METAPHORS BE WITH YOU: USING STORIES FOR A CHANGE
HOW TO TELL A COMPELLING STORY AND HELP PEOPLE CHANGE

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METAPHORS BE WITH YOU

SLIDES WILL BE AVAILABLE AT

BillOHanlon.com
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
Most people function in a storytelling mode. It’s the way we communicate ideas, richly, as well as how we structure our thoughts.... I don’t know anyone who remembers things based upon a string of facts. You remember because you assemble things in a storytelling form. I would argue that genetically our brains are wired for storytelling. –Bran Ferren, Disney Imagineer
THAT REMINDS ME OF A STORY

The Spastic Colon and the Brick Wall
STORIES ARE BASIC TO HUMANS

Homo Narrans
META [ACROSS/BEYOND] + PHERIEN [TO CARRY]

- Analogies/similes
- Stories/anecdotes
- Double entendres/puns
- Multiple level communication
- Symbols
- Rituals
- Jokes
WHY STORIES?

- Indirect/gentle way to invite change (low resistance)
- Stories stick
- Introduce new perspectives and points of view
- Suggest new ways of doing things
- Validating people
THINKING METAPHORICALLY

• Problems are like ________________

• Therapy is like ________________

• Life is like ________________
ELEMENTS OF EFFECTIVE STORIES

• Character(s)
• 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)
Flowers and Freckle Cream
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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
HEALING BY 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
HEALING BY LISTENING TO CLIENTS’ STORIES

• "All sorrows can be borne if you put them into a story or tell a story about them." –Isak Dinesen
MASTERING STORYTELLING

- 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
OTHER METAPHORICAL INTERVENTIONS

• Rituals
  • Of transition/disconnection
  • Of connection
• Symbolic tasks
• Symbols
  • Physical objects
  • Problem symbols
  • Solution/strength symbols
  • Transition/moving on symbols
I am going to a place where there are no bad, mad people.
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/