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Storytelling Workshop: Notes

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1) General Notes

Storytelling Workshop participants are encouraged to write their thoughts relating to stories and storytelling in ***Storytelling Journals***.

Two aspects of Storytelling work are

- 1) Analysing, shaping, and creating stories (Content).
- 2) Coaching Communication Skills: Storytelling is a form of Public Speaking involving Acting.

Basic Guidelines for Storytelling

VISUALISE.

DESCRIBE.

MIME relating to objects and landscapes.

BECOME characters.

and

Interact with individual listeners:

including by, at times, making eye-contact with individual listeners while speaking complete thoughts -- both when one is narrating, and when one is role-playing characters.

Three Kinds of Stories

- Personal-Experience stories (Autobiographical stories), and other Documentary stories.
- Traditional stories.
- Made-up stories.

Personal-Experience Stories

Why do people remember and decide to share certain experiences? What events tend to be considered significant enough for one to make a story out of them? Telling a story involves expressing points of view -- that an event is significant, and how one feels about it. Thus telling a story is an act of moral persuasion. If teller and listeners can agree that a story is worth telling, and that it has a certain point and meaning -- they are members of a community together.

Types of Traditional Stories

- 1) An **Epic** is the story of a hero who travels from one end of the land to the other, often leading a group. The hero is victorious in his endeavor, and finally tends to become a ruler, and/or to establish a new institution.
- 2) A **Fable** often features talking animals, and tends to have a clear moral (behavioural message). Collections of Fables include, *Jataka Tales*, *Panchatantra Stories*, and *Aesop's Fables*.
- 3) A **Fairy Tale** tends to centre around a main character who begins relatively alone and without possessions. However, this character is kind and humble (especially in relation to animals); and as a result, in some magical way Mother Nature helps the character to find a spouse and a treasure, and be set to live happily ever after.

Fables and Fairy Tales are two types of **Folk Tales**. Traditionally, Folk Tales were composed by communities (not by individual authors), and were passed down orally from generation to generation.

Twelve Elements of Story

- 1) The **Title** of the story.
- 2) **Characters** (their histories, thoughts, decisions, abilities to follow-through on decisions, actions, etc).
- 3) Characters' **Ways of speaking**.
- 4) Characters' **Ways of moving**.
- 5) **Place**.
- 6) **Time** (continuous, or jumps, flashbacks?).
- 7) The **Storyline** (also known as, plot) -- in one sentence.
- 8) **Objects** in the story.
- 9) **Sensory Elements** in the story: Smells, Flavours, Colours, Textures, etc.
- 10) **Emotions** in the story (for the characters, the teller, and the listeners).
- 11) If the story is being told by a character in the story: **Who is the Narrator**, and what is his/her Point of View, Tone of Voice, Attitude, and Style?
- 12) **Point** (theme, meaning, moral, message).

Elements 1-11 combined help to produce element 12.

Situations

Regardless of whether a story's characters are humans, animals, divinities, etc -- all stories are about *situations*. Story listeners can **Project** themselves into, and **Imagine** themselves in these situations. They can **Empathise** and **identify** with -- and even may possibly eventually **Imitate** -- the characters. Considering if they might do things the same or differently from how the characters do things, gives the listeners *practice for living*.

Moments of Decision

Identify the Moments of Decision in a story.

In *Moments of Decision*, a character's nature is exposed (or self-created) through his/her decisions and actions. That is: a figure's internal nature manifests and expresses itself in and is embodied in his/her decisions and actions (and his/her abilities to follow-through on such decisions). These decisions and actions form important parts of the storyline, the plot.

Moments of decision are also sometimes known as a story's **Moments of Truth, Turning Points, Pivotal Points, Crucial Scenes, Key Scenes, and Dramatic Moments**.

In scenes that you identify as important in a story: Please do not just summarise what happens in such scenes. Rather, actually give us the details **step by step**, and **act-out (role-play)** what the characters say and how they feel. **Do not just tell us** how they feel -- **let us see and hear** how they feel.

2) Types of Stories

Folklore Stories

- 1) An episode from an Epic.
- 2) An Animal Fable (Panchatantra Stories, Jataka Tales, Aesop's Fables, etc).
- 3) A Fairy Tale, or any other kind of Folk Tale (Grandmother Stories, Raja-Rani Stories, etc).

Personal-Experience Stories (Autobiographical Stories), and other True Stories

- 4) Something that happened in the last 24 hours.
- 5) An experience one learned a lot from. Something that opened one's eyes, and changed one's life,
- 6) One's Life Story -- focusing on one's unique interests, skills, and talents.
How did one first discover one had these interests? How has one developed them through education and applied them through work, and how might one like to do so in the future?

2) Types of Stories (continued)

Imaginary Stories (Made-up Stories)

7) A story based on any 2, 3, 4, etc, words.

8) A story based on 4 Story Elements: a character, place, object, and action.

9) A real-life situation transformed:

Shifted from being about self ("I"), to being about an external character ("he", "she", etc), with exaggeration, changes, fantasy, etc, added (please see pages 11 and 12).

