



Peggy: Hello everyone and welcome. Thank you for joining us today. This program is part of an APA series called Essential Science Conversations where panelists and audience members have the opportunity to engage in an open dialogue about emerging topics in psychological science.

Today's conversation will focus on psychological science and public communications. We've assembled a fantastic panel for today's conversation, but before we get started, I first need to go over a few housekeeping details. Many of you submitted questions for today's program when you registered, thank you for doing that, and we'll try to get to as many of those questions as possible. You'll also have an opportunity to ask a question as the program is taking place in real time. There's a panel labeled Questions in your go-to webinar dashboard, just click on that panel and type your question into the box, and we're going to be monitoring those questions throughout the program.

This program is being recorded, so once it ends, everyone who registered will receive an email with a link to the recording, and you should receive that email a few hours after the webinar ends. We'll also have this recording available within a few days on APA's YouTube channel. If you weren't aware, APA does have its own YouTube channel. Just go to the channel, type "Essential Science Conversations" into the search box and you'll find this recording as well as recordings of previous Essential Science Conversations.

Finally, we also have a new Essential Science Conversations webpage on the APA website where you can find recordings, slides and written transcripts of all the programs, and we're going to share that URL for that website shortly. You'll see it in the upcoming slide and I'll also be sure to insert the link in that chat box.

First, I'd like to introduce our host for today who will be leading the conversation on psychological science and public communications. Let's welcome Dr. Mitch Prinstein who is APA's new Chief Science Officer. Welcome, Mitch. At this point I'm going to hand it over to him and he's going to introduce our panelists. Mitch, if you can turn on your camera so we can see you, you can begin. There you are, I see you.

Dr. Mitch Prinstein: Thanks, Peggy, so much. Thanks everybody for joining. Let me talk quickly so we can get off this slide and this horribly airbrushed photo of me, now that you can see what I really look like. I am going to spend our time moving us forward by introducing our panelists for today's discussion. I'm so excited by this amazing panel. Thank you so much.

First we have Alicia Aebersold who is APA's first Chief Communications Officer. She joined APA about four years ago, in 2017. She is coming from us from the National Council for Behavioral Health. She was the senior vice president of communications and strategic development where she worked to elevate awareness of the National Council's mission and vision to a broader audience. She also previously directed the national program office of aligning forces for quality, the Robert Wood Foundation's

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signature effort to lift the overall quality of healthcare in targeted communities, reduce racial and ethnic disparities, and provide models for national reform. Alicia recently gave a Ted talk for the National Council for Mental Wellbeing, NatCon21 Conference. You should definitely check that out.

Next, I'm very excited also to welcome Dr. Dan Gilbert who is the Edgar Pierce Professor of Psychology at Harvard University. Of course, you know Dan Gilbert, I'm sure, and all of his amazing work, but you might also know his very popular book, *Stumbling on Happiness*, which spent six months on the New York Times bestseller list. It's sold over a million copies now worldwide and translated into more than 40 languages. Dan is also the host and the co-writer of the award-winning NOVA television series, *This Emotional Life*, which was seen by more than 10 million viewers in its first airing. He's been a guest on numerous TV programs like *The Today Show*, *The Colbert Report*, *The Late Show*. Dan has three Ted talks, and more than 30 million views across those. His first Ted talk is one of the most popular Ted talks of all time.

Next, I'm so excited that we also have Dr. Ali Mattu who's a clinical psychologist, who's now created over 150 videos for his YouTube channel, *The Psych Show*. These videos have amassed over 4 million views and over 150,000 subscribers. Ali was the co-host of PBS's Emmy nominated *Self-Evident*. He's been an expert on Netflix's *The Mind Explained*, on HBO's *Doctor Commentaries*, and heavily featured on A&E's *The Employables*. He's also the Director of Mental Health at Loop, which is a startup making self-care social through small group real time audio hangouts.

Last but not least is Dr. Jonathan Wai, an assistant professor of education policy and psychology at the University of Arkansas. Jon has done amazing outreach through science writing for over 10 years now with bi-lines at *Forbes Science*, *Psychology Today*, *The conversation*, *Quartz*, *Business Insider*, and many others. He's written numerous articles that highlight his collaborative work on encouraging other academics to educate the public about their own research.

Welcome everybody to Essential Science Conversations, and thanks so much for joining us for our panel. As our panel is turning on their webcams and joining us, I wanted to make a quick plug for our newly created Essential Science Conversations series which you are a part of right now. I should mention that our next one will be in October 20th, we'll be talking with NIH and a few recent successful applicants from the NIH Loan Repayment Program, which encourages promising researchers and psych scientists to pursue research careers by paying them up to \$50,000 a year to repay their student loans. I personally was a recipient of this program and can't say more, too many good things about it. It's so amazing. I hope you'll join us to hear about an NIH's LRP program on October 20th. A registration link for that, by the way, will appear soon in your chat box.

Thank you so much to our panelists for joining. I'm very excited about this conversation because you all have of course done work in disseminating

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psychological science to the media in different ways. I wanted to start by recognizing that there are different opinions on how it is that psych science should at all be communicated within media circles and be part of our public discourse dialogue. So, I wanted to get a sense from each of you about where you think we are today. Why is it important that psychological science be communicated by the media, and that it's part of our public discourse when we talk about science?

