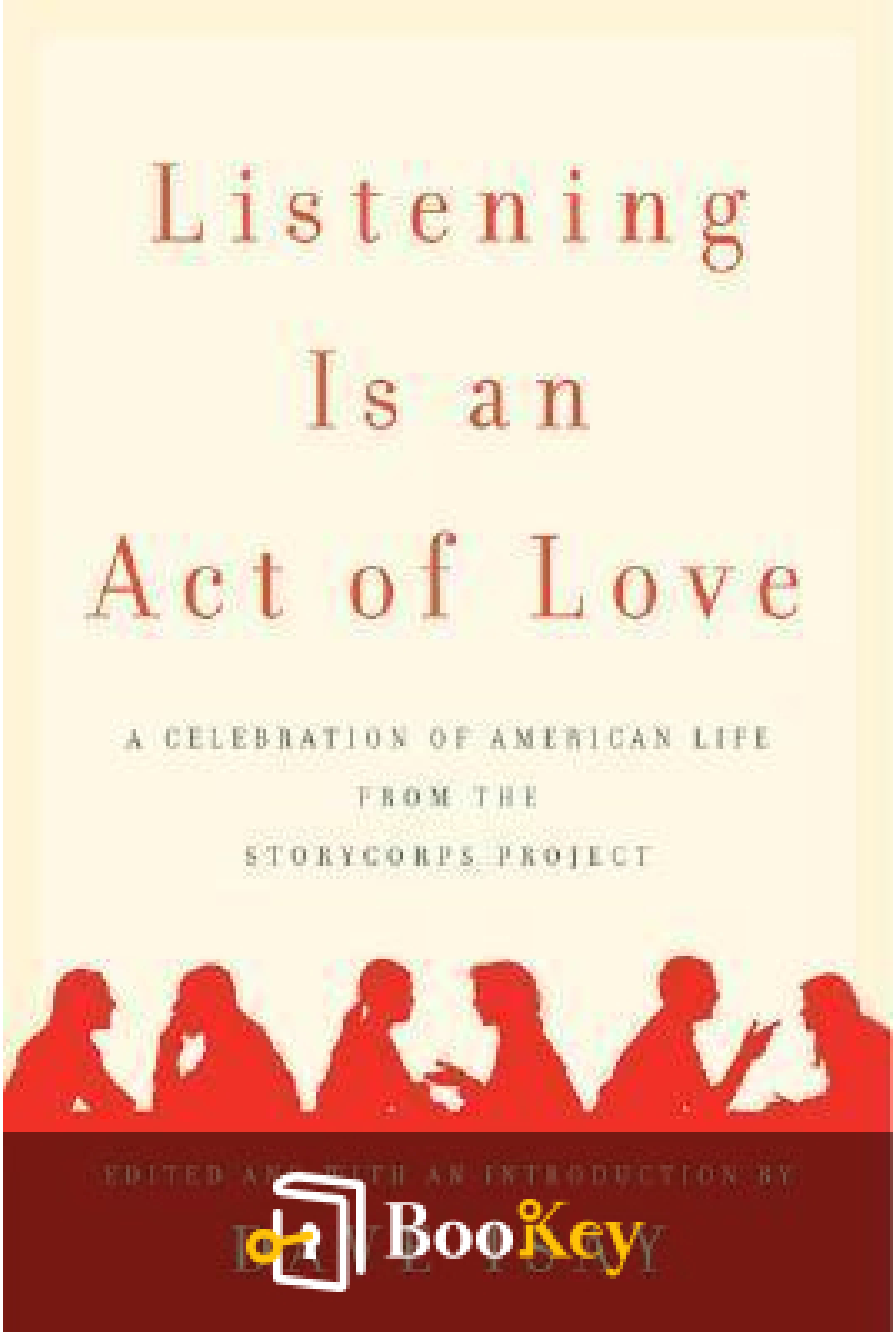
Listening Is An Act Of Love PDF (Limited Copy)

Dave Isay



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Listening Is An Act Of Love Summary

Celebrating the Diverse Tapestry of American Lives Through Shared Stories.