These could be in any of the above categories

10) A story based on an emotion.

11) Guiding, Inspirational, and Healing Stories can be found or created in response to aspects of a person's Life Story.

3) Online Resources

Articles about storytelling for teaching-and-learning, www.storytellinginstitute.org/37.html .

"Ways Storytelling Can Be Used for Teaching-and-Learning",
www.storytellinginstitute.org/2015e.pdf .

"Ways Verbal Play such as Storytelling and Word-games Can Be Used for Teaching-and-learning Languages", www.storytellinginstitute.org/2015a.pdf .

Links to many Folktales (Animal fables, Fairytales, etc) written in English are at www.storytellinginstitute.org/87.html . Including,

Kannada Folk tales, <http://tinyurl.com/cp9yjpc> .

Tamil Folk tales, www.storytellinginstitute.org/85.pdf (22 stories, 315 KB).

www.storytellinginstitute.org/99.pdf (99 stories, 1.6 MB).

Ten favourites, www.storytellinginstitute.org/44.htm .

"Ponnivala Story" ("Annamar Kathai"), from the Coimbatore area. Researched by Dr Brenda Beck, Toronto. www.ponnivala.com , <http://legendofponnivala.blogspot.in> .

Links to 122 audio-recordings of conversations with professional storytellers are at www.artofstorytellingshow.com/past-guests .

Links to audio-recordings of conversations regarding Storytelling and Healing are at www.healingstory.org/events/teleconference-recordings .

Links to recordings of storytelling-related videoconferences are at www.storytellinginstitute.org/av.html .

An *Interactive Documentary on Story and Storytelling* is at <http://biologyofstory.com> .

The list of participants is at <http://biologyofstory.com/#/main?index=entity> .

Especially recommended are the audio/video recordings of, Ben Haggerty (Storytelling). Kendall Haven (Story). Nancy Mellon (Story and Healing). Jo Radner (Storytelling). Laura Simms (Storytelling). Dan Yashinsky (Storytelling). Jack Zipes (Story).

Links to recordings of Laura Simms, the person who trained me in storytelling, are at <http://biologyofstory.com/#/main?entity=laura-simms> .

An audio-only recording of an interview with Laura Simms is at <https://soundcloud.com/james-nav/storytelling-your-secret-territory-with-laura-simms>

4) Story Formulas and Models

- 1) Vladimir Propp's theory of ***Wholeness, Fragmentation, and Wholeness Regained***.
- 2) Joseph Campbell's theory of ***Heroic Journey and Community Revitalisation***.
- 3) Carl Jung's theory of ***Psychological Integration***.
- 4) The theory of the "***The Well-Made Play***" (Conflict, Crisis, and Resolution).
- 5) Bob McGee's theory of ***Characters Wanting Things; Characters on a Mission***.
- 6) Aristotle's theory of ***Catharsis***.
- 7) The Indian theory of ***Rasas***.

1

Vladimir Propp's theory (Propp 1928) states that a story (especially a fairy tale) is composed of three stages:

- a) Peaceful home,
- b) Break-up of the home, often seemingly caused by a villain figure.
- c) Member of the broken home tracks down the villain, defeats him/her, and re-establishes the home.

2

Joseph Campbell's theory (Campbell 1949) also states that a story (especially an epic or a heroic legend) is composed of three stages:

- a) The hero's/heroine's community is dull and barren. (For examples: people are unable to have children; there is no rain, etc.)
- b) The hero/heroine goes on a journey, obtains a sacred object, and
- c) Returns to the community with the sacred object, thus revitalizing the community.

3

Carl Jung's theory of Psychological Integration -- which he often called "Individuation" (the making of an individual) -- states that stories are composed of two stages:

- a) Elements are apart.
- b) Elements are integrated.

This approach has involved seeing aspects of existence as Male and Female elements, which symbolise both aspects of each individual's personality (micro level), and aspects of nature (macro level). For examples: The sea might symbolise the Female element, and the land might symbolise the Male element. Daytime and action might symbolise the Male element; and night and the regeneration of sleep and rest might represent the Female element. A male character might represent the Male element, and a female character might represent the Female element -- but this is not always the case. This theory states that each individual's personality is composed of Male and Female elements, and that stories portray, represent, and facilitate the psychological integration (in the teller and in each listener) by bringing these Male and Female elements together and into harmony with each other.

The perceiving of elements of existence in oppositional pairs has been typical of the Structuralist approach in academic thought.

4

Especially in the USA and England, from the 1920s to the 1950s -- the Golden Age of Modern Western Drama -- there was much talk about "The Well-Made Play". This model also applied to other forms of story presentation, such as screenplays and novels. According to this theory, stories revolve around conflict:

- a) Exposition (situation background).
- b) Conflict develops.
- c) Crisis.
- d) Resolution.

This model does not have much to say about the art of avoiding conflict. Moreover, it was produced by cultures which were very competitive and individualistic, sometimes to the point of being self-destructive.

5

The following notes are based on material in Robert McKee's *Story: Substance, Structure, Style, and the Principles of Screenwriting* (1997).

