

Embodied Restorying Process

David Boje and Grace Ann Rosile
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Steps of the Embodied Restorying Process:

1. Characterize: “Describe you at your “best,” or your family at their best, either in words or by arranging a scene in the sand tray. What would a favorite grandparent, parent, teacher, family member, or best friend, say about you? This is you or your family on your best days or the you that these favorite people know you have the potential to become. In contrast, there are the old ‘received narratives’ which have been imposed on you and your family by others. These received narratives constitute a received self-identity. For example, society, films, families, and institutions such as the military or professional training all tell us who we should be and how we should behave.”
2. Externalize: “Describe your ‘old story,’ your description of you/your family in the past. Feel free to make any problems or struggles into another character in your story (use an object in the sand tray to describe this character/problem).” (Note: Sometimes this externalize step features very little talking at first, as participants choose characters, arrange scenes, and then later describe. Also, some people prefer to talk about their old story before they describe their “best” self.
3. Sympathize: “How has the problem (the old story) benefitted you or how is it understandable?”
4. Revise: “Identify negative consequences of the problem.” This helps reaffirm the commitment to change them.
5. Strategize: “Find the ‘little wow moments’ of exception to the usual ‘same old story.’” For example, “How did you overcome the problem this time?”
6. Restory: “Re-write history and write a new future life/family story. This time, highlight all the ‘little wow moments’ from family members and make them the “new normal” (instead of the exception) in the future story.”
7. Publicize: “Identify a support network and write letters to potential supporters to request participation in the new story of the future. It does not matter if the letter recipients respond or not. Consider family and friends who can support and ‘call you on it’ if the old story creeps back in.”