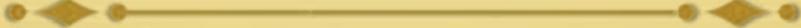


# **Narrative Mediation, Conflict Analysis & Conflict Resolution**

IXth Conference of the World Mediation Forum  
Quebec Province May 2017

Gerald Monk, Ph.D.  
San Diego State University



Life hangs on a narrative thread. This thread is a braid of stories that informs us about who we are and where we come from and where we might go. Anne Pellowski, 1977

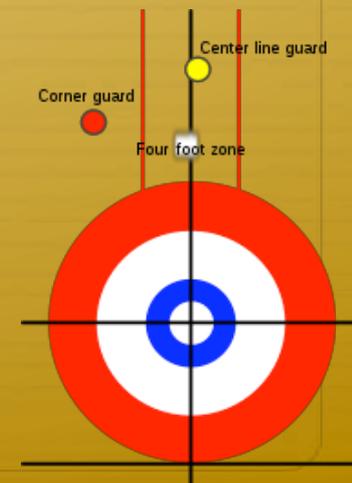
# Why Your Stories Matter

- ✦ People live their lives through stories
- ✦ **Stories drive our actions** more than inner drives or interests
- ✦ Narratives can **construct** our **past**, our **present** and **future**
- ✦ Out of stories we **produce lives, families, careers, relationships, communities, nations,**
- ✦ **People make decisions on the basis of stories rather than facts**

# Curling: Collaboration & mediation

A new game...

- ✦ New rules, new behaviors
- ✦ Primacy of the relational climate, cooperation and collaboration
- ✦ Removing the restraints to change
- ✦ Team working together in coordinated effort
- ✦ Closest to the goal (the circle)



# Different ...

**Expectations**



**Understandings**

**Meanings**

**Perceptions**

Cause Conflict

# History of Narrative Mediation

- ✦ Late 1980s and early 1990s introduced narrative methods in the New Zealand Family Court Mediation Services
- ✦ Narrative Practices focused on International Contexts, Civil Mediation, Tenant/Landlord, Family/Divorce mediation, Indigenous Issues
- ✦ Narrative mediation now taught in many conflict resolution programs in Canada and the USA, Denmark, Britain, Australia

# Development of Narrative Mediation

- ✦ Michael White, the primary developer of narrative ideas built on the work of Gregory Bateson, Edward Bruner, Michel Foucault
- ✦ The problem is the problem, the person is not the problem!

Sara Cobb

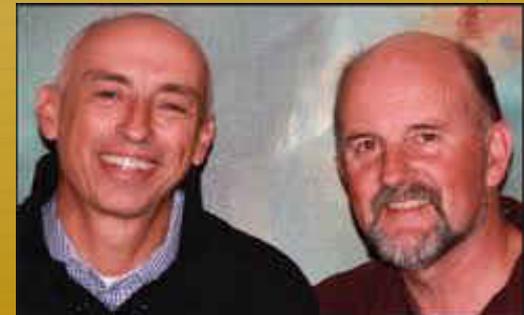
Michael White



David Epston



John Winslade &  
Gerald Monk



# Stories are made up of:

**Discourse or Cultural ideas**

**Characterizations:** victim, hero, villain, rescuer,

**Plot elements:** Beginning, sudden turn, complication, resolution

**Themes:** sexism, power, recognition, authenticity, betrayal & distrust

**Contexts:** Geographical Location & Ethnicity, Religious Practices, Socio-Economic Backgrounds

# Key concepts of Narrative Mediation

News of difference  
(Gregory Bateson)



Centrality of stories  
(Jerome Bruner & Edward Bruner)



Dominant culture acts as a form of  
surveillance (Michel Foucault)