Character Development: What changes occur in the character's situation or condition? Does the character grow, change, learn? Is the character transformed? Or is it just that the character's inner nature is revealed? A character's inner and innate nature is revealed through his/her choices under pressure.

"Character is destiny". A character's fate is created by who he/she is, and what he/she does.

A character may be on a **Quest, Mission**, to do, create, or find something; may **Desire** to become something, or win over someone.

The central character's quest is the story's **Spine, Super-Objective, Controlling Idea**. Look into a character's heart to discover what he/she is seeking.

What are a character's **Objectives** in a scene, a sequence of scenes, the entire story? What change occurs in a scene? How does a scene move the story forward? What is at risk, at stake, in each scene? The higher the risk, investment, expenditure, the more valuable the prize.

The **Hook, Inciting Incident**, captures the audience members' attention, awakens their curiosity, sets the story into action, upsets the balance of forces in the central character's life. The character must react to restore balance. The Inciting Incident establishes the story's **Major Dramatic Question**. Tells the audience: this is the issue, this is what is at stake. Now we want to see how things work out, what happens next.

There may be some **Problem** in the story that the characters or the audience members want to be resolved. If all are content, there may be no need for dramatic action (but there still could be action and story perhaps).

Conflict may occur due to scarcity, frustration, ambition, desire. **Progressive Complications, Obstacles, Hurdles** may be faced by the main character in the course of his/her attempting to restore balance to his/her situation, to achieve a goal.

Set-up -- gives information to characters and audience members.

Pay-off -- this information is used by characters in a way that moves the story forward.

Pivotal Event, Turning Point. "A Turning Point is centered in the choice a character makes under pressure to take one action or another in the pursuit of desire" (248).

Reversals, Twists, are surprising things that a character does, or that happen to a character.

Subplots -- may contradict or resonate with the Controlling Idea of the main plot. **Irony** -- opposites co-exist.

Up-ending. Down-ending. False-ending. An **Open Ending** means, it could go any number of ways. It is left open.

"**Classical Design** means a story built around an active protagonist who struggles against primarily external forces of antagonism to pursue his/her desire, through continuous time, within a consistent and causally connected fictional reality, to a closed ending of absolute, irreversible change" (p. 45). Key terms include: **Causality, Closed Ending, Linear Time, External Conflict, Consistent Reality, Sole and Active Protagonist**.

At some point, the main character goes to an extreme in pursuing his/her goal. The changes are **Irreversible**. The main character passes a **Point of No Return**.

These are qualities of the "Hollywood Movie" -- along with the idea that life can change, especially the optimistic idea that life can change for the better. In what ways might this approach be limited? What are some other possibilities?

6

Aristotle, the ancient Greek philosopher, and literary and drama critic, presented and discussed the theory of "Catharsis" (Aristotle, approximately 2,350 years ago). This especially applied to one type of drama -- tragedy, in which the hero is destroyed by a tragic flaw within himself. This flaw was often hubris (pride). According to the theory of catharsis, audience members feel awe, and finally release and relief, by observing and identifying with a great figure who falls due to his/her tragic flaw.

7

In classical Indian aesthetics -- as set forth in the Sanskrit text, the *Natyasastra* (Bharata, approximately 2,000 years ago) -- there are eight *Bhavas* (imitations of emotions that actors perform) and corresponding *Rasas* (the audience members' reactions). These eight emotions are:

Astonishment, Comedy, Love, Disgust, Heroism, Sadness, Fear, and Anger.
(Peace was added later.)

According to this approach, what happens in a storytelling event is that the story presenter presents the representation of the emotion, and the audience members then experience that emotion. Some commentators say that plays, etc, should mix different *Rasas* but should be dominated by one.

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5) Story-Composing Activities

ROQI -- Remember, Observe, Question, Imagine

Think, Write, or Tell a Partner --

- 1) An interesting experience you have had in the past 24 hours.
- 2) What you tend to daydream about.
- 3) Some of your unique interests, talents, and abilities.
When and how did you discover them? How have you developed and applied them?
In other words: What are you good at? What do you know a lot about?
- 4) An incident in your life from which you learned a lot.
- 5) Some turning points in your life (past, and anticipated in the future).
- 6) Your Life Story.
- 7) Some Social and Environmental issues you think about.
- 8) Stories relating to your Profession and Industry, and the Institution in which you work.
- 9) Start with any Story Element, or any fragment from the above, and build a story around this.

Tell About Various Situations

Tell about the first time you _____.

Tell about your favourite _____.

Tell about how you did something that was important to you.

Take us somewhere we can go only if you take us there

Tell us about a place only you know about.

Take us there, in your and our imaginations.

Tell about a photo

Bring in a family photo, and tell us about the photo (what happened before and after, etc).

If you could ...

If you could do anything -- **What would you do?**

If you could go anywhere -- **Where would you go?**

If you could be anyone -- **Who would you be?**

If you could meet anyone -- **Who would you meet?** (How might the conversation go?)

Hope

I hope that _____.

For some time, Hope had to go away. But when Hope comes back to the world, the first thing she would do is _____.

