STORYTELLING IN A LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

" Stories are how we think. They are how we make meaning of life. call them schemas, scripts, cognitive maps, mental models, metaphors, or narratives. Stories are how we explain how things work, how we make decisions, how we persuade others, how we understand our place in the world, create our identities, and define & teach social values".

Dr Pamela Rutledge, Director, Media Psychology Research Center

MODELLING PROJECT

STORYTELLING IN A LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Contents

Tess Cope, Master NLP Practitioner Project

Introduction

Why have I chosen storytelling in a learning environment as my subject for this modelling project? I guess it's because I wanted to choose a topic that I'm really interested in, and this is one that I'm becoming more passionate about – it's an area that I also know will benefit me significantly – both in my professional life and in my personal life.

I am an organisational consultant, trainer and executive coach and work with organisations, teams and individuals on their transformation journey around culture & leadership. I believe storytelling will be a fabulous asset and allow me to 'reach' people in different ways within my work.

My Models of Excellence – Some background

Sue Knight, NLP Trainer & author

I completed my Master NLP Practitioner intensive programme with Sue, and have had the pleasure of being on the receiving end of Sue's storytelling throughout the programme. I really appreciated, and noticed how Sue used everyday situations (e.g. A story about her son's style of communicating from the ship whilst being on military duty), as examples to demonstrate some key points for our learning that day. Our modelling conversation focused in on the day's session, and also referenced the story she shared about her son, mentioned above.

Jan Elfline, Executive Coach & Trainer

As with Sue Knight, I have been a delegate within one of Jan's workshops – and observed her over the course of our first module (4 days) of a coach training programme.

I found her to be very easy to listen to – she stood out for me as an exemplar in her ability to translate some complex propositions into such straightforward and simplistic frameworks, and used herself within a variety of stories as an example to make it OK not to get it perfect first time around – indeed, she made it OK not to be perfect full stop!

Tracey Gray, Performance Director – a great friend & ex Colleague

I have known Tracey for circa 12 years – initially as a colleague, as my line manager, and more recently as a great friend and as a client. I have observed her on numerous occasions and as she has matured, I have noticed that she has become more relaxed and accessible as a public speaker. One of her greatest strengths, in my opinion, is her accessibility and ability to reach a wide variety of people of all 'levels', both personally and in an organisational/commercial setting. For the purpose of our modelling conversation, I asked her to focus on a specific 'piece' she did at a recent company meeting.

Tom Hulme, Design Director, IDEO

Tom's area of expertise is around entrepreneurship and innovation - I have observed him on three occasions whilst I had commissioned him to get involved in a number of leadership development workshops – each event was a bespoke situation for groups which varied in size between 14 and 50 participants.

Tom's style is fast, exciting and his content is delivered through stacks of examples and stories about other organisations and how they have instilled innovation and entrepreneurship to drive growth. Feedback from clients on Tom has been exceptional.

Narendra Laljani, Head of Education & Lecturer of Strategy, Ashridge Business School

I have known Narendra for circa 5 years – he heads up education at Ashridge Business School, and as well as delivering on their MBA programme, Narendra also gets involved in some private consultancy work. It is in this context that we have worked together, and I have commissioned him to get involved with various leadership development programmes, with several of my clients.

Feedback from clients suggests that he makes strategy (a topic that could be seen as a very dry and 'hard going), interesting, accessible and fun. Narendra talks about strategy through stories of what other organisations have done (or are doing) – he translates the theory of strategy into very relevant, accessible examples – and typically chooses examples of well known brands that people can identify with.