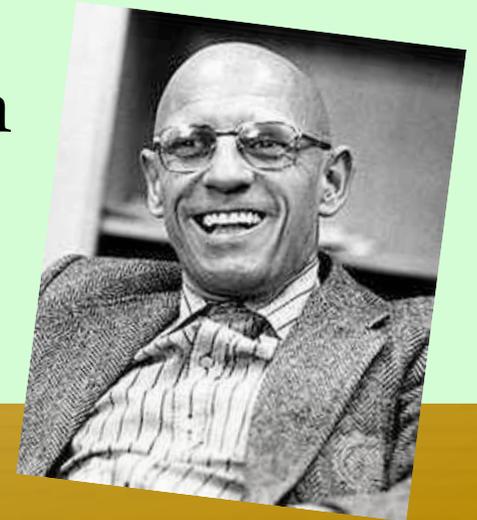


# Narratives are formed out of discourse

## Discursive statements:

- ✦ Men should be the head of the household
- ✦ Women are the primary caregivers of the children
- ✦ Women are more emotional than men

Michel Foucault



# Social stories matter...



- ✦ **Personal stories are shaped by wider cultural ideas**
- ✦ **Some stories dominate other stories**
- ✦ **Stories position people**
- ✦ **We speak/act from these positions**
- ✦ **Stories legitimate needs or entitlements**