Problems and Solutions

Make a list of problems -- big and small, personal and social. For each problem, give a solution.

A big problem I have faced in my life so far is _____.

A big problem I have heard of someone else facing is _____.

Possible solutions to this problem might include _____.

Why Does She Feel That Way?

If a character might be **angry**, she might feel this way because ____.

If a character might be **happy**, she might feel this way because ____.

If a character might be **sad**, she might feel this way because ____.

If a character might be **in a rush**, she might feel this way because ____.

If a character might be **confused**, she might feel this way because ____.

One can also do this exercise regarding personal experiences, told in the first person ("I did this") or third person ("she did this"). One can modify these personal-experience narratives, so they are no longer 100% "true", by adding exaggeration and metaphors, changing situations to bring out points, etc.

One-minute or five-minute stream-of-consciousness writing activity

Write about any of the above, mentioning as many of the five senses as possible -- hearing, seeing, feeling, smelling, and tasting.

6) Metaphors in Speech

Figures of Speech

(Animals as metaphors for human personality traits, and behaviors.)

He's chicken.
 He's crabby.
 I will not be cowed.
 He cowered in response to the threat.
 He did it doggedly.
 Something's fishy here.

(Colors as metaphors for emotions and ideas.)

I am blue.
 He was green with envy.
 Recycling is a green activity.

I am in the woods.
 I am at sea.
 I am in the dark.
 I am up a creek without a paddle.
 I am going out on a limb.
 He is skating on thin ice.
 She's a star.
 His head is in the clouds.
 His goose is cooked.
 The situation is up in the air.
 It is up for grabs.

Expressions, Sayings

I am going to do it sooner or later.
 Please get to the point.
 Please stop pulling my leg.
 Please do the necessary.
 Don't jump to conclusions.
 I can't read your mind.
 I am going to get to the bottom of this.
 Don't put all your eggs in one basket.
 Money does not grow on trees.
 The cat is out of the bag.
 Do not open that can of worms.
 I am turning over a new leaf.
 I am leaving no stone left unturned.
 He sent me on a wild goose chase.
 Out of the frying pan, into the fire.
 He is behaving like a bull in a china shop.
 He is making a mountain out of a molehill.
 It is a tempest in a teapot

Euphemisms

A great tree has fallen.
 He is no longer with us.

Proverbs

A stitch in time saves nine.
 A friend in need is a friend indeed.
 A leopard cannot change its spots.
 A watched pot never boils.
 A picture is worth a thousand words.
 A dog is a man's best friend.
 Some things are easier said than done.
 Haste makes waste.

7) Metaphors in Stories

Notes on reasons and ways to use metaphors in story-composing processes:

When starting with memories of life experiences, and then creating/finding stories featuring metaphors for these experiences, a question that might arise is: Why make metaphors?

Two answers might be:

- A) Metaphors can express from the unconscious; and
- B) If the metaphor is traditional, using it could help one feel related to and supported by one's culture and society.

From *Healing Stories for Challenging Behaviour*, by Susan Perrow

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Metaphors help 'lift' the listeners into their imaginations.

One way to build a story with a metaphor is, start with a simile (this is like that).

63

Metaphors are story seeds.

Think of an animal character associated with, corresponding to, a child's challenging behaviour.

From *Therapeutic Storytelling*, by Susan Perrow

Page 10

A metaphor shows us one thing as another, and in doing so extends the way we see the world, often refreshing and enlivening our perception.

Metaphor speaks directly to our imaginative facilities, bypassing our rational brain. Such metaphoric byways and pathways enable us to explore the ideas, forces, and powers that lie behind or beyond our rational thought.

We must integrate our ego into the whole of the macrocosm. The responsibility for our self-transformation is forever our own, although we may draw on the resources of the universal, and the expansion of our thinking to ever-greater concepts is our doorway to the universal. Absorbing and understanding metaphor is a tool of this expansion.
 -- From the essay, "Metaphor as a Path to Higher Consciousness",
 at <http://moonchalice.com/metaphors.html> .

Simile (Comparison): This is like that, it is as if this were that.

Metaphor: This is that, this becomes that, this has replaced that. A magical transformation occurs.

11

Metaphors speak directly to the imagination, building their connections through feelings rather than through theories or abstract reasoning.

12

Metaphors help form imaginative connections that draw in and enchant the listener.

One can find/create metaphors for obstacles, helpers, transformations, journeys, goals, etc.

13

Compose a story about how an animal character becomes his/her true self.

17

Choose metaphors based on things a child is keen on, things that are central to the child's experience, environment, and interests.

18

Choose metaphors from class themes and content, or from a child's own life.

When trauma is involved, the subconscious uses the imagination. The subconscious may translate experiences into metaphors. Dreams for instance have that capability. Violent dreams can be metaphors for an individual feeling vulnerable.

Our subconscious is smarter than we are. It knows what we can handle and what we can't. It translates trauma into symbols the same way sages translate real life into parables. We must spend time to slowly figure it all out. If trauma wasn't translated into metaphors, we would blow ourselves out of the water. We could never handle the devastation of trauma without the buffer of our subconscious. The different levels of awareness are important. Many religious scriptures, fairy tales, and wise words come in the form of metaphors to be slowly absorbed through consciousness.