Written by New York Central Park Page Turners Books Club

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About the book

In "Listening Is an Act of Love," Dave Isay masterfully compiles a rich anthology of tales sourced from more than ten thousand interviews gathered by StoryCorps, the largest oral history project in the United States, established in 2003. This initiative seeks to preserve the narratives of everyday Americans, illuminating the diverse and heartfelt experiences that shape our shared humanity. Isay's selection showcases a spectrum of emotions ranging from joy and love to sorrow and resilience, encapsulating the essence of American life.

Each story highlights the individuality of its narrator while simultaneously weaving a broader narrative that reflects the interconnectedness of our collective experiences. The interviews cover a multitude of backgrounds and life lessons, emphasizing the human truths common to us all—our struggles, triumphs, and the small moments that define our existence.

By presenting these personal histories, Isay not only honors the contributors but also invites readers into a deeper reflection on their own lives and the lives of those around them. The anthology articulates a powerful reminder that we are all shaped by the stories we tell and witness, fostering a sense of empathy and understanding that transcends our differences. Through this collection, Isay underscores the transformative power of listening and storytelling, revealing the profound impact these narratives have in shaping

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our shared history and identity.

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About the author

In "Listening Is an Act of Love," Dave Isay introduces readers to a tapestry of personal stories collected through StoryCorps, an organization he founded to highlight the significance of everyday narratives. This collection serves not only as a showcase of individual experiences but also as a testament to the vital role of listening in fostering empathy and connection among people from varied backgrounds.

Throughout the book, Isay emphasizes the notion that each person's story is worthy of attention, illustrating how profound moments often lie within the routine aspects of life. He presents a series of interviews conducted by everyday individuals—family members, friends, and acquaintances—who candidly share their thoughts, hopes, and struggles. These narratives range from moments of joy and celebration to deep sorrow and loss, each woven together to reveal the shared fabric of human experience.

In the chapters, we meet a diverse cast of characters, each bringing their unique background and perspective. For instance, we encounter a son reflecting on his relationship with his aging father, revealing the complexities of familial love and the challenges of acceptance. Another story features a mother recounting the trials of raising a child with special needs, highlighting the lessons learned through resilience and unconditional love.

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Isay's work champions the power of storytelling as a means to bridge divides and foster understanding. He invites readers to consider how listening is not merely passive but an active engagement that can transform lives. The stories serve as catalysts for empathy, encouraging individuals to reflect on their own experiences and the narratives of those around them.

Overall, "Listening Is an Act of Love" is a celebration of the human spirit, urging us to honor the stories of others and recognize the beauty in the act of listening. Isay's innovative approach demonstrates that through shared stories, we can cultivate a deeper understanding of one another, reinforcing the idea that every voice has the power to resonate and connect us all.

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Chapter 1 Summary: HOME AND FAMILY

Summary of Chapter 1 from "Listening Is an Act of Love" by Dave Isay

In the opening chapter of "Listening Is an Act of Love," Dave Isay, the founder of StoryCorps, introduces readers to the profound significance of the interviews conducted through his project. Initially unsure about their broader relevance, Isay quickly discovers that the stories shared resonate universally, touching on fundamental themes such as birth, love, and death. As the quality and depth of these narratives evolve over time, Isay acknowledges the transformative power of storytelling, affirming the project's importance.

The chapter features a series of personal anecdotes that illustrate human experiences and relationships.

Cynthia Rahn shares a touching childhood memory linked to a school project, where her mother's heartfelt gesture of crafting a barn from notebook paper instills in her a sense of specialness and warmth, reflecting the enduring bond of maternal love.

Dr. Richard Collins reminisces about his mischievous childhood, highlighting humorous escapades with his father, a country doctor. Through these stories, he imparts valuable life lessons and shares a playful wisdom

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about managing relationships—especially with dogs.

William Jacobs offers a deep and emotional recollection from World War II, where he learns from his future mother-in-law that his love, Claire, would be unable to bear children. His response—embracing the idea of adoption—illustrates his unwavering commitment to their bond.

Hee-Sook Lee discusses her journey of understanding love through the lens of American missionaries, contrasting it with her cultural upbringing. Through personal narrative, she explores how love can be expressed and the importance of communication in relationships.

Sulochana Konur reflects on her arranged marriage, contrasting the cultural expectations she faced upon moving to the United States with the realities of family life. Her story highlights the complexities and surprises inherent in navigating love across cultural boundaries.

Victoria Keller Fraser recounts her experience living with her grandson, Christopher, who struggles after being separated from his father. Their burgeoning relationship, filled with affection and respect, illustrates the resilience found in familial bonds during challenging times.