# Problem story themes

**Disrespect**

**Hatred**

**Fear**

**Anger**

**Threat**

**Betrayal**

**Distrust**

# Characterizations

Narcissism Simplified



Don't tolerate another day of abuse

**Abuser**



**Victim**

**Narcissist**



**Betrayer**



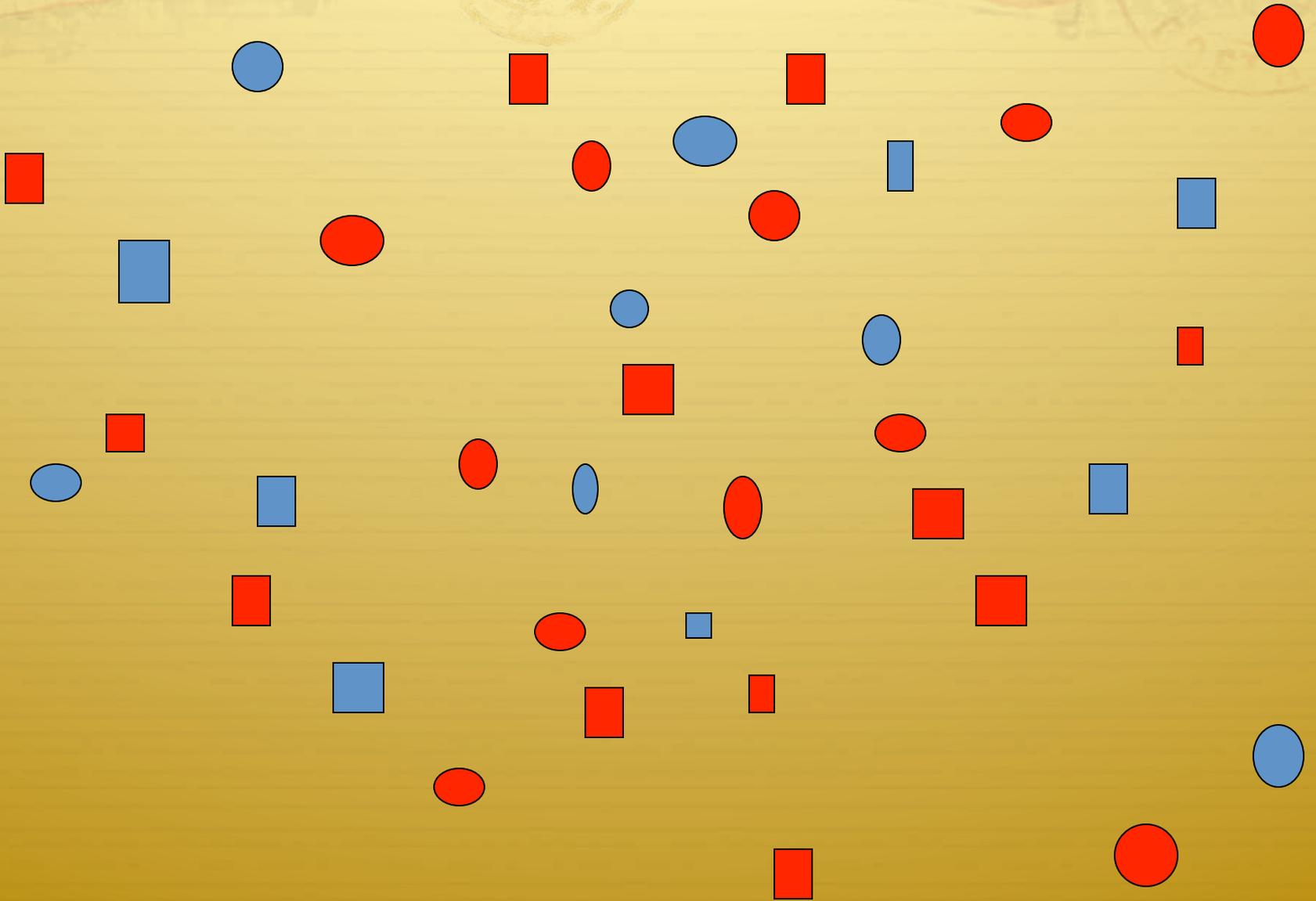
**Borderline**



**Villain**

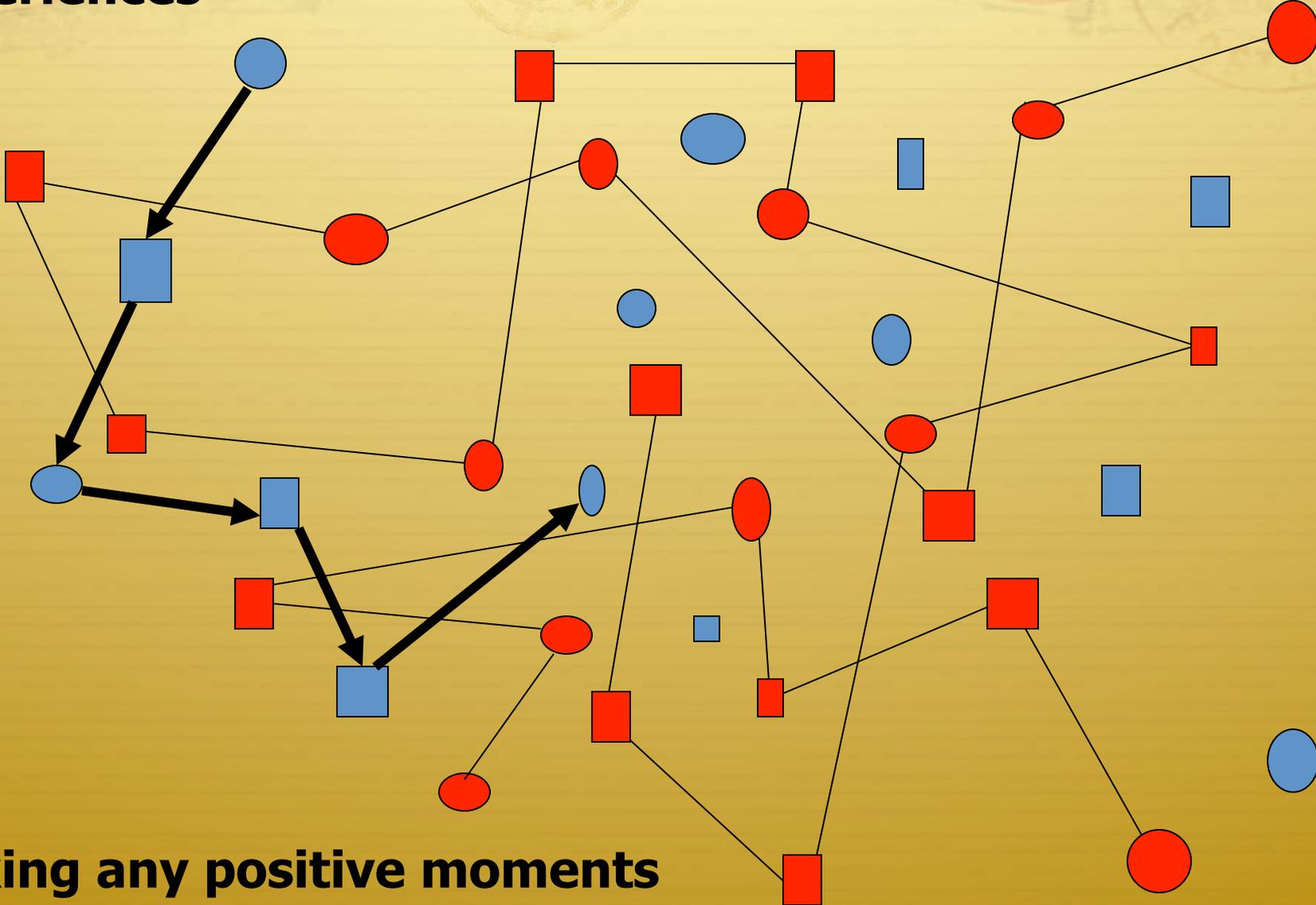


**These objects represent lived experiences in life**





# Narrative approaches link positive lived experiences



**Linking any positive moments begins alternative story construction**

# Characterizations are Externalized

The problem person



becomes the person with a problem:

✦ Abuser	→	abuse & harm
✦ Violator	→	violation, fear & hurt
✦ Betrayer	→	betrayal & mistrust
✦ Borderline	→	unpredictability and hurt
✦ Narcissist	→	disrespect and devaluing
✦ Victim	→	Limited choices & ability to act

# Activity



- ✦ In pairs tell a small conflict story you have experienced – **where you were a party to the conflict.**
- ✦ Remember your partner's story.
- ✦ We are going to come back to it.

# Activity

- ✦ In pairs tell a small conflict story you have experienced – where you were a part of the conflict.
- ✦ Now discuss the process of selection of what you included and what you left out when telling your story to your partner. Use these questions.
- ✦ *What was not appropriate to say?*
- ✦ *What did you emphasize?*
- ✦ *What did not fit because it would have contradicted the story you were telling?*
- ✦ *What would the other person have said?*
- ✦ *If you were to tell the story to someone else (family member or close friend) how would it be different?*



PERFECT

**How do THESE stories change when we hear new information.**



# “The Lady” v. The Generals

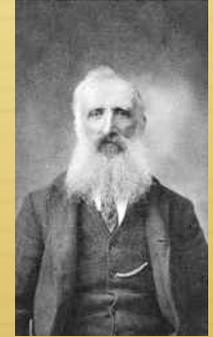