One's mind must translate trauma into metaphors -- not just to enable the slow absorption of the consciousness for more awareness of life's lessons, but also because of the nature of the injury and how that injury impacts the individual. There is a spirit inside us much wiser than our consciousness. When experiences of trauma hit us they resonate deeply, and penetrate to our core. That experience is non-verbal, and gives non-verbal signals to us through symbols. Then it is our job to unravel it all and slowly find a way to heal, overcoming the shock and loss, and recreating the self.

- Jan Marquart (e-mails, May 2013)

Conclusion:

One way to make metaphors is,

A) Remember and tell an experience.

B) To help describe aspects of the told situation, use a simile (this is like that).

In the process, ask oneself

What is it like? ("it" being a key element of the original personal-narrative.)

What does it feel like?

What does it remind one of?

C) Then, drop the rational explanation/connection/description, and just say,

"Once there was *such-and-such*" (implying the original element is symbolised by, represented by, *such-and-such*).

8) Starting with Challenging Real-Life Situations

Think of some *challenging situations* -- situations that occur with friends, family members, children, in the workplace, etc. In each case: How did the situation develop? How *might* it have developed?

Here are some challenging, problematic **child behaviours in the home** (from a parent's perspective) about which one could develop stories:

- 1) A child who does not want to eat vegetables.
 - 2) A child who hits people, including peers and parents.
 - 3) A child who does not pay attention to, or obey, instructions.
 - 4) A child who does not like to go to new places, or try new things.
 - 5) A child who refuses to share her toys.
 - 6) A child who does not put away her toys.
 - 7) A child who is slow to get ready.
 - 8) A child who wants to watch cartoons all day.
 - 9) A child who does not like to read and write.
-

Here is a challenging, problematic **situation in the classroom** (from a teacher's perspective) about which one could develop stories:

Each child is often going off in his/her own direction. One child does not talk. One child does not stop talking. One child cries almost constantly. One child often runs around. It is sometimes difficult for teacher to keep all the children in place, and hold their attention.

Here are some challenging, problematic **situations in the workplace** about which one could develop stories:

A) Challenging situations one might experience with colleagues --

- 1) Competition regarding who might get an assignment.
- 2) Delegation of responsibilities and authority.
- 3) Lack of teamwork and support.

B) Challenging situations one might experience with people one might be supervising:

- 1) "Please stay late to complete a project".
- 2) "I feel I am getting too angry, in a counter-productive way, with people I am supervising".

C) Challenging situations one might experience with one's boss:

- 1) "I would like to ask my boss for a raise.
- 2) "I feel my boss is micro-managing me".
- 3) "I feel my boss is too critical of me, and is putting me down".

Might any traditional stories come to mind that might relate to any of the above situations?

The Process of Imagining

Let your imagination wander... What if things went this way? What if things went that way? Explore the possibilities, and imagine how things might play out in numerous possible ways.

Imagine

- 1) Variations and exaggerations of these situations.
- 2) Possible consequences of each decision and act by a character.
- 3) Possible solutions, resolutions.

Seek to come up with colourful, vivid, fantasy, symbolic situations and objects regarding what might happen when a character might do, or not do, these things.

Two ways of transforming a personal experience into a fictional story are:

- 1) Shift the telling from 1st person ("I did something") to 3rd person ("She did something").
- 2) Exaggerate, add to, and change elements. Create metaphors -- external symbols of inner qualities.

Possible values of creating **metaphorical stories** -- and **metaphorical elements in stories** -- based on, or inspired by, real-life situations and characters include:

- 1) Doing so distances oneself from the material, so that one can consider it calmly and coolly.
- 2) Doing so may make the situation more of a public, shared issue.
- 3) Doing so may help to establish that others have had such challenges, and that our culture has traditional ways of handling such situations. This might communicate that a character is not alone, and is not starting from scratch in seeking solutions to challenges.
- 4) Doing so may relate elements of the story to larger forces in the universe -- including "Mother Nature", and other Divine figures.

In sum, using metaphors in relation to one's experience may help one

- 1) To feel and communicate a sense of connection between one's self and the world beyond (especially if the metaphor is traditionally used in one's culture);
- 2) To express from one's subconscious.

Opposite Characters

Many folk tales (fairy tales, fables, etc) from all around the world, feature two opposite types of characters:

- 1) Lazy, greedy, self-indulgent, tyrannical.
- 2) Hard-working, generous, kind to others.

A story might be developed featuring two characters who are opposite in a similar way: one who behaves in not-such-a-great-way, and one who behaves in a better way.

Or, a single character in a story could first behave a not-such-a-great-way (and learn her lesson), and then behave in a better way.

Ways of Playing with Stories

- 1) For each story location: Describe **four objects**, and mime interacting with each of them.
- 2) Identify an important object in the story. Imagine **going into, and becoming, this object**. Inside the object, as the object: How do you feel? What do you see? Tell the story **from the perspective of this object**.
- 3) Tell the story **from the perspective of each character** of the story.
- 4) Play the **"What if?" game**. At any point in the story, one can say, "What if [*something else*] happened?"

