

Proposal for a 2-day Workshop on  
**"Stories and Their Applications in Psychology,  
Personality, and Career Development –  
and Psychodrama"**

This workshop would be co-led by

Dr Eric Miller ( <https://indianstorytellingnetwork.org/Chennai.html#Eric> ,

video recording at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I9rPAmOi\\_Wg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I9rPAmOi_Wg) ) and

Ms Magdalene Jeyarathnam ( <https://centerforcounselling.org/magdalene-jeyarathnam> ,

TED Talk on Psychodrama at <https://youtu.be/CfDUUugbTeY> ).

Dr Eric would lead discussions about story and stories, and assist the participants to gather and create, write and tell, and think about, the stories.

Ms Magdalene would at times assist the participants to experience the stories (and explore and extend the stories) by assisting the participants to act-out the stories in various ways. When participants do this acting-out (enacting, dramatising, etc), the stories tend to have a much stronger emotional and intellectual impact on the participants. Ways the stories are related to participants' psyches tend to become more clear to the participants. Also, the enacting process gives participants opportunities to try out new behaviours, that is, to change themselves (and the stories they know and tell about themselves). Psychodrama not only provides an opportunity to practice living in new ways, it also provides an opportunity to actually live in new ways.

Aims and Objectives of this workshop include: Experientially teaching methods of increasingly knowing: who one is, where one is coming from, where one wants to be going, and ways of altering aspects of oneself.

**Workshop Outline**

1) Story and Stories (Introduction)

2) Applications of Stories in Psychology (Introduction)

3) Psychodrama (Introduction)

4) Applications of Stories in Personality (Introduction, Story Development, Psychodrama)

5) Applications of Stories in Career Development (Introduction, Story Development, Psychodrama)

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1) Story and Stories (Introduction)

Stories can shape and express one's identity.

A story is a series of events. These events are chronologically related to each other, and there may also be a level of causality between the ongoing events. In some way, and to some degree: A leads to B, B leads to C, and so on. There is a beginning, middle, and end.

A story is a model of the past, and a model for the future. A point / meaning / message / lesson / take-away often emerges in the teller and listener (or writer and reader) regarding a story. A story may provide an example of behaviour to follow (this is an inspirational story). Or, a story may provide an example of behaviour to avoid (this is a warning story).

We use stories to communicate not just what happened, but also to communicate what we think and feel about what happened. When I tell you a story, I am hoping you will "see it my way". Thus telling a story is an act of attempted persuasion. If we have drastically different responses / interpretations / take-aways, regarding the behaviour of a character in a story, we will not be in the same societal group, or of the same culture.

We project ourselves onto story characters. We imagine that what is happening to a story character is happening to us. We imagine that we are doing what a story character is doing (and we have an internal debate regarding whether or not what the character is doing is the best thing to do). We empathise with some of the characters, and we may come to imitate the characters who become ingrained in our psyches.

The words, "story" and "narrative" both refer to communicating a series of events. "Story" may include dialogue between character, and implies that some "art" may have been added (to make a point more clear, to add drama, etc). "Narrative" implies a direct and literal statement of what happened – although of course humans are not capable of full objectivity.

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## 2) Applications of Stories in Psychology (Introduction)

To think about ways story and stories relate to Psychology, it is useful to consider the field of Narrative Psychology. Narrative Psychology is the study of how humans construct stories to deal with experiences. That is, we process new experience into story models that we already know.

A person's life story becomes a form of identity. How one chooses to reflect upon, integrate, and tell the facts and events of one's life not only reflects, but also shapes, who one is.

One's self and one's culture come together in the narrative one conceives of and tells (oneself and others) about oneself. (Some of the above is paraphrased from [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Narrative\\_psychology](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Narrative_psychology) ).

Stories provide a sense of identity. One's Life Story is often felt to be who one is. The cultural stories one has been exposed to – especially the cultural stories one embraces – help to shape one's identity. We tell ourselves (and others) stories about ourselves, and these stories may be "self-fulfilling prophecies", that is, we may become the stories we tell.

With pattern recognition provided by knowing stories, one has a sense of knowing what is going to happen next in the midst of a developing situation. One has "seen this movie before". One perceives experience in a previously-known form. This is one way we learn from stories.

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## 3) Psychodrama (Introduction)

Jacob Moreno was the founder of Psychodrama. Moreno attended one of Sigmund Freud's lectures in Vienna in 1912. As the audience members filed out after the lecture, Freud (age 66) asked Moreno (age 23) what Moreno was doing. Moreno responded, 'Dr. Freud, I start where you leave off. You analyse their dreams. I give them the courage to dream again. You analyse them and pick them apart. I let them act out their conflicting roles and help them put the parts back together again.'

