



Narrative Therapy Level One 5-day Intensive

with Tileah Drahm-Butler
Dulwich Centre

Online (from Cairns, QLD)
30th August to 3rd September, 2021

Workshop Outline

(this may vary in response to group discussions)

Monday

- Locating on Country
- Cultural Safety & Community of care
- Collective Timeline
- History of Narrative Therapy and Community Work
- Towards Decolonisation
- Some Ideas that shape Narrative Practice
- Therapeutic Posture

Tuesday

- Questions and Review of Monday
- The Problem is the Problem: Externalising Conversations
- Externalising in a Collective
- Externalising Practice Activities

Wednesday

- Questions and Review of Tuesday
- Finding the Strong Story: Re-Authoring Conversations
- Re-Authoring Practice Activities
- The Relationship Continues: Introducing Re-membering Practices
- Re-membering Practice Activities
- Migration of Identity

Thursday

- Questions and Review of Wednesday
- Hearing the Story through an audience: Outsider Witnessing
- Thickening stories through documentation
- Tying it all together: Live interview

Friday

- Questions and Review of Thursday
- Returning to the timeline
- Tree of Life
- Continuing ideas
- Celebration

What is Narrative Therapy?

Telling our stories in ways that make us stronger

Narrative therapy is about telling our stories in ways that make us stronger.

As Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of this country, our stories are precious. They have survived over generations. Our elderly have passed them on to us and we will continue to pass them onto our children. We have our own ways of telling and listening to stories which are important to us.

The telling of stories is something we can relate to. As Aboriginal people, we have always told stories about our lives, and we know how important it is for people to be connected to their own stories, the stories of their family, their people and history. These stories are a source of pride. When people become disconnected from them, life can be much harder to live.

Narrative therapy seeks to be a respectful, non-blaming approach to counselling and community work, which centres people as the experts in their own lives. It views problems as separate from people and assumes people have many skills, beliefs, knowledges, values, commitments and abilities that will assist them to reduce the influence of problems in their lives.

The term 'narrative' implies listening to and telling or re-telling stories about people and the problems in their lives. In the face of serious and sometimes potentially deadly problems, the idea of hearing or telling stories may seem a trivial pursuit. It is hard to believe that conversations can shape new realities. But they do. The bridges of meaning we build with others help healing developments flourish instead of wither and be forgotten. Language can shape events into narratives of hope.

Our people understand the significance of our stories, and the importance of taking care to tell them in the right places, to the right people, and in the appropriate ways. Once these stories begin to be told we can then listen for the moments of change, the times when people are moving their lives in positive directions. By listening and through our questions we can assist people to tell their stories in ways that make them stronger.

Collective Narrative Timeline of History

Introducing ourselves through our histories

(For more information see: *Collective Narrative Practice: Responding to Individuals, groups and communities who have experienced trauma*, by David Denborough)

What is drawing you to the work you are doing?

This might relate to a wish, a purpose, a commitment, a hope, a learning, a value, belief and so on. Eg. a belief that all children have value and should be safe; a commitment to making a safe place available for people to speak about their experiences

- Please come up with a name for this.

Can you think of a story, or describe an event that contributed to strengthening this wish, purpose, hope, learning, value, belief or commitment?

Where did this come from?

How long has this been important to you?

When did this start?

- Please give a date (a year). This may be within your lifetime or in some cases earlier.

Who else is linked to this theme? You may have learnt it from them or they may have recognised that it is important to you or they may have helped sustain it ...

Who did you learn it from? Who did *they* learn it from? Who did you learn it with?

Who would be least surprised to hear you speaking of this ... why?

- What image is sparked by this story?

Returning to our timeline, but this time looking forwards

First round

From this week:

- What are the three key learnings that occurred for you this week?
 - These could be learnings in relation to skill development, or learnings about life, or learnings about yourself.
- Choose one to focus on. Please name it clearly.
 - What was it?
 - When did it take place?
 - Why is it significant for you?
 - What difference might this make in your work?
 - What difference might it make in the lives of those with whom you work?
- Interviewer to thicken these descriptions.
- 3rd person to rescue words and put this into a short document that is to be read at the closing round. This document is to focus on one learning per person.

Second round

The future:

- Think of one person, family, group, community with whom you work.
 - What is one next step you are going to take to put into practice your new learnings?
 - When are you planning to do this? Where? With who?
 - Name this clearly, with date and place... so you can add this to the timeline.
 - What is your hope for how this may assist those you work with?

The person is not the problem, the problem is the problem Externalising the problem

Externalising Conversations ... a bit of history

Started with children but now used with adults, families and whole communities.

- Michael White worked in The Adelaide Children's Hospital from 1976-1981 where he was meeting with young people who were soiling their pants (very seriously). The families were experiencing defeat, helplessness, hopelessness, despair, frustration, and often mothers were experiencing blame.
- One day, they discovered that it wasn't the mother's fault, or the child ... it was 'Sneaky Poo' who was coming to visit the family uninvited.

Video from Michael White Archive of 'Sneaky Wee': Features a young girl, Ryan, from California. (This video is shown as part of the Externalising online course at www.narrativetherapyonline.com)

Externalising conversation with AIDS, Sugar and Grief

In early 1996, as a member of the Aboriginal Women's Health and Healing Project, Barbara Wingard had the opportunity to watch a video of the work of the CARE counsellors of Malawi who were using externalising conversations in village meetings to talk about ways of preventing AIDS and caring for people with AIDS.