9) A Method for Bringing Stories to Mind

Beginning with Real-life Incidents (at the Centre of the Circle),
and Composing Metaphorical, Fantasy Stories (based on the Real-life Incidents).



10) Criteria for Assessing Storytelling

As the storyteller and as characters --

1) **Throw yourself into telling the story.**

Believe in the value of the story, and be enthusiastic about sharing it with listeners. Commit yourself to the story, trust it, get into it, and tell it whole-heartedly.

2) Use **voice modulation**.

Give variations in tone-of-voice, attitude, and emotion; speed, pitch, and rhythm. Give contrast -- even opposites -- between the various voices (slow and fast, continuously and with pauses, soft and loud, low and high pitch, meek and proud emotions, etc).

3) Use facial expressions, gestures, **body language** (posture and movement).

4) **Visualise** and **describe**.

Visualise the elements of each scene and describe these elements to listeners.

5) **Act-out (step-into, role-play) characters:** speak their words and physically become them.

6) Make **eye-contact with individual listeners** -- both when narrating, and when role-playing a character. Try looking at a single listener while speaking a complete thought.

7) Develop **repeated conversational exchanges** between characters in the story.

8) Sing **songs** (or use other verbal delivery styles).

Songs could be sung by the narrator, about something or someone in the story. And, songs could be sung by a character, about something that she is thinking -- "I want to *do this...*", "I feel *like this...*", "*This* is what I did...", etc.

Natural and Direct Tone of Voice -- Conversational Storytelling

When telling a story, be aware of using any **artificial tone of voice**. Such tones of voice can create a distance between you and your listeners.

When telling a story, be aware of the inclination to **sell** a story, to push it onto listeners, to constantly be insisting that it is important. An ideal is for the listeners to be attracted to the story world, and thus for them to come to the storyteller, seeking to inhabit the world that the storyteller is conjuring. Sometimes **go slowly**, so that listeners have time to visualise, and feel and think, about the story elements.

After Telling a Story

When possible, lead a conversation with the listeners about the story (and the way it was told).

Ask "**open questions**" (questions with no right or wrong answer), such as,

1) Tell one specific thing -- an image, an action by a character, etc -- you liked about the story (or about the way the story was told).

2) Tell one thing you did not like about the story. Might you like to add to the story, or change it in any other way? Might you have any possible suggestions for improvement regarding the way the story was told?

3) Might the story remind you of any personal experience, or of some other story.

4) Does the story teach any lessons?

With each question, it is recommended to first seek to get some responses from one's listeners, and then give one's own answer.

11) Introduction to Storytelling Therapy

(Note: *Storytelling Therapy* is also known as *Therapeutic Uses of Storytelling, and Storytelling and Healing*.)

The time has come for Storytelling Therapy to take its place alongside Drama Therapy, Dance Therapy, Music Therapy, and Visual Art Therapy as one of the Expressive/Creative Arts Therapies.

What is Storytelling Therapy? It is, simply, using storytelling for therapeutic purposes. This can be done in many ways. The below begins to describe some of these possible methods.

First of all, it should be kept in mind that the psychological and social processes of storytelling can in themselves be therapeutic. Storytelling involves making sense out of experience, and sharing this meaning and understanding with at least one other human being.

Talk Therapy itself is largely composed of storytelling -- the client telling about what happened in the client's past. Client and therapist together review and discuss how and why things happened, and perhaps how similar experiences (if negative) could be avoided in the future. Numerous possible ways things could go in the future are explored.

One thing therapy is about is healing. Much of what is being discussed here can also be done in the context of Coaching one's self and others. In Coaching, story exploration can be done for the sakes of self-awareness, self-discovery, self-improvement, self-inspiration (motivation), and self-transformation.

All of this said --

1) Storytelling Therapy can begin with consideration of the client's life story.

There is a difference between one's life, and one's life story. One is at the centre of one's life. Thus, one may not have very much perspective regarding it. Sometimes in one's life, many things may be "up in the air". It may at times be difficult to detach oneself from one's situation and view one's situations in a cool and objective manner. One may not always have a clear sense of where one is going.

On the other hand, when one constructs one's life story, one is constructing an object that is distinct from one's self, and that can be viewed as a whole. One's life story -- like any story -- has a beginning, middle, and end. Thus, one's life story may seem more manageable, and at times may be more inspirational and less anxiety-provoking, than one's actual life.

If a client's life -- and life story -- is not going according to plan, the client may wish to engage in "life-story repair". Such repair work takes the difficulties into account, makes the best of the situation, and charts a new course towards an as happily-ever-after ending as possible.

2) Once the client's life story has emerged, one way to proceed is for the client and therapist to identify outstanding themes in the client's life story. These themes could involve turning points in the life story.

3) Then client and therapist could recall or create other stories -- from any realm of experience or culture -- that relate to the themes and turning points in the client's life story. Telling and discussing these other stories might give the client ideas about how to handle similar situations in his/her own life.