# Stories of the Colonizer & the Colonized



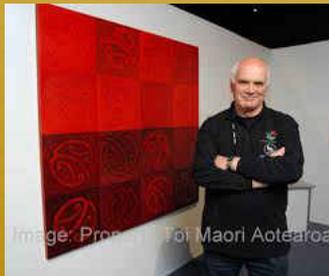
Maori



Pakeha

- ✦ The indigenous people
- ✦ The Tangata whenua
- ✦ The colonized

- ✦ The settlers
- ✦ The stealers and betrayers
- ✦ The colonizers



# Techniques in Narrative Mediation

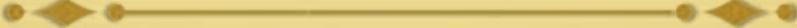
- ✦ Goal setting and establishing hopes
- ✦ Externalizing conversations
- ✦ Mapping the effects of problem situations
- ✦ Evaluating preferences
- ✦ Counter stories or preferred narratives

# Establishing hopes and goals



- ✦ Participants' goals act as the map to guide the process to keep it on track
- ✦ Exposes the favorable motivations and purposes
- ✦ Places the preferred cooperation story front and center
- ✦ People have an opportunity to show their "best selves" up front

# Examples of externalizing questions



- ✦ What might we call this thing that we're up against? Is it a long standing conflict? Or what? What would you call it?
- ✦ How long has it been around? How has it grown in importance?
- ✦ How does it persuade you to think about the other person?
- ✦ Does it follow you into all the domains of your life? Work, home, finances, friendships, self esteem?
- ✦ How much power does it have over you?
- ✦ Does it interfere with your best intentions? Your hopes for something else? Your preferences for how things could be different?
- ✦ What does that voice try to persuade you about?

# Activity: Re-phrasing Externalizing Questions



Replace these questions with externalizing questions:

How do you feel about what happened?

How did what happened get you to feel?

What is your issue with what she does?

When she does that what does it get you to do?

