**HELP for your 9/14/20 HOMEWORK for True Storytelling Intercultural Communications Workshop**

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Re-story-ing for Change using STORYBOARDS and Re-story-ing

What is a STORYBOARD?

A storyboard is one or a series of visual images, usually on one sheet of paper, showing a sequential and logical plot of a story. Written notes may be underneath the images.

Why do we use a STORYBOARD?

The storyboard makes a story more visual and concrete, making it easier to work with the material

elements of the story. This more tangible depiction of the story helps us in changing the future story.

Storyboards are also helpful in developing the STAGING phase of True Storytelling change programs.

Styles of STORYBOARD:

The storyboard may be stick figures, or may be clip art or actual photos, as the designer prefers.

What is included in the STORYBOARD when it is used for RE-STORY-ING and social change?

The STORYBOARD should include the characters in the story. Be sure to include yourself.

It should include the plot (what happens), staging (surroundings), and time (chronological).

The Re-story-ing STORYBOARD should include “the problem” as a separate character in the story.

Example: When the problem is the organization’s resistance to improvements, that problem is not me.

That problem is also not you, nor is it the bad boss. Instead, it may be the “Status Quo Monster.”

How does the STORYBOARD help with Re-story-ing?

I, the artist drawing the storyboard, can move, change, or even erase a character or object in the story.

This opens possibilities for more creative thinking and reinforces your sense of choosing your story.

EXAMPLE:

6pm

E D C B @@@ A # Butcher

5 people of color lined up at the butcher counter at a grocery store in LA. Person A is being served.

I am person B. “@@@” is the White Privilege Dragon. “#” is the counter.

6:05pm

E D C B @@@ F # Butcher

One white female (F) walks up to the counter and the butcher serves her.

6:10pm

G E D C @@@ B # Butcher

Butcher serves me (person B) and says “Sorry about that, thanks for waiting.”

**The Externalized Problem**: In this story, as in most like it, there is not the proverbial “one bad apple” responsible for the apparent bias in monitoring and enforcing line etiquette at store check-outs. Oscar says this type of episode is common, and this type of unfairness has happened to him many times. By externalizing the problem, we assume none of the people is the problem, no person is the “bad guy.” Instead, we will invent a character to be responsible for the constellation of factors that contributed to this situation. We will call this character the “**Pecking Order Check-out Line Dragon**.”

**Pros and Cons of the Problem Situation**:

Pros: Most people do not challenge someone who cuts into a line, thus keeping things usually calm/quiet.

Sometimes people have a “good” reason for cutting into a line (medical need, child waiting, etc.).

It is better to have people sort out their own petty conflicts rather than an “authority” intervening.

Cons: Although they may not challenge line-cutters, others may resent the behavior and blame the store.

Those pushed back in line may feel disrespected.

Individuals of color may assume they are being disrespected due to racial bias.

Unchallenged white privilege may serve to keep whites less aware of potential unfairness.

**Little Wow Moment #1:**

Oscar remembers another time in line with his nephew at a Home Depot. The clerk began checking out some white customers before Oscar. Oscar speaks up and points out that he should have been next in line.

The clerk at the register continues ringing up the white person’s order despite Oscar’s comment.

A second check-out clerk sees Oscar questioning the order of people in line, and says that he saw what happened, and that he saw Oscar in line ahead of the other customers. This second clerk steps in and takes over the cash register, and rings up Oscar next, ahead of the other customers.

**Little Wow Moment #2:**

A white person with a big cart full of items is in front of Oscar in line at a store. Oscar has one item in his hands. The white person notices Oscar, and says “It looks like you only have the one item. I’m not in a hurry, why don’t you go ahead of me?” And Oscar says “Well, if you are sure, I am running late. That is so kind of you, thank you!” and the other person responds “No problem!” After checking out Oscar turns and says “Thanks again!”