The client is in an active role when telling and discussing these stories -- and this active stance is an important aspect of the client's healing and strengthening processes.

Projection, Identification, Empathy, Imitation, and Imagination are key processes when it comes to people and storytelling. People project themselves into story characters. They tend to identify, and feel empathy, with the characters. This occurs through the use of people's powers of imagination. People may then imitate the characters of their favourite stories. Playing and working with stories from TV shows, movies, books, folklore, and mythology might give the client some sense of relaxation and fun, rather than facing the pressure of constantly thinking directly about his/her own situation.

In the course of Storytelling Therapy sessions, therapists and clients could make lists of challenging situations that clients may face, including those involving: 1) Family members, 2) People in the workplace, and 3) Health, economic, and sexual-orientation issues.

Then they could consider these challenging situations, and (using their imaginations, their abilities to weave fantasy), they could compose and tell stories based on these situations. They could come up with various possible endings to a story -- some successful, some less so, for the characters involved.

Regarding the uses of Fairytales and Myths in Storytelling Therapy

Psychologist Carl Jung, and Mythologist Joseph Campbell are two of the leading thinkers in this area.

Each participant in the Workshop would develop and tell a personal myth or fairytale, based on his/her life story.

"Fairytales" often involve a central character who begins with very little material wealth. However, this character is kind and humble. These qualities may be expressed through love of, and respect for, Mother Nature, especially animals. Often the central character helps an animal, and this help is returned, leading to the central character gaining treasure and a loving spouse. It is at this point -- at the central character's wedding, and the beginning of his/her adulthood -- that fairytales often end.

"Myths" can be defined as stories that explain *the way things are*, and *why things are this way*. Each person, organisation, and culture has at least one "organising myth".

"Myth is the secret opening through which the inexhaustible energies of the cosmos pour into human individual and cultural manifestations" (Joseph Campbell, *Hero with a Thousand Faces*).

In the process of developing and telling personal myths (or fairytales) based on their life stories, participants might use metaphors to represent some of their personal experiences.

We would ask questions such as:

Why develop a personal myth (or fairytale) based on one's life story?

What are some possible relationships between autobiography and myth?

We would look at differences and similarities between one's ordinary existence, and the cosmic heroism of famous cultural and religious figures; and between the human and the divine.

One's consciousness certainly experiences a mix of these different realms -- usually by experiencing the ordinary, and by imagining the extraordinary. In what ways could this linking, bridging, mixing, integrating be achieved?

What might be some benefits of this integration?

Possible answers may include:

Becoming increasingly aware of, and articulate about, the myths one lives by can be healthy and helpful for oneself.

It may be interesting, important, and valuable to traverse the separation line between these opposite realms; and to discover resonance between universal mythic themes, and one's own personal experience.

Doing so might help one to develop "mythic consciousness", and to "think and live mythically".

This could help to give life meaning and direction, and could help one to feel connected to and supported by forces greater than oneself.

12) Review: Story in Storytelling

3 Types of Story --

- 1) Documentary Stories (including Personal-experience / Autobiographical, Journalistic, and Historical Stories).
- 2) Folklore Stories (including Epics, Myths, Legends, and Folk Tales such as Animal Fables and Fairy Tales).
- 3) Original Creative Stories.

12 Elements of Story --

- 1) The **Title** of the story.
- 2) **Characters** (their histories, thoughts, decisions, abilities to follow-through on decisions, actions, etc).
- 3) Characters' **Ways of speaking**.
- 4) Characters' **Ways of moving**.
- 5) **Place**.
- 6) **Time** (continuous, or jumps, flashbacks?).
- 7) The **Storyline** (also known as, plot) -- in one sentence.
- 8) **Objects** in the story.
- 9) **Sensory Elements** in the story: Smells, Flavours, Colours, Textures, etc.
- 10) **Emotions** in the story (for the characters, the teller, and the listeners).
- 11) If the story is being told by a character in the story: **Who is the Narrator**, and what is his/her Point of View, Tone of Voice, Attitude, and Style?
- 12) **Meaning** (Point, Theme, Moral, Message). Elements 1-11 combine to help to produce Element 12.

7 Theories of Story (models, formulas, structures) --

- 1) Vladimir Propp (*The Morphology of the Folktale*): Wholeness, Fragmentation, Reformation.
- 2) Joseph Campbell (*The Hero with a Thousand Faces*): Oppression, Escape, Connection with Mother Nature, Triumphant return.
- 3) Carl Jung: integration of story elements; and individuation of participants in the storytelling event.
- 4) The Well-made Play: Centering around Conflict.
- 5) Characters are on a Mission, and Want Something.
- 6) Catharsis: Great Characters Rise and Fall (due to Pride).
- 7) Classical Indian Aesthetics: 9 *Bhavas* (mental states) and corresponding *Rasas* (mental states inspired in audience members by performers): Heroism, Laughter, Disgust, Anger, Love, Sadness, Fear, Surprise, and Peace.

Dramatic Tension --

Each action causes a reaction. Each action has consequences.
 "The other shoe has to drop".
 Seeds are planted: When and how might they grow?
 Suspense: When and how might the anticipated occur?