I'd love to start by asking Ali who's really been doing so much work to try and communicate what we know about evidence-based practice. Why is it important that we're doing more of this, do you think?

Dr. Ali Mattu: Mitch, I feel like you looked at the first box that you saw and you named the person there-

[laughter]

-but thank you. Thank you for giving me the chance to talk about this, and thank you APA for having this, what I think is absolutely an essential conversation. I think it's critical that we're a part of these conversations because if we're not, they're still happening without us. By, us, I mean the experts in psychological science, in mental health, and the science of thoughts, feelings, emotions.

My favorite example of this is, just go to Twitter and look up psychology says. There are all of these tweets from who knows who are these individuals who are making all these claims about what psychology says. "Psychology says that abstinence does make the heart grow fonder," and all of these types of things. You don't have to look too far to see all of the conversations that happen about our science but aren't necessarily infused by the real science, by the real expertise, the real knowledge.

If we're not a part of the conversation, it's still going to happen regardless, and it's probably not going to be as evidence-based and really highlight our science, what we do and what we've learned in the way that we want it to.

Mitch: Thank you. Dan, what about for you? What inspired you to write a book and then start getting involved in your hosting?

Dr. Dan Gilbert: I would just start by saying I couldn't agree with Ali more. I think it's very important for us to realize that any hesitancy on our part to be involved in the conversation is not just silly, it's a moral failing. The world has paid for all the research that we're doing; the only thing they get back are the results. We're the experts and we owe it to people to tell them what we know.

I think many of us don't do it because we're worried what our peers might think if we're appearing on television. Many of us don't do it because we're just worried about being wrong. Scientists are trained to care about getting it right, and we should, but worse than getting it wrong is saying nothing whatsoever. I think we have

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an obligation to go forward and say, "Here's our best guess at the moment based on the best evidence."

The conversation goes on without us, just as Ali said. Also, the problems that need to be solved, they don't wait for us to be sure, to replicate everything 140 times. We don't know the best way to arrange the food in the cafeteria to make the children healthy. We don't know the best way to arrange the children in the classroom to make them get along. We don't know the best way to arrange the school so that the neighborhood succeed. They all have to be in some arrangement today. We should be weighing in with the best advice we possibly can.

Mitch: Thanks, Dan. Jonathan, you've also been so eloquent in your writings about the importance of public education. Tell me a little bit about why you think that this is something that deserves more attention, why we should even be encouraging our colleagues to do this in peer-review publications like yours.

Dr. Jonathan Wai: Thanks. I agree with Ali and Dan completely. I think that if we don't control the conversation or make an effort to engage, then others will still have the conversation, there'll be less evidence involved. I do think-- So, I'm going to plug a paper by Neil Lewis, Jr. We wrote it for *Perspectives on Psychological Science*. It's titled *Communicating What We Know and What Isn't So*.

Even though engagement is important, in that, in the OSF settlement of that paper, we actually provide some tips on how you can get started, because I think a lot of academics are kind of introverted, like me, I'm not a talking head type. I'm just a writer and I try not to get ongoing webinars, but here I am on this one. I'm here because I do think it's really important for us to realize, if we don't give back, and we don't figure out a way to communicate our own work, we basically cede it to anyone else. That's unfortunate.

Mitch: Alicia, you know so much about the media and what the media is interested in? Are they interested in our science? What are some signs are some evidence to suggest that we should be doing more or that we shouldn't be?

Alicia Aebersold: Yes. I first want to say that I love hearing the passion across the board because I knew you all would have the passion for this. I also think that the piece of this that's additionally so important is that, individually, the work that you do, you do it to have impact, you do it to create change. Part of the impetus for getting out there is also ensuring not only that you're in the middle of the conversation, but that your research is able to affect change, that people know about the specifics of what you're doing.

Some of the indicators we know, at least at APA, how that's working is just a massive surge in media interest for the work that scientists are doing. I think, this year, the number of articles that were written about psychological science and research pitched by our team, just pitched by our team, that's not all the articles in

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the world, it's just things that have been pitched by APA, was 30% higher than the same period for last year.

Last year, people were sitting around in their houses desperately looking for stories to write. So, the fact that it's up this year, I think it says something. Over the past four years, we're up 500% in our media coverage. That combined with our--

Speaking of Psychology Podcast, which just hit 5 million downloads, the thing about that, that I think is so compelling and interesting is that only 9% of the people who are involved with the podcast, who subscribe to the podcast, who then watch the podcast, and who fill out the surveys, are APA members. I think that there's a lot of interest in the media. I think it's spurred by how interesting the research is. I think that's what it comes down to, is the passion for the work that you do and the research that you do is so important. When you pitch it the right way, then the media are very interesting.

