

Notes from Eric (on 15th Dec 2022)  
relating to the CSF 2023 workshop on "Storytelling and Autism"

The workshop is being led by Audra.

The workshop outline we have so far is:

Part 1 -- What is autism? (Kinds and degrees of the condition.)  
(Shital and others are compiling material.)

Part 2 -- Telling TO people who have autism.  
(Lavanya S, Banu, Shivani and others compiling material.)

Part 3 -- Telling BY people who have autism.  
(Shital is compiling material.)

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The outline in more detail:

Part 1 -- What is autism? (Kinds and degrees of the condition.)

Part 2 -- Ways of storytelling TO people who have autism.  
This might include,

- A) Repetition (of gestures and spoken words) with variations.
- B) Gestures that listeners could imitate or respond to.
- C) Speech with melody and rhythm.
- E) Consideration of the listeners' emotions towards, about, and as story characters, and towards the teller.

Part 3 -- Ways of storytelling BY people who have autism.  
This might include,

- A) Ways having autism might make for unique styles of storytelling.
- B) Ways having autism might give people "super powers" which might be useful for storytelling.
- C) Consideration of sequencing (or non-sequencing) of story events.
- D) Consideration of differentiating (or not differentiating) between story characters.
- E) Consideration of the teller's emotions towards, about, and as story characters, and towards the listeners.

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The workshop's questions could include:

What might be some ways to facilitate people who have autism to "get into" into the process of LISTENING TO stories?

What might be some ways to facilitate people who have autism to "get into" into the process of TELLING stories?

In what ways could people who have autism be assisted to "get into" into the process of TELLING stories?

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It seems a goal is to help people who have autism **engage** with something, or with some process (both as listener and as teller).

Just imagining -- experiencing and exploring one's imagination -- might be valuable for people who have autism (as well as for everyone else).

This engaging cannot be forced. It needs to be something that the person who has autism wants to do, and enjoys doing.

In this way, the person might develop a tolerance for (and the habit of) engaging with things -- applying oneself, and getting involved with things and processes. This could be satisfying to the person.

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Some useful practices may be to focus, perhaps one at a time, on story elements such as,

- 1) Visual images (of 3-dimensional objects).
- 2) Ways of moving (movement qualities).
- 3) Emotions.
- 4) Situations.
- 5) Words.

It may not be useful to work with stories that have elaborate and complicated plots. (I may be wrong about this.)

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So one activity in Part 2 or 3 of the workshop I would suggest is:

A story element could be chosen.

For example, an object. For example, a tree.

Then tellers and listeners could be invited to write about their associations with trees, and to draw trees.

People could then be invited to imagine what might occur regarding a particular tree.  
 Might birds or other animals come to visit?  
 What might the tree do?  
 What might happen to the tree?

In this way, people could let stories organically develop about, around, and out of their chosen story elements.

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One well-known story-making activity is to choose 3 or 4 story elements, and invite people to compose a story involving these story elements.

However, working with multiple story elements may be too complicated for the workshop we are planning.

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