

the Art of Storytelling

Why use stories?

Stories . . .

- ⚡ Set a tone of lightness and fun—the optimal learning state!
- 👁 Engage the whole brain
- ☀ Provide a non-threatening environment to communicate the language of emotions
- 👉 Bring the group together
- 👂 Validate the importance of human issues
- ✳ Provide the opportunity to explore new learnings in more depth
- ✿ Offer the opportunity to
 - ~ share and compare experiences
 - ~ build a support network
 - ~ develop a common language
 - ~ modify behavior
 - ~ clarify confusing issues
 - ~ be a forum for expression

And our story begins.....



A certain important man of learning said to a Sufi: “Why do you Sufis always use analogies? Such forms are good enough for the ignorant but you can speak clearly to people of sense.”

The Sufi said; “Experience shows, unfortunately, that it is not a matter of ignorant and the wise. It is a matter that those who are most in need of a certain understanding, or even a certain part of understanding, are always the least able to accept it without an analogy. Tell them directly and they will prevent themselves perceiving its truth.”

(Sufi Wisdom)

- 1) How did the story make you feel?

- 2) What were some of the themes you heard in the story?

- 3) What affect does hearing a story have on how you listen?

- 4) What did you hear externally?

- 5) What did you hear internally?

"Listening to your heart, finding out who you are, is not simple. It takes time for the chatter to quiet down. In the silence of 'not doing' we begin to know what we feel. If we listen and hear, what is being offered then anything in life can be our guide. Listen!"

Anonymous

■ Practical Storytelling™

The story, *The Journey of the Little Stream*, is an example of what we call "■ Practical Storytelling™." These are stories drawn from symbols, themes, emotions and principles that we as human beings hold in common, whatever variety of cultural expressions we may appreciate.

■ Practical Storytelling™, in the process of ■ Artful Communication™ for individuals or organizations, evolves from the legends, yarns, folktales, cultural traditions and personal stories that speak to the deep truths about what inspires and encourages us to take action for positive change in the world. The world that matters most is usually our home and the other organizations of which we are a part, where we make our most creative contributions.

Countless "practical" stories contain an irony that makes us laugh, cry or ponder. Many of us have traveled to "the base of the mountain where we are stopped by the desert sands" in search of "who we are", our true essence. *The Journey of Little Stream* becomes a metaphor for what we hope to find and to give in our world of work and interpersonal relationships.

As listeners our "emotional memory" is triggered as we share in the story of the *Little Stream*, experiencing a connection that creates a bond, which carries over to the ways we listen to our internal self and to others.

Stories are powerful sources of learning, affirmation, and hope. They can open up new ideas, options, and possibilities in our lives. They illustrate principles that have universal application. If you know someone's story you cannot hate them; we gain insight and understanding as we listen to or tell our stories. By sharing the emotions and passion in our stories, we build relationships and community.

Mary J. Kelly, MFA

Mary J. Kelly, President/Founder of **Storytelling.U: Institute for Narrative Expression**, is a human development strategist and performance artist. Her approach to consulting follows the best of oral and written traditions, restoring learning and development as an educational whole-brain learning method.

StorytellingU utilizes a wholistic process called **! Bridging™**, which incorporates the arts as skill-building tools. These arts-based tools—**! Practical Storytelling™**, **! Functional Drama™**, **! Narrative Scripting™**, and **eStorytelling Design™**—incorporate oral and written traditions, metaphors, and performance to stimulate discovery of personal values. Through this process, participants have a better understanding of themselves and their relationship to others, resulting in personal accountability and a heightened sense of community.

A master storyteller/actress, Mary has earned Master of Fine Arts degree in theatre and Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in child drama/communication, both from Arizona State University. She has over 20 years experience in business and education worldwide with organizations such as: American Express Company, Motorola, Bankfirst, ConocoPhillips, Maricopa County, City of Phoenix, Maricopa County Community College District, American Community School (Beirut, Lebanon), University of Phoenix, and Ottawa University.

Suggested Reading

- Brady, Mark, ed. *The Wisdom of Listening*. Somerville, MA: Wisdom Publications, 2003.
- Brown, John Seely, Stephen Denning, Katalina Groh, and Laurence Prusak. *Storytelling in Organizations: Why Storytelling Is Transforming 21st Century Organizations and Management*. Burlington, MA: Elsevier Butterworth-Heinemann, 2005.
- Livo, Norma J. and Sandra A. Rietz. *Storytelling Process & Practice*. Littleton, CO: Libraries Unlimited, Inc., 1986.
- Simmons, Annette. *The Story Factor: Inspiration, Influence, and Persuasion Through the Art of Storytelling*. Cambridge, MA: Perseus Publishing, 2001.