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Organic Storytelling: A Key for Promoting Creativity, Community and Healing Activities in Education with Twice-Exceptional Students

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ORGANIC STORYTELLING
A Key for Promoting Creativity, Community and Healing Activities in Education with Twice-Exceptional Students

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ORGANIC STORYTELLING

Organic = “Having characteristics of an organism... Developing in the manner of a living plant or animal... Or with natural ingredients and without chemicals.”

A TERM COINED BY GAIL N. HERMAN
WHILE WORKING FOR THE EUGENE O'NEILL THEATRE CENTER IN 1977.

BASED ON THE WORK OF STORYTELLER MARA CAPY AND MENTOR LESLEY UNIVERSITY AND ANTIQUO COLLEGE.
“Organic Storytelling” provides freedom of symbolic expression.

Yet the storyteller can show the difference between feeling and action is thinking!

(Herman, 1980)
Carl Rogers on Fostering Constructive Creativity

- Psychological Safety
  1. Accept the individual as of unconditional worth.
  2. Provide a climate in which external evaluation is absent.
  3. Empathic understanding
  4. Provide “I” statements instead of a priori general judgments

- Psychological Freedom
  1. Freedom of symbolic expression
  2. Gives freedom to think and feel, which
  3. Promotes openness, play, spontaneous juggling of percepts, concepts, meanings—all part of creativity.
Psychological Safety & Freedom. To allay some possible doubts and fears in the reader, … to *cease evaluating* another is not to cease having reactions. It may, as a matter of fact, free one to react. “I don’t like your idea” (or painting) is not an evaluation, but a reaction. It is subtly but sharply different from a judgment which says, “What you are doing is bad (or good), and this quality is assigned to you from some external source.”

When a teacher, parent, therapist, or other facilitating person permits the individual a complete freedom of *symbolic expression*, creativity is fostered. This permissiveness gives the individual complete freedom to think, to feel, to be whatever is most inward within himself. It fosters the openness, and the playful and spontaneous juggling of percepts, concepts, and meanings which is part of creativity. … Behavior may …be limited by society, and this is as it should be. But symbolic expression need not be limited. Thus to destroy the hated object (whether one’s mother or a rococo building) by destroying a *symbol* of it, is freeing. To attack it in reality may create [undesirable consequences], guilt and narrow the psychological freedom which is experienced.

“Organic Storytelling” provides freedom of symbolic expression. Yet the storyteller can show the difference between feeling and action is thinking!
## The Organic Process of Interventions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Use a Problem</th>
<th>Use the Journey in “Magic Cooking Pot”</th>
<th>Keep the original plot. Make a List Chunk-Outline</th>
<th>During the problem decision making or during the journey, Solicit students’ images.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In “How Taiwan Came to Be”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ask a question. What do you think he/she/they did? Saw? Heard?</td>
<td>Students think in pictures or sounds.</td>
<td>Call on one. A student says, “Storyteller I was there!” Teller says, “What do you see?”</td>
<td>When student shares the image, the group validates it. “For sure you were there.” Or, “You’re right!”</td>
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ORGANIC INTERVENTIONS

Who was there?
????
Close your eyes? Or, Think.

What do you think he/she saw (or did)?

Listen to one at a time. Elaborate on it, then Make it not work Say, "For sure you were there."
Creative work can be visual, musical, and kinesthetic as well as linguistic. Sometimes I ask all, “Show us how he pulled the rope?” Or one, “Can you show us how the grasshopper hopped?” In this way, I can help the more active students to use (and learn) mimetic actions.
The “Edginess” of Creativity

Creative students

♦ Sometimes enjoy being just on the edge.
♦ Older student catch on that whatever they say you have to use.
♦ Gail has a story about how to validate while showing that the difference between feeling and action is THINKING!
Gail N. Herman

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www.wvstorytellers.org/id21.html
www.alleganyartscouncil.org/artistregistry
www.gailherman.net

Research and rationale plus over 50 storytelling lessons for grades pre-k to 8 are described using the National Standards and organized by grade level. Many lessons include original stories; others refer to stories from the literature. Objectives, process, and assessments are shared, as well. A review of the current views on the benefits of storytelling and a theoretical rationale are also addressed.

**For High School teachers:**

Simmons, A. (2006). *The story factor: Inspiration, influence, and persuasion through the art of storytelling* (Revised ed.). New York: Basic Books. This text is written for more than the high school teacher; Simmons speaks to future and present business leaders as well as educators. Sprinkled throughout the text are short teaching stories from around the world that motivate, persuade, and inspire us to do more with what we have and show us the pathways! This book is 25% rationale, 25% folk stories and stories about business and life, 25% teaching about life, 25% resources.

Or Yashinsky, D. (2004). *Suddenly they heard footsteps: Storytelling for the twenty-first century*. Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi. This well written text about the art of storytelling is sprinkled with fabulous metaphors, analogies, and figurative language. Yashinsky is truly a wordsmith as well as a teacher and teller of classical tales. His storytelling often puts new life into these tales as he entertains us with his personal accounts of his storytelling adventures and wisdom. Seven longer stories are included.
Stories and Resources: Kindness, Creativity, & Concern