Psychodrama is a group-action method that involves role-playing, acting-out, enacting (under the supervision of a Psychodrama Director) aspects of the stories of participants' lives. Psychodrama characters may be:

- 1) Based on people one knows (including oneself), or has known.
- 2) Characters from history, literature, movies, one's imagination, etc.
- 3) Personifications of emotions or personality traits.
- 4) Personifications of historical events, or anything else.

Psychodrama consists of three stages: a warm-up, action, and reflection. The reflection process enables participants to integrate into their conscious minds what has come up in the course of the action.

Psychodrama is the original form of Drama Therapy. However, Psychodrama may be used both therapeutically and non-therapeutically (for personal exploration, growth, and development; team-building; play; etc).

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Participants would be invited to tell to one other person a brief version of the Story of Your Life (your Life Story), focusing on your Personality (ways it was formed, and ways it manifests itself) and on your Career Development. Participants would be requested to include mention of:

- \* What events and people helped to form you? What were some of the formative events in your life?
- \* What has happened to you in life? How have you responded to what has happened to you in life?
- \* Throughout your life, what stories have inspired you? What stories have captured your attention? What stories have arrested your imagination?

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#### 4) Applications of Stories in Personality (Introduction, Story Development, Psychodrama)

Stories can help to shape one's personality. These stories may include family histories, and stories about culture heroes and heroines.

Stories can be used to explore (and alter) one's personality.

Participants may be asked:

\* What do you think are some outstanding aspects of your personality? What is unique about your personality? Do your family members and friends agree, or do they to some degree see you differently?

\* What interpersonal situations do you enjoy? What interpersonal situations do you dread?

From the stories one remembers (both personal-experience stories and other stories), one knows what and who one is – as an individual and in relation to others. Then one repeats this story (consciously and/or unconsciously). One may feel and think that this is all one knows, and that this is all one is.

Only once one comes to recognise and be aware of the story about oneself that has been ingrained in one, can one seek to change the story, to transform into an unfamiliar role, an unfamiliar way of being, thinking, and feeling. Then one can possibly change one's self, and one's identity.

This involves the possibility of handling in new ways situations that one has been handling in habitual ways. This is a chance to grow, heal, and transform. The process may involve recognising and grieving over negative experiences and patterns, and seeking to establish new ways of responding to situations, new ways of being.

One's patterns are not set in stone. If one discovers and delves into the formative events in one's life (and in one's Life Story), events which have led to one handling situations in less-than-ideal ways, one could then enact a situation in which one has the option of handling a situation in a new way.

One may also want to recognise and celebrate good patterns – how they were formed, and how they repeatedly manifest.

**Psychodrama interventions might include:**

**Conversations and other events in which one's Personality:**

**1) Was formed.**

**2) Manifests itself.**

**3) Might develop and transform.**

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#### 5) Applications of Stories in Career Development (Introduction, Story Development, Psychodrama)

Stories can be used to explore (and alter) one's Career Development.

Ideas for a career may emerge in a young person. An inkling. An urge. A sense. An inclination – to enter a certain field, or to prepare to enter a certain field. One may feel drawn to a certain field, attracted to a field. One may find aspects of the field interesting, fascinating, and important. One may feel that one has some talent, aptitude, ability, and skills in relation to the field. Something "clicks". One feels "at home" in the field. It makes sense (on various levels, including regarding location and financially).

An early stage of Career Development may involve: Choosing what one might want to study. Choosing which college to apply to. Choosing what one's major is going to be. Conversations with parents and others regarding the above. Of course, in choosing a career, one has to be practical, and work within the conditions one has.

Participants may be asked:

- \* Regarding your career – What decisions have you made? What decisions are you planning to make?
- \* What are some stories of famous people, events, and innovations in the field one is in, or in the field one is planning to enter? Whose shoulders do you want to stand on? Whose work do you want to follow-up on?
- \* What did you say through the years when people asked you, "What do you want to be when you grow up?"

Sometimes "Life Story repair" and "Career Story repair" is needed, to recover from setbacks. Conditions may not permit immediate and full achievement in relation to one's career dream. One may get side-tracked and have to take a detour due to various conditions. One may go through a number of "skill-gathering phases". What one thought was going to be a "final destination" may turn out to be a step along the way, with the final destination unclear. Many times people eventually find a career that involves many of their long-term interests, but in a new and unexpected form.

In retrospect, once one finds oneself (including one's career), the process may all make sense, the pieces may all fit together. However, while one is experiencing career twists and turns, and dead ends, the story of one's career can feel disjointed and broken, meaningless, a waste.

Personal identity and Professional (Vocational) identity often become combined. So if there is confusion or disturbance relating to one's career, this may colour one's entire and general feeling about oneself and one's life.

Stories relating to Career Development may include stories one knows and holds dear about famous people in a field, how they overcame obstacles, and their innovations and other accomplishments.

**Psychodrama interventions might include:**

**Conversations and other events in which one's ideas about one's Career:**

- 1) Has been conceived.**
- 2) Might develop and transform.**

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