

# Narrative in online relationship development



---

## Notes from: Storytelling and Facilitation with Marie Finlay

Australasian Facilitators Network (AFN) Conference  
27 November 2005, Perth, Australia

### Workshop Brief

Storytelling is the core of human experience and the oldest learning/ teaching technique. It is unique to every human being and common to all.

This workshop will focus on storytelling and the power of its use in facilitation. We will engage in a conversation around our experience of story, how it is used, why it works and through practice work to develop the storyteller in you.

### Opening

Marie opened the workshop with the following story  
(Note: this is my memory of the story, not verbatim)

There once was a Jewish community and when they came up against strife and really needed a miracle to get them through, they performed a ritual, danced and spoke the special words.

The miracle came, and the community survived.

In the following generation, the community also came up against real strife and really needed a miracle. Their young Rabbi couldn't remember the ritual, but he remembered the dance and spoke the special words.

And it was enough.

The next generation also came up against real strife and really needed a miracle. Their Rabbi couldn't remember the ritual or the dance but he remembered the special words. He spoke the words, and it was enough.

The following generation too came up against strife and need a miracle to get through. None of them could remember the ritual, the dance or the special words. They did not know what to do.

But they remembered the story... and it was enough.

### Her experiences

Marie then talked a bit about her experience as a storyteller, Professional Storyteller and Private Consultant. She uses story in organizations and teaches with facilitator Christine Hogan at Curtin University in Western Australia.

She has used story to explore the silence of women in the workplace, to help organizations and individuals tell their story, change management and providing techniques for people who work with people in organizations.

### Group stories

Notes from Storytelling and Facilitation with Marie Finlay  
Australasian Facilitators Network (AFN) Conference, 27 November 2005, Perth, Australia

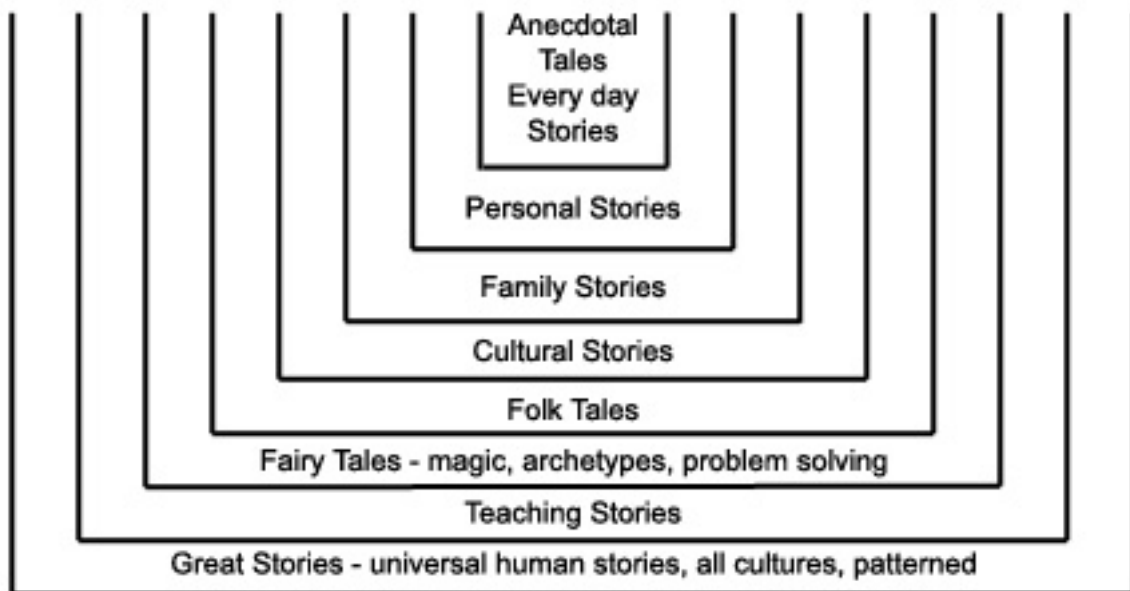
We then moved into groups of four and told a 1 min story to each other. The frame up was to tell a story from the past that is similar to something that has occurred or inspired us from the conference.

We then swapped to another group to tell the same story again. We then discussed the difference that occurred when we told it the second time. Some people said there was more detail added, others added more depth or feeling, and others found it easier to tell as they could remember from the previous telling.

We then went and put a hand on the person who's story we liked the most. The top four stories were then told to the larger group. We discussed why these stories were chosen – the power to move, the emotional connection, the emotional response, humor, the challenges that were overcome.

### **Models of Storytelling**

Marie then introduced the following model that she uses.



**Model of Stories – Marie Finlay**

Think of the story model as a series of containers with the stories holding layers of stories inside each other. Like the bright plastic cups that children use, where the smaller cups fit inside larger ones.