What are you angry about?

Under what circumstances does anger show up?

It sounds like you really feel strongly about that. Is that right?

These events have got you to feel really strongly about that. Is that right?

Am I right in assuming that you felt deeply disrespected by him?

Am I right in assuming that you experienced deep disrespect in your interactions with him?

# Mapping the effects



- ✦ Ask about the effects of the conflict (or IT)
- ✦ Asking about causes makes the conflict seem inevitable
- ✦ It is more productive of change to ask about effects

## Past, present & future

- ✦ *What damage has it done?*
- ✦ *What effect is it having right now?*
- ✦ *If it were to keep on happening where might things end up?*

**Feelings**

**Relationship with others**

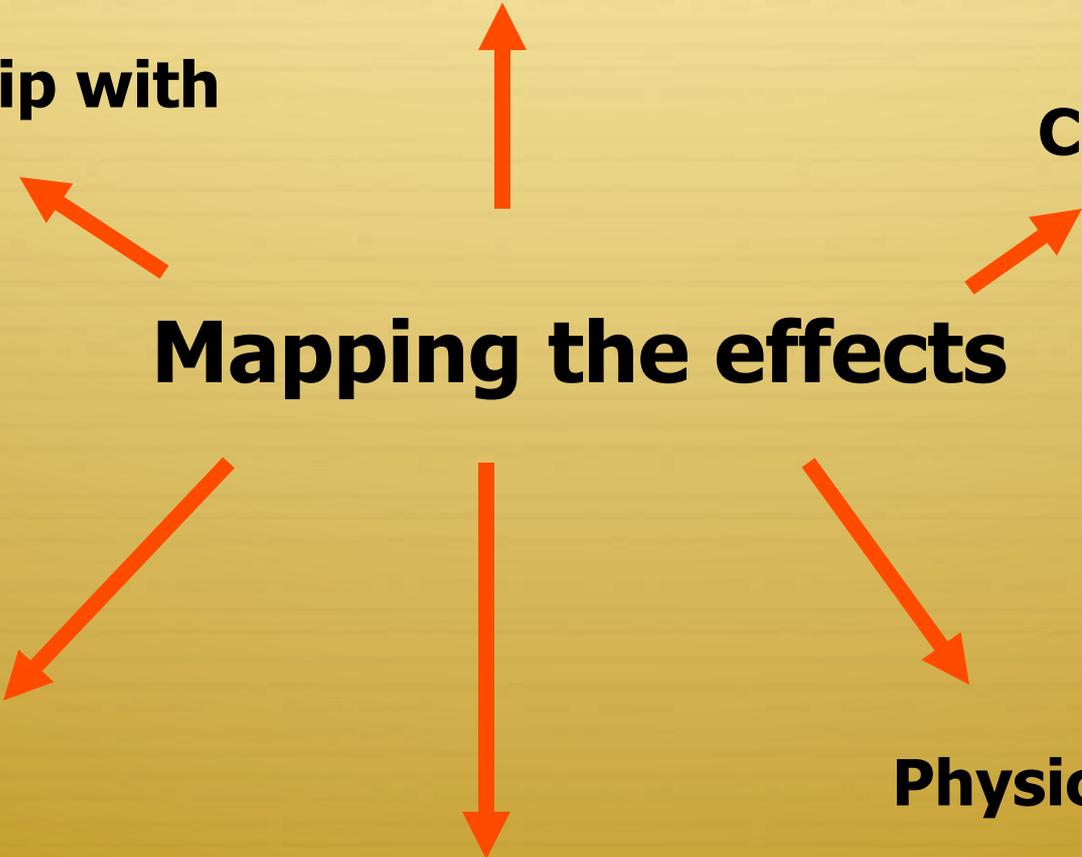
**Communication**

**Mapping the effects**

**Identity**

**Physical well-being**

**Economic circumstances**



# Mapping the Effects Questions

- ✦ On a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is “no concerns” and 10 is “overwhelming concerns,” how could you rate this present situation?  

