



DISTRICT ONE StoryMasters

StoryMasters Holds Idyllic First Meeting

It's July 12, 2020. I've just signed onto Zoom for the StoryMasters meeting, and already my laptop screen is filling up with smiling faces. Cheerful greetings, laughter and chatter fan out across cyberspace. The excitement is palpable as the meeting time nears. At 3:00 o'clock, the meeting begins. This is the club's first meeting of the new Toastmasters year. I can tell it's going to be an excellent one!

Margaret Mitchell

As Immediate Past President, I was placed first on the agenda in order to give my swan song address. I was happy to thank the officers and members who had had worked so hard to pursue their goals, while also helping the club achieve President's Distinguished with a perfect score of 10 DCP goals.

Next, President **Miyo Yamauchi** gave her incoming address titled *Don't Forget the Beginner's Humility*. She urged us to continue to grow, embrace change, and use opportunities in our everyday lives to practice our storytelling skills.

Now for the stories! **Tina Tomiyama** took us to church with her tale, *Singing in the Choir*. To the delight of her audience, she sang snippets of gospel and Negro spiritual songs as she she described her experience as the sole white member of the black choir at Transfiguration Catholic Church.

Lin Van Gelder led us back in time with *A Disneyland Adventure*, her story about riding the Matterhorn at Disneyland with Jim, the man who would one day become her husband. A light-hearted and humorous story, it captured memories from the 1970s, enhanced by photographs that Lin shared onscreen.

Hiba Hamdan, our final speaker, delivered a powerful speech titled *WarOna*. She gave us a glimpse into her horrific experience of growing up in Lebanon during the Lebanese Civil War. Then she skillfully transitioned to describing how she "sanitizes the stress" associated with Covid-19 by using some of the same skills she learned as a girl during the war. Her prescriptions for winning the war against virus-related stress are: be safe, be grateful, and be of service.

Such a fine meeting merited strong evaluations. General Evaluator **Mallery Murtrey** led an evaluation team that included **Kathy Garr**, Timer; **Antoinette Byron**, **Anna Ziss-Patton** and **Catherine Magruder**, Evaluators; and **Sarita Jackson**, Word/Grammarian.

The word of the day was "*idyllic*," an adjective that means like an idyll; extremely happy, peaceful or picturesque. What a perfect word to describe StoryMasters' first club meeting of the year!

UPCOMING EVENTS

- Saturday, July 18: [Toastmasters Leadership Institute](#)
Our own Catherine Magruder is co-chairing, and our own Margaret Mitchell will be a panelist in an educational workshop at noon. *Check it out!*
- Sunday, July 26 @ 3pm: **Think Like Google Workshop** (only for StoryMasters)
Check your email and RSVP if you want to attend!
- Sunday, July 26 @ 4:30pm: [Tales by the Sea](#)
- Sunday, August 9: [StoryMasters meeting](#)
Guests, don't forget to RSVP!

Check out more events at: <https://thestorymasters.org/events/>

MEMBER'S STORY

How to Survive WarOna Times

Yes, I hear you! We've all had enough of this Coronavirus situation, a situation neither you nor I have created.

Sometimes I feel like, "Okay, that's it! I'm going to rip off this mask and scream. Hey, where's the remote control, let's change this Corona channel...!" But there's no control.

Then I catch myself in this hysterical mode, so I shift my thinking in a certain way. Breathe deeply. Smile. Life is beautiful. Thank you, God! Now, I feel calmer, even somehow happier!

You may ask, "How can this be possible in a pandemic?"

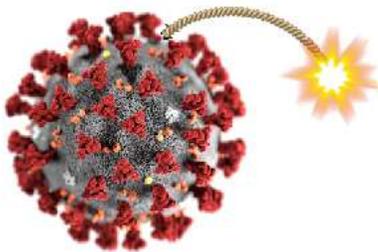
Well, it took me 15 years living in a horrific war in Lebanon to get trained on calming myself down, even in the midst of exploding bombs. I had to, because I used to volunteer with the Red Cross and in field hospitals, and you can't be hysterical in front of patients!

One basic rule I learned from the war:

If you can't control it, don't fight it! Just survive it!



Hiba Hamdan



Since March, when we started to seriously feel the coronavirus impact, I started to apply what I had learned, and it's been working!