**P H A T**  
**a e n r**  
**s r t a**  
**o a n**  
**i g s**  
**o n o**  
**n i r**  
**t s m**  
**a t a**  
**t i o**  
**n**

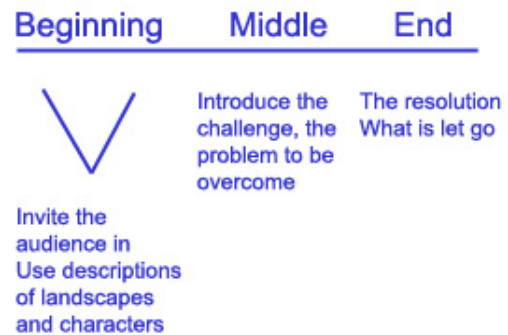
We then looked at the stories that we had been talking about during the session, which were mostly Personal Stories. Marie discussed the differences between the types of stories. Her work as a facilitator and consultant lay mostly in the domains of organizational cultural and teaching stories.

Next was introduced a structure for creating and working with stories

Stories must have passion. If a story has little passion in it's telling it won't work. Stories must have an identifiable hero in order to be effective. There needs to be an antagonist – where would Luke Skywalker be without Han Solo and Darth Vader. It must be a story about transformation

Marie also introduced us to a sequence to remember when creating a story. Start with a beginning using description. Describe the landscape, the characters, the setting for the story. Then in the middle introduce problem or the challenge to be faced by the hero. Then finally the hero's resolution or letting go.

Then workshop was concluded.



### **What is story?**

A story is a fact, wrapped in an emotion that can compel us to take action as so transform the world around us.

*Robert Dickman: The Four Elements of Every Successful Story*

A real story not only touches the mind, but also the imagination and the unconscious depths in a person

If we have no story we are nobody. We are lost in the darkness, there is no light.

*David Mowanjali: Yorro Yorro*

The stories that people tell have a way of taking care of them. If stories come to you, care for them. And learn to give them away where they are needed.

Sometimes a person needs a story more than food to stay alive. That is why we put stories in each others' memory. This is how people take care of themselves.

One day you will be good storytellers. Never forget these obligations."

*Barry Lopez : Crow and Weasel*

### **What does story do?**

- Creates meaning
- Motivates people to action
- Transmit values
- Transmit culture
- Engages the whole person
- Releases energy in the individual or group
- Help us make sense of our present and past experience and allow us to imagine possibilities for the future
- A good story is a bridge between our particular lives and the universal, it connects our individual life to the patterns and wonders of the whole
- Transforms: A genuine story will not leave us alone—it insists on changing us.

You are your stories. You are a product of all the stories you've heard or lived.

### Tips for facilitators:

When using traditional story, make sure the story:

- connects to the purpose of the work
- connects to you
- is appropriate for your audience
- connects in some way with the human condition
- is told with passion
- is rich in language
- have a strong beginning and a satisfying conclusion

Personal Stories have to be:

- understandable to the audience
- told from the perspective of a single protagonist ... a single person who is typical of that situation.
- story must be true
- be told simply
- have a happy ending
- storyteller has to let go of control
- some groups are immune
- the storyteller must believe: perform with passion
- marry narrative and analysis: ie do all the analysis, but use the narrative to get people *inside* the idea, so that they *live the idea*, so that they *understand* how the idea might work.
- Remember: Everyone is a story teller

**When might you use story?**

- Warm up
- Create a mood
- Set a theme
- Create connections and build relationship
- Communicating who you are
- Fostering collaboration
- Teach and learning
- Sharing knowledge
- A way of explaining what's happening...making the invisible visible
- Validate experience
- Gather knowledge
- Times of transition/change

### Some references

Daniel H Pink (2005) *"A Whole New Mind"* Allen and Unwin

Howard Gardner (1996) *Leading Minds: An Anatomy of Leadership*, Basic Books.

Joseph Campbell (1968) *"Hero With a Thousand Faces"* Princeton University Press

Karin Evans and Dennis Metzger (2000) *Storytelling*, an Info-line booklet from the American Society for Training & Development.

Noel Tichy (2002) *The Leadership Engine*, Harper Business.

Steven Denning ((2005) *"The Leaders Guide to Storytelling"*

Annette Simmons (2002) "The Six Stories You Need to Know How to Tell", <http://www.storytellingfoundation.org/resources/articles/simmons.htm>.

Edward O. Welles (1996) "Why Every Company Needs a Story", [http://www.cin.com/articles/finance/capital/vent\\_capital/1658-print.html](http://www.cin.com/articles/finance/capital/vent_capital/1658-print.html).

Hilary McLellan (2002) "Introduction to Corporate Storytelling", <http://tech-head.com/cstory1.htm>.