

INSPIRATION FROM NARRATIVE THERAPY

So, what are some of the ideas and practices that have been discussed in the narrative therapy workshops Annie talks about? I will list a few of them here:

What ideas come to the front?

- That it is worth the effort to allow people to express themselves about sparkling experiences or steps taken.

- Sparkling experiences or steps taken are experiences or initiatives which are linked to
 - a quality
 - something he or she enjoys doing
 - skills
 - knowledges
 - hopes
 - something he or she cherishes,
 - a personal ethic or conviction,
 - a view on how things should be,
 - a perspective on what is important in life,
 - or any other topic that connects with something the person cares about in life
 - ...

- In this context, Maggie Carey talks about ‘a sense of about-ness’. She refers to an experience of identity, a sense of what one’s life is about. When you create space for people to give expression to this sense of aboutness, through stories connected to preferred identity conclusions, such an experience of ‘about-ness’ can become highly awakened and full. This can be experienced by all who are part of the conversation.

- When you get a more rounded or full experience of what you and your life are about,
 - negative identity conclusions can lose some of their influence,
 - ideas about possible steps you could take that might fit in with this (as well as the desire to take those steps) become more accessible.

- As conversation partners, we can be active and deliberate in facilitating this kind of storytelling. Michael White talked about facilitating the development of ‘rich’ or ‘thick’ storylines.

What curiosities did Annie engage with to allow her conversation partners to develop rich/thick storylines?

- First of all, a curiosity for the very **concrete** of what sparkles: an open curiosity.

- What kind of **step** is that? What is this about? What would be a good name for what you have done here?
- Could you tell me **another story** about ... [*the topic that has to be picked up*], maybe from earlier?
- What do you suspect that X [*a person or figure or animal*] might **appreciate**/value about you?
- What does Y [*something the person likes doing*] **add** to your life? What are some of the things that Y gives you?
 - What you think that this might add to the life of ...?
- What should a person **be able to** in order to be able to ... [*something the person likes doing or is good at*]?
 - Have you always been able to do that, or have you learned this over time?
 - Does this also help you in other situations? Does this shine through in other situations than ...?
- How did you first get a taste of ... [*something the person values or likes*]? **Who** do you think might have played a role in this, in one way or the other? I.e. as an inspiration, or by encouraging you? Or because he/she appreciated you when you ...? **When** did this come into your life?

Annie has invited one of her conversation partners, Carla, to tell her about her 'inferiority complex'. This isn't exactly a sparkling theme. How did she manage this? I believe she was inspired by Michael White's ideas on externalizing conversations.

- She did not allow Carla to coalesce with 'inferiority complex'. She created a differentiation between Carla and 'inferiority complex', and she maintained this differentiation as the conversation progressed.
- This way, you can map out the **influence a problem has on the life** of people (i.e. on their thinking, their relationships, their job, the image they have of themselves, etc.). In this way, you can even map out the tactics and the agenda of a problem. This 'externalizing' way of mapping out a problem, protects the identity of people against any unnecessary feeling of failure.
- She expressed this **difference between the person and the problem** in her **language**. Instead of locating the problem within Carla in the way she speaks and asks questions, she asked her for instance
 - what the 'inferiority complex' looks like, and
 - what the 'inferiority complex' wants from her and with her.

- This makes it easier for Carla take a **stance** against this. To agree with, or not quite, with what the “inferiority complex’ is doing or is planning. She links this with unpleasant experiences she had with ‘girlfriends’. Friends who were not really friends.
- Such a stance: i.e. a not-agreeing-with what a problem is doing can be linked with something that is **valuable** to the person. As it turns out, Carla does have some nice experiences with friendship, and now she’s back aboard the sparkle-train!
- In a conversation like this, what occurs is a form of **‘double listening’**: listening to the problem story, as well as listening to the preferred story. This leads to people **feeling** that they have been **doubly listened** to.

Lastly, something important: ***Annie has deployed these ideas and options in her own distinct way, based on her own ethical preferences in her language and in relation to the unique people she has met.***

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