EXEMPLAR 1	EXEMPLAR 2	EXEMPLAR 3	EXEMPLAR 4	EXEMPLAR 5
Sue Knight, NLP Trainer & Author	Jan Elfline Executive Coach & Trainer	Tracey Gray, Performance Director, emap (& ex colleague)	Tom Hulme Design Director, IDEO	Narendra Laljani Strategy Lecturer & Head of Education, Ashridge Business School
Observation & Interview	Observation & Interview	Interview (previous observations)	Observation & Interview	Interview (previous observations)
NLP EXPERTS (TRAINERS)		MASTER NLP PRACTITIONER – role is equivalent to HR Director –includes responsibility for L&D	'EDUCATORS' – COMMERCIAL ENVIRONMENT	
May 2011	October 2011	June 2011	October 2011	October 2011

The structure of the model

	Jan	Sue	Tracey	Tom	Narendra
Purpose	I call what I do craftsmanship (which. For me means: taking the time to look through and articulate what is progressing – articulate the less complex and the more complex & craft exercises for the learning to take place) To make it safe To reassure that there is a plan To facilitate whatever learning is going to take place To ask provocative questions My job is to 'set it up' and 'let it go' Allow people/create space for people to answer things for themselves To do the best I can do, in the moment – sometimes the results come years later			My purpose is to create an impact (I know I've achieved this via my 'gut feel'/intuition) It's about sowing seeds for different conversations to take place - my measure is that new/different conversations are happening It's about Instilling a behavioural change - primarily at Market level (and organisational & individual level) - or there is potential to change - if no change happens, I'll stop working with the client I want people to be successful	To orchestrate discovery To let people discover things for themselves – they will hold their own discoveries more dear The kind of audience I work with (typically middle or senior managers) already know a lot -they have a lot of tacit knowledge– my job is to help them extract it
Beliefs that underpin my success	I'm not that important in the learning process – I have my job to do – and this may be pivotal in the 'classroom' The delegates have the pipe-line to wisdom Learning is a constant process Homosapiens want to learn the meaning of things – this will happen no matter what... We will learn & grow no matter what – even if it looks like we are stagnating – life's desire to learn will take over Trust the process Whatever is perculating in life, is perculating.... We can learn so much more from imperfect models – these are also more accessible Learning is not a one	I trust myself to handle the process Learning is a complex process – it's not a literal process – its 'multi-dimensional' Creating that slight non-plussed reaction is a good thing – and I enjoy creating that curiosity	'Everyone has the right to be heard, and for their perspective to be voiced' What's important – is that I stay true to me and am authentic (that's where my power is) What's important, is what's real My aim is not to get my story across as "the truth" as I recognise that we all hold different beliefs and needs I believe that somewhere in the middle is where we can often meet and move forward.	Enthusiasm is essential Being adaptable & relevant is important - these are closely linked Providing rich content (examples/stories that will inspire & stimulate) is important It's risky to be too prescribed - this will inhibit my ability to respond and adapt to the group Letting the audience drive the conversation increases engagement I can dive into what I need to, in the moment Quality is more important than quantity (I will have more examples prepared, than I actually use) Who I work with is important (I will only work with organisations I like/admire e.g. I won't work with tobacco or booze companies)	People generally hold their own ideas/discoveries more dearly I firmly believe in the power of storytelling (it wasn't obvious to me initially – I saw strong patterns in the feedback I received – and the stories were often mentioned as valuable) Storytelling makes the learning more memorable We use stories to develop our children – why should adults be any different? The use of humour puts people into a more 'comfortable' state of mind When I'm in the story, people will find me more 'available'