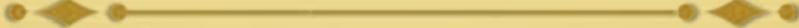
- ✦ How has this problem impacting on important areas of your life?
  - overall wellbeing
  - mental health
  - peace of mind
  - quality of life
  - important relationships such as family
  - business concerns
  - future plans
- ✦ What was the sequence of events that took place?
- ✦ When he/she did that, what did the conflict invite you to do in response?
- ✦ So it sounds like this whole cycle of events started to take over and just got you feeling madder and madder at each other.
- ✦ Who/what else has been affected by this problem to your knowledge?
- ✦ Could this troubling situation get worse? How much?

# Evaluating preferences

- ✦ Ask people if they wish to take a stand against the problem
- ✦ Invite them to explain the evaluation
- ✦ Ask how they have been endeavoring to express this evaluation
- ✦ Ask them what developing these expressions further would lead to



# Restorying Questions



- ✦ Can you tell me any times that you experienced, even for a brief period some relief from these difficulties?
- ✦ What did you do?
- ✦ How did you do that?
- ✦ What difference did it make?
- ✦ What does it say about you that you did that?

# SMALLING Questions

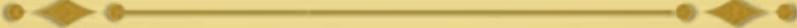
- ✦ How have you kept things from getting worse? How come it is not a 10 (from 1-10 when 10 is the worst) leaving you completely overwhelmed?
- ✦ Can you tell me about a recent time where the problem situation **was slightly less severe?**
- ✦ Have there been any times when this troubling situation has let up and allowed you to **cooperate a little more, even for brief periods of time?**
- ✦ What things are happening, despite the problem situation, that you would want to continue?
- ✦ **If you could, what would you rescue that has not been damaged by the troubling situation?**
- ✦ Think about a previous tough time that might get close to the level of your current distress where you managed to get through it? What and how did you do it?

# More Re-storying questions



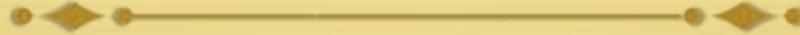
- ✦ Where did you learn those skills? Do they come naturally to you or have you studied them?
- ✦ Are there some principles that you based those actions on? What are they?
- ✦ From back then, what would suggest that you will be able to do to find a way out of the current difficulties?
- ✦ **What do you think it means that you are able to cooperate in this area?**
- ✦ What skills/abilities did you use to prevent this issue from being dragged into the conflict?
- ✦ **Are there some principles that might be drawn from this experience that can be used to address these other, more sticky, issues? What are they?**

# Individual meetings in Narrative Mediation



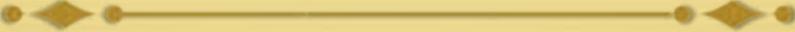
- ✦ Build good relationships
- ✦ Name hopes and wishes in wanting to resolve conflict
- ✦ Understand problem story and its costly effects
- ✦ Find areas of cooperation, understanding, mutual interest and respect in the history of the relationship between the parties

# Joint Meetings in Narrative Mediation



1. Find mutual hopes and preferences
2. Name and externalize conflicts
3. Identify the effects and costs of conflict on each of the parties
4. Bring forward areas of mutual cooperation and respect to strengthen relational space
5. Develop a plan and agreements that are built from a shared vision

# Future Possibility Questions



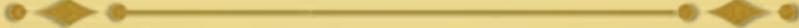
- ✦ What do you think it means that you are able to cooperate or develop understanding in this area?
- ✦ Does this kind of interaction make some kind of agreement and understanding more likely or not? Why?
- ✦ What are you each prepared to do/offer/agree to in order to defeat this problem/challenge?
- ✦ Are you able to reach enough agreement to undermine the power of this argument?

# Mobilizing an Audience



- ✦ Witnesses can thicken the alternative story
- ✦ An audience can “cheer people on.”
- ✦ Alternative stories take hold when performed in front of significant others such as ones children
- ✦ Significant others are inspired to revise their views based upon new action

# Questions to Mobilize an Audience



- ✦ What do you imagine Donald would appreciate most about the ideas you just mentioned?
- ✦ If your children were adults and knew of the sacrifices and courage you are showing today what do you think they would say?
- ✦ What difference would it make to Jose to know that you have achieved these things now?
- ✦ How does Jessica knowing these wonderful things about you change the way you understand yourself?

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