INTRODUCTION

STORIES ARE BASIC TO HUMANS

Somewhere in our neuro-physiology, we’ve been hard-wired for story. There is a kind of narrative imperative—we can’t be without stories and we will find them where we can.

–George Miller, director of Mad Max movies
STORIES ARE BASIC TO HUMANS

Homo Narrans

THAT REMINDS ME OF A STORY

The Spastic Colon and the Brick Wall

WHAT'S A METAPHOR?

- From the Greek “meta” meaning “beyond or across”; and “pherien” meaning “to carry”
- To carry knowledge from one area to another

PURPOSES OF STORIES

➢ To show understanding and acknowledge people's experience
➢ To assess a situation
➢ To transfer know-how or resources from one context to another
➢ To channel the discussion or guide associations
➢ To deal with objections or concerns
➢ To introduce new possibilities or frames of reference
ELEMENTS OF EFFECTIVE STORIES

- Character(s) - clothes, habits, flaws, residence, incidents
- Action (beginnings, middles, ends); Plot – Character is frustrated or threatened or faces conflict
- Scene setting (props and sets)
- Dialogue
- Suspense/engagement of interest and curiosity
- Specific sensory details (V, A, K, O, G); details about people, places or actions
- Vague enough to allow for imagination
- Repetition of sounds/themes/elements
- Revisiting the beginning at the end (story arc)

CHARACTERS IN STORIES

- PROTAGONIST/HERO - The main character; likable, even if troubled or cranky at first; the one we most identify with and follow through the story
- ANTAGONIST - Blocker; enemy; thwarts or tries to destroy the antagonist; can be an institution
- ALLIES - Friends, temporary helpers or guides, people who transport the hero to the next place or across a difficult threshold; made be an unfriendly but mutually beneficial ally
- COMIC RELIEF BUDDY/SIDEKICK/FOIL - Can provide some humor, or a chance to comment on or explain something; someone who matters to the hero and makes the hero vulnerable

STORY EXAMPLE

The Misery of Rain

METAPHOR CLUSTERS

- Argument as war
  - His criticisms were right on target.
  - I demolished his argument.
  - You can’t defend such a position.
  - She shot down all my arguments.
- Money as liquid
  - Liquid assets/frozen assets
  - Cash flow
  - Floating a loan
RECOGNIZING AND USING PEOPLE’S METAPHORS

Metaphorical frames or clusters

Sports
- “on the same team”
- “on the ropes”
- “pin down”
- “punt”

Journey
- “different directions”
- “off course”
- “road less traveled”
- “off the rails”
- “Car wreck” or “train wreck”

Cooking
- “back burner”
- “blowing off steam”
- “simmering”
- “Pressure cooker”
- “half-baked schemes”

SENSORY METAPHORS

See; vision; look; clear; paint me a picture; I see your point

Rings a bell; sounds good; shouting; spell it out for me; I hear you;

Feels right; grates; rubs the wrong way; smoothly
WHAT IS THIS PROBLEM LIKE?

Ask people to talk about their problem situation and generate metaphors by asking them what the experience or problem is like.

PRACTICE RECOGNIZING METAPHORICAL FRAMES AND CLUSTERS

- Have one of your small group members talk about something meaningful and important to them.
- Note any metaphorical frames and clusters used; visual, auditory, kinaesthetic metaphors?; discuss

THREE OPTIONS

- Go with the metaphorical frame and shift it into an expanded or different direction
- Switch metaphorical frames
- Make the metaphor literal

MUTUAL STORYTELLING TECHNIQUE

- Richard Gardner
- Have kids tell you stories
- You provide new endings, with new meanings
TELLING STORIES
➢ Tell stories that speak to you or touch you
➢ Practice, write them down, pre-plan which stories you might tell
➢ Notice responses to what you are saying
➢ Let your intuition or unconscious help you find the right stories
➢ Find a way to collect and remember stories
➢ Listen to storytellers

BECK WEATHERS MIRACLE SURVIVAL STORY

STORY EXAMPLE
Parker Palmer - Depression and disconnection

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LIVE STORYTELLING

• Different voices and postures for different characters
• Outline gestures
• Voice volume/emphasis
• Voice speed
• Gaze/direction of gaze
• Body movements/position

STORY EXAMPLE

Flowers and Freckle Cream
Elizabeth Ellis

DECIDING WHAT METAPHORS TO USE

🌟 Collecting stories
🌟 File folders
🌟 Class of Problems/Class of Solutions
🌟 Stories to evoke resources
🌟 Problem into resolution