Tess Cope, Master NLP Practitioner Project

	dimensional process – it happens on various levels, and in various timescales			Because I'm empathic, I can pick up what's working for people & flex accordingly Engagement will increase when I allow the audience to probe into what interests them - I don't disclose everything up-front	
Preparation – before the 'story-telling event'	I like thorough preparation, but I don't write down my stories – these are held in my memory I am not consciously thinking about the stories in my preparation Preparation is an on-going process – the content & format is constantly evolving I don't prepare specific stories for learning events – I draw upon these to illustrate a point or in response to a question	I get connected with myself – what's going on for me? Both good & bad (through internal dialogue) I consider how I can work with this? I get clear on the learning outcomes for each person in advance – I 'hold' an outcome for the group as a whole, and for individuals I step back and look at the structure of what I'm providing – and how it connects with the learning outcomes (above) When I'm with another trainer (e.g. with Gene) – we get clear on what's going on for us, and then utilise this to provide learning for the group	I think about what 'they' want/need to hear I think about what is true for me – what's important from my perspective? I bring these together in some way I ensure I have a real sense of clarity & purpose I particularly pay attention to the start, middle (body) and the end of my story Timing: there's a time pressure that 'makes me' get on and do stuff (I might create the deadline myself as I work well under pressure) I capture all of my thoughts – pretty randomly and potentially in different formats e.g. Mind maps, lists, etc I start putting the presentation together as the ideas (above) come to mind I make sure I can weave my way through the story – so that even if things come up, I know where I'm going and won't be taken off 'track' I try out my story/approach with a few people – conversationally – and ask: 'Does this make sense? Does it Flow?' – I don't need them to agree with the content at this point, as I've got to the point where I'm confident in the content	I'm more recently spending less time preparing in a structured way - and I'm seriously considering going into sessions without slides I look for examples/stories that are relevant/close to the audience or organisation – i.e. examples that show what other similar organisations (or similar size of organisations) have done I also look for examples not so 'close' to the audience/organisation so as to provide external/different inspiration and stimulus I prefer not to disclose too much up-front - and cover a broader spectrum ("not put all my eggs in one basket") - and then create a 'pull' from the audience to dig deeper into the areas that are of interest for them I make sure I stay 'up to speed' in the relevant areas & context (e.g. events, technology, & create my blog);	I read extensively (Economist, Fortune, HBR, McKinsay Quarterly, news week, etc) I look for rich articles about business– and draw out stories and examples with which I can correlate some strategy models and frameworks My reading list is probably longer that most of my colleagues I'm looking for a few gems –I look for good pieces of journalism that uncover what goes on behind the scenes in organisations My search for 'material' isn't necessarily linked to specific talks/sessions I rip articles and news stories out of papers/magazines – and often circulate them to my colleagues to get opinion – I'll then store them and review again I create a mental library of events, data points – and make notes to myself "It's a 'messy' process" I don't always decide which examples/stories to use in my sessions – these are sometimes drawn out from questions asked in the session – then I draw upon my mental library to demonstrate a point There isn't a 'cunning plan' – unless the client has a very specific brief and they want to draw upon specific examples/stories It's a continuous process I look for examples that

					can bring some abstract ideas to life I'm selective with the stories that I use – choose ones that allow people to open up I tend to use a varied duration of stories in a session – a few lengthy stories (up to 90 mins), and all the rest fairly short & sharp (circa 5 mins)
Structure/ Format	I'll often use myself and/or Drake (my husband) in my stories – to promote the concept that none of us are perfect	I love there to be curiosity and for learning to happen after the event like time capsules	I start my story in such a way as to create a 'hook' and/or with something they'll be really interested in – to get them really listening	I focus on 3 things I provide examples close to and 'away from' client's area of expertise - to provide stimulus and proactively challenge any 'knee jerk' defensive responses (e.g. we can't do that, or it doesn't apply to us) I like to leave some time for opening things up to the 'audience' e.g. 15 mins at the end & ask "what would you like to talk about?	I'll have an agenda, I'll get their permission to 'tell a story' (see note below), then I'll extract some concepts, work on the application process, and then review the story/case study – talk about what actually happened? – thereby teasing out some principles and frameworks around each element I'll often open a session with a story – '"we want to talk about strategy – we can do the theory or we can start by telling you a story" – give this as an option. Invariably the latter is chosen by the group I utilise stories to facilitate the diagnostic process - pose a situation to them via a story I put myself into a story and take some artistic license to create impact with a story And then get them to tease out the concept and discover what the theory might be – I get them to think about their own ideas first, Then I provide a framework, with relevant theory to help them make sense of it Stories that have me in it, enable people to question me – it makes me more 'available' E.g. I routinely include stories about my parents, what I've done wrong, where I've partly messed up, etc I sometimes take liberties with the stories that I tell – I utilise