Mary Lou Maher shares her poignant story of becoming pregnant at a young age and the emotional complexities surrounding her decision to place her

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child for adoption. Her journey reveals themes of deep loss and the potential for reconnection, emphasizing the intricate nature of maternal love.

Finally, cousins Cherie Johnson and James Ransom fondly remember their visits to their grandmother’s home, reflecting on their interactions with the stern yet nurturing figure of Miss Devine. Their stories encapsulate the blend of childhood innocence and the lasting impact of family traditions.

In conclusion, the chapter weaves together these diverse narratives, showcasing the themes of love, sacrifice, resilience, and the interconnectedness of family. Each story serves as a testament to the profound influence of relationships throughout life's journey, celebrating the richness of human experience.

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Chapter 2 Summary: WORK AND DEDICATION

Summary of "WORK and DEDICATION"

The chapters illuminate personal journeys and life lessons that emphasize the values of hard work, dedication, and community connection through a variety of perspectives.

Facilitators at StoryCorps start the narrative by highlighting the role of these frontline workers who, with exceptional listening skills, guide participants in sharing their stories. Their experiences underscore the importance of empathy and understanding, leading them to appreciate the inherent goodness in people. After their one-year term, they return to their communities enriched by the wisdom gained from those they interviewed.

Dr. Monica Mayer's Journey tells of her upbringing as a mixed-heritage girl in the 1960s, where her father's insistence on valuing education became pivotal. Now a family medicine practitioner on the Fort Berthold reservation in North Dakota, she embodies the lessons of perseverance and the impact of education.

Ken Kobus and Steelmaking focuses on a familial legacy in the steel industry. From his first encounter with steelmaking at sixteen, Kobus

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reveals a sense of pride and connection to this demanding yet magnificent work, showcasing the pride tied to family tradition.

The memories continue with **Samuel W. Black on His Father**, who honors his father's dedication as a janitor, reflecting on the sacrifices made for the family. This instilled in him a robust work ethic that has defined his own life choices.

Joyce Butler Remembers Her Mother shares a powerful narrative of resilience as she describes her mother's bold decision to divorce in 1941, which led her to support the family through hard labor in a laundry and later a shipyard. Butler's respect for her mother's determination is palpable.

Shifting to small-town life, **Sharon St. Aubin's Small-Town Childhood** emphasizes the influence of her mother's post office and the lessons learned in a close-knit community of Blaisdell, North Dakota. The chapter illustrates how shared experiences can shape one's values.

Lendall Hill's Early Life emerges next, where he recalls the lessons of hard work imparted by his father despite his disability. Hill's anecdotes reflect resilience and the significance of maintaining a positive outlook in the face of adversity.

Barb Fuller-Curry's Family Legacy moves the reader to reflections on

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agricultural sacrifice. Her parents' dedication to sustaining their family farm during tough economic times is celebrated, and Fuller-Curry expresses how that legacy has shaped her appreciation for hard work.

Rick Kincaid's Life Lessons reveals his unconventional journey from musician to bounty hunter, illustrating how life events and personal choices can lead to unexpected paths and valuable insights about resilience and adaptability.

Phyllis Johnson's Police Career recounts her evolution from clerk to police officer, capturing the challenges of being a woman in law enforcement and the heavy emotional toll of confronting violence in the community, thus highlighting the courage needed in her profession.

Meanwhile, **Ronald Ruiz and Acts of Kindness** shares a moving account of meaningful connections through small acts of kindness as a bus driver, emphasizing that even the simplest gestures can have profound impacts on individuals' lives.

Barney Feldman's Life in a Barber Shop revisits the lessons of hard work learned during his childhood in a barber shop amid the Great Depression, illustrating resourcefulness and the importance of community support during difficult times.

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The story of love and education is explored in **Scott and Catherine Kohanek's Journey**, depicting their unconventional path to marriage in an elementary school lunchroom, cementing the value of shared experiences in their roles as educators.

Finally, **Janet Lutz as a Hospital Chaplain** wraps up the collection by sharing her role in providing emotional support in a hospital setting. Lutz underscores the often-overlooked stories of hospital staff and highlights the importance of shared prayer and presence during crises, revealing the healing power of compassion.