You too can feel calm and somehow happy if you apply 3 easy principles that were tested-and-proved to help survive tough times, a war, coronavirus, or any "can't-control-it-dangerous-risky-and-driving-me-crazy" situation. Let's call this situation a WarOna! (War-Corona)

1. Be Safe (Body)

When I started to volunteer with the Red Cross in Lebanon, I was only 13 years old. Because I'm always passionate about helping others, and with the craziness of a teenager, I used to take high risks and go to dangerous fighting areas. One day, my older brother said to me, "Hiba, be careful, and ***don't do anything that can't be reversed***. The war will end, and you don't want to end up with no legs or no arms, and not able to continue your life easily."

His words stayed with me, so I learned basic safety practices and applied them. Today, I'm learning different measures to stay safe-and-healthy during the pandemic. You know these already; if not, just ask any 5-year-old kid!

Other than washing our hands, wearing a mask, and eating healthy; there's another aspect to consider: Stress. During the war, there were as many people who died from stress-induced heart attacks as those killed by bombs...

Do you want to survive a deadly virus, then after all is over, end up with a serious condition just because you stressed yourself out?

In 1990, once the civil war ended in Lebanon, I was able to start realizing my dreams because I stayed healthy and... alive. I left to North America, got a dream job traveling around the world, got to live in beautiful-safe places, and got to have wonderful loving friends.

What dreams would you like to realize when Corona is gone-a?

Start today to prepare a list of goals-and-dreams and sanitize stress out of your life.

2. Be Grateful (Mind)

In whatever terrible condition you're in, there's always someone else, somewhere else in the world, who's got worse. *Misery can go to infinity!*

Be grateful of what you have now; and make it easier on yourself by imagining the worst! Exaggerate, and the situation becomes humorous.

During the war, when serious bombing used to start, we'd run with our family and all neighbors down to the basement, or any other sheltering place. We'd sit there at candlelight, horrified by the loud explosions around us, and we'd say, "At least, we have here food and coffee. Imagine if we were in Zimbabwe-Africa, hungry, and chased for days by lions and tigers!" And we'd laugh!

Today, if you're in Zimbabwe, hungry, and chased by lions and tigers, you'd say...

"Imagine if I were now in the US...!"

When you catch yourself having negative thoughts, turn your focus to the good things you have, and be grateful. Gratitude triggers endorphins in our brain and helps us feel better.

The American poet Walt Whitman said, "Keep your face always toward the sunshine, and shadows will fall behind you."

3. Be of Service (Soul)

Serving our community is healing.

When we help others, people will be grateful, they'll be praying for us, and we'll get all that positive energy, the good-karma, coming back at us, making our life better. You know, you can be of service doing nothing...except simply smiling! You'll feel better, the others around you will feel better. What a great service!

One day during the war in Lebanon, I was volunteering at a field hospital, and there was a sudden attack on my small town. Fifty-eight innocent relatives, and my grandma, were shot at their door. My life was saved because I was out there, being of service.

How can you serve your community while doing your daily work, and taking care of family or business? Helping others will energize your life. In the process, you may discover your life purpose, or — like in my case — you may save your life.

Be safe, be grateful, be of service; and remember, if you can't control it, don't fight it, just survive it!

Hiba Hamdan grew-up in Lebanon during the civil war (1975-1990), then moved to North America, where she had a 20-year career in the Airlines and Telecommunication industries. Currently, Hiba lives with her husband in Santa Barbara, California, and works on a part-time basis in TV Programming & Production.

FEATURE STORY

Why Do My Stories Matter?

“Why do you tell stories?” I was asked by an elderly audience member who I sensed was not being friendly. So I gave her a flippant answer, “Because they spring into my hand and want to be shared.”

Later I was reminded of a quotation from author Madeleine L'Engle and wished I could have come up with an erudite answer like hers.

“Why does anybody tell a story? It does indeed have something to do with faith, faith that the universe has meaning, that our little human lives are not irrelevant, that what we choose, or say or do matters, matters cosmically.” —Madeleine L'Engle

Although my flippant answer had not been as poetic or literate, it was equally true. My personal stories do spring into my head and they want to escape into Madeleine L'Engle's cosmic world. They are stories of my life experiences, my family background, my cultural history. They are a look into the real world I must occupy.