Video from Malawi

The ten of us involved in the Aboriginal Women's Health and Healing Project really enjoyed watching this video. It really touched me very strongly and I couldn't wait to come home and work with the ideas. I specifically thought about how this sort of work could be used with diabetes as it is an illness that is causing a lot of harm within Aboriginal communities ... I said to one of the other members of the Aboriginal Women's Health and Healing Project, 'Wouldn't this be fantastic to use with diabetes?' And she said, 'Yeah Barb, we should do it together'. We went away from that day with a sense of excitement, with a feeling of, 'Wow, we've got to use this'. I couldn't wait to get to Murray Bridge, where I work, to try it.

Sugar

The group: *Who are you?*

Sugar: *My name is diabetes but a lot of people call me Sugar. You can call me Sugar. I can be anybody's disease but I do my best work with Nungas because they can't quite control me yet.*

Sugar became very popular! She even made it to Central Australia where she was translated into Pitjantjantjara

Video: Lumara – Call me Sugar

Metaphors in resisting the problem¹

All metaphors that are taken up in the development of externalising conversations are borrowed from particular discourses that invoke specific understandings of life and identity. These discourses influence the actions people take to solve their problems, and they are shaping of life in a general sense as well.

The diversity in these metaphors is very much due to the fact that most of them were coined by people who have sought therapy.

- Walking out on the problem (from the concept of agency)
- Going on a strike against the problem (from the idea of civil action)
- Setting themselves apart from the problem (from the concepts of separation and individuation)
- Defying the problem's requirements (from the idea of resistance)
- Disempowering the problem (from the idea of empowerment)
- Educating the problem (from the concept of teaching)
- Recovering or reclaiming the territory of their life from the problem (from geographical conceptions of life)
- Undermining the problem (from geographical conceptions of life)
- Reducing the influence of the problem (from the concept of personal agency)
- Coming out of the shadows cast by the problem (from the idea of light)
- Reducing the problem's grip on their lives (from the psychological conception of life)
- Taking their lives out of the hands of the problem (from puppetry)
- Resigning from the problem's service (from the concept of employment)
- Taming the problem (from the concept of training)
- Harnessing the problem (from the equine world)

NOTE

1. White, M. (2007). *Maps of narrative practice* (chapter 1, Externalising conversations). New York, NY: Norton.

Externalising Conversations (Statement of Position Map¹) additional questions

The following questions are suggested options and your choice will vary depending on the age and circumstances of the person seeking help. Choose which questions fit for the conversation you are having. When referring to this map as a guide for conversations, we can move **up and down** through the four categories of enquiry – the conversation **does not** have to follow a strictly linear path of 1-4.

Category One: Naming the problem in your own words

- I'm interested to understand a bit more about when these concerns started. Can I ask you some questions about this?
- What was going on around you at the time the problem started?
- Can you think of particular circumstances that may have influenced the worries that you are having now?
- Are there particular things that are happening when this problem occurs?
- Does the problem arise more often when you're with certain people?
- Is this problem more present in particular places or situations?
- How long has this problem been around?
- Some people say it helps to find a name to refer to this problem, what name fits or how might you describe it?
- In describing [this problem], what mental image or picture might come to mind?

Category Two: Exploring the Effects of the problem [use the name used in category one]

- Is it okay if I ask you some questions about the ways [this problem] has impacted on your life?
- How does [this problem] affect the daily tasks that are important to you?
- In what ways does [this problem] affect your relationships with those around you?
- How does [this problem] affect how you think about yourself or see yourself?
- In what ways does it affect how you treat yourself?
- Does it affect how you feel physically in any way?
- What do you notice about how [this problem] gets in the way of what you are wanting in life? OR
- How does [this problem] affect the hopes and plans you have for your life?

Category Three: Evaluating the Effects of the problem: inviting the person to take a position in relation to the problem

- What do you think about the effects [this problem] is having on your life?
- Is this okay with you or not okay, or a bit of both, that [this problem] is affecting you in these ways?
- So where do you stand on how [this problem] is affecting your life?

Category Four: Justifying the Evaluation: Enabling people to begin to speak about their values, beliefs, hopes, dreams, principles, purposes

- Why is this okay/not okay for you?
- Why do you feel this way about how [this problem] is affecting you?

NOTE

1. See Michael White's teaching notes: Externalising Conversations.

Conversation with 'Shame'

On the 2nd of March, women from Lockhart River in Cape York, Queensland, had a conversation with 'Shame'. They hoped to understand what Shame's intentions were in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities in Australia, as well as to find ways that people in Lockhart River can push it away.

Good morning, what is your name?

My name is Shame. Sometimes people mistake me for my friend's shyness or embarrassment, but I'm something altogether different! I'm Shame.

Tell me a bit about yourself.

I can be a feeling or a thought where I stop people from expressing themselves. I like to come around when someone wants to try something new, that's when I feel really deadly. It makes me smile when people stay quiet, especially when they have something good to say. I love hanging around even at Shake-a-leg time. This makes me feel strong because I even get in at Cultural time. At community events I always be around at feasting time. I stop people from getting their delicious food ... how funny is that!

Where do you live?

I can live anywhere, but at the moment I am very successful in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities. I live in many communities, even here in Lockhart River.

How long have you been around in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities?

Well I came here with colonisation, when the white fellas came. Aboriginal people have their own Law and I worked hard to break that down so that I could get in. I could never get there with Aboriginal people in the past, they wouldn't let me in.

Some Aboriginal women still dance traditional way with no tops on, like Old Lady from Aurukun who danced outside of the High Court of Australia and on the lawns of Parliament House in Canberra! She wouldn't let me anywhere near her!

What are some of the things that make you strong?

When people go outside, I make them think they look no good. When people do try to look nice, I even stop them by telling them that they can't look nice.