Mitch: When you are publishing articles, you have the opportunity to hear what other scholars think of it. When you're at a presentation or a conference, you have the opportunity to get a sense of how our work is being received within our own community of scientists. As all of you know, when you start doing work in public education or in this kind of more media involvement, you start hearing a lot about what people think about psychology, or how they perceive psychological science in a much, much broader way. How do you think the public perceives us as a field, as a science? Dan, what feedback have you gotten from your book?

Dan: I'm of two minds about it. There's two ways to answer the question. I think I believe both of them. One is that perception is utterly positive. Look, psychologists are studying the things people want to know. Bless PBS for getting people interested in fossils and stars, but that's a big push. It isn't hard to get them interested in why their aunt is depressed, why their marriage isn't doing as well as it could, how they might raise their children. This is the stuff of every human life.

I think psychology is inherently interesting. You have to work hard to make it not. I think people are excited, and they love to hear from scientists. Scientists have great respect; even though it's on the decline in our country, it's still a lot higher than most other authorities.

What's the other answer? The other answer is that in the last 5 or 10 years, there has been a so-called replication crisis in psychology. Anybody who knows me knows that I think that is a lot more talk than reality, that there is not rot at the heart of our science, that it stands on its firmer foundation as any. I think it's been horribly overblown, but I'd be lying if I didn't say, I think it's harmed our reputation, with at least a particular section of our audience. Not everybody who turns on their television has even heard of it or would care of it but there is a certain particularly educated population, people who now wonder if psychology is a science that has anything to offer.

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I think that's just too bad. I can't recommend anything to do about it, except to keep talking about the good work we do, because I think that is a parade that has already burned out and is passing.

Mitch: Thanks. Ali, kudos to you for putting yourself out there on YouTube, where the comments can be from anyone anonymous, and not always kind, although I think for yours, they're very kind. I'd love to hear what you're thinking about how the world is viewing psychology?

Ali: I was going to say, I think my audience tends to skew a little bit younger. The people I tend to reach are high school, college-age, and young adults in their 20s. I've experienced a similar type of reactions as Dan mentioned here.

First off, the people who are seeking us out, seeking out our writings, our videos, the shows, our articles, all of that, they are outliers. They're very much interested and passionate about psychology, they're looking for more connection with a larger community. There might be psychology majors, who are our greatest ambassadors for our science. They are really interested people and they're very positive about this.

At the same time, I do run into a lot of, "Psychology isn't a science. This is a joke. This guy's talking hogwash." What's very fun is to see how those comments sometimes appear right when I publish a video and there's no possibility that they've even finished watching the video, but they just comment away. That's out there. What I think's going on there is a lot of people don't have the schemas for psychology. I think back to creating a Papier-mâché cell in elementary school, and how that was really a lot of the foundation of physics and chemistry. I never made a Papier-mâché brain.

The fundamentals of how psychology works as a science, some of our big ideas, most of the time, people don't get exposed to those unless they maybe are lucky enough to have an AP Psychology course, or maybe they're fortunate enough to go off to college and take Introductory Psychology. That's how I discovered psychology. A lot of people don't have the basic fundamentals, any type of understanding of what psychology is. When they first get exposed to it they don't understand it as a science. They don't have any understanding of some of our big findings. They're approaching it for the first time. Of course, they're going to be cautious, hesitant, and might be falling into some of the media tropes that are out there about who psychologists are and what we do.

Mitch: Dan, you talk about the idea that it's almost a moral, ethical responsibility for scientists to communicate what we know. I think there are a couple of potential barriers, and I'm curious what you all might think about it. One is that there has been within our lifetimes quite a heavy stigma against working with the media at times. I's selling out through somehow, it's not a scholarly activity. Second, that the media are potentially dangerous people to interact with. They might somehow take our words



and misquote us, and that will harm our science, that would even harm our personal careers. I'm curious what you all think about those kinds of perceptions.

Dan: Both of those things are true. Let's start with the second one. Yes, journalists can and will misquote you, and that's one of the risks you take in talking to them. That's why it's actually better to do what Ali is doing, which is to talk directly to the public rather than using a journalist as your mediator. We are now living in an age where everyone can be a journalist. There's really no reason why you have to chat with a reporter in order to get an audience. You can actually say what you want to say and say it right, and people will listen if you know how to talk to everyday people.

With regard to it being a moral obligation, I certainly see it that way. I think, of the top 10 problems facing humanity, roughly 10 of them are behavioral. Basically, everything that we worry about could be different tomorrow if human beings decided to change their behavior. Climate change is not a meteorological problem, it's a behavioral problem. Obesity is not a medical problem, it's a behavioral problem. On and on and on.

We are the people who are sitting on the science the world needs most. To sit back and see ourselves as a bunch of rarefied monks sitting in a monastery guarding the illuminated manuscripts from the people is, I think, just a terrible way to think about scholarship. Scholars should not be up in an ivory tower hiding from the people who need their opinions and who pay for their opinions. It is our job to help the world we are a part of. I just don't buy into that view that we are above it all. We don't **[unintelligible 00:22:15]** ourselves with what? Talking to humans about the things they need? If that's your opinion, then I'm actually glad you don't have a YouTube channel.

