

**Meaning Making
During A Pandemic**

**A new course on
Digital Storytelling**

Episode 2:

The digested read by
Azam Masoumzadeh



This online program is hosted by:

Andrea Geipel



Abhay Adhikari



Guest speaker
Amanda Aronczyk



Our digital producer is
Jenni Mueller



Andrea introduced herself and began with a question

Andrea



My background is in psychology, sports science, neuroscience and science communication. I'm interested in the relationship and connections between the digital world (external) and well being (our internal world). And that's why I want to ask:

What does well-being mean to you?



We received many answers. There were two repeating themes: **cool projects** and **inspiration** contribute to people's well-being



I need something that keeps my mind busy! Development and progress is important to have a healthy mind

I feel the same. I need inspiration for peace of mind. I also need cool and interesting projects



Priya, Abhay and Azam felt that it's equally important to do absolutely nothing sometimes. Idleness is also good for our well-being

After this discussion, Andrea took us through
an online meditation for 10 minutes

lay back in your chair

Breathe in 1...2

Breathe out 1...2...3...4

Try and feel every part of your
body and let it go



Try to imagine your perfect working place

Are you in a room or outside?

Is it an empty place
or is there furniture?

Do you have colleagues or
are you working from home?

Remember what you see
and let's slowly get back to
our session...



After the meditation, Andrea asked:

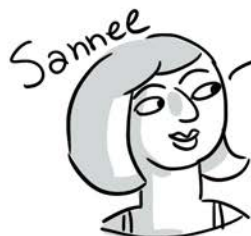
How much does well-being influence your storytelling?

- Only slightly?
- very much?



I'm so busy with projects, I feel I don't have any time to think about my well-being

It's important because it gives you clarity. Especially when you are working with videos and podcasts. We also need to take the well-being of our audiences into consideration



I work in a museum and sometimes I find it hard to think about everyone's well-being all the time

Speaking of well being, the lockdown was an opportunity for me to think about my well being at work.



Our next question was:

What does reflection mean to you?

● To be more self-aware?

● To be progressive?

● To be a responsible employee?



Soeren surprised us with his answer He said:

reflection is part of being a responsible employee. It helps you take into account the needs of your colleagues



Andrea



I've found it important to reflect on the connection between myself and my colleagues

I love my job and I do it well. I don't hold myself responsible to anyone

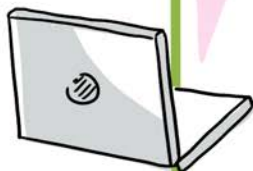


But what is our **responsibility** as a storyteller?



I want to make science accessible but I sometimes wonder how accurate I must be

In journalism our responsibility is to open up future possibilities for our communities to take action



It's our responsibility to think about the needs of our audience



I think it's also people's responsibility to validate the information they read online and not believe everything



Our guest speaker for this episode was Amanda Aronczyk, who has an amazing ability to present complicated subjects as highly entertaining stories



I am a co-host and reporter for Planet Money

I'd like to give you the example of the US elections in 2016



It was a very stressful moment for everyone. Both, the voters supporting the Republicans and the Democrats were very anxious

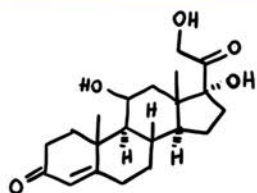
Watching debates!

We wanted to know what this election stress is doing to our bodies



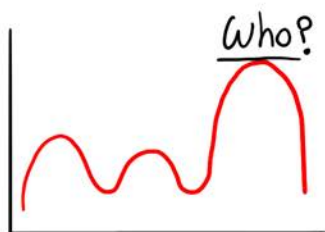
It was an opportunity to talk about the elections from a completely different point of view

Cortisol is a hormone that we release when we are stressed



And we can find it in Salvia

So with professor Kevin Smith who is a political scientist and Dr. Jeffrey French, who runs a lab, we decided to run an experiment



Who has the biggest changes in their cortisol levels over the course of a debate between Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton

In a pilot study we collected saliva samples from a bunch of participants. Even if we couldn't control all variables we got some interesting results. For example:



Cortisol levels were affected if someone had a friend or a family member who was going to vote for the opposing candidate

Trump supporters had much higher baseline levels compared to Clinton voters



This interesting study, lead us to make another story on how to love and respect each other in such stressful situations...

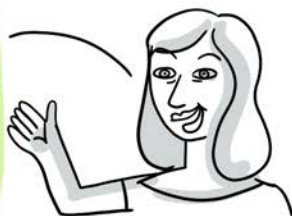
We interviewed Chuck and Brenda,
a loving couple with different political views



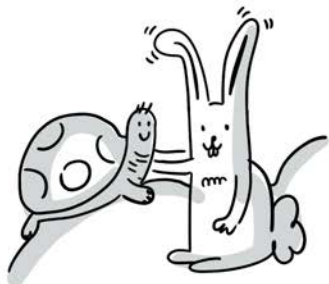
But it didn't stop them
from loving each other



I'm proud of this story as it offered
a very different point of view on
what makes the elections a stressful
experience. It was a challenging
story to tell, but we managed to
entertain our audiences



We did face several challenges working on this story



Scientists work on a very different timescale to us. We talk in days and weeks, they talk in months and years

We were also very worried that the findings of the experiment would not be interesting enough for our audience



But in the end, we created a lot of interesting multi-platform content. It was a joyful experience not just for us but for our audiences as well

Thank you to everyone who participated in
Episode 2 of Season 1
of Meaning Making During a Pandemic



Illustrated by: Azam Masoumzadeh