I'm actually in partnership with the media at the moment. Especially for women and girls. I get the media to only show women who are mostly white, they usually have straight blonde hair, I tell people that the perfect woman is tall and slim and confident. What a lot of women and girls don't know is that lots of these pictures are photo-shopped. People don't actually look like that! Hahaha!!!

What makes you weak Shame?

Well I really don't like it when people talk about me. When people realise that I'm there, they start to take steps to push me away. When people connect with their Culture and their Elders, that makes me weak.

People are starting to speak up and ignore me and this is making me feel proper weak!

When people do training and education, or workshops, they might learn that I make it harder to turn up, so I try to keep people away from learning.

When people realise that everyone is really kind of the same. Lots of people have me in their life, but I make people think that it's only them, that they're all on their own.

What are the things that might protect people from you?

Family support keeps me away. It's hard for me, because when people encourage each other, that keeps me away.

Who are your friends?

I hang out a lot with conflict and I really like Put Down. Bad Attitude is my good friend too. Racism is my best best best friend!

Who are your enemies?

Confidence, happiness and giving-it-a-go are my biggest enemies, because then people realise I'm not that strong.

What are your plans for the future here in Lockhart River?

I want to move into everyone's house. I want to keep Lockhart River back, I don't want people to succeed. I want to stop people from doing the things that they want to do. I want them to be afraid to speak up. Mostly, I want people to stop being the best that they can, especially for their health. If I can keep people away from the clinic or from being healthy, then I will be happy.

And how are you going with your plans here in Lockhart River?

Well, don't tell anyone, but I'm not doing too well. I've met some very strong women and men here. Too strong for my liking. People are going to start working together to keep me away I think and this just scares me.

Is there anything else you want to say in closing?

Please keep me around, because I will keep you down.

The women in Lockhart River who wrote this script hope to share this in the school and other community groups as a way of showing the community that Shame is trying to keep them down, but acknowledging that Shame is not part of Culture and that they have the knowledge and skill, passed down from their Elders to push Shame away.

How to Externalise the Problem: Some ideas about ways of describing problems

1. Listen for what may be pushing the person around. For example:

‘I feel really guilty about it’ ... How is **the guilt** getting in the way of what you want?

He’s always been a lot of trouble! ... How has **the trouble** got in the way of the connection you’d prefer with your son?

2. The externalised name of the problem may change. It is an evolving conversation. If a number of problems are being mentioned, maybe ask the person to clarify which would be most important to speak about in the time that you have.

3. Externalising is an understanding of identity that practically has us changing a verb or adjective (doing or describing word) into a noun – a thing. For example:

depressed / the depression

fighting / the fights

hopeless / sense of hopelessness

worry / the worries

Often we will hear people using more descriptive or ‘experience-near’ names for the concern: ‘the black cloud of depression’, ‘the fidget bug’.

It is important that we adopt this language and centre their knowledge about the problem.

4. Initially the problem may be called ‘it’ or ‘the problem’.
5. Externalising practices when used meticulously and carefully enables people to separate their identity from the problem and have a sense of being able to act in relation to the problem. This can also mean people can join together against the problem – rather than see the person as the problem.

Making your own interviews with problems

Why externalise the problem?

- It gives this problem a name
- It exposes the problem
- Helps us to understand how the problem operates
- Helps to then be able to talk directly to the problem
- Easier to start thinking of solutions or ways of weakening the problem
- Helps to assist people to stop thinking that the problem is a part of their culture or of who they are
- Can assist us to come together to stop the damage of problems in our communities
- Increases awareness
- Helps people to notice when they are doing the problem's work: 'I do that all the time and I didn't know it had a name'
- It puts the spotlight on the problem, rather than shaming or blaming individuals
- It's funny! We need to make fun and have fun as we deal with serious issues.
- It puts the problem in context – looks at the history of the problem

Things to remember if you are creating an interview with a problem.

- Make sure the problem is named
- Ask the problem how long they have been around, trace the history of the problem
- Include what the problem likes to do, how the problem operates
- Ask what makes the problem powerful or stronger (what are the friends of the problem)
- Make sure the effects of the problem are talked about
- Ask the problem why they are doing these things
- Explore the times when people have managed to address the problem
- Ask what the problem doesn't like
- Make sure that by the end of the interview the Problem is getting weaker or giving away its secrets or thinking about retirement, etc ... this is a hopeful interview!
- Include humour!

The Narrative Therapy Charter of Story-Telling Rights

- Article 1: Everyone has the right to define their experiences and problems in their own words and terms
- Article 2: Everyone has the right for their life to be understood in the context of what they have been through and in the context of their relationships with others
- Article 3: Everyone has the right to include others who are important to them in the process of reclaiming their life from the effects of trauma
- Article 4: Everyone has the right to be free from having problems caused by trauma and injustice located inside them, internally, as if there is some deficit in them. The person is not the problem, the problem is the problem.
- Article 5: Everyone has the right for their responses to trauma to be acknowledged. No one is a passive recipient of trauma. People always respond. People always protest injustice.
- Article 6: Everyone has the right to have their skills and knowledges of survival and resistance respected, honoured and acknowledged.
- Article 7: Everyone has the right to know and experience that what they have learnt through hardship can make a contribution to others in similar situations.

The Narrative Therapy Charter of Storytelling rights was developed by David Denborough while visiting the treatment and rehabilitation centre for victims of torture in Ramallah.

Double Listening

This can be done in groups of 2.

One person is to tell a story of a difficult time in their work (or with a retired problem).

While listening to the stories, the person interviewing is to practice double listening by writing down the words and phrases of the problem story and the parts of life that are outside of the problem story.