[laughter]

Ali: If I can extend on that, I think what Jonathan and Dan and I and Alicia are talking about, none of this is new. APA President, George Miller, in 1969, gave a speech about giving psychology away, and how there will never be enough psychologists to meet the needs of the world. That the challenges we have are very much based in psychology, there's never going to be a supply and demand matching where there's going to be enough of us to solve these problems. That it is our responsibility to give psychology away to the public so it can be practiced by non-psychologists. This is nothing new here.

I think the difference here is, as Dan was saying, the tools are now available, where you are the media. The problems are so huge and so urgent that there's a fierce urgency to know. We need to be there to address these problems to be a part of these conversations. Take any major issue from the last year and a half, crisis after crisis. Dan was talking about climate change, we have vaccine hesitancy, which is I think a very nice way to describe that problem, to George Floyd, and what's been happening with police brutality. You take any of these big problems that America is

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dealing with and at the heart of them is a behavioral science that can help guide us to a better way forward.

Alicia: That's why I might argue, though I can't believe I would argue with any of you, not to discount journalists, that I think the direct to public communication is critically important. One of my favorite anecdotes about that was that there was this pediatrician in California, Dr. Robert Hamilton. For 35 years, he'd been teaching families who would come in how to calm their crying baby, and the special way of holding the baby; for 35 years. He reached, what, 80,000 families roughly, for 35 years, teaching people how to do this.

Then somebody said, "Why don't you put that on YouTube?" In a week, it was 6 million people. 6 million people who were pacing around their houses melting down because they couldn't stop their kids from crying.

I think that that direct communication is vitally important, and if you get the right message and you have the right audience, that can explode. Also, as all of you have been saying, reporters are writing about this stuff. Reporters are writing about climate change, and they're not thinking about the behavioral aspects of it. If psychologists don't get their voice out through reporters to those audiences, we miss that entire opportunity to be part of that conversation.

Though I do think some journalists are scary. I think most journalists are sitting around trying to fill column inches looking for good story ideas. If you can package what you do in a way that's compelling and engaging and has a personal anecdote to it, if you can talk about science the way [unintelligible 00:25:31] talks about it, that really pulls people in. Actually, reporters are going to be a great tool for you. I would say don't be too scared. [chuckles]

Ali: Thank you for saying that, Alicia. One of the things that I really want everyone watching to try to practice themselves, one of the things I've learned about journalists is, one of the greatest ways we can help them is point them to the right people to talk to. Journalists are always trying to find, who are the key players in this field related to this issue? That is very easy often for us. We know who is doing the leading research or who could be a good counterpoint to this issue, who can give you the other perspective.

If you're ever reached out to by a journalist, it's not your area, point them to the person that you think is the right person for that story. You're going to save them a lot of time, and you're also going to establish a relationship where they're going to come back to you and say, "Hey, I'm really looking for someone who can speak to this issue. Who do you think that might be?"

If you think someone's messed up, send them a message and say, "I really think you should talk to this person. They can help you get things right." Journalists do want to often get things right. They often have editors who want them to write sensational

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headlines. That is one way in which if you don't want to be camera facing, if you don't want to be quoted, you can still do a great service to the public and to psychology by pointing people in the right direction.

Dan: [unintelligible 00:27:08] this fear of journalism, I'll just say, in my entire life, I'm not sure I've been misquoted more than once. This really is just such an overblown fear. This doesn't happen. Journalists may not write the article you would have written, but they will get your words right, almost every time. Just be careful what you say, and they will probably reword it correctly.

Jonathan, did I cut you off? It's a little hard on the webinar to see who's talking. I'm so sorry.

Jonathan: No problem. I was going to jump in and say, yes, I think when working with journalists, I view a lot of editors and science writers that I've worked with as people that you should reach out and try to form relationships with, try to learn from. View it as being educated about their world and what their incentive structure is. It's very different from ours as academics.

Dan, to go back to one particular thing that I will push back a little on, we probably have different viewpoints on this, but I will try to express the viewpoint of Morehouse, a psychological scientist who believed that there's a credibility revolution going on. There is a really good article by Christie Aschwanden, and she was writing for *FiveThirtyEight* at the time, called *Failure Is Moving Science Forward*.

Even though it is true that in the public we are viewed in some circles, as you know, not necessarily should be taken seriously because maybe we have a credibility revolution, we don't replicate, it's a sign of humility that we as a psychological science are actually trying to get things right. I think a huge part of what I do as a science writer is- the reason I do it is because I'm trying to figure out a way, how do I get a journalist or how do I get someone, how do I write about a story where I can get someone to actually go to the full body of evidence?

Understanding replication, understanding what actually the current body of evidence is, is fundamental for us to communicate. If we cede that to other people, they're just going to write the one-off stories about stuff that doesn't replicate. I'm going to say I absolutely think that we have to think about this credibility revolution in a way that we are communicating scientific process, we are communicating how we don't know everything and things build up over time. We're trying to communicate what actually is replicated across the years, and that's what I do. I think the evidence is still really, really important, and the full body of evidence is important to communicate.

