

Four-Page Handout/Notes and Article
“The Power of Story” Learning Café Program
Presented by Dave Kampfschulte

1. Stories start when we are little.
 - a. Fairytales
 - i. Give courage
 - ii. Overcoming hardship
 - iii. If something is too good to be true, it probably is
 - iv. Stories have external dangers dragons big bad wolves, witches , hidden internal dangers that we unconsciously start to identify.
 - b. All those characters also show themselves concurrently in the stories of our families.

2. A story tells the significant actions of the character over time
 - a. You come too
 - b. Drawn in – What would I do given the same circumstances?
 - c. Who do I want to be like? Role models – early biographies. Swamp Fox, Charles Lindberg, and G Washington. They persevered. They stuck with it despite overwhelming odds. They had to make tough choices. They had a code they live by. That message followed me into adulthood.
 - d. Every story has heroes and mentors that are like a beacon and guide us along the way.
 - e. We choose to value certain things, they become our morality.
 - f. Bible, fairytales, and fables are full of choices and dilemmas

3. Change
 - a. You are not reading about the character, you are traveling along with him/her, experiencing the same emotions they are. They become part of your spiritual and mental universe. I was affected by the story.
 - b. Character changed but as result of the story I changed too. As a result of that story I am a different person. *To Kill a Mockingbird? How did you change?*
 - c. Realization that things can be something other than they are. Heart of any change is that realization.
 - d. Points our past failings and how we can do better.
 - e. If we see ourselves as stories, we believe there is a plot to my life and I can take action to influence it. I am an active participant as opposed to a passive bystander.
 - f. Some ways of living are better than others. All involve change, Change is hard
 - g. Our value system is like standing in two rowboats. The story we grew up with and the story we are hearing that is new truth.

4. Healing
 - a. Stories can heal us by reconnecting us with others who share the same story
 - b. Every story implies a community, which helps us heal
 - c. Grief groups – I am not alone.
 - d. Part of the grief process. *Tell me how she affected you. What stands out about him?*
 - e. AA – telling your story makes it real. Name doesn't matter. The story does. Navoho sand paintings
 - f. Review the experience and reflect upon them. *When something goes wrong who do we often blame?* Abuse - What we thought was to be true, like we are at fault, may not be true at all.

- g. *Do you remember when?* Healing and bonding.
 - h. *We are defined by our stories.* Obituaries, eulogies
5. Part of a whole – long continuous train
- a. Family stories connected to the past
 - b. Biblical stories, Greek mythology – people have been wrestling with these dilemmas for eons.
 - c. True is not necessarily factual, but reflecting on the human experience.
 - d. MLK – “Telling a little history now.” Shared past but shared vision to the future too.
 - e. There is order out of chaos. There is a plot and I am part of it

Dave’s Favorite Books That Tell a Great Story and Have a Great Message

<i>Cold Mountain</i>	Charles Frazier
<i>A Gentleman in Moscow</i>	Amory Towels
<i>A Prayer for Own Meany</i>	John Irving
<i>Les Miserables</i>	Victor Hugo
<i>Ellen Foster</i>	Kaye Gibbons
<i>Plainsong</i>	Kent Haruf
<i>The Education of Little Tree</i>	Forrest Carter
<i>Always Outnumbered, Always Outgunned</i>	Walter Mosley
<i>A Gathering of Old Men</i>	Ernest Gaines
<i>11/23/63</i>	Stephen King
<i>The Prince of Tides</i>	Pat Conroy
<i>The Secrete World of Bees</i>	Sue Monk Kidd

Books Mentioned in Talk

<i>Tell Me a Story</i>	Daniel Taylor
<i>The Hero with a Thousand Faces</i>	Joseph Campbell
<i>The Power of Myth</i>	Joseph Campbell
<i>Kitchen Table Wisdom</i>	Naomi Remen
<i>To Kill a Mockingbird</i>	Harper Lee

Movies

- Kramer v. Kramer*
- Star Wars*

See page 3-4 for an article Dave Kampfschulte wrote on “The Power of Story” for the Area Agency on Aging.

The Power of Story

I think it is safe to say we all like a good story. At first glance, stories are entertaining, as we are often transported to a different time and place, as the author skillfully paints a picture in words. Or we are able to obtain some history along with a good story from a historical fiction book. Who doesn't like a good "who done it thriller?"

But as Paul Harvey would say, "Now for the Rest of the Story." Daniel Taylor wrote a nifty little book, *Tell Me a Story*, which I am going to be drawing on for this article. It helped me understand the subtle, unconscious pull that stories have on us.

Stories, at their core, involve choices and the consequences that result from those choices. Those consequences often have long lasting effects on the subject and the people around him. Sound familiar to our own lives? Those choices are the result of the constant shifting ground of our values. It is a never ending dilemma between going with the unquestioned values that our culture provided us with growing up, that we accepted without question or the new values emerging as we view our life through a new lens, brought on by recent experiences.

It is like having a foot in each of two rowboats side by side. It is comfortable and manageable. But then as values diverge, the boats start to drift, spreading the legs to the breaking point, and pretty soon, the main character has to make an irreversible decision or fall in the water. Which boat does she jump to?

Ted Kramer in the movie, *Kramer v. Kramer* is a great illustration of that. He thought his role as the husband and dad was, as society had instructed him, to 'bring home the bacon.' With much angst, what he learned from raising his son, helped him to make a desperate lunge for the other boat and become a better, changed man in the process.

These choices don't happen immediately. Like our own lives, they play out over time. That is where the story is. They need to percolate. They percolate not with just the main character, but with us too. We often find ourselves asking, "What would I do under similar circumstances?" Our values develop from a questions like that.

The character in the story is inviting us in subtle ways, "I am going on this journey to unknown places, would you like to come too?" In the often neglected fine print, it says that these unknown places aren't always going to be physical ones. They often are involve an irresistible journey, where all conflict resides, into the recesses of our psyche.

These inevitably create encounters with the Big Questions of Life: *What am I to do? Who am I? Who are all these others and what are they doing here?* So much of this is gradually going on at an unconscious level; kind of like waves slowly moving sand around on a beach.

A story is not just facts. It is the emotions that go along with it. Those emotions have an effect on us too. How many times have we shed a tear, laughed out loud, or reacted in horror from our encounters with story? You find yourself experiencing the same emotions the characters are. They become as Daniel Taylor says, part of your spiritual and mental universe.

The main character changed, but guess what, I was effected and I changed too! As a result of that story, a part of me is a different person. I think of the first time I read *To Kill a Mockingbird*. My comfortable white bubble I had been living in, burst, as I realized there was a whole different world out there with people facing challenges and prejudices I had never knew existed. It is kind of like the shock of learning there is no Santa Claus for a child.

That realization propels us to dare to think that some things can be better than they are. The heart of any change is that realization. We all know change is hard. It is easier to live in that predictable bubble we have created. The hero's quest is all about leaving the bubble, going out to gain wisdom, and returning to help the dying society recover.

All this time, you thought that you were reading, watching, and listening to stories to be entertained! Bottom line, they have helped us be the author of your own, never-ending saga of your life. I can't wait to read it. I will look for it on the best seller list.

Amazing Circles Workshops

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