

## Narrative in online relationship development

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### **Report: Yahoo! Messenger meeting on 13-14 December 2005.**

Singapore: 2.00pm - Wednesday 14th  
South Australia: 4.30pm - Wednesday 14th  
NSW and ACT, Australia: 5.00pm - Wednesday 14th  
NZ: 7.00pm - Wednesday 14th  
Chandler: 11.00pm - Wednesday 14th  
Huston and Chicago: 12.00am – Tuesday 13th  
Eastern US: 1.00am – Tuesday 13th  
London: 6.00am – Tuesday 13th  
Groningen, The Netherlands: 7.00am – Tuesday 13th

### **Proposed Agenda**

Short welcome  
A round where everyone can check-in  
Discuss and tell our stories  
Share our experiences  
Completion

### **Present**

Eva Martony (Chandler), Jon Jenkins (Groningen), Stephen Thorpe (New Zealand)

### **Apologies**

Kathleen Curran, Penny Pullan, Nancy Settle-Murphy, Janet Danforth

### **Meeting**

We discussed the confused dates in setting up the meeting, the participation survey and getting straight into our stories. A suggestion was made and we shifted from text to voice chat. There was a strong echo and turning off the hands free solved this problem.

We discussed a process of one person telling their story, and then questions being asked by the audience and then the storyteller asking questions of the audience.

Jon posted his story in the text.

I am lazy and somewhat socially inept. I am shy and find social interaction difficult. I have moved dozens of times, leaving places, leaving friends, leaving meaning and going to an unknown place. I quickly develop surface relations and quickly recover from leaving friends. I seldom make in-depth friends.

I have spent much of my life in meetings where everyone speaking is using a language I don't understand. I am comfortable in silence and alone. I have grown to appreciate all of this about me and feel little need to change. Those who want me to be friendlier do not bother me. I even pity them and their superficial noise.

On an ordinary day, I sit in front of my computer, open the email and begin to delete all of those things I don't want to read. There is a note from someone I hadn't heard from in 20 + years. I am horrified. Ghosts stand around the computer.

I fear I haven't left all behind.

We then began with some questions for Jon.

Yahoo-Skype meeting 13-14 December 2005  
1am US Eastern Standard Time Tuesday 13th 2005

Eva talked about the impact that the story had had on her. Jon clarified between the two stories that were captured in the Yahoo meeting on Friday-Saturday 9-10 December. There was the one in Pace Mississippi and this one posted today.

Eva said that she really related to the story and felt more connected to Jon from hearing his story because he had opened up and revealed quite a bit of himself. Eva said that it was a useful story for us to research.

Stephen said that from reading Jon's story he saw something of the man behind the message and that there were many layers to the story.

Jon made an interesting observation that it's a part of facilitation itself to have the courage to expose oneself in such a way that others are given courage to expose themselves or share their thinking.

Stephen said that a particular line that had drawn his focus. "I am comfortable in silence and alone." This struck a cord as something that men like to be – comfortable in our silence.

Eva identified from a women's perspective that when she read the same line she had wanted to joke around with Jon and draw him out more.

Jon said that in the silence it was about listening.

Jon talked about others needing him to speak in order for them to feel more comfortable – people who want to make him friendlier.

Eva said that as we have been talking about the story together she can see it with new eyes and understand more what Jon meant by silence in terms of listening.

We then discussed the process and how it would be useful in either audio and text formats. Jon suggested the idea of 2 or 3 stories that we could talk about simultaneously.

Jon talked about some stories at the Europe IAF conference. Mary Ellis Arthur asked What is an experience that was a very positive experience in your facilitation? And 8 very powerful stories emerged – it would be interesting to explore them as a group of stories.

Stephen told his worst facilitation about facilitating a rather charged family meeting at a Heart Politics community gathering. There were several issues from past gatherings that he was unaware of and he hadn't been to any of the family meetings at two previous gatherings he had attended. Stephen felt like he had lost control of the meeting and someone else ended up taking over the second half of the meeting. After telling story, Jon and Eva asked questions. Stephen came to see a lot of learning in telling his story. I saw new light in it. He saw that the person who took charge in that meeting as really wanting to help achieve its purpose. An ally rather than someone to struggle against. Stephen developed a new relationship with his experience of that meeting.

It was interesting - Jon had had a similar facilitation experience and then told that story about working with a coalition of telecom companies. We identified the importance and need for self preparation and the opening set of rituals starting the group. These are an important dimension in helping groups come to decisions.

Eva was reminded about a similar experience about a visitation training pilot that turned into a facilitated discussion about issues around visitation. Issues with visitors and equipment breaking were more important to the students than the training that was planned. It turned into an hour long discussion about what issues they had being trying to bring to the director as no one was listening to them.

Jon talked about collecting the secondary issues around training that may come into play during training. He introduced a process he uses called an Audience Analysis and offered to email it around.

We then talked about the possibility of setting up a yahoo group and discussion forum possibly using iMeet.

Jon said he had trouble using yahoo groups as it was truncating messages. Particularly in from IAF e-groups.

**Action points**

Jon to email Audience Analysis sheet  
Stephen to write up report