

MAGGIE CAREY - 2015 ABSTRACTS for Narrative Workshops

1. Responding to Trauma and Difficulties in People Lives. What does Narrative Therapy have to offer?

This workshop will share some of the Narrative practices that have been found useful as ways of working with people's experiences of difficulty and trauma in their lives such as abuse or violence, intense loss, or being subjected to oppression or injustice. Trauma can have the effect of establishing a sense of vulnerability, hopelessness and a sense of being stuck in the past events and not able to 'do' life.

A Narrative approach offers many hopeful possibilities in these circumstances. It picks up on the ways in which people, even young children, have responded to what has been difficult or traumatic and this can give entry points to develop stories of personal agency rather than victimhood.

Narrative ways of working also have us looking at ways to bring forward story lines that serve to make sense of the on-going painful experience of trauma or of difficult experiences. The opportunity to understand this pain as being a reflection of the person valuing certain dearly held beliefs about life (that have been transgressed) will be looked at. In exploring the affective experiences that are felt in the body, we can be supported by findings from neuroscience about the ways in which our neurobiology is organised to respond to threat and danger. This can help people who have experienced trauma to be able to make sense of both their actions at the time and subsequent on-going effects of what happened that continue to be difficult and often debilitating.

An examination of memory systems and how we store difficult or traumatic memories supports us to think about how we can bring language and words and stories to what are initially only body memories of emotional pain and distress. The practices of creating a place for people to stand on 'solid ground' in order to have these conversations will also be explored.

2. Finding our way with the maps of narrative practice.

When consultants are introduced to the 'maps of narrative practice' there can sometimes be a sense of having to use them in a structured way that then takes away from developing a flow in the conversation. It can also make it difficult to develop the relationship with the person who is seeking consultation, as it feels like the maps get in the way. Over time this becomes less of an issue, but even experienced consultants can have the sensation of not knowing where they are in the conversation. In this workshop, there will be a chance to develop a concept of the overall shape of a narrative conversation that can support consultants and therapists to have a clearer sense of which territory they are in, and what might be possible questions to ask or lines of enquiry that would contribute to further story development of either the problem or of the preferred story. Being able to move between these different territories through using all of the maps is what can contribute to a sense of agency for the person consulting us and can contribute to invigorating conversations of discovery and delight.

In this workshop Maggie will share a theoretical frame for envisaging the overall narrative conversation and will then conduct a number of live interviews of participants as a basis for further exploration of the maps of practice.

3. Neuro-science and narrative: embodied stories

Every day it seems there are more findings from the arena of neuroscience. Findings about how the brain works and how we are 'wired' and what the science is telling us about our perceptions of our experience. Is there a place for therapeutic practice and consultation in the arena of this brave new world? Is there a place for long held understandings of meaning making, choice and agency in the science of neurons, synapses and the wonders of the biology of the brain?

In this workshop I will explore the ways in which the findings of neuroscience seem to have a direct correspondence with what we notice takes place in our conversations with people in consultation. A particular thread of these findings is the importance of embodied and affective experience in consultation. The findings from neuro-science support us to take our time in developing the detailed stories of self that are different to problem accounts, and in appreciating why it can be helpful to bring the affective experience into these stories. But it is not only at this micro level of brain activity that there is this interest in embodied stories. In some forums of philosophical exploration there is a question being asked regarding the seemingly absent consideration of the body in the discursive constructions of identity, and I would like to draw some links with these considerations and the emphasis on the importance of embodied stories in our work.

4. The art of loitering: how going slowly can get us a long way.

There are so many expectations upon consultants/therapists to facilitate the making of 'big changes' in the lives of those that consult them, and given the widespread reduction in social resources in many workplaces, to do so quickly. These expectations can have consultants pushing the persons who consult them to notice difference and to step into new stories of self, and this can have the person who is experiencing the consultation feel that they are not really 'getting it' or that they are failing therapy because it doesn't feel real to them. The practice skill of taking our time and loitering over the small details of lived experience and scaffolding a solid exploration and development of story will be the focus of this workshop. This will take the form of a rigorous re-visiting of the maps of narrative practice through the lens of noticing and appreciating details and how to take these up into rich story lines.