Problem story	Parts of life outside of the problem story (the starting points for <i>alternative or preferred</i> stories)
<p>Listening to the effects and influences of the problem</p> <hr/>	<p>(Often hidden or in the shadows)</p> <p>Listening for clues about ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What the person's hopes and dreams are• What the person values or finds important or precious• What the person has done to cope with, endure or get through a tough time• What the person has done to take some power away from the problem story• Useful knowledge the person holds about the problem or about depowering the problem <hr/>

Exercise:

Re-authoring Conversations

The person being interviewed is to think about a time that they did something they were pleased with in their work. Try to think of a fairly recent event. Please choose an event you are happy to talk about and explore.

These questions MAY be used as a guide to shape this re-authoring conversation. You might like to add other questions within the landscape of action or landscape of identity.

Begin with;

- *Can you please tell me about a recent event that you are happy with in your work?*

Landscape of action questions:

- Can you tell me some more about this time?
- Where were you when this happened?
- Can you describe in more detail what you actually did? This might also include the steps which led up to this.
- Who else was there and were they important in the steps you took? (and/or other ideas of populating the conversation) (Re-remembering question)
- What led you to the idea that this could be possible? Or, what were some of the things that you did to get ready for this?

Landscape of identity questions

- Can you remember what was important to you about doing this at the time? What values or beliefs were motivating you at this time?
- When you think about these things we have been speaking about, is there a word or phrase that would capture what it is you've been describing?
- Do you think this phrase says something about a purpose you might hold?
- What might be some of the hopes you have for your work/life that are linked to this purpose?
- Thinking back, can you think of other times in your life when this purpose has shaped your action? Are there any events that come to mind? (Historicising the landscape of identity)

- Could you tell me more about this event? (Landscape of action question)
- What is it like to make this connection between (this event and the purpose mentioned above – use persons words)? (Historicising the landscape of identity)
- Have you got clearer about purposes you hold or values you carry for your work or your life more generally?

Landscape of action questions

- What might it be like for you, if this purpose and the history of it was a close companion for you over the next days? What steps would be lit up or be more visible? (Linking landscape of action and the landscape of identity into the future)
- What might the people you meet with notice if you were to continue to take steps in the direction you have described? (Landscape of action into the future)

REFERENCE

White, M. (2007). *Maps of narrative practice*. New York, NY: Norton.

Re-membering Conversations: some history¹

In the mid to late 1980s Michael White began to write about some of his conversations with people who had been referred to him on account of what was called a 'delayed grief reaction' or 'pathological mourning'.

Often these people had received therapeutic treatment based on the 'saying goodbye' metaphor, that is, the requirement to accept their loss and proceed with their life detached from the deceased loved one.

People therefore experienced not only the loss of a loved one, but in this requirement to 'say goodbye' and move on', people also experienced a loss of self and identity.

Michael White became interested in conversations that were re-incorporating of the person's relationship of the lost loved one into their life, rather than a further forfeiture of the relationship.

These ideas and practices were first published in: White, M. (1988) Saying hullo again: The incorporation of the lost relationship in the resolution of grief. *Dulwich Centre Newsletter*, (2), pp.17-55.

It was also during the mid-1980s that David Epston introduced Michael White to the work of the American cultural anthropologist, Barbara Myerhoff. It was on account of this reading that he began to refer to these conversations as 're-membering conversations'.

Barbara Myerhoff wrote about her work with an elderly Jewish community in Venice, Los Angeles. These people had migrated from Europe to the United States as children and infants in the early twentieth century, ultimately retiring to California. They had not only experienced the loss of family during the Holocaust, but many had also outlived their own children or were within rare contact with them. These things, as well as poverty, inadequate housing and transportation, and gentrification of the area around them, contributed to them being, as a group, both isolated and invisibilised.

The centre of their social life was a senior citizen's centre, and what Myerhoff called 'Definitional Ceremonies', forums that are purposefully created to provide an opportunity for the performance and re-performance, to an audience and to themselves, of their preferred identity claims. The implication of others in these claims was called 're-membering' by Myerhoff.

NOTE:

1. White, M. (1997). *Narratives of therapists' lives*. Adelaide, Australia: Dulwich Centre Publications.
White, M. (2007). *Maps of narrative practice*. New York, NY: Norton.

Re-membering quotes by Barbara Myerhoff¹

Freud (1965) suggests that the completion of the mourning process requires that those left behind develop a new reality which no longer includes what has been lost. But judging from the Centre members;’ struggle to retain the past, it must be added that full recovery from mourning may restore what has been lost, maintaining it through incorporation into the present. Full recollection and retention may be as vital to recovery and well-being as forfeiting memories. (1982, p.110)

To signify (a) special type of recollection, the term ‘Re-membering’ may be used, calling attention to the re-aggregation of members, the figures who belong to one’s life story, one’s own prior selves, as well as significant others who are part of the story. (1982, p.111)

Re-membering, then, is a purposive, significant unification, quite different from the passive, continuous fragmentary flickerings of images and feelings that accompany other activities in the normal flow of consciousness. The focused unification provided by Re-membering is requisite to sense and ordering. A life is given shape that extends back in the past and forward in the future. (1982, p.111)

Without Re-membering we lose our histories and ourselves. Time is erosion, then, rather than accumulation. (1982, p.111)

Private and collective lives, properly Re-membered, are interpretative. Full or ‘thick description’ is such an analysis. This involves finding linkages between the group’s shared, valued beliefs and symbols, and specific historical events. Particularities are subsumed and equated with grander themes, seen as exemplifying ultimate concerns ... A life, then, is not envisioned as belonging only to the individual who has lived it but it is regarded as belonging to the World, to Progeny who are heirs to the embodied traditions, or to God. Such Re-membered lives are moral documents and their function is salvific, inevitably implying, ‘all this has not been for nothing’. (1982, p.111)

NOTE

1. Myerhoff, B. (1982). Life history among the elderly: Performance, visibility and re-membering. In J. Ruby (Ed.), *A crack in the mirror: reflexive perspectives in anthropology*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Myerhoff, B. (1986). Life not death in Venice. In V. Turner & E. Bruner (Eds.), *The anthropology of experience*. Chicago, IL: The University of Illinois Press.