**Little Wow Moment #3:**

Oscar is again in line at the butcher counter in the same neighborhood grocery store. Oscar is the first of three persons in line at the counter, each standing on a marked strip indicating the 6-foot social distancing position. As the customer currently being served leaves the counter, a white male approaches the gap between Oscar and the counter. Before Oscar can say anything, those behind him call out “Sir, the line is here. This man (pointing to Oscar) is next.” The man looks embarrassed, says “Oh, sorry, I did not notice the line” and then moves to the back of the line.

**RE-STORY-ING:** To review, we have first created the storyboard with the problem as an externalized character. Then we listed both the pros as well as the cons of the present situation. Then we identified the Little Wow Moments when we were successful against the problem dragon. Now we look at those Little Wow Moments and look deeper for any patterns we see there, any structural and systemic issues that can contribute to the problem continuing or to its reduction or elimination. In other words, we are taking the stories of our past successes regarding this problem and instead of these stories being the rare “unique” outcomes, we are going to take steps to make these lost or ignored stories into our new stories of the “new normal.” We will then devise strategies to support the success stories, where such success becomes the rule rather than the exception.

In the three(3) examples of Little Wow Moments (LWM’s) above, we can see a few patterns. One pattern in Moment 1 is the passivity and complicity of most people in most lines. However, Moment #3 shows us that when one person speaks up, others are likely to follow to support the fair and ethical behavior of turn-taking in line. Both Moment #2 and Moment #3 show us the impact of awareness. In #2, a person noticed Oscar’s situation and acted generously. In #3, all the people in the line with Oscar noticed what happened, and in addition, they spoke up. However, if there had been no awareness, there would have been no speaking up. So awareness is a key.

Truth, True Storytelling Principle #1, means our stories are based on our own personal experiences. Then together, we identify the common values in “acts of community.” Are we willing to be brave enough to stand up for our truth personally, and also to commit to developing a shared truth in community? In Oscar’s example, he reports he has had many experiences relating to line-cutting. Without blaming particular persons, we want to look at the systemic and structural factors that lead so many people to follow similar patterns of behavior.

Making Room, True Storytelling Principle #2, means we make a safe space where we are open to many voices and many stories. Externalizing the problem can help us to hear other stories without blaming either the victim or the demonized “other.” We can all be good people fighting the problem Dragon.

Plot is True Storytelling Principle #3, and includes the sequence of events enacted by our cast of characters. The Plot helps us understand how we got to where we are with the present problem. We want to include many voices (from Principle #2 above) as we develop understanding of the many different plots going on at once all around us in the Tamara-land of simultaneous stories.

Timing, True Storytelling Principle #4, is important to this process, as we discussed in our last session. It would not be as helpful to object to the line-cutting if the store clerk was already fulfilling the order. Quick intervention, before the transaction was underway, would likely be most effective in this case., and in future similar situations.

Helping (new) Stories Along, True Storytelling Principle #5, asks us to help our new story of success in overcoming the problem (the Line Dragon in the above example). Only one Little Wow Moment can be sufficient for re-story-ing. However, by generating 2 or 3 such moments, we help along the new story on its way to becoming the new dominant story. The accumulated Moments help us to identify patterns that lead to success in defeating the problem Dragon. When we “strategize,” we identifying the patterns in those Little Wow Moments helps us to craft a strategy to overcome the problem Dragon in our future stories.

Staging, True Storytelling Principle #6, includes both human support networks of people we can enlist to support the new story. Staging elements might cause us to consider whether the store had clearly-marked places for customers to form lines, rather than just milling about. Some stories use the “material object” of numbers drawn from a machine to guide behaviors.

Reflecting, True Storytelling Principle #7, asks us to reflect on the effectiveness of our re-story-ing for change. Reflecting also includes the aspect of self-care. In Oscar’s story, he may conclude that a more active response would be appropriate, and had been very effective, in other similar situations. However, more personal reasons of self-care might suggest that his choice not to speak to the line-cutting person at the butcher’s counter might, on reflection, still be determined by Oscar to be the best response in that situation for him personally at that time.