					'poetic license' to create an impact ("I never let a fact get in the way of a good story") – but I'll always make sure they know how it really ended I like to end with something punchy My signal is often with some sort of sound bite – this can be serious or it can be a 'quip'
Resources	I constantly learn myself – from each session – and bring this learning with me, into subsequent sessions I have learned so much from (and loved having) teachers that have been 'imperfect models' I bring a coaching mindset into my coaching training – my role is to facilitate, and I'm open to changing things I don't play to 'is this enough', 'a good session/average session' , I have 'suspended' this metric for myself as it takes me away from being the most congruent I can be - I do my job and ensure I'm serving the group – and this includes being willing to alienate everyone in the room in order to facilitate the learning		I frame the situation in such a way that I'm talking to just one person (doesn't matter how many are actually there) – it's a conversation with an individual Being fully 'present' in the situation NLP Visioning – 'fire in my belly resource' (I don't always need this, but utilise it when required)	I have an innate desire to stretch & develop myself It's a bit 'gladiator like' - I like to put myself 'on the spot', whereby I have to respond - this forces me to get better I'm always looking for challenges & opportunities to develop - I don't want to get complacent I am comfortable with the unknown I form my opinion by keeping up to date, and lean on this and all the examples I've collected in the process If I like the business - I'll put in more effort I create an opinion and lean on my point of view (captured within my various columns, blogs, articles) - this helps me to build an 'armory' of relevant examples to draw upon important resources include my laptop, and access to the Internet	I put myself in the story – to make it more engaging Stories help me to speak about my experiences The story doesn't 'cut it' by itself – I ensure the story is converted, and that the general concept or framework has been extracted; a way of thinking is exposed, mental models are uncovered I utilise humour – and believe it works because its universally engaging – it puts people in a comfortable frame of mind I utilise Billy Connolly as a role model (a clean version of Billy Connolly) – I like his self-deprecating approach, his use of silence and his timing I make sure I understand the context and the environment of the group – and tailor my stories accordingly There have been occasions when the stories/examples haven't worked, and this is usually been down to the fact that I haven't fully appreciated the situation/context of the group/ organisation

Tess Cope, Master NLP Practitioner Project

In the moment	I don't prepare specific stories for learning events – I draw upon these to illustrate a point or in response to a question Or I sense a question that's in the group and use a story to illustrate – "something takes over, and the moment presents itself" I choose the appropriate story that 'will bring the concept to life' My criteria when choosing the stories: 1.What will bring this concept to life? 2.Humanness (providing 'perfect models' can provoke a feeling of inadequacy in others) 3.Being able to laugh at ourselves 4,.Providing perspective & humour I stay flexible – I pay attention to what's going on in the group & respond accordingly I 'throw' out possibilities without any attachment to these		I'm completely tuned in and paying attention to what's happening, what's being said and the reactions of the recipients I often encourage the other party (where possible) to share what is going on for them in response to my story - new meaning making can be made in the combining of the two stories. I'm responding to the reaction and for example, if the 'messages I'm observing' suggest people don't understand or agree with what I'm talking about, I acknowledge that I've noticed this, and probe accordingly –(rather than keeping going) I don't need people to agree with my story and in paying attention to where they are, I am interested in "their story" too. I believe that somewhere in the middle is where we can often meet and move forward. When I'm doing all of the above, It's easy, It's natural - It just flows	I look for continual feedback –I like a 'short feedback loop' - so that I can adapt accordingly within the conversation I get feedback from body language - e.g. a look of surprise and will sometimes 'call on this "you look surprised...", I'll adapt my behaviour & approach based on what comes back - sometimes I'll explore, sometimes I'll be more combative/challenging I pay attention to the questions that come back – what is this telling me? I want to let the audience guide the conversation as much as possible (Underpinning belief: being flexible & relevant is crucial) I'll check twitter 'stream' in respect of my 'talk' (during the overall session) - what's the reaction? what are people saying? What's resonating?	I pay attention to how I'm feeling – I like the advice of Peter Block, whose view is 'If you are feeling in a certain way, then there is a good chance the group are feeling this too' I often use stories to illustrate a point in response to a question I sometimes 'play' with the group – and tease the story out over time – I'm looking to help them change their perception –and I therefore make the learning process interesting and fun I pay attention to how I'm feeling – my indicator of whether it's working is twofold: Who's doing all the hard work? 1. If I'm having to work extra hard and fill the space & vacuum – then it's not working so well 2. If I'm feeling energised and engaged – then I know it is probably working for the group I make sure to keep the stories fresh – it shouldn't feel like one that's been around for ages
Know when to stop…	It's a kinesthetic thing – its internal – I won't always know if learning has happened, or when it has – I know that the learning can take place long after the event itself (learning is a constant process) – it's not about pleasing the group - so I ensure I'm staying congruent within myself I don't have to know/have evidence that the learning has happened – I trust the process	I've given enough to set the context for the day and/or give the learning I stop before I become self indulgent (when it's not about their learning anymore)	"By being present and honouring what is and what is real for the other person/people I know when to stop / I have shared enough. By paying attention to what is needed in the other – this helps me to know when to stop I often encourage the other party (where possible) to share what is going on for them in response to my story so that 'new meaning making' can be made in the combining of the two stories. "		I pay attention to the body language of the group I often ask the question "Does this make sense?" – I see this as a crucial part of my job My criteria for knowing when to close the session is when I know that nobody is in doubt that the session has ended I ensure there is a clear ending – and signal this