Exercise:

Re-Membering Conversation

You can do this activity in groups of two or three. One person is to be the person to ask the questions, the other is to respond to the questions and a third person may take notes, help the questioner and/or support the person being asked questions.

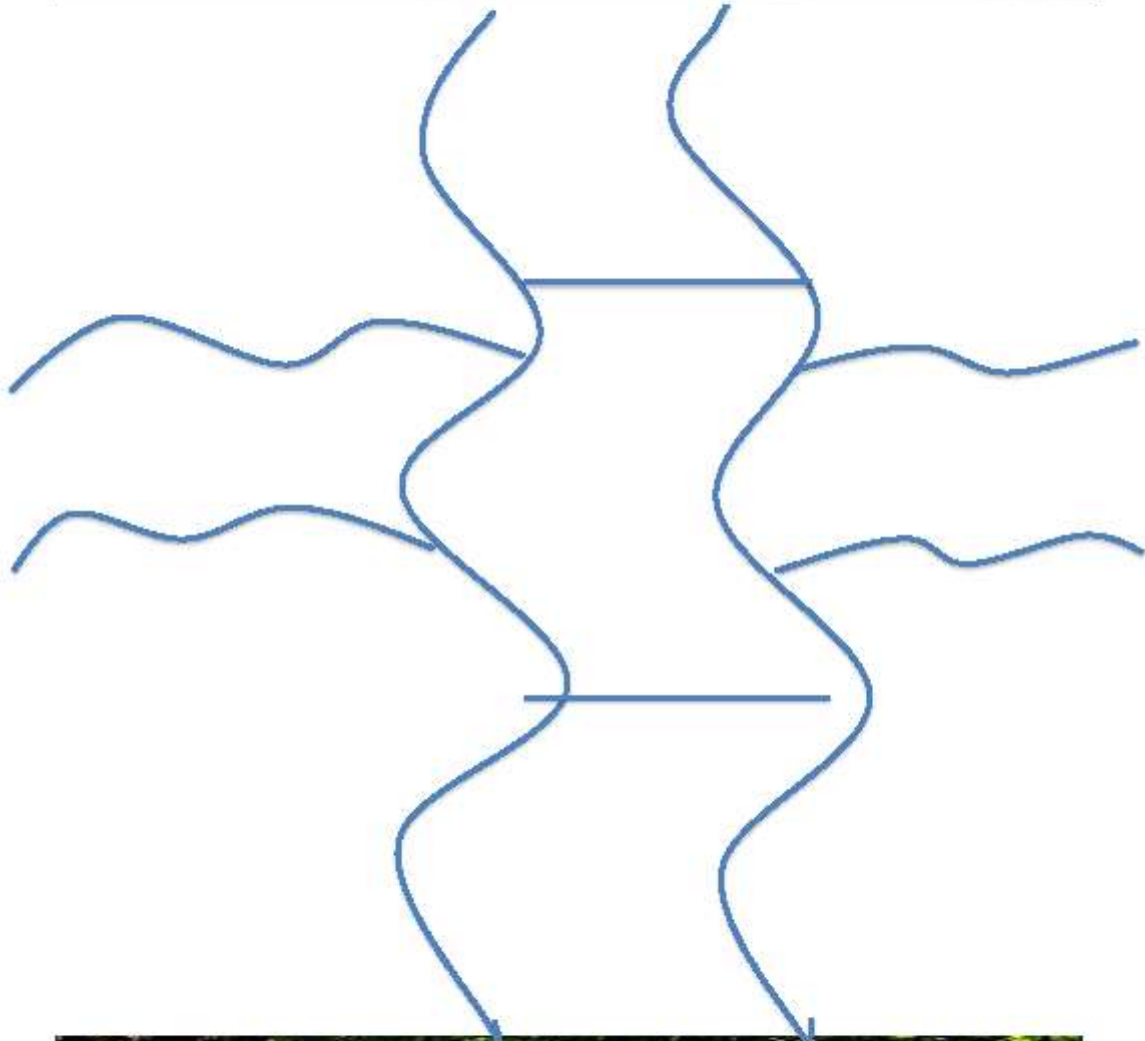
The person being interviewed is to think about a person who would be proud that they were here today. This might be someone who is in their life today, someone who is passed or someone from their childhood.

- 1) The remembered person's contribution to person's life:
 - In what ways was _____ supportive of you?
 - What is it that makes this support significant to you?
 - Are there particular ideas or activities you enjoyed sharing or doing together?
 - What was this like for you to be sharing these things with _____?
 - What did you experience when you were with this person?
 - What was it that _____ contributed to your life during those times?
 - Were there other things that _____ brought to your life?

- 2) Interviewee's identity through the remembered person's eyes.
 - What do you think _____ appreciated about you that had him/her supporting you in these ways?
 - What do you think _____ appreciated about you during these times?
 - What did this tell _____ about you or tell them about what is important to you?