Overall, these chapters weave a tapestry of various lives, with each narrative underscoring the importance of work, dedication, and the connections that are formed through shared experiences and acts of kindness.

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Chapter 3 Summary: JOURNEYS

Summary of Chapter 3: Journeys from "Listening Is an Act of Love" by Dave Isay

In May 2005, StoryCorps broadened its mission to document personal narratives by launching mobile booths throughout the United States. This innovative approach attracted substantial media attention, which encouraged a wider array of individuals to participate, sharing their life stories that aired on NPR every Friday.

Among the poignant narratives featured, Martha Conant recalls her near-fatal encounter on United Airlines Flight 232, which crashed in 1989. She emphasizes the crew's calmness during the chaos and reflects on her newfound perspective on life, valuing family and practicing gratitude following the trauma.

Blanca Alvarez shares her arduous journey from Mexico, facilitated by a "coyote," as she traversed the border into the United States. She recounts the sacrifices endured for her family's sake and highlights the resilience often needed by immigrants striving for a better life.

Eddie S. Lanier Jr. narrates his battle with alcoholism, deeply rooted in his

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family's history. Acknowledging the dangers of repeating his father's patterns, he shares his path toward sobriety, underscoring the significance of friendship and the relentless effort required to maintain recovery.

In a candid dialogue, inmates Paul Mortimer and Shawn Fox reflect on their troubled pasts, influenced by drug use, and the implications that led them to incarceration. They express hopes for personal growth and the well-being of their families amid the challenges of prison life.

John Brown discusses his coming-out experience, highlighting the varying reactions of his brother and the supportive environment fostered by his family. He underscores the transformational power of acceptance and open communication in strengthening familial bonds.

Kim Schumer openly addresses her struggles with self-harm during her teenage years and the role her sister, Amy, played as a witness to her tumultuous journey. Their discussion sheds light on the complexities of mental health and the critical importance of family support.

Curtis and Cindy Connolly Cates reflect on their love story against the backdrop of Curtis's childhood struggles with an absent father and addiction. Their relationship exemplifies mutual support, illustrating how love can thrive amidst personal battles.

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George Caywood shares the heavy burdens of his upbringing, particularly the impact of his father's suicide. He expresses a commitment to offering his four daughters a nurturing environment, motivated by his intention to break the cycle of mental health issues that affected him.

Shasti O'Leary-Soudant describes a poignant moment during chemotherapy when the love from her husband, Jethro, enveloped her. This experience provided solace and clarity, enabling her to navigate her illness with a sense of vulnerability.

Gregg Korbon pays tribute to his late son, Brian, who tragically passed away shortly after an exuberant Little League game. Through his grief, Gregg finds solace in cherishing the memories of Brian, acknowledging the importance of embracing life despite loss.

Katherine Meers interviews her father, Sam, about their shared heartbreak following the death of her mother from cancer. Their heartfelt discussion explores the enduring nature of family connections and the profound impact of loss, emphasizing the healing power of love.

Collectively, these narratives encapsulate raw emotions and pivotal life moments, highlighting themes of love, resilience, loss, and the transformative nature of storytelling. Each story reinforces the notion that the sharing of personal experiences fosters understanding and connection

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among individuals, illustrating the strength found in vulnerability.

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Chapter 4: HISTORY AND STRUGGLE

HISTORY and STRUGGLE

The journey through American history is richly illuminated in this chapter as it showcases a collection of personal narratives that highlight significant historical events from the Great Depression to the AIDS crisis. These narratives, drawn from the StoryCorps initiative, aim to capture the voices of people who lived through pivotal moments, contributing to a broader, grassroots understanding of American history at the Library of Congress.

StoryCorps Initiative

StoryCorps was established with the mission of fostering a transformative experience through personal interviews. The initiative seeks to build an oral history archive that highlights the everyday stories of Americans, providing a bottom-up perspective that helps fill in the gaps of official historical accounts spanning the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

Personal Accounts of Historical Events

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In this chapter, readers encounter a series of compelling individual stories that paint vivid pictures of life during key historical moments. These accounts reflect the resilience, struggles, and triumphs of ordinary Americans navigating through times of crisis.

Virginia Hill Fairbrother's Memories

Virginia Hill Fairbrother, born in 1924, offers a poignant reflection on her school life during the Great Depression. Her memories are tinged with hardship—the sensory details of her childhood evoke the struggles of the era, while her father's lessons instill in her a sense of self-worth and the importance of humility.