Dan: Well, you're not pushing back against anything I said. I couldn't agree with you more about any of these things, the importance of replicable evidence, the importance of communicating science correctly to the public. If you think that by advertising as widely as possible every failure of replication you are winning humility

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points with the public, you don't understand the public very well. What they understand is, "Gosh, I guess your science isn't very good." There's lots of ways to improve science. The way we do it is by talking to each other, not by talking to the *New York Times*. If you're running to the *New York Times* to tell them about something that doesn't replicate it's because you want your name in the paper, not because you're trying to improve our science.

Ali: [crosstalk] Jonathan, quick question.

Dan: Yes, please.

Ali: Jonathan, what's your secret to getting people to go to the original source? How have you done this? [laughs] It's a constant stressor of mine. Whether it's with students or with--

Jonathan: When I get asked to be quoted and stuff, I actually don't even like being quoted anymore. I'd prefer to shape a story. I try to build relationships with journalists to try to just get them to use more evidence. I think it's the building of relationships that is the most important way, that I think I'm trying to help. I'll just say for all those introverts out there who don't want to actually get out like Dan and Ali, you're amazing people.

I just want to say that there's a way that most of us, introverted academics in the ivory tower can make a difference and we can write for places like the conversation. I started blogging for *Psych Today*, 2011 or something. You can control it. You can get your word out there. Is it going to reach a million people? Not necessarily. You can find a way to at least control what you say about your own research.

You can communicate the broader-based evidence. I just feel like if we all did this collectively, as individuals, as a field, we could actually make a big difference. Then also, not thinking the journalists are enemies or editors are out there to get us because they're really not. They're actually just doing their jobs and they're going to do their jobs, whether we give them good evidence or not.

I don't know Ali if that answers your question, but that's the way I approach it.

Ali: I think that's really helpful. One of the things that I've often found is when you do-- You might look up a journal article. Sometimes what you're fed by Google is the scholarly original source. Then sometimes if people have written it, you get summaries in their own words on something like *Psychology Today*, which I think is a great avenue to get the public into accessing your own words, and maybe they're just one step away from the original source. I think that's wonderful.

Mitch: Jonathan, I wanted to pick up on something that you said about if we all were to do this, we could really make a difference. Right now, it's hard as an academic to find the time to do this because it's not something that is incentivized. It's not

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something that we can put on our end-of-the-year report or our tenure dossier. It's also something that maybe we don't learn how to do it.

I'm curious, how did each of you learn how to do this, and is there any reward? Do you think there should be if we think about the future? Ways that we explicitly help people learn and reward them for doing those?

Jonathan: Okay. I guess I'll start on this one. The science writing side of my work is just literally not connected to academic work. If you're on the one tenure track, it doesn't count. I write, because that way, hopefully, I can educate the broader public. Then I do academic work so that I can hopefully get tenure one day, something like that. It's unfortunate that these things don't count. I think places like the American Sociological Association have tried to start building it and do the incentive structure, but the truth is, people on the research, one tenure track, we've got to get grants, we've got to publish lots of top peer-review publications.

There's not a lot of time. I teach on top of that, do service, do everything else. I don't know what the solution is. It's a structural issue. I'm not sure how to move things in that way. I think a lot of the people end up engaging are like Dan and Ali. Dan, especially. Dan just does everything. You got to have enormous energy, enormous ability to work all the time and just be interested in doing all these things well. I don't know. I'll stop there.

Mitch: Dan, how would you want to incentivize? Do you think that academics should get incentives or reward or academic credit for writing something for the conversation or writing a book?

Dan: Look, this isn't for everybody. I don't think any of us here are advocating that all psychological scientists should, tomorrow, start writing popular books, magazine articles, appearing on YouTube, making television commercials. It takes a certain person to want to do this and to do it well. I think as long as you're not standing in the way or snickering at others, that's fine.

There's enough of us who are happy to be doing this science communication that it's not necessary for everybody. I do think that early in your career if you're employed at a university, it's probably not a great idea. Not just because of the incentive structure, but before you can weigh in as an expert, you really need to be spending some decades of your life becoming one.

It's not a bad idea to be spending part of one's career, becoming an expert on something, getting totally deeply ensconced in subject matter. I think it's perfectly fine to spend time doing that and then turn to science communication. It's a funny rubric of science communication. It's what every professor does in the classroom. I just think of it as teaching. When I went and gave my first TED talk, I just thought I'm up in front of a bigger audience of somewhat older people, but they're interested in the same things as my intro psychology students are.

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I'm going to tell them. I don't see that there's a line between communicating science and teaching. It's just teaching everybody. The world can be your classroom. I feel like I've wandered off from whatever question you [laughs] asked me, but that's the privilege of [unintelligible 00:36:23]

Mitch: No, that's great. Thank you. Ali, how did you learn to do what you did? Was there something you experienced in graduate school about how you can translate science and communicate, or did that just come naturally or in some other way?

Ali: Well, Mitch, I've always been gifted in these areas since I was-- I am an extrovert as Jonathan has claimed me to be, but I was a socially anxious kid who was never comfortable in the spotlight. All of that changed because of an amazing public speaking teacher I had in high school. Thank you, Georgiana Hayes, you changed my life. To make a long story short, because psychologists could talk.