Tess Cope, Master NLP Practitioner Project

My Journey & Experience of Modelling

As part of setting up the modelling conversations, I had to find my own way of describing what modelling is all about – of course, some of my exemplars are experts in NLP so I had an easier task here – but for those that are not (Narendra & Tom), it meant that I needed to get the concept very clear in my own head, and then translate it in such a way so as to articulate the value. This in of itself was a really useful and valuable 'exercise'.

The value for me in the first instance, was straightforward - to uncover their 'strategy' so that I could compare my exemplars and eventually integrate the model – but just as importantly, the potential value to them was to uncover what might be an unconscious 'approach'. And by uncovering that unconscious process, prove the opportunity to acknowledge it, and create the possibility to further refine it.

In most cases, the exemplars found the conversation not only interesting, but also useful in helping them appreciate what they do, and gave them an insight to how they do what they do so well. This was especially the case when we talked about the beliefs that underpin their success – and although when asked, they tended to be very clear about them, these were mostly sitting at an unconscious 'level'.

After each conversation, I typed up the notes from the conversation and sent these to the exemplars for review – this process of review was helpful in that the 'strategy' was further refined with the benefit of reflection.

My Reflections

In the early stages of the modelling project, I attended an evening workshop with another NLP trainer, Judith Lowe – the theme of which was 'conversational modelling'. I found this to be of enormous and relevant benefit – in that it helped me to ensure that the dialogue was more of an interesting and enjoyable conversation (for the exemplar) rather than what could be perceived as a more formal 'interview'.

My learning, however, is that there are some benefits of a slightly more structured approach e.g. having specific questions that are asked to all exemplars. I noticed in pulling my notes together, that I have some gaps in my 'data' when comparing strategies of each exemplar – this was due to being totally present in the relevant conversations and being curious - exploring those areas which seemed pertinent at the time and consequently omitting others.

In reviewing this experience, one of my reflections is that for future modelling I will bear in mind that I need to find an approach that is balanced – i.e. incorporating some structure whilst also being curious and present. I recognise that within this balance of structure and curiosity, I need to trust myself to uncover what's important. From the perspective of adopting some structure, I will utilise a checklist of the key areas I'd like to uncover (mainly driven by the logical levels model), **AND** allow myself to be totally present and curious within the conversation.

I have also realised that there has been a dual benefit from this modeling project for me – not only have I uncovered a model for storytelling in a learning environment, but I have also uncovered/created my own model for effective modelling!

Tess Cope, Master NLP Practitioner Project

Having uncovered the underpinning beliefs of the exemplars, I have recognised that I have had some limiting beliefs running within myself, that have caused hesitation and some anxieties around storytelling – thereby resulting in me choosing not to utilise it as a resource within my work and to take a more 'one dimensional' route – which, of course I am radically re-thinking.

