

The Seeing "I"

Empowerment through Interactive Storytelling

Vol 5 No 3

September 2008

Look around! The StoriesWork Mission: To help people manage the dilemmas and challenges of their lives through the power of interactive storytelling, by increasing empowerment, self-esteem, and understanding. A much needed venture. ***Look around!***

Mentoring Storytelling

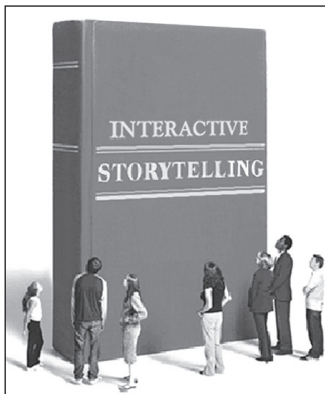
At StoriesWork, we tell folk stories to young and old, and then probe the layers of meaning hidden beneath the actions of the characters. Typical stories have ambiguous endings, making audiences wonder, "What can you do with a story like that?"

StoriesWork storytellers pose carefully crafted questions to the audience designed to encourage new ideas, insight, and understanding. that were not immediately apparent in the stories, or even in ourselves. There are no right or wrong answers.

No matter what the topic nor how sensitive the issue, audiences have characteristically responded with comments such as:

Fascinating! Enriching! Enlightening! Inspiring! Proud to be among this group of creative, imaginative, problem-solving folks.

StoriesWork is an unusual organization. What impresses me most is learning and understanding through storytelling.



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The StoriesWork Technique

What is unique about StoriesWork Interactive Storytelling? The technique taps into ideas buried inside us: a sense of justice and fairness, a need for equality and self-esteem, a desire for peace. As we grow up and make compromises in the real world, these needs may be subordinated but they do not go away. Interactive storytelling helps us reconnect in a safe, non-judgmental, non-intrusive environment. Let's look at the following folktale.

Choosing a Bride (East Africa)

A strong, brave young man who lived with his parents brought home a beautiful woman of good character and reputation whom he wanted to marry. The father said to his son, "Very well. But first lift the stone over there and bring it to me."

But the stone was too heavy and the son gave up. The father turned to the girl and asked if she wanted to marry a man who could not even lift a little stone off the ground. The girl said, "Certainly not!" and stalked off. The same happened again with a second attractive young woman. Neither wanted a man who looked weak and incompetent.

Finally the young man brought home someone a little different, simpler and more plain. When she saw the

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"Mentoring" ...continued from previous page

The StoriesWork class generated very positive feedback. People knew they had spent a unique afternoon.

In addition to working with schools, community groups and professional organizations, StoriesWork provides training for staff people who work directly with clients (e.g., domestic violence survivors, troubled families, substance abusers, and others). Through hands-on practice, trainees learn the StoriesWork technique of telling stories, asking questions and guiding discussions for insight and empowerment. At the end of the training, staff people are generally enthusiastic about how stories can improve their effectiveness with clients.

But there is a problem. Once back at their jobs, staffers can find it hard to change their routines. Many feel awkward introducing a new idea, self-conscious as storytellers, and uncertain about the outcome with clients. Follow-up studies with our trainees show that only some actually use the technique we taught them. Research confirms this to be the case with staff training programs in general.

After long and hard thought, we have decided to add mentoring to our services for new trainees. Lenora Ucko, Executive Director, and Rachel Galper, Training Coordinator, are launching a mentoring plan at a training program for the Durham Crisis Response Center, an organization serving the needs of abused women. Following the training, we plan to assign each trainee an experienced StoriesWork storyteller. The staff person and the StoriesWork storyteller will work together to introduce storytelling to support groups for battered women. Lenora Ucko experimented with mentoring more than 10 years ago at the Orange Durham Coalition for Battered Women (the forerunner of DCRC) with good results. It has taken us a while to offer this practice again, and we hope it will yield successful outcomes. Wish us luck!