Manny Diaz Jr.'s Childhood

In his narrative, Manny Diaz Jr. recounts his childhood in New York after migrating from Puerto Rico in 1927. He emphasizes the communal spirit shared by neighbors as they weathered the Great Depression together, illustrating their resourcefulness in creative endeavors like brewing wine from discarded grapes.

Debra A. Fisher and the Holocaust

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Debra A. Fisher shares the emotional burden of her father's Holocaust experiences, illustrating the silence and reluctance to confront the memories of Auschwitz. Their dialogue reveals the complexities of memory and trauma, showing how the past continues to cast a long shadow over the present.

Joseph L. Robertson in WWII

Joseph L. Robertson reflects on his early enlistment in the Army before the onset of World War II. His harrowing account of the D-Day invasion reveals the brutal realities of war, underscored by the haunting images of lost comrades and the moral complexities of taking a life.

Marie DeSantis and War's Impact

Marie DeSantis shares the anxieties surrounding her brother Joe's involvement in WWII, particularly the emotional turbulence following the telegram about his disappearance. Her story takes a heartwarming turn with a letter from him, serving as a beacon of hope amid uncertainty.

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Sam Harmon’s Poverty and Navy Service

Sam Harmon narrates his experience growing up in poverty during the Great Depression and how he enlisted in the Navy. He candidly discusses the racism he faced, notably being misclassified as Caucasian—a testament to his intelligence—leading to an unexpected assignment in electronics.

Theresa Burroughs’ Struggles with Segregation

Theresa Burroughs recounts her childhood in the segregated South, vividly detailing her encounters with systemic racism. Her unwavering determination to vote despite numerous humiliations faced from white registrars ultimately culminates in her hard-won success, reflecting the broader struggle for civil rights in America.

Taylor Rogers’ Sanitation Workers’ Strike

Taylor Rogers shares the dire circumstances faced by sanitation workers in Memphis, which sparked a pivotal strike. His account highlights the severe injustices they endured and the profound impact of Martin Luther King's assassination on their movement for dignity and respect.

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Tom Geerdes’ Vietnam Reflections

Tom Geerdes reflects on the lasting emotional scars from his service in

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Chapter 5 Summary: FIRE AND WATER

FIRE and WATER

StoryCorps Booth at the World Trade Center Site

In July 2005, StoryCorps pioneered a booth at the World Trade Center site, creating a safe haven for the public to share memories, particularly for families affected by the September 11 attacks. This initiative, termed "bearing witness" by facilitators, aimed to promote healing through storytelling. By September 2006, New York City mayor Michael Bloomberg championed StoryCorps' mission to document the lives of those lost on 9/11 for the upcoming World Trade Center Memorial Museum, with an objective of gathering at least one account for each victim.

Tommy Sullivan's Family Interview

Among the early interviewees was Tommy Sullivan's family. His sister, Norene, poignantly expressed how recounting fond memories of Tommy facilitated their healing process. She underscored the critical need for open dialogue regarding love and loss, demonstrating the therapeutic potential of shared experiences.

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Reflections on Community Connections

In the aftermath of 9/11, a notable sense of community emerged, uniting people in shared grief and resilience. However, as time passed, this connection began to wane, prompting reflections on the importance of rekindling this bond through storytelling and open expressions of love.

Hurricane Katrina Stories

Traveling to Mississippi and New Orleans in late 2005, StoryCorps recorded the first-hand accounts of Hurricane Katrina survivors, capturing the emotional and devastating experiences surrounding one of the nation’s most catastrophic disasters.

Richard Pecorella Remembers Karen Juday

Richard Pecorella shared a touching memory of his fiancée, Karen Juday, describing the magic of their first encounter and the deep affection they had for each other. His recollection turned heart-wrenching as he detailed his frantic attempts to reach her on September 11, 2001, when she was at work in the Twin Towers, ultimately learning that she had perished in the attacks.

Joseph Dittmar's Survival Story

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Joseph Dittmar recounted his harrowing escape from the World Trade Center on that fateful day. While attending a meeting in the North Tower, he experienced the terrifying moments following the impact, navigating down stairwells filled with chaos as he witnessed widespread destruction and panic.