CLASS OF PROBLEMS/CLASS OF SOLUTIONS

Specific → Specific Intervention → Transfer to
Presenting       Analogy        Problem
Problem          Anecdote        Context
Trance phenomenon
Task
Interpersonal move

(DERIVE)                      (EVOKE)

Class of Problems → Class of Solutions
(Pattern of experience/resource/skill)
LISTENING TO CLIENTS' STORIES

"One of the most valuable things we can do to heal one another is listen to each other's stories." — Rebecca Falls

LISTENING TO CLIENTS' STORIES

"All sorrows can be borne if you put them into a story or tell a story about them." — Isak Dinesen

ELICITING CLIENTS' STORIES

- Inviting people to tell you their stories
- Sequence of events, turning points, influential people, shining moments, crises
- Neglected self, future self
- Metaphorical frames
- Life scripts

ELICITING CLIENTS' STORIES

- Early childhood memories
- Favorite fairy tales
- Family stories (about self or family)
- Life changing moments/turning points
ELICITING CLIENTS' STORIES

- Self as animal, object, another person, or color
- Situation as animal, object, person, color or shape

EXERCISE

Interview people and ask them about:
- Early childhood memories
- Favorite fairy tales
- Family stories (about self or family)
- Life changing moments/turning points

DEEP LISTENING

- Validate, value and acknowledge people, their feelings, points of view and experience, even if they are “negative”
- Being willing to sit with pain, suffering, and problems without trying to fix them or make things more “positive”
- Drop the need for happy endings or redemptive stories

DEEP LISTENING

...often I have told of a phone call I received around three o'clock in the morning. This woman had decided to end her life, and she was curious about what I had to say. I offered all the arguments against such a step and we discussed the pros and cons. We finally reached the point where she promised to postpone her plans and to come to see me at nine that same morning. She appeared on time and began: “You would be mistaken, doctor, if you thought that any of your arguments last night had the least impact on me. If anything helped me, it was this. Here I disturb a man’s sleep in the middle of the night, and instead of getting angry, he listens patiently to me for half an hour and encourages me. I thought to myself: if this can happen, then it may be worthwhile to give my life another chance.” - Viktor Frankl
DEEP LISTENING
The capacity to give one's attention to a sufferer is a very rare and difficult thing; it is almost a miracle; it is a miracle. Nearly all those who think they have this capacity do not possess it. Warmth of heart, impulsiveness, pity are not enough.

–Simone Weil

LISTENING FOR CLIENTS' METAPHORS

- Are clients' metaphors useful or empowering?
- Do they allow for change?

LISTENING FOR CLIENTS' METAPHORS

- Shifting metaphors
- Expanding metaphors
- Challenging metaphors

METAPHORS BE WITH YOU

Unhelpful stories
- Impossibility/discouraging
- Blame
- Invalidation
- Non-accountability
METAPHORS BE WITH YOU

More helpful stories
• Possibility
• Validation
• Accountability

LISTENING BY TELLING STORIES

• Watching people when you tell stories
• Noticing what aspects people respond to
• Watching nonverbals
• Listening for stories in response to your story
• Co-creating stories

METAPHOR IN ACTION

➢ Anything that involves taking action that has meaning
➢ Usually involves doing rituals
➢ Often involves a physical symbol

METAPHORS BE WITH YOU

Rituals and symbols
• Symbolic actions
• Physical symbols
• Rituals
  • Of passage
  • Of grieving or leaving behind
  • Of inclusion
  • Of celebration
2 TYPES OF THERAPEUTIC RITUALS

Rituals of connection/continuity

Rituals of disconnection/transition

RITUALS OF CONTINUITY AND CONNECTION

- Regularly repeated activities
  - Daily, Weekly, Monthly, Yearly, seasonal, holidays
  - Activities kids can count on; stability
  - Make connections to people or situations

RITUALS OF CONTINUITY AND CONNECTION (CONT.)

- Continue existing rituals
- Restore previous rituals
- Create new rituals

PRACTICE STORYTELLING

- Find one of your personal stories and practice telling it in your small group
- Get feedback on which parts of the story were the most effective and affecting and get suggestions for improvement/editing
RESOURCES

http://www.storytellingcenter.com/
http://www.storyteller.net/
http://www.audible.com
http://www.augusthouse.com/
http://www.talltalesaudio.com/
http://www.storycenter.org/

Remember: PDF of the slides to download is at:
BillOHanlon.com/PLATS

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