We love talking. We especially love talking about ourselves, so I'm going to try not to do that too much, but it was teaching is what got me to get a PhD. I love psychology so much and I thought I can just get a career teaching it. That's why I pursued my PhD. As Dan was saying, for me, I developed my way of communicating psychology to the public in the classroom very quickly iterating on every lesson, semester after semester of teaching introductory psychology, how can I get better at this?

How can I improve my storytelling craft? How can I create more demos where I'm bringing this material to life? For me, this is just an extension of the classroom to a much wider audience. To pick up on a couple of things that both Jonathan and Dan just mentioned, one thing I want to encourage everyone to think about, how can we encourage more people to do this?

Like Dan, I don't think everyone should go and become media-facing, but I do think, as Dan was saying, that moral imperative, that obligation, I do think all of us can find some way to contribute psychology to the local communities that we belong to. Whether that is a church, a temple, a synagogue, a mosque. Whether it is a club, an organization you belong to, you have this wealth of knowledge that people are hungry for.

Can you find some way to give it away to the communities you already belong to, the non-psychology communities you belong to. That I think we all can do, we all should do and we all must do. With the incentive model, one of the things that happened for me and how I got started making content myself, Mitch, I got started making this stuff because, in my former life, I too was an academic.

I was at Columbia medical center and there I was teaching, I was training, I was involved in some research. I kept having patients bring up information that they were finding on YouTube that was not accurate. I was complaining to my wife about this and she said, "Well, you should just make a video about that." I'm like, "Well, I can't make a video. You can't just put a video on YouTube."

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She said, "What do you think YouTube is, Ali?" It started that way and what I found is my videos were helping me with my day job. There were things I could point my patients towards and they were helping with my department, the clinic I was working at in terms of generating referrals, getting more people in, getting more interest. In as many ways as you can, if you're interested in this career path, find ways of doing it that actually help the day job, help you to do the work that you already do.

With my colleagues having read some of their work, I think the more that Jonathan and Dan have probably done the science communication, it's made them much better academic writers as well. I love reading both of your work. Dan, one of your papers, I can't remember which one it is now. I remember reading one of your papers and just laughing because you snuck in this joke in there. It was this wonderful joke.

I had never laughed reading an academic paper before. It was a joyful experience. I think the better you get at communicating science to the public, it is going to make you a better scientist as well.

Mitch: I'd like to ask all of you, Alicia, perhaps with you to start. Graduate school teaches us to write manuscripts, it teaches us to present our research in 15-minute PowerPoint-driven presentations, but the ways in which you're talking about communicating are different. If there were a graduate course, teaching people to publicly communicate, what are the things that you would want to teach scientists to do, or to undo based on the ways that they've learned how to write manuscripts and get 15-minute PowerPoint-driven presentations? Alicia, if you're one of these four co-instructors of the class, tell me one of the things you're going to want to teach people in this fictional class?

Alicia: I think that story is the most important thing. Not being afraid that telling a story demeans your work, not saying that if you use an anecdote, that means there's no such thing as a footnote, that storytelling doesn't invalidate your data, or undermine your accuracy, that it's the tip of an iceberg. I see this a lot, but academics write with the dawn of time perspective, beginning of time, all these things happen, and then you narrow, and then you narrow, and then you narrow.

If you're impatient, you flip ahead to see what the conclusion is. Reporters write this way, which is here's the conclusion, and then I'm going to tell you a little more than I'll tell you a little more. That tip of the iceberg writing and speaking and communicating, allows you to recognize it. You still can provide everything at the bottom of the iceberg but you want to grab people's attention, you want to figure out what's most salient.

I think that that approach really trying to hone in on what the story is you're trying to tell is critical if you're going to communicate your science in a way that people are going to listen to. The other thing is, you're telling a story. People want a villain, they want action, they want a hero, they want to know. Jumping right into the research

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you're doing without laying out why it matters, without saying, "This is the massive problem facing humanity, and this is how psychology can come in and address it."

Treating that massive problem like the villain and your research like the hero and telling an arc of the story, I think is really important. I would probably start with fairy tales and helping [laughs] people understand that that's how you got people's attention is with a story and humor of course.

Mitch: Terrific. We've got the first two weeks of this class built. Who's next?

Dan: I want to take Alicia's class. I don't want [crosstalk]. Alicia is of course exactly right. Everything we learn as science writers is not just worthless in communicating science to regular people. It's actually an impediment. You have to unlearn everything you learned in graduate school. Don't get me wrong. Those skills are exactly the ones you need to write a scientific paper.

It's your intuitions as a teacher you want to use when you're communicating with the public, not your intuitions as a science writer. Think about how you look at a freshman and explain something. That's what you do when you're looking into a camera explaining something to people or sitting down to write, or everyday folks. I actually began my career as a fiction writer.

It was only because I went to take this writing workshop and it was closed but the psychology class was open that I got shanghaied and ended up in psychology. It always seemed clear to me that writing was story. It's always story. Instead of characters, the characters now are called ideas, but that's fine. They still move around and they have conflict, some battles, and one wins and one loses, and there's a beginning and an end. Of course, it's all got to be about telling stories.