My limiting beliefs included: "The story is crucial – make sure it's a good one" , "It's not appropriate to talk about your imperfections/where you've messed up – if you're training this stuff, you're supposed to be a role model" (no pressure there then!), "The learning is all in the story", "Why would anyone want to hear about <u>my</u> story/examples? – that will come across as conceited/arrogant",

I really enjoyed all of the conversations I had with the exemplars, and have a belief (similar to that of Narendra) that if this is the case, then it's quite likely that this was also an enjoyable and worthwhile experience for the exemplars too.

Each of the modelling conversations took only 30-40 mins – how amazing it is that we can uncover such levels of quality and depth by setting things up appropriately (where possible), carefully choosing our language and being genuinely curious with our attention.

In addition to the actual process of modelling, I have learnt (and am enthused by the fact) that I can utilise a wide variety of stories to enrich the learning experience, and that the role of storytelling has an important part to play. It can take many forms, and doesn't sit 'centre stage' – it's an enabler – a role that sits very comfortably with me.

Integration

"Over the years I have become convinced that we learn best and change from hearing stories that strike a chord within us. Those in leadership positions who fail to grasp or use the power of stories risk failure for their Companies and for themselves".

John Kotter, Harvard Business School Professor & author 'Leading Change'

Having uncovered the strategies of the exemplars, I realise that I have some work to do in the preparation stages of storytelling in a learning environment – particularly in researching rich examples of leadership and culture (my areas of focus with my clients) to really bring these concepts to life in an accessible and relevant manner. I was inspired by Tom & Narendra's approach of extensive reading and gathering of a library of examples to pull upon, and especially inspired by Tom's approach of creating a 'blog' so as to build an opinion – he uses this as a discipline to ensure he is constantly building and developing his library and viewpoint.

I know that if I make a public commitment (such as starting a blog), then I will go far and beyond the 'norm' in making something happen - this will be a massive trigger for me to get into and maintain action and, as such, has been put onto my 'important' action list.

Leadership can come across as an elite, abstract and challenging concept – especially for those that are early into their management career. I recognise that I can bring my own experiences of management and leadership to the conversations, especially of situations that were both challenging and imperfect – something which I don't do very often currently - partly driven by my limiting beliefs mentioned earlier, but was a key aspect in the majority of the exemplars' strategies. My experience of this approach (when observing the exemplars) is that it really helped the participants (including me) feel OK about trying things out and simplified things significantly. In the arena of leadership, this is an important step in the learning journey.

Although I will adopt the exemplars approach of not having specific stories for specific 'workshops', I would like to take some time to build my 'mental library' around helpful and relevant stories and get more and more comfortable with putting myself into the stories.

One of the things that really struck me around the exemplars approach to preparation of their storytelling was that although things seemed to 'just flow' in the moment, is that there is quite a lot of preparation that happens in the background.

My impression prior to this modeling project is that the storytellers just 'pulled it out of the bag, in the moment' which in turn, created some anxiety for me as that generated a sense of taking on more of an entertainment role – something that didn't sit comfortably with my values around the importance of developing people. My realisation, however, is that there is a meticulous, thorough and ongoing process going on behind the scenes. It takes slightly different forms and different lengths of time for each exemplar, but in all cases they have built up an extensive mental library that they can access when it is appropriate/when needed.

This, coupled with being totally present in the moment (picking up visual signals e.g. body language of the group, noticing the questions the participants are asking, directly asking for feedback 'Does this make sense?', noticing how they are feeling within themselves as a clue to what might be going on for the participants and that utilizing what is going on for them, as part of the learning process)

Tess Cope, Master NLP Practitioner Project

has enabled a realisation that has both surprised me and excited me – all of a sudden, this storytelling concept feels more 'do-able'…..