Situations -- characters are in psychological, emotional positions.

It is important to be able to identify a story's Defining Moments, Dramatic Moments, Moments of Decision, Moments of Truth, Turning Points, Pivotal Points, Crucial Scenes, Key Scenes, etc.

Uses and values of Metaphors.

13) **Review: Telling in Storytelling**

Two definitions of Communication:

- 1) Communication is the sending of a signal.
- 2) Communication is the sending of a signal, and the receiving of a reply.
(This method is recommended in relation to storytelling.)

Two types of Communication:

- 1) Top-down, One-way Communication (Broadcast and Publishing Paradigms).
- 2) Interactive Communication (possible in Physically-present Communication; and New Media, Social Media, Interactive Telecommunication, etc).
(This method is recommended in relation to storytelling.)

Storytelling is an interactive and reciprocal social process.
Storytelling can be defined as relating a series of events.

A key rule in storytelling is: "Do not bore your listener".

A Question: How can one avoid being boring? How can one keep one's listeners' attentions?
An Answer: Tell a relevant story (fitting the listener and occasion), in an engaging manner.

- 1) Visualise, 2) Describe, 3) Mime (relating to story elements), and 4) Become (characters).

Balancing: Narrating the story; and Enacting characters.

Balancing: Skimming over, outlining, summarizing scenes (conveying essential information); and giving scenes "the full dramatic treatment" (painting a full picture, speaking dialogue).

Balancing: Narrating Action (telling what happened); and Giving Description (sensory details).

Balancing: Experiencing the story inside oneself (remembering the story); and Communicating the story to listeners (holding listeners' attentions).

When one enacts characters, these character may address audience-members as if they were other characters in the story. This brings the addressed audience-members into the play, the fantasy.

Eye contact -- let listeners "join the club", one by one.

Ways of speaking (voice modulation) -- speed, pacing (including acceleration, de-acceleration, and pauses), pitch, rhythm, melody, tone, emotion, attitude.

Body language -- gesture, posture, facial expression, use of hands.

Each listener has a unique experience -- visualising images, responding emotionally to each signal.

Two options: First-person narration ("I did this"); and Third-person narration ("he did this").

Three options: Telling a story in the past, present, or future tense.

Listeners may experience: Identification, Projection, Empathy, Imagination, Imitation.

Speakers may do these activities (from having the most Authority, to the least):

Commanding (telling people what to do).

Interpreting (commenting on what happened; explaining what it means

and how it may teach us lessons about what to do in our own lives).

Narrating (telling what happened).

Pretending to be a Character, Play-Acting, Fantasizing.

Sometimes it is effective to act out what characters feel and say in a story's Defining Moments; to give these moments "the full dramatic treatment".

14) For Use in Workshops: 13 Types of Stories

1) **Something That Happened in the Past 24 Hours.**

(Remembering Experiences.)

Helps to raise awareness that we humans are constantly composing stories, by remembering incidents and telling about them. In the process, we tend to express our feelings and thoughts about the incidents. People could then tell to the group:

- a) The story one told to one's partner.
("I did ...", 1st person.)
This gives one practice speaking to a large group.
- b) The story one told to one's partner,
as if it had happened to an external character.
(Change it to -- "He/she did ...", 3rd person.)
This distances one from the material,
and gives one a different perspective on what occurred.
- c) The story one heard from one's partner.
("He/she did ...", 3rd person.)
This tests one's listening abilities.
- d) The story one heard from one's partner,
as if it had happened to oneself.
(Change it to -- "I did ...", 1st person.)
This causes one to *play* someone other than oneself,
and gives one a different perspective on what occurred.

2) **An Eye-opening Experience.**

(Remembering Experiences.)

3) **One's Life Story.**

(Remembering Experiences.)

4) **A Favorite Grandmother Story -- Animal Fables, Fairytales, Episodes of Epics, etc.**

(Remembering Stories.)

- a) Tell about the character.
- b) Tell what happened, from the point of view of the character ("I did ...", 1st person).

5) **A Little Man in Front of a Tree.**

(A Guided Visualisation, then Creating Stories.)

6) **Four Words.**

(A Game for Creating Stories.)

7) **A Character Who Wants Something.**

(Remembering Stories, Remembering Experiences, and/or Creating Stories.)

8) **A Challenging Situation.**

(Remembering Stories, Remembering Experiences, and/or Creating Stories.)

9) **A Frustrating Situation, and a Wish that Resolves It.**

(Remembering Experiences, then Creating Stories.)

10) **A Moral, and a Story that Illustrates It.**

(Remembering Stories, Remembering Experiences, and/or Creating Stories.)

11) **Stories relating to Teaching-and-learning.**

(Remembering Stories, Remembering Experiences, and/or Creating Stories.)

12) **Stories relating to Business.**

The stories of one's Industry, Company, and Department. Favorite projects. Dream projects.

(Remembering Stories, Remembering Experiences, and/or Creating Stories.)

13) **Stories that Illustrate Points in Speeches.**

(Remembering Stories, Remembering Experiences, and/or Creating Stories.)