Mitch: What do we want to teach people about how to write a book, how to interact with the media, how to get started? What other things might we be able to help scientists to know how to do so maybe they'll do it more often?

Ali: One of the things that I want to share is we are in the business of storytelling. It's usually the data that's telling the story. The difference here is we know the cast of characters, we have been following this research, we know all the different competing parties, we know that schools of thought. That's the curse of knowledge. That's all the complex schemas that we have for the research that we're doing.

If you ever go to a conference where you have two people who are on different sides of research, and you see that panel play out, you are seeing a beautiful story happen in real life. One of my favorite conferences I went to was ABCT, the organization for Behavioral and Cognitive Therapies. There was a panel on-- I think it was the panel was called "Can you change a thought?"



It was fiery, it was intense, it was passionate. It was really beautiful. The data is usually what we have doing the storytelling. That won't work when you're talking to the public. They don't know the players, they don't know the backstory. It's like trying to read one chapter out of *The Lord of the Rings* when you haven't read the 1,000 pages that have come before. You're completely lost. You need a hobbit.

You need an easy way into the story. You need a simplified version of that story. If people get that, then you're opening the door for them to learn more. A couple of books that I want to share that really helped me, *The Science Writers' Handbook*. It came out a few years ago. It's a wonderful research resource if you're coming from a science background and you want to do more of especially what Jonathan does, writing for the public. It is fantastic.

One of the other books that really influenced me, I know friends of APA, Chip Heath, and Dan Heath, *Made to Stick* is a wonderful book about how to share information in a way that is much more likely to stick. I always go back to a lot of the principles there. *Made to Stick* and *Science Writers' Handbook* would be two of my required reading, Mitch.

Mitch: Got it.

Alicia: Is the course going to be called finding the hobbit in your science.

Mitch: That's right.

Ali: I like that headline, Alicia.

[laughter]

Mitch: That's our course name. Jonathan, what other advice would you want to give people about science writing and how it differs from manuscript writing?

Jonathan: One thing I'll start with, and I'll provide some resources in just a second, is that I think just like in the credibility revolution, a lot of the graduate students in the Open Science Movement, they're actually changing things. I think if we could find a way where more graduate students took up science writing as a part of actually improving their thinking, questions and asking and so on in terms of asking good psychological science questions, clarifying and distilling the way that they approach their papers in their writing, I feel that there's a way that academic writing is our kick.

It's a journal article format that's gone back I don't know how many years. In reality, maybe there's a way you can merge the types of styles. I don't know. Maybe not. I do think more engagement in a simple way of just using plain language, being clear, teaching about context, teaching about the history, teaching about what is actually replicated, what's the body of evidence around a particular topic. I do think these are the ways we can try to get a better way to educate the public.

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Some possibilities for resources for the class would be *Getting to the Heart of Science Communication*. Faith Kearns has a great book on that. *Escape from the Ivory Tower*, Nancy Baron. Randy Olson actually has a book called *Don't Be Such a Scientist*. It's a great book because he actually creates movies now, but most of the book he explains to a lot of people how basically, we don't get our messages across because we don't understand storytelling.

We understand how a story grabs people's attention. Those are just some. Another great book if you want to understand the viewpoint of science writers is *The Craft of Science Writing*, edited by Siri Carpenter.

Alicia: I think that having people think through or having yourself think through how you would tweet about your science. There's some great psychologists on TikTok which I admit is a type of social media I'm just starting to learn [laughs] because my 15-year-old is making me do that. Dr. Rachel Brenner, Dr. Brad Klom on TikTok the way they talk about you have to tell story so fast and be compelling so fast.

Just consuming others who are doing it well I think is important. Then podcasts like Hidden rain which have to have people on there who can tell the story over the course of an hour is also really good to see how other people are doing it to give you inspiration.

Ali: One change I'd love to see happen in the field that speaks to something Jonathan was just talking about and also gets it back at that ethical-moral imperative. I think if your research is funded by the government a requirement of that funding should be some type of summary article about that that is written for the public, that is published in some type of public press. That needs to be a requirement. This is taxpayers' money as Dan said before.

Number one, why are these articles many of them behind a paywall that many other scientists can't access without some type of institutional subscription. Then number two why is it not written in a way in which the taxpayers who have funded this research can read and understand and use. I think that would go a long way and that would build that pipeline that would require us at the point of grad school to really train people and that would change the motivational structures here. That's my plug APA make it happen, please.

Mitch: There are hundreds of people who are watching this either now or will be watching it. A recording of this who are going to be so inspired by everything that you are saying and want to know how they can get started today. They're not going to be able to develop the expertise and success that you've all had in your careers overnight but there's probably something that they can start doing practicing or some way of starting to get out there.

In addition to reading the books, you've recommended and watching the *Lord of the Rings*. What are some ways that you would recommend getting started finding their

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voice? How can they use social media to be embarking on some of these activities? Any thoughts there?

Dan: The first step is to have something to say and if you don't then do everyone a favor and don't. Not everybody has a story that they got out. I don't hear anybody here recommending tomorrow everyone should start writing articles for the public because many of us are doing research that actually the public wouldn't find particularly interesting. Something about how a cell on the retina works. It's wildly important science most people aren't going to care.