- 3) The interviewee's contribution to the remembered person's life.
 - In what ways did you respond to this support?
 - Might there have been particular things that you did to take in or receive his/her support?
 - In what ways might _____ have known you were responding to his/her support?
 - What might this have been like for _____, to know they were contributing to you in this way?
 - What might this have meant to _____?
 - What do you think might have made possible for _____ through knowing you?
 - What do you think this might have brought to their life?

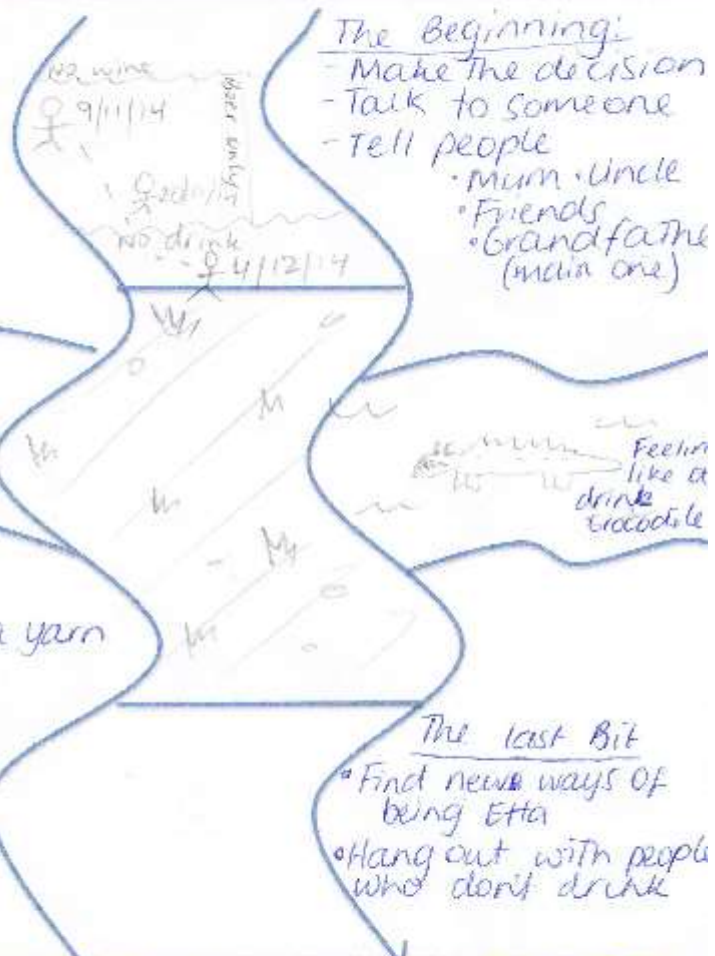
- 4) Implications of this for the remembered person's identity
 - In what ways might you have made a difference to how _____ thought about themselves or saw themselves?
 - What might your response have confirmed to _____ about what is important to them?



- less money for self
- Effects relationships
- Can't help Mum (hangover)
- It's hard to say no
- Don't see my children



- stay home
- Find things to do instead
- Tell self leave drink alone
- Tell the crew to not offer me drink.



- Feel good about myself
- Go for a holiday camping.
- See children more
- Get back with partner who doesn't drink

GIVE UP DRINK

Outsider Witness Practice

In the re-telling that you will offer within Outside Witness practice, it is important to remember to step back from some common ways that people may respond to stories of other people's lives.

You're encouraged to resist from offering advice, or other options to a story, from making judgements or from offering praise.

- What are the things that you were drawn to? What stood out for you? What captured your imagination?

- What does this suggest to you about this person's purposes, hopes, dreams, commitments?

- What is it about your own life/story did this evoke for you? Is there a story within your own life that this reminds you of?

- Where does this story take you? What difference does it make to your life which otherwise wouldn't be possible if you hadn't of heard this story?

Making your own documents/letters/songs

If you are going to try to create documents/letters/songs in your community here are some things to think about:

- Sometimes it's hard for people to talk in a big group. So we need to break up into smaller groups, sometimes family groups, sometimes it could be in groups of women and groups of men, groups of elders. Sometimes it's good for young people just to meet with their friends and one teacher or worker who they already know.
- It can be important to leave room for silence! Sometimes leaving space and silence can make it possible for people to respond.
- If we want to create documents, someone will need to take notes. We need to make sure we have asked permission to do this.
- It makes a real difference if we can 'rescue people's own words'. We don't use our words but instead write down what people say. This way, people feel they have been listened to and when we read back their words they think: 'that sounds like me, I said that'.
- We usually don't use people's names or identifying details in stories. We always check with the person if they are happy with how their story has been written. We always take care with confidentiality.
- The aim is for the community members to start to recognise that they do have ideas and knowledges. The people are the experts on their own lives (and not the worker or consultant).
- It's great if we can speak and write in ways that everyone will understand and that we don't use jargon.
- If we make a document out of other people's words, we make sure that people have a chance to hear the draft and to give feedback and make any changes.
- It can also be important to ensure that people have a chance whether to give their permission for the document to be shared. The people whose words are in the document are the owners of the document.

Further reading

There is a chapter in the book *Collective narrative practice: Responding to individuals, groups and communities who have experienced trauma*, by David Denborough on making documents.

