human beings.



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What is your air travel story?

We usually know what kind of story we wish to tell. There may be a situation in one's life, where certain things come together, a crisis, and an AHA moment - or a period of time when one can no longer ignore the knowledge about our impacts on the planet. It could be cumulative or a specific turning point.

For some like Gopal Patel, Director of Bhumi Project, this transformation was *catalyzed* by a life event - applying for a green card, leading to being literally grounded for a certain amount of time - leading to a spiritual connection and appreciation for staying put and present. This is a "change agent" story that will resonate in particular with those who have had similar experiences.

For others, transformation and change comes about more gradually, perhaps as a series of events or experiences that, over time, lead to a growing sense of commitment and motivation to live in a different way. For many people, it's gradual, and not a clear "turning point" moment.

What matters most in telling our stories, as diverse as they are, is the quality of honesty, vulnerability, and humility. This is the relational "glue" that helps people experience trust and connection with the people "behind the curtain" of the campaign and brand. And the more human and real those people are, the more sticky the engagement and loyalty will be.

The following are suggestions for the creation of personal stories

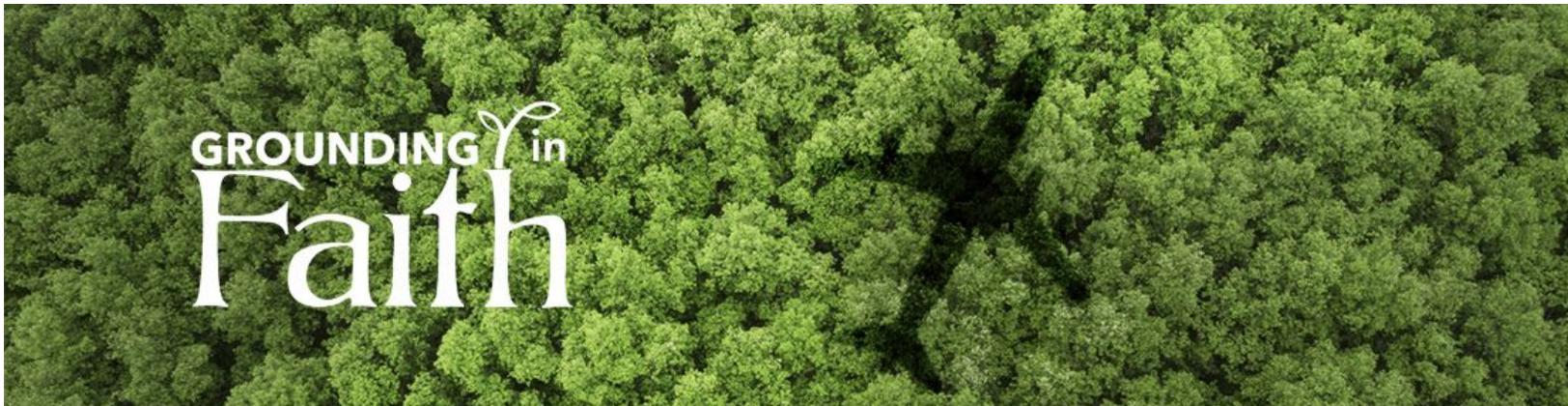
It's tempting to only want to tell the positive story and all of the benefits we are experiencing by being more grounded, flying less or mindfully. However, if we only focus on the benefits, we are not empathizing with the audience who may be experiencing intense ambivalence or complicated feelings about the whole thing.

What kind of stories and examples can you include, that show that you have also been there, and that it's OK to have those feelings?

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- Considering starting out your personal story with a specific experience or moment, when you knew that things were changing. What was happening, who were you with, how were you feeling?
 - Was there a situation, event or experience that led you to start connecting travel and planet? What was happening? Did you have resistance? How did you navigate this?
 - Can you recall a time when you first started feeling the benefits of flying less or engaging with air travel differently?
 - Is there a specific moment or situation, conversation, that was particularly significant for you?
 - Is there someone who has been especially inspiring for you? Why? What about them?
 - What remains a challenge or an area that comes up for you?
 - What is your "why"? And here, avoid being overly moralizing or getting into too much data. Stay human.
 - What is surprising or unexpected?
- Consider featuring challenges in a series or collection of stories. For example:
 - When you needed to communicate with someone close in your life, about your new choices.
 - Situations where you felt judged, attacked, or people were being defensive. How did you manage that, and what did you learn?
 - How you've dealt with family events.
 - Humorous moments or experiences when communicating with others about being more "grounded."
 - Dealing with your desires. What are they, how do you handle this?



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- Specific resources, books, etc. that have been powerful, and why.
- How your identity has changed - how your experience of being in the world (more empowered? Lighter, cleaner, when you're in alignment with your values?)
- What remains challenging, if anything?

In our stories, we can relate challenges, trials and insights with humor, candor and honesty. In doing so, we reduce the "threats" many people may experience when it comes to looking at our relationship with climate change. In fact, demonstrating empathy around behavior changes like this is a proven technique that significantly reduces people's resistance, and enhances the likelihood of adapting new practices, especially with something gentle and modest as setting intentions for shifting mindsets, and engaging in mindful travel.

Let us and others know how it goes!