An additional element of being 'totally present' in the group, is the opportunity of allowing for differences of opinions to be aired, creating space for discussion, feedback and other perspectives to be heard. I really appreciated Tracey's approach to this, coupled with her belief that this can provide the opportunity to produce shared meaning and that 'somewhere in the middle is where we can often meet and move forward'. I'd like to extend this further and broaden it to 'By sharing perspectives, examples and rich stories – somewhere in the middle, is where shared meaning materializes and powerful learning happens.

In addition to this constant and evolving preparation process, and being truly present, the underpinning beliefs and overall purpose play a significant part in the success of the exemplars. I particularly appreciated Narendra's purpose of 'orchestrating discovery', supported by the belief that learners hold their own ideas/discoveries more dearly. In my mind, this appropriately positions where storytelling fits in the learning experience – it's there as a catalyst for the learning process (not necessarily providing the learning itself), to 'open up' a concept - and then allow the learners to explore and discover…. . This is also reinforced by Jan's belief that 'she's not that important' in the learning process – and that learning can happen long after the 'learning event' itself.

The Model

Purpose:
- The role of storytelling is to orchestrate learning, to enable exploration & discovery; to find ways of making the content accessible and human; to 'open up' concepts for exploration

Beliefs that underpin success in storytelling:

- Stories can be prepared in advance

- Learning is a complex process – it's multi-dimensional

- Learners are far more engaged in their own ideas/discoveries

- Learning doesn't always happen at the learning event – it can kick in long afterwards

- Whatever is perculating in life, is perculating

Preparation:
- Build up an ongoing mental library of rich stories and examples – including own experiences of when things haven't gone well and consequent learnings

Structure/format:
- Open a concept up with an appropriate story

- Offer it as one perspective/angle

- Then set participants up to explore, discuss & discover

- Create some room to find shared meaning - shift the spotlight to them – enabling them to move into discussion, e.g. ask questions of me and/or with each other….

Resources:

- Build up a wide range of stories & utilise others to build upon these/sense check them

- Have a broad reading list – on line, newspapers, books, trade articles, relevant examples and stories that will add to the 'mental library'

- Create a blog – providing discipline for above

In the moment:

- Pay attention to how I am feeling (internal sensation), consider what's going on for me at that point in time (or just before), and what this is telling me. 'Check: Can I utilise this right now as part of the learning process for the group?(internal dialogue)

- Pay attention to staying open - allow others to "look inside me" and see the imperfections and vulnerabilities (physiology: open shoulders, open arms, and shared eye contact)

- Notice what's going on for the participants – notice their body language, quizzical looks, listen to the questions they are asking – Ask them 'Does this makes sense? And/or what's going on for them?'

Know when to stop:

- Keep the learning process, and where stories 'fit in' at top of mind i.e. they are appropriate to open things up and/or to demonstrate a concept (it's not all about the stories, or my story per sae)

- Finish with a clear signal - check for learning, ask for final questions, and ask for feedback

Sharing the model

- I know that if I commit to doing something publicly or with/for others, it gives me significantly more momentum – this is my model for getting things done. With this in mind, I requested Sue to give me an opportunity to share my storytelling model at an appropriate 'event' and this was confirmed for an NLP alumni gathering. As I suspected, this has generated a massive impetus to complete my modelling project.
- This event has taken place and was a great experience - the feedback was also very useful
- My intention was to demonstrate my model by telling a story (about storytelling and why this was important for me), thereby embodying the model, and the feedback from the group suggests this was effective
  - As a consequence of the feedback (from Sue and the participants at the Alumni event), I have made a few adjustments to the model. These have included a more instructive approach, being clearer around the sub-modalities and being more succinct
  - For forthcoming learning events that I'm running, I have also been reminded of a few essentials:
    - the various learning styles and the importance of visuals for some;
    - stories will not work for everyone/not all stories work for everyone – some learners will prefer a more direct approach – thus reinforcing my belief that the learning event is not all about the story – it's there to open things up

"Tell me a fact, and I'll learn. Tell me a truth and I'll believe. But tell me a story and it will live in my heart forever".

Indian Proverb

Tess Cope, Master NLP Practitioner Project