"Technique" ...continued from previous page

young man struggling with the stone, she hurried over to help him. Together they carried the stone to the father, who said, "That's the right girl for you."

Try to answer the following questions:

Was the father fair in setting this test for his son? In testing the young women?

What was each young woman's self image? Was a sense of equality involved?

Was the father accurate in his assessment of his son's strength?

What made the first two young women accept the father's judgment?

What influenced the third young woman?

Who benefited in this story? Who did not benefit?

Interactive Storytelling encourages new perspectives in a confusing and complex world. Consider the following story.

A Portrait of Peace.

A king offered a prize to the artist who could paint the best picture of peace. After viewing all the submissions, the king narrowed the field to two. One was of a calm lake with lush green mountains and fluffy white clouds floating in a clear blue sky – a perfect picture of peace. The second had mountains that were rugged and bare, with angry gray clouds hurling lightning, thunder and rain on a turbulent waterfall. The picture was anything but serene. But the king looked more closely. Behind the foaming cascade on a tiny bush, a mother bird had built her nest and was calmly sitting, hatching her eggs. The king chose the second picture. "Because," he explained, "we must find peace not only in a place of serenity and ease, but amid noise, trouble and hard work. The peace you find in the midst of things as they are, that is the meaning of real peace."

Against the great discord of the world, interactive storytelling helps us find a haven behind the waterfall!

Fall Calendar 2008

Duke University Medical Center : Duke Student Health Retreat: *Communication Workshop*
Friday, August 15, 2008 1:30 pm

Duke University: Osher Lifelong Learning Institute course: *The Roads Not Taken*
Mondays 1:30 to 3:30 pm
September 8 to November 3, 2008

Durham Crisis Response Center: Staff training and mentoring program
Times to be arranged

Target Grant: Domestic violence prevention program
Times to be arranged

Improving Communication Through Interactive Storytelling

Workshop at the Duke Student Health Staff Retreat August 15, 2008

At a StoriesWork communications workshop for the Duke Student Health Clinic Staff on Friday, August 15, Lenora Ucko and Diane Lennox conducted an interactive storytelling session for six staff members: a medical doctor, a physician's assistant, two registered nurses, and two special nursing assistants. A good mix of staff positions, this group eagerly participated in a spirited and exciting discussion about the stories we presented. Here are a few comments:

Very different and interesting.

Great discussion.

Mentally stimulating.

Excellent interactive time with colleagues

We look forward to future workshops with Duke and the medical staff.



Progress on Challenge grant

Snider Family Foundation	\$2,500
Target grant	3,000
Still to be raised for the challenge	<u>4,500</u>
Total needed	\$ 10,000

Recent recognition

We are listed as a grantee in the Mary Duke Biddle Foundation 2007-2008 Annual Report, with this photo from our Inter-generational Storytelling Workshop prominently displayed. Copies of the Annual Report are available at the MDB Foundation, 493-5591.



Personnel Changes

Board of Director Changes

We expect to welcome to Heidi Deja, Media Relations Manager, Blue Cross/Blue Shield of NC at the next board meeting on September 12, 2008.

Farewell and good luck to Prachi and Ashish Chhabra

Staff Changes

Welcome to Rachel Galper, Training Coordinator

Farewell and thanks to Dorothy Gillis Branch, Office Manager

Accountant Changes

Welcome to Regina Kronmiller our new accountant

Welcome to Charles Carver, CPA, for yearly income tax preparation

Farewell and thanks to Carolyn Dalby, CPA, and her assistant, Sonia Wiggins, for accounting services

StoriesWork

**We thank these loyal supporters
who responded to our
March 2008 fundraising campaign**

Storyteller \$250 and above

Lenora Ucko, PhD

Fabulist \$100 to \$249

Richard Adelman, MD

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Samuel Sverdlik, MD

Stephen Ucko

Chronicler \$50 to \$99

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