The Power of Stories
Utilizing Narrative Strategies in Career Practice to Enlighten, Encourage, and Empower

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Introductions
Tell us about your name
Me and “Grandpap”
-David M. Martin

How do we become who we are?

- How do we construct a personal narrative?
- What do our stories say about us?
- How can we use them in counseling?

Narrative Therapy
Theoretical Underpinnings

Narrative Therapy is a postmodern constructivist theory develop by Michael White and David Epston, circa 1980s

- Respectful, non-blaming
- People are the experts in their own lives
- Views problems as separate from people
- Assumes people have many skills, competencies, beliefs, abilities and commitments to reduce the influence of problems in their lives.
Narrative Therapy involves ‘re-authoring’ or ‘re-storying’ conversations and events.

As people begin to inhabit and live out the alternative stories, the results are beyond solving problems. Within the new stories, people live out new self images, new possibilities for relationships and new futures. (1996, p.16)

J. Freedman

To learn more about Narrative Therapy

• Free online course in narrative practice
• Free articles
• Case studies
• Videos

“Narrative Identity is a person’s internalized and evolving life story, integrating the reconstructed past and imagined future to provide life with some degree of unity and purpose.”

Researchers have tracked the development of narrative identity from conversations between young children and their parents to sophisticated meaning-making in the personal stories told by adolescence and you adults.


Throughout life, personal experiences are transformed into personal stories that are given meaning and help shape a person’s identity. Narrative therapy utilizes the power of people’s personal stories to discover the life purpose of the narrator.

GoodTherapy.org

We Choose and attach meaning to memories. From them we Construct our Stories and Create Ourselves

Privileging memories for “self defining memories”

Consciously
• Purposeful forgetting/pushing unwanted memories out of the mind.
• Choosing to disregard (“That’s not like me at all” technique)

Unconsciously
• Through mechanisms of memory function.
The Brain is Predisposed to Preference Positive Memories

*The “That’s not like me technique” can also help consciously shape self-image.

The advantage of using a narrative approach

- A Narrative Approach honors the individual and is great for working with diverse populations.
- It provides opportunity to fully engage clients by honoring their past and by building psychological capital (Luthans, Youssef, & Avolio, 2007)
- Stories can provide clues to possibilities not apparent to the client.

Incorporating Narrative Techniques into Career Practice

Life Design & Career Construction

The work of Dr. Mark Savakis

Life Design Theory

- Constructs career through small stories
- Reconstructs the stories into a life portrait, and
- Co-constructs intentions that advance the career story into a new episode
- Contextual Possibilities
- Dynamic Processes
- Neurotransmitter Progressions
- Multifaceted Perspectives
- Personal Patterns

CAREER CONSTRUCTION INTERVIEW

How can I be useful to you as you construct your career?

1. What did you admire when you were growing up? Tell me about her or him.
2. Do you read any magazines or watch any television shows regularly? Which ones? What do you like about these magazines or shows?
3. What’s your favorite book or movie? Tell me the story.
4. Tell me your favorite saying or motto.

An easy narrative technique for you to use...

Construct a Life Story Interview

As in a book or novel:

- Consider an overall plot
- Develop a table of content w/ Chapter names
- Identify Key Scenes in each chapter
- Review the entire story for recurring themes

Developed by Dr Mark Franklin M.Ed. and Rich Feller Ph.D. www.onelifetools.com

Foley Center At Northwestern University

“The Life Story Interview” http://www.sesp.northwestern.edu/foley/instruments/interview/
References