5. Surfing for resonance. The practice of listening.

Gilles Deleuze made an observation in regard to the practices of modern sport that has application in consultation and therapy. In traditional sport the athlete was the source of the effort required, running, putting the shot etc. However, "All the new sports – surfing, windsurfing, hang-gliding – take the form of entering into an existing wave ...The key thing is how to get taken up in the motion of a big wave, a column of rising air, to "get into something" instead of being the origin of an effort." (Deleuze, Gilles 1995: *Negotiations, 1972-1990*. Columbia University Press, page 121). This workshop will use this understanding as a starting point to develop skills in listening and 'going with' people's stories. Exploration will be made of what we are listening for and how we can hear people's expressions of what is meaningful and resonant to them.

6. The picture tells the story: The use of visual images as a support for Narrative Practice

In this workshop Maggie will focus on the use of visual imagery in story development. The use of images has long been held to support meaning making and the old adage 'one picture is worth a thousand words' rings true in our everyday experience. In this workshop there will be the opportunity to explore ways in which using visual imagery can be used in narrative conversations in therapy, group work or consultation in order to support the practices of story development. What happens in the mind's eye when we are invited to describe or use visual images or symbols or metaphors and how does this support concept development? How can we take into our practice learnings from Vygotsky about the importance of symbolic play and its contribution to the development of an inner conversation and a stream of consciousness? Over the two days of this workshop, exploration will be made of how visual material or a focus on images and metaphors can support all of the practices of the narrative approach and can contribute to rich and embodied experiences of stories.

7. Working with children and young people

When problems gain traction in young people's lives they often cast a bleak shadow over everything. When these problems have had a sustained presence they can often blind everyone involved in helping the young person, to what is already being done that is part of a solution to the problem. A narrative approach is interested in seeing problems as separate to the young person and in finding openings to stories of young people and their family's know-how and skill in responding to problems. This workshop will focus on how this 'multi-storied' way of looking at things can have us take a position of exploring and scaffolding new directions with the young person, rather than being the one who has to "fix" the problem.

The narrative approach is also based in an appreciation of how identity is formed within a social and relational context and ways of engaging audiences to the development of preferred stories will be examined. This appreciation can also support us to take account of the relationships of power in our conversations with young people and to notice the discursive influences that shape the meanings that are given to experiences.

This workshop will be a chance to consider some everyday dilemmas in attending to young people's well-being, hear examples of key narrative principles in action and practice specific skills to help navigate tricky dilemmas.

The Narrative approach offers many helpful pathways and 'maps' of practice in responding to for example:

...Children and young people who live with common labels such as Anxiety, ADHD or OCD;

...Breathing fresh air into conversations when things become stuck or weighed down by the enormity of the problem;

...When conversations and initiatives fall flat and we are confronted by the "I dunno", "What?" and "Whatever!" moments;

... The impact of trauma on young people.

And here is an updated bio:

Maggie Carey is one of the co-directors (along with Shona Russell and Rob Hall) of Narrative Practices Adelaide, the centre for narrative training, supervision and therapy that Michael White established before his death in 2008.

Maggie has been involved in the practice of narrative therapy since the early 90's and in the teaching of it for the past 18 years. She has taught narrative approaches in many local and international contexts including Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Mexico, Brazil, Chile, England, Canada, Israel and Palestine, US, India, Hong Kong, South Korea, South Africa and Zimbabwe. Maggie enjoys the opportunity to teach both the theoretical principles of the narrative approach and the detailed practices that come from these philosophical underpinnings. She is known for her ability to make the narrative practice and thinking accessible to workshop participants and is energetic in her desire to have practitioners develop their own rich accounts of themselves in their work.

Since 1994, Maggie has participated with Michael White and others in a number of community projects relating to a range of issues in people's lives. These issues have included responding to grief and loss within Aboriginal communities, responding to people living with mental health issues and to homelessness, to people living with a disability and to women and children who have been subjected to violence.

Her current therapeutic work covers a range of issues that are impacting on people and she has a lively supervision practice with practitioners across many continents.