It isn't your obligation to somehow get us interested. If you have something to say, you really do have a story you want to tell that you think your neighbor and your aunt Sophie and that guy you saw at Starbucks would all be interested in hearing. Once upon a time, you were out of luck. You had to find somebody who would publish you. Publishing today we're all published right now, aren't we?

There's a million places you can publish. You can blog. You can tweet, you can go to your local newspaper if you have one and ask if they might like an article on what's-- There's a million places for you to start. Usually, when people ask me this question they say, "Yes, I don't want to know that." I want to know how did you make the Prudential commercials. How did you get to PBS? The answer is you don't start there.

The big media giants call you, you don't call them by and large but they are all shopping in smaller media markets. When you're writing for a smaller publication bigger publications are looking at it and wondering if they might tap you. Beginning by speaking and writing for the outlets that will have you is a good way to have even I don't want to say better outlets but outlets with wider reach notice you and invite you to do something.

That's how you get invited. You get yourself out there. You are visible. They've seen you somewhere. People will say how did you ever team up with Prudential to do television commercials? They don't read the journal of personality and social psych but they watch TED Talks and they watch PBS and PBS watch TED Talks, you get the point. The way you start if you're really excited about science communication is just tell the people who will listen and hope that it's going to bubble up. If you're a good storyteller it will.

Ali: There's two quick things I'll recommend. The first one is a little bit of an exercise. Take a piece of paper and then I want you to make three intersecting circles a bit of a Venn diagram. The first one is you. What is the most interesting part of your story? Now the second circle is going to be your science, your expertise, and what is the most interesting part of that?

That last circle is what are your other passions? What are your other interests? What are the things that you love? Then what goes in the center that intersecting point of

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all three that's the thing you want to get across. It is the intersection of who you are, your expertise, and your passions and interests. Get good at doing that. Find out the places where those three things intersect and that's where you need to go.

The last thing I want to recommend is the Story Collider is a wonderful organization that helps scientists to tell true stories. If you're interested the Story Collider does training in all of this. If you're not interested in that just go listen to some of their episodes and there's a lot of wonderful psychologists have been on there and you can hear what it's like to tell a story that doesn't bore you to sleep.

Alicia: I think maybe don't start by thinking that you have to be in the *New York Times*, so you have to be on the *Today Show*. That all of these ideas are great ideas and it starts with figuring out like being a thought leader you have to have thoughts so figuring out what you want to say. Then the other piece is figuring out who you want to say it to. I can't tell you how many people will reach out to me and say, "I need to get in the *New York Times* and my next question is why?"

I appreciate the value of the *New York Times* but really like who you need. There was some work I did it a couple of years ago and it turned out that we really only needed to reach like one guy. It was a legislator on a committee and he was one guy but we didn't need this whole campaign to hit every paper, we need to reach one guy. Figure out who like Ali was saying earlier who in your community might benefit from your research?

What audiences might benefit from your research start there and figure out who you're trying to reach and then think about what you need to do based on that.

Jonathan: I'll just jump in and say from the academics who write academic journal articles because I think I'm just going to try to move people who publish JPSB and don't really know what to do beyond it. Start there, I think pitch the conversation. Go look up the conversation, pitch them and write about your work and they'll work with you. They'll teach you. I think writing for the public is just trial and errors. Like getting on a bike you go do it.

It's just like learning radio or learning TV. Reach out to your media office in your university, go learn from them. They're actually former journalists who now work to help people but academics don't actually reach out to them a lot of the time. Go learn from those people. One other thing, something that Ali said about narrative and finding your particular narrative especially when you're trying to get your narrative on say the academic job market to pitch yourself as a brand.

A great book that I've read recently was I think it's Andres De Los Reyes, *The Early Career Researcher's Toolbox*. He talks about using theater and narrative to interconnect by a three-stage play of how your work connects. I think that's a great way to talk about think about storytelling in the context of academic storytelling. Also,



think about how can that translate into public communication and storytelling there and those are my recommendations.

Mitch: I'd like to thank you all so much. A couple of announcements first is that all of the terrific books and resources that have been recommended by our panelists will be collected and posted on the APA essential science conversation webpage. You'll be able to capture all of those and follow through with that if you want. Second I wanted to say the first 200 folks who registered for this essential science conversation will be getting a free registration to the Alan Alda Institute Training to help scientists learn how to communicate with the public.

Congratulations and keep an eye out for that email from APA giving you a free pass to get that training. I'd also like to thank all of our panelists again Jonathan, Dan, Alicia, Ali, you are inspirational and incredibly helpful in talking about this topic. I'm very excited to hear the conversation continue. Please write to me here at APA, tweet about this. Use social media, talk with your colleagues and pass along this video so we can continue to talk about how and whether scientists should be publicly communicating what we know to help as many people as possible.

Thank you all so much for taking the time to talk with us about your expertise. This has been terrific. Thank you to everybody who joined and has been listening.

[01:00:36] [END OF AUDIO]