

The Listener and Storyteller Relationship as a Trauma-Informed Approach

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From “What’s wrong with you?” to “What happened to you?”

This question has allowed us to move from *people with many symptoms* to *people with many stories*.

Story is the trauma event
transformed
into meaning.



Why Are Our Stories So Important?

When violence leads to physical and mental injury, it also engenders a healing response. One aspect of this is the trauma story, whose function is not only to heal the survivor, but also to teach and guide the listener—and by extension, society—in healing and survival.

– *Richard F. Mollica M.D.,
Healing Invisible Wounds*

Why Are Our Stories Important?

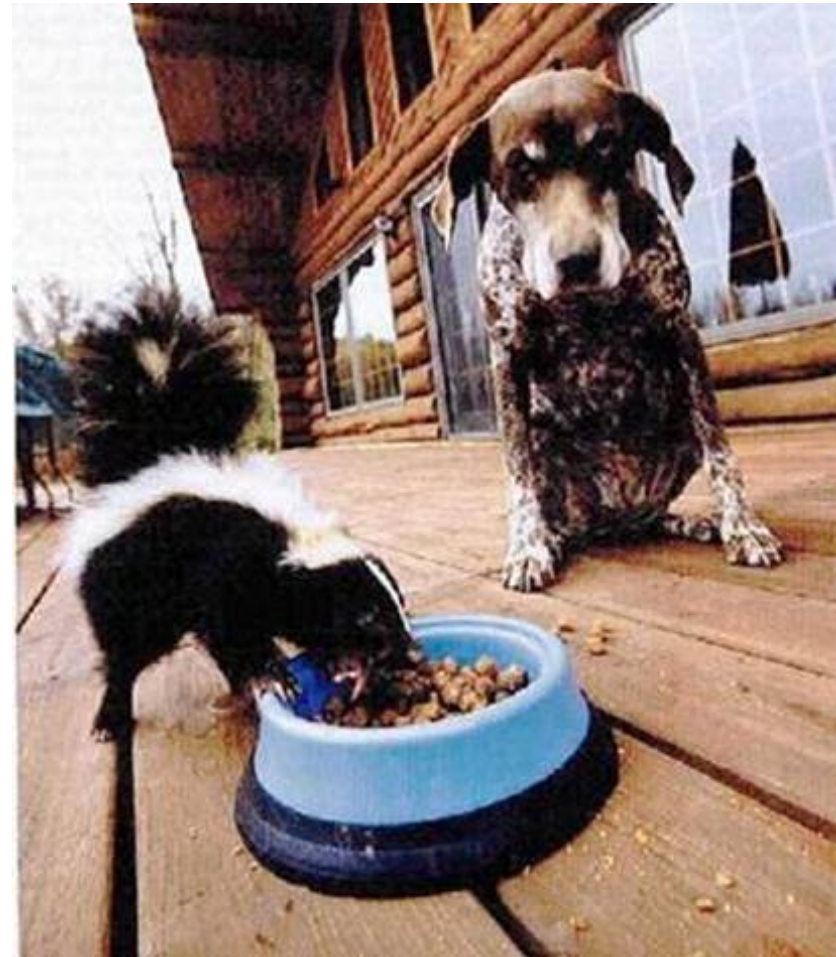
- Story is the event transformed into meaning
- Story creates connection with the listener/
audience
- Story organizes experience
- Stories create community culture, history, and
more.

Listener's role – to help the person tell the story that brings him or her into connection with self, and with others.



The Listener-Storyteller Relationship

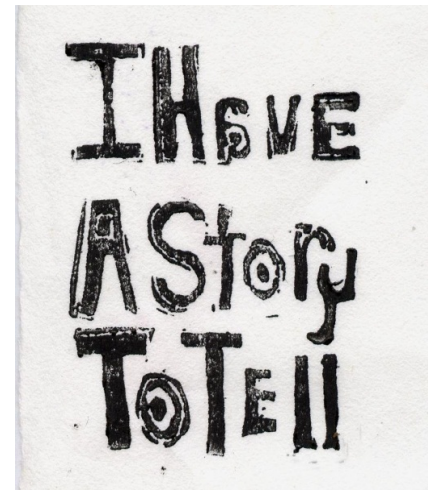
- Is not static
- Maintains equality and shared power
- Is what both people are doing



Listener – Storyteller Relationship

Three dimensions of the trauma story:

- Event – What happened?
- Effects – How has this played out in your life?
- Meaning – How do you make sense out of what has taken place?



Architecture of the Trauma Story

- Factual accounting of events
- Cultural Meaning of trauma
- Looking behind the curtain – Revelations from the trauma experience
- Listener – storyteller relationship: Deep revelations, powerful knowledge into the meaning of life – “The survivor as teacher.”



Architecture of the Trauma Story:

- Factual accounting of events
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- Looking behind the curtain

Deepening Our Conversations:

- How have you dealt with loss/grief/rage? How have others responded to you as a result of what you've gone through? What has that been like for you?
- Do you ever wonder why things happen the way they do? Do you have a personal philosophy of life based on past trauma? How has this philosophy helped you survive?
- What is the cultural meaning of the event for you? How does your culture evaluate you due to this traumatic experience?
- If you were able to reject cultural (family, neighborhood, job, village, community) evaluation of you how were you able to do this?
- Based on what you have learned as a result of where you have been, what would you most want to teach others about survival? About suffering?
- What do you know about survival that can help this community deal with disaster?
- What justice do you require?