

## Summary

### **Preparing for an AI-Enhanced Event**

Matthew and Dianna discussed preparations for an upcoming event, with Matthew confirming that the agenda would be shared on different screens for everyone's access. Dianna tested a new AI companion feature during the meeting. Randy, the team leader, announced a proposal writing day and confirmed that book copies had been sent out as planned. The team also discussed the schedule for the session, with Dianna's presentation set for the second half. Furthermore, Randy suggested a conversation with the AI after the meeting, though this was not confirmed. Matthew revealed that some names in dark green on the sign-up sheet were graduates returning for a refresher and to help newcomers, and he noted a need for a volunteer to fill a gap in one of the working circles for the following week. Furthermore, Randy inquired about the status of a book shipment to Emory, with Matthew promising to look into it. Finally, Randy introduced the plan for the session, which included a short presentation, introductions to three Abt bills, and a guest speaker, Dr. Dianna Padilla.

### **Narrative vs. Literal: A New Approach to Communication**

Randy stressed the importance of moving away from a literal-minded approach in communication. He noted the difference between providing information and shaping it into a compelling narrative that can solve problems. Randy discussed a spectrum of literal-mindedness, with the entertainment world being highly non-literal and the science world being highly literal. He urged the adoption of communication techniques from other professions to improve communication in the science world. Randy introduced four guests for the upcoming sessions, including two scientists who are excellent communicators, a business community representative, and an improv actor from the entertainment world. He emphasized the importance of partnerships with the business community and the need for a partnership between those with narrative intuition and those with numerical intuition. Lastly, Randy introduced a new tool for their toolbox, recently introduced by a group in the UK.

### **New Method for Understanding Autoimmune Disease**

Randy introduced a new method for understanding the emotional progression of material, which stands for DNA, representing Dream, Nightmare, and Action. This tool was applied to Denise's discussion about ulcerapitis, a rising autoimmune disease with limited treatment options. Denise was guided to revise her initial presentation, focusing on the need for greater knowledge of intestinal epithelial barrier homeostasis, which could lead to better therapies. The discussion highlighted the importance of challenging assumptions, pushing for clarity in understanding the disease, and the potential for different approaches towards new therapies.

### **Medical Expert, Vaccine Efficacy, and Intestinal Barrier Discussion**

Randy shared a clip from a TV show featuring a medical expert discussing the Pfizer vaccine and its effectiveness. The conversation then shifted to a discussion about the mechanisms contributing to intestinal barrier homeostasis and the potential for this knowledge to lead to new therapy options. However, it was acknowledged that a lack of understanding in this area currently hinders progress. The team agreed that a focus on understanding the genetic and environmental factors contributing to disease progression could be a solution.

### **Leukemia Disparity and Neural Functioning**

Tarun discussed the higher long-term mortality rates among adolescents and young adults with leukemia and the need to understand the reasons behind this disparity. He proposed that the severity of illness at the time of hospital admission could be a factor and announced plans to characterize this and analyze its association with long-term mortality. Randy provided

feedback on Tarun's presentation, suggesting he focus more on the narrative and simplify his message. He also encouraged Tarun to dig deeper into the problem and explain why this issue hasn't been thoroughly explored yet. Ava then presented her research plan, which aims to investigate the prospective effects of neural functioning as a mechanism linking food insecurity to internalizing symptoms among adolescents.

### **Exploring Neural Functioning's Link to Adolescence**

Ava and Randy discussed the need to better understand neural functioning as a potential connecting factor between food insecurity, internalizing symptoms, and adolescence. Randy suggested that Ava's main issue lies in this area and should be further explored. Randy urged Ava to incorporate this understanding into her work, noting that this research area has been overlooked due to other priorities. They agreed that further investigation in this link was worth exploring. Dianna, a former program officer with the National Science Foundation and a professor at the Department of Ecology and Evolution at Stony Brook University, was introduced by Randy. Dianna was to present a practical proposal writing presentation and encouraged attendees to ask questions. She emphasized her experience in writing, reviewing, and assessing grant proposals, highlighting her experience at the National Science Foundation where she had reviewed hundreds of proposals.

### **Proposal Review Challenges and Narrative Prioritization**

Dianna discussed the challenges of reviewing proposals, highlighting that reviewers are often stretched for time and prioritize those that are easy to understand and engaging. She emphasized the importance of a singular narrative in a proposal and explained the concept of 'goal overload', encouraging participants to prioritize their primary objective. Dianna also stressed the need to control the narrative and keep it focused in order to avoid distractions. She suggested the use of the 'colleagues test' to assess the effectiveness of the narrative, and referred to Shirley's law, which warns about the risk of others telling your story if you don't take the initiative.

### **Proposal Writing: Context, Hero, and Listening**

Dianna emphasized the importance of understanding the context and previous literature in proposal writing. She stressed that proposals should acknowledge existing work in the field and position the new proposal within that broader context. Dianna also highlighted the importance of listening, both in proposal writing and in general. She cautioned against assuming that reviewers will understand the context of the proposal as the proposer does. Towards the end, she discussed the concept of the "hero" of a proposal, emphasizing that the proposal should aim to benefit the hero, who is usually the entity that will gain from the proposed research.

### **Simplifying Science Proposals**

Dianna emphasized the importance of clear communication in science proposals. She urged the group to ensure their proposals are understandable to an outer circle that is often closer than expected, recommending avoiding jargon and clearly defining acronyms. She stressed the importance of formatting for easy navigation, particularly for agencies with required elements. Dianna also noted that less text and better formatting would improve proposals. Lastly, she highlighted the value of simplicity in proposals, not necessarily in the idea but in the clarity of its presentation. Randy asked about the role of simplicity in proposals, to which Dianna responded that simplicity means being straightforward and easy to follow, even in complex ideas.

### **Simplifying Complex Science Proposals**

Randy and Dianna discussed the process of reviewing complex scientific proposals. They agreed that the key to understanding such proposals lies in the ability to distill complex ideas into simpler concepts. Dianna, who often reviews proposals outside her area of expertise, shared her experience of being pleasantly surprised by well-crafted proposals that are easy to read and understand. Despite the time she spends on crafting an NSF proposal, she acknowledged that a reviewer typically spends only 5 to 10 minutes on it. Dianna also noted the importance of maintaining objectivity, even when dealing with proposals from friends or colleagues.

### **Simplifying Proposals: A Focus on Clarity and Narrative Structure**

There was a discussion about writing proposals that are easily understandable, even for those outside the area of expertise. Matthew and Dianna agreed that proposals should be written in a way that isn't too technical or overly reliant on jargon, and should clearly explain the question being addressed. Dianna noted that while some proposals might require more technical language, such as those involving statistics, these sections should still be written in a way that is easy to understand. Ryan raised a question about how to keep narrative focus in proposals that require detailed statistical analysis, to which Dianna suggested that it's okay to assume some basic knowledge of statistical concepts in certain contexts, but also recommended explaining these concepts for proposals targeted at a broader audience. Randy added that proposals should be structured in a way that maintains the narrative thread, with tangential information relegated to sidebars.

#### **Next Steps**

Matthew will check on the status of the book shipment to Emory.

Ava should consider focusing on the prospective effects of neural functioning on food insecurity and adolescent internalizing symptoms.

Ava should work on the opener and setting up a positive scenario.

Ava should consider incorporating more creative elements and entertainment into her research proposal.

Ava should focus on understanding neural functioning better.

Ava should work on her setup and ensure it is clear and concise.

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