You can also view an article called *Linking Stories and Initiatives: A narrative approach to working with the skills and knowledge of communities*, at www.dulwichcentre.com.au/linking-stories-and-initiatives.pdf

Some aims of Narrative Therapy

- To assist people to separate their identity from the problems they experience (externalisation and deconstruction).
- To assist people to articulate skills, knowledges, hopes, dreams, values, principles for living and move towards preferred experiences of self (re-authoring).
- To assist people to recognise and develop ways these skills, knowledges, values, etc., can address the problems they are experiencing (re-authoring and re-membering).
- To assist people to hold onto the preferred identity (documentation, re-membering and definitional ceremonies).
- To assist people to engage with others who support the preferred identity and direction for living (documentation, re-membering and definitional ceremonies).
- To assist people to examine the expectations/norms they are being measured by, and measuring themselves by, which may have been leading to a sense of failure. This examination aims to offer the opportunity to reconsider/refuse the measuring of oneself and others in this way (failure map).
- To assist people to notice and articulate the responses they made/are making to situations of trauma, creating a stronger sense of personal agency (responding to trauma).
- To assist people to recognise the distress they are experiencing is a testament to strongly-held values that have been transgressed (absent but implicit).

NOTE

See White, M. (2007). *Maps of narrative practice*. New York, NY: Norton.

Maps of Narrative Practice¹: Why might we use them?

To quote Michael White:

On occasion, in teaching contexts, I have been asked why it is necessary to have maps for therapeutic practice. My response: 'it is not at all necessary'. However ... we all refer to guiding ideas of some sort in the development of therapeutic conversations, although very often guiding ideas have become so taken for granted and accepted that they are rendered invisible and unavailable to critical reflection. I believe that this is a hazardous development, for it has the potential to restrict us to the unquestioned reproduction of what is familiar in terms of therapeutic practice, regardless of the consequences on the lives of the people who consult us.

1. **For guidance** on our journeys with people who consult us about the predicaments and problems of their lives.
2. **To assist us in finding our way** to destinations that could not have been specified ahead of the journey, via routes that could not have been predetermined.
3. **As a reference for accountability**: to render more transparent the therapeutic process that Michael White has developed.
4. **Therapeutic conversations are not ordered**, and I make no effort to determine my response to people's expressions ahead of these expressions.
5. **A map gives a structure** that can guide practice. Interestingly, it is rigorous practice and repetition of this non-linear structure that enables spontaneity – the expressions of life that seem most spontaneous to us are those that we have had the most practice in.

NOTE

1. White, M. (2007). *Maps of narrative practice* (pp.5-6). New York, NY: Norton.

Resources List

On-line

Dulwich Centre general site: www.dulwichcentre.com.au

Online courses: www.narrativetherapyonline.com

Free videos on last Friday of every month: www.dulwichcentre.com.au/category/friday-afternoons/

Online bookshop and registration for training events: www.narrativetherapylibrary.com

Searchable bibliography of narrative therapy writings: www.narrativetherapylibrary.com/bibliography

Receive regular news of projects, publications, events by subscribing to Dulwich Centre Emails news:
www.dulwichcentre.com.au/email-news/

Check out the Facebook narrative discussion, Tree of Life and Team of Life groups too!

Aboriginal narrative practice

Wingard, B., Johnson, C., & Drahm-Butler, T. (2015). *Aboriginal narrative practice: Honouring storylines of pride, strength and creativity*. Adelaide, Australia: Dulwich Centre Publications.

Wingard, B. (collected by) (2015). *Stories of hope for Aboriginal children, families and culture: Narrative responses to a national crisis*. Adelaide, Australia: Dulwich Centre Foundation.

Finding hidden stories of strength and skills: Using the Tree of Life with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children (DVD) Dulwich Centre Foundation ... features Carolynanha Johnson!

Yia Marra: Good stories that make spirits strong - from the people of Ntaria/Hermannsburg Ntaria community, Dulwich Centre Foundation & General Practice Network, NT.

Wingard, B., & Lester, J. (2001). *Telling our stories in ways that make us stronger*. Adelaide, Australia: Dulwich Centre Publications.

Dulwich Centre Publications (Eds.) (2020). *Yarning with a purpose: First Nations narrative practices*. Adelaide, Australia: Dulwich centre Publications.

Orientation to Narrative Ideas and Practices

Commonly asked questions about narrative approaches to therapy, community work & psychosocial support: a collective paper. Available to read at: www.dulwichcentre.com.au/articles

Freedman, J. & Combs, G. (1996). *Narrative therapy: The social construction of preferred realities*. New York: Norton.

International Journal of Narrative Therapy and Community Work. Published by Dulwich Centre Publications, 4 issues per year. On-line now at www.narrativetherapyonline.com

Michael White Workshop Notes 2005. Available to read at: www.dulwichcentre.com.au/articles

Morgan, A. (2000). *What is narrative therapy? An easy-to-read introduction*. Adelaide, Australia: Dulwich Centre Publications.

Payne, M. (2000). *Narrative therapy: An introduction for counsellors*. London, UK: Sage.

Russell, S. & Carey, M. (2004). *Narrative therapy: Responding to your questions*. Adelaide, Australia: Dulwich Centre Publications.

Thomas, L. (2002). Poststructuralism and Therapy – what's it all about? *International Journal of Narrative Therapy and Community Work*, 2, 85–88. Reprinted in S. Russell & M. Carey (2004), *Narrative therapy: Responding to your questions*. Adelaide, Australia: Dulwich Centre Publications.

White, M. (1995). The narrative perspective in therapy. In M. White, *Re-authoring lives, interviews and essays* (chapter 1). Adelaide, Australia: Dulwich Centre Publications.

White, M. (2007). *Maps of narrative practice*. New York, NY: Norton.

White, M. & Epston, D. (1990). *Narrative means to therapeutic ends*. New York, NY: Norton.

Externalising Conversations

Carey, M. & Russell, S. (2002). Externalising - commonly asked questions. *International Journal of Narrative Therapy and Community Work*, 2, 76–84. Reprinted in S. Russell & M. Carey (2004), *Narrative therapy: Responding to your questions*. Adelaide, Australia: Dulwich Centre Publications.

