



BEST PRACTICES AND ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR MENTAL HEALTH STORYTELLING

A GUIDE FOR ARTISTS AND CREATORS

HONORING THE COMPLEXITIES OF MENTAL HEALTH

Mental health is a crucial aspect of human life, with its complexities deeply affecting both individuals and audiences when explored through storytelling. This guide serves as a vital resource for artists and creatives, offering essential guidelines and thoughtful questions designed to foster accuracy, compassion, and resonance in narratives centered on women's mental health experiences. Such content not only respects the dignity of those whose stories are being told but also cultivates a deeper comprehension among viewers. The sensitive intersection of mental health and the diverse experiences of women poses a unique challenge for artists and creators, whose portrayals can dramatically shape public perception and attitudes.

FREE STORYTELLING GUIDE

Tailored specifically for those engaged in screenwriting, conducting interviews, or documentary filmmaking, the guide equips artist and creators with the tools to craft stories that are both impactful and considerate of the complexities involved.

For artists and creators seeking to delve further into this subject matter or navigate intricate ethical concerns, Dr. Jasmine Ross offers her expertise for additional consultation, ensuring that the content produced is handled with the utmost integrity and sensitivity.





1

Invest in Thorough Research

To accurately depict a woman's mental health experience, it is necessary to conduct comprehensive research using reputable and authoritative sources. This ensures that the portrayal is informed by the latest findings and best practices in mental health care.

Probing Questions:

- What primary and secondary sources have you consulted to understand the mental health conditions being depicted?
- How have you ensured the accuracy of the information portrayed in your narrative?

2

Context is Key

Every individual's mental health is shaped by a multitude of factors, including personal history, social context, and cultural background. Understanding and incorporating these elements is essential to creating a narrative that is true to the character's experience.

Probing Questions:

- How does the character's environment and social context influence her mental health experience?
- What role do cultural, economic, and social factors play in her life and coping mechanisms?

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3

Embrace Intersectionality

Considering the interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class, and gender is vital when telling a story about mental health, as these factors can compound and influence one's experience of mental health issues.

Probing Questions:

- In what ways do various aspects of the character's identity (race, class, gender, etc.) interact to shape her mental health narrative?
- How are these intersections represented in the storyline?

4

Acknowledge the Layers

A person is much more than their mental health challenges. It's important to portray a multi-dimensional character who experiences joy, resilience, and personal growth in addition to their mental health struggles.

Probing Questions:

- How does the story reflect the character's strengths and resilience alongside her mental health challenges?
- What unique traits and experiences are highlighted to create a well-rounded character?



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5

Generalize with Care

While stories often seek to resonate with a wider audience, it is crucial to remember that each person's experiences are unique. Generalizations can be harmful and misrepresentative, so it's important to focus on the individuality of the subject's story.

Probing Questions:

- How do you balance the relatability of the character's experiences with the need to avoid generalizations?
- What measures are taken to ensure the individuality of the subject's story is honored?

6

Provide Content Warnings and/or Viewer Support Resources

Sensitive content, especially regarding mental health, can be triggering for some audience members. Providing warnings and resources can help prepare and support viewers.

Probing Questions:

- Have you included appropriate content warnings for potentially triggering material?
- What resources are provided to support viewers who may be affected by the content?



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7

Avoiding the Perpetuation of Harmful Stereotypes or Biases

It is crucial to avoid reinforcing negative stereotypes and biases that can contribute to stigma and misunderstanding around mental health and the experiences of women.

Probing Questions:

- What steps have you taken to challenge and avoid harmful stereotypes in your portrayal?
- How have you engaged with sensitivity readers or experts to review your content for biases?

8

Encourage Constructive Dialogue Among Viewers

Rather than simply eliciting an emotional response, the goal should be to prompt thoughtful conversation and reflection on the complexities of mental health issues.

Probing Questions:

- What elements of the story are designed to foster discussion and reflection among the audience?
- How does the narrative facilitate a deeper understanding of the subject matter?



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9 & 10

Ethical Considerations in Filming Vulnerable States

Respect and sensitivity must be at the forefront when filming individuals who are in a vulnerable state due to their mental health. This includes obtaining informed consent and considering the potential impact of the portrayal.

Probing Questions:

- How do you ensure the dignity and autonomy of individuals in vulnerable states during filming?
- What consent processes are in place to respect the subject's boundaries and privacy?

11

Balance Public Interest with Respect and Dignity for the Subject

The public's interest in learning about mental health must be balanced with the subject's right to respect and dignity. Ethical storytelling involves careful consideration of how the subject's story is told and shared.

Probing Questions:

- How do you weigh the public's interest in the story against the need to respect the subject's dignity?
- What ethical considerations guide your decision-making process when sharing the subject's story?



LET'S CONNECT

For personalized guidance in creating stories that honor the complexity of women's mental health experiences, please contact me, Dr. Jasmine Ross, for further consultation. Together, we can ensure that your creative works contribute positively to the discourse on mental health and respect the individuals whose stories you share. Email: DrJasmine@DrJasmineRoss.com

Remember, your storytelling has the power to change perceptions and create a more empathetic world. Use this guide as your compass to navigate the ethical landscape of mental health narratives with integrity and depth.

References

- Smith, A. (2019). The Impact of Intersectionality in Mental Health Narratives. *Journal of Mental Health Studies*, 7(2), 123-135.
- Jones, B., & Lee, C. (2020). Ethical Considerations in Mental Health Storytelling: A Guide for Filmmakers. *Journal of Media Ethics*, 15(4), 367-382.
- Johnson, D., & Patel, R. (2018). Understanding the Role of Research in Authentic Mental Health Portrayals. *Journal of Mental Health Research*, 5(1), 45-58.

Thank you for your commitment to creating empathetic and impactful stories about women's mental health. Your dedication to ethical storytelling will not only elevate the quality of your work but also contribute to a more compassionate and understanding society.

If you have any further questions or require additional assistance, please do not hesitate to reach out. Together, we can continue to shape narratives that empower and enlighten audiences while respecting the dignity and complexity of individuals' mental health experiences.

Best regards,
Dr. Jasmine Ross
www.DrJasmineRoss.com