Rufus Burkhalter and Bobby Brown on Hurricane Katrina

Rufus and Bobby, operators at the Sewerage and Water Board of New Orleans, vividly described the critical moments during Hurricane Katrina when their pumping station was overwhelmed by floodwaters. Their stories reflect the devastation they faced and the dedication to their city during a time of unprecedented chaos.

Douglas Paul DeSilvey's Loss

Douglas shared the heartrending account of losing his entire family—his wife Linda, daughter Donna, and mother-in-law Nadine—in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. He recounted the devastating moment the roof of their home collapsed as he attempted to rescue them, a trauma that would haunt him forever.

Kiersta Kurtz-Burke's Experience at Charity Hospital

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Kiersta, a medical professional at Charity Hospital during the crisis, revealed the confusion and resource scarcity that plagued staff and patients as they awaited rescue amid rising floodwaters. Her account emphasizes her role in maintaining morale, showing strength in both herself and those around her in the face of overwhelming adversity.

This chapter underscores the transformative power of sharing personal narratives during pivotal life events, illustrating themes of love, loss, community, and resilience against the backdrop of tragedy and hope.

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Chapter 6 Summary: The Story of StoryCorps

The Story of StoryCorps: Summary

Introduction to StoryCorps

In this opening chapter, author Dave Isay reflects on his childhood experiences that inspired the creation of StoryCorps. He reminisces about using a cassette recorder to capture the stories of his family, especially his lively grandmother, Rose Franzblau. After the loss of several family members, Isay felt a profound urgency to preserve their voices and stories, recognizing the importance of remembering and honoring one's heritage.

Early Radio Experiences

Isay's journey into radio was ignited in 1988 during a chance meeting with individuals seeking to create a museum focused on addiction recovery. This encounter kindled his passion for radio production as he began documenting their narratives—a pivotal moment that directed him towards amplifying the voices of everyday Americans through storytelling.

Inspiring Projects

As Isay delved deeper into various documentary projects, like one featuring two young boys from Chicago, he became acutely aware of the emotional impact that storytelling holds in fostering human connections. This

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realization encouraged him to explore larger avenues for preserving individual narratives, prompting him to research the historical archives of the Works Projects Administration, which had collected personal stories during the Great Depression.

Conceptualizing StoryCorps

In 2002, Isay conceptualized StoryCorps with the intention of prioritizing personal storytelling above all. He envisioned facilitating intimate, high-quality interviews that would allow people to share their life experiences authentically. By collaborating with the American Folklife Center, he secured a promising platform to archive the rich tapestry of collected recordings.

Pilot and Launch of StoryCorps

The successful pilot launch in 2003 paved the way for StoryCorps to officially open its first recording booth in Grand Central Terminal in New York City. This unique environment encouraged spontaneous and emotionally rich conversations among participants, offering them profound opportunities to share meaningful stories from their lives.

Widespread Impact and Reach

StoryCorps expanded its engagement to ensure it included diverse and underrepresented voices, breaking language barriers and inviting participation from a broad spectrum of the community. It emerged as a

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sanctuary for vulnerability, allowing people from various backgrounds to connect through the shared human experience of storytelling.

Foundational Challenges and Support

Despite early financial hurdles, StoryCorps received generous support from philanthropists, which enabled it to grow rapidly into one of the largest nonprofit organizations in the United States. The organization was celebrated for its mission to capture the depth of human experiences in a way that transcended societal divisions.

Memorable Participants

Among the many poignant stories shared at StoryCorps, Danny and Annie Perasa, a couple from Brooklyn, stood out. Their love story resonated deeply, and they became somewhat of unofficial ambassadors for StoryCorps. Their relationship exemplified how storytelling can illuminate the challenges and triumphs faced in life.

The Legacy of Love and Loss

As Danny battled terminal illness, the emotional recordings of him and Annie served as a powerful testimony of love and the significance of memory. Their heartfelt exchanges portrayed not only the dire realities of facing loss but also the strength found in sharing one's story. Danny’s passing elicited a profound sense of community support, reinforcing the enduring ties between StoryCorps and its storytellers.

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Conclusion

The chapter culminates by reiterating the core mission of StoryCorps: to honor and celebrate everyday voices, ensuring that the stories of individuals from all walks of life are preserved for future generations. This legacy reshapes how we understand our collective experiences and the power of storytelling in human connection.

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