Cronin-Lampe, K. Tufuga, P. TeKira, S. & Herbert, A. (1998). Talking with Dak. *Dulwich Centre Journal*, 2&3, 34–38.

McMenamin, D. & Cronin-Lampe, K. (1998). Questions to ask self-blame, teasing, bullying and harassment. *Dulwich Centre Journal*, 2&3, 39–41.

White, M. (2001). Narrative Practice and the Unpacking of Identity Conclusions. *Gecko: A journal of deconstruction and narrative practice*, (1). Re-printed in M. White (2005), *Narrative practice and exotic lives: Resurrecting diversity in everyday life*. Adelaide, Australia: Dulwich Centre Publications.

Wingard, B. (2001). Introducing Sugar (Diabetes) (chapter 3); Externalizing conversations (chapter 5); Grief: remember, reflect, reveal (chapter 8). In B. Wingard & J. Lester, *Telling our stories in ways that make us stronger*. Adelaide, Australia: Dulwich Centre Publications.

Re-authoring Conversations

Carey, M. & Russell, S. (2003). Re-authoring: Some answers to commonly asked questions. *International Journal of Narrative Therapy and Community Work*, 3, 60–71. Reprinted in S. Russell & M. Carey (2004), *Narrative therapy: Responding to your questions*. Adelaide, Australia: Dulwich Centre Publications.

Hammoud-Beckett, S. (2007). Azima ila Hayati - An invitation in to my life: Narrative conversations about sexual identity. *International Journal of Narrative Therapy and Community Work*, 1, 29–39.

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Ungar, M. (2005). A thicker description of resilience. *International Journal of Narrative Therapy and Community Work*, 3&4, 89–96.

White, M. (2000). Re-engaging with history: the absent but implicit. In White, M., *Reflections on narrative practice: Essays and interviews* (chapter 3). Adelaide, Australia: Dulwich Centre Publications.

White, M. (2001). Folk psychology and narrative practice. *Dulwich Centre Journal*, 2. Reprinted in M. White (2005), *Narrative practice and exotic lives: Resurrecting diversity in everyday life* (chapter 3). Adelaide, Australia: Dulwich Centre Publications.

Re-membering Conversations

Hedtke, L. & Winslade, J. (2004). *Re-membering lives: Conversations with the dying and bereaved*. New York, NY: Baywood Publishers.

Russell, S. & Carey, M. (2002). Re-membering: Responding to commonly asked questions. *International Journal of Narrative Therapy and Community Work*, 3, 23–31. Reprinted in S. Russell & M. Carey (2004), *Narrative therapy: Responding to your questions*. Adelaide, Australia: Dulwich Centre Publications.

White, M. (1988). Saying hullo again: The incorporation of the lost relationship in the resolution of grief. *Dulwich Centre Newsletter*, 2, 17–55.

White, M. (1997). Re-membering (chapter 2), and Re-membering and professional lives (chapter 3), in *Narratives of therapists' lives*. Adelaide, Australia: Dulwich Centre Publications.

Yuen, A. (2007). Discovering children's responses to trauma: A response-based narrative practice. *International Journal of Narrative Therapy and Community Work*, 4, 3–18.

Therapeutic Documents

- Denborough, D. (2005). A framework for receiving and documenting testimonies of trauma. *International Journal of Narrative Therapy and Community Work*, 3&4, 34–42.
- Fox, H. (2003). Using therapeutic documents: A review. *International Journal of Narrative Therapy and Community Work*, 4, pp. 16–36.
- Newman, D (2008). Rescuing the said from the saying of it: Living documenting in narrative therapy. *International Journal of Narrative Therapy and Community Work*, 3, 24–34.
- White, M. (2005). Therapeutic Documents Revisited. In M. White, *Re-authoring lives: Interviews and essays* (chapter 8). Adelaide, Australia: Dulwich Centre Publications.

Definitional Ceremonies and Outsider-Witness Practices

- Carey, M. & Russell, S. (2003). Outsider-witness practices: Some answers to commonly asked questions. *International Journal of Narrative Therapy and Community Work*, 1, 3–16. Reprinted in S. Russell & M. Carey (2004), *Narrative therapy: Responding to your questions*. Adelaide, Australia: Dulwich Centre Publications.
- Hernandez, R. (2008). Reflections across time and space: Using voice recordings to facilitate 'long-distance' definitional ceremonies. *International Journal of Narrative Therapy and Community Work*, 3, 35–40.
- White, M. (2000). Reflecting-team work as definitional ceremony revisited. In M. White, *Reflections on narrative practice: Essays and interviews* (chapter 4). Adelaide, Australia: Dulwich Centre Publications.

Working with Issues of Violence

- Jenkins, A. 1990: *Invitations to responsibility: The therapeutic engagement of men who are violent and abusive*. Adelaide, Australia: Dulwich Centre Publications.
- Reynolds, V. (2014). Honouring Women's Resistance to Violence and Oppression. Presented at Hoopla, a Women's Health Carnival organised by Positive Women's Network in partnership with WAVAW and Options for Sexual Health: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YnzbsBBGKP8>
- White, M. (1995). Naming Abuse and Breaking From its Effects (interviewer: Christopher McLean). In M. White, *Re-Authoring lives: Interviews & essays* (chapter 4, pp. 82–111). Adelaide, Australia: Dulwich Centre Publications.

Team Discussions

- Reynolds, V. (2011). Resisting Burnout with Justice-Doing. *International Journal of Narrative Therapy and Community Work*, 4, 27–45.