This realization came to me with more impact than ever during the last month of inequality protests. I am reminded of stories I have told that shed a light on events that diminished my value as a person. Those stories needed to be told because they matter. They needed to be told because that history matters.

So if an audience member asks today, “Why do you tell stories?” my answer would be different. I tell my stories because they are who I am, and they matter, because I matter.



Barbara H. Clark

BARBARA H. CLARK is a professional storyteller who performs original personal stories written for adults. They include events from life in a small east coast town and in Los Angeles, stories of her family heritage, profiles of memorable relatives, and accounts of spooky events. She has performed in storytelling concerts and festivals all over southern California. Her polished stage presence reflects the 30 years she spent as an administrator with Los Angeles Public Library. Her love of books is seen in her 14 years as secretary to a Literacy Council which provided books and storytellers to 26 preschools. Barbara is a five-time recipient of L.A. City Cultural Affairs grants to perform her stories at Senior Citizen Centers, and a four-time recipient of foundation grants to teach personal storytelling to high school students. She served nine years as Artist-In-Residence at Vineyard Recreation Center teaching storytelling to seniors. She was recognized as an “Unsung Hero of the Year” in 2005 by KCET-TV for her work with seniors, and her storytelling workshop TELL ME A STORY was highlighted on television for the full month of February. Now in its 16th year, that workshop is currently taught at the Institute of Musical Arts where she also serves as Artistic Director for the Ray G. Clark Theater. She is also a recipient of the “Storytelling Spirit Award,” presented by the Los Angeles Storytelling Festival, and the “Unsung Shero Award” presented by Women In NAACP. Barbara has a B.A. degree from Howard University and a M.L.S. degree from University of Southern California.



Institute of Musical Arts

STORYTELLING STUB

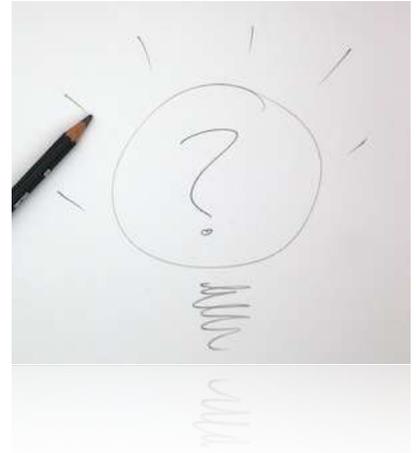
Story Ideas

Where do you get your story ideas? When we listen to somebody's story, sometimes a phrase in the story or emotion that you feel from it sparks our inspiration, doesn't it? If you jot down your thoughts at those moments, you get more story ideas.

Next time when you need some inspirations, open a book or magazine, pick a sentence randomly, set a timer, and start writing with the sentence you picked. Human brains are fascinating. Even when it doesn't make sense, keep writing for 3-5 minutes and let the feeling flow. It may take you to somewhere you've never imagined or you may get a totally different idea.

Or try these ideas:

- ▶ [100 Story ideas Categorized by Theme](#)
- ▶ [365 Story Ideas](#)
- ▶ [Top 100 Short Story Ideas](#)
- ▶ [50 Creative Storytelling Ideas For Your Brands](#)



EDITOR'S NOTE

One Step At A Time, One Day At A Time

I'm going to accomplish so many things!

That's what I thought back in March when I started working from home. Where did the time go? In theory, I've had more time by staying at home. What did I use the extra time for? I can list all the items that didn't happen or cancelled, but what did I actually accomplish? Sure, I wrote a couple of new stories and finished some little projects, but I'm still far, far away from where I want to be.

While I was being overwhelmed with the frustration and self-criticism, I was invited to Professional Women Toastmasters as a keynote speaker last month. The keynote speech preparation took me down memory lane from joining Toastmasters in 2009, winning my first speech contest trophy in 2011, becoming a club president in 2013 and Area Governor in 2014...to receiving Distinguished Toastmaster and Lifetime Achievement Awards in 2020.

That reminded me of a saying:

The creation of a thousand forests is in one acorn.

When I started my journey in 2009, none of those accomplishments was my goal. I simply wanted to improve my English speaking skills. All I did was to complete one task at a time. Who would've thought that I would be telling stories in public in the future? Not me!

No acorn becomes an oak tree overnight.

Let's keep remind ourselves; *Take one step at a time, one day at a time!*

— Miyo Yamauchi



My first trophy