

Telling the New Story

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PURPOSE:

To practice telling (sourcing) the new story with feedback and coaching from your team. Two alternate procedures are also offered.

FORMAT:

Sitting in chairs in groups of 4, with 3 people facing 1 person. The Speaker gets 3 minutes of speaking and 3 minutes of feedback and coaching from the Team. This works best if after the first time around the groups dissolve and each person sits with new partners and uses the feedback and coaching received in the first round as a guideline to try something new. Takes 90 minutes. **NOTE: Please introduce Rapid Learning before delivering this initiatory process! This initiation uses Rapid Learning.**

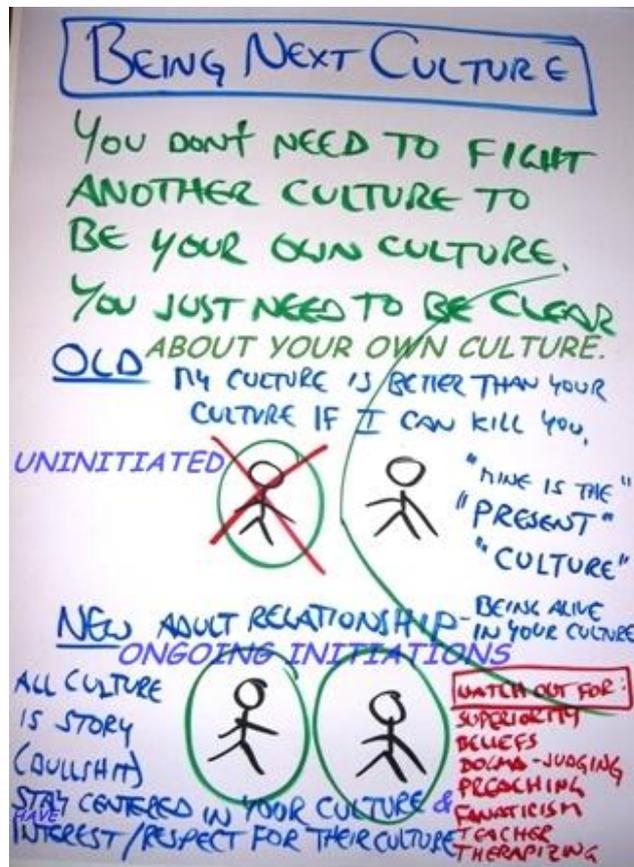
INTRODUCTION / BACKGROUND:

(Based on <http://sustainablehuman.me/>) (Spaceholder notes are given in parenthesis. The rest can simply be read out loud.)

Human beings are a storytelling species. As much as we who live in modern culture would like to believe that we are rational, scientific people who consider all the "facts" before acting, the truth is that our stories and the roles we play in them have a far greater impact on our behavior than the facts. Your family, past experience, and even your name are all part of the story of who you are (or at least who you tell yourself you are). We play many roles in different stories – husband, wife, co-worker, business partner, sibling, employee, boss, waiter, customer, father, mother, friend – and as we play our roles, the story defines our behavior.

We also have another kind of story, a collective story that answers the question of who we are as a people. The current story of the people of modern Western cultures descends from the Newtonian, mechanistic worldview. It says that we are each separate beings - separate from each other and from Nature - interacting through market transactions to maximize economic and reproductive self-interest. In this story, dolphins suffocated by oil spills, starving children, and ostracized homeless people do not affect us because the story we live in tells us we are all separate from one another.

If life on Earth is to not only survive but thrive, we must change the story of modern civilization. The world we have inherited is built on the unsustainable story of infinite resources, limitless waste, and endless competition with one another, degrading both our planet and humanity. Right here, right now, we have a chance to practice shifting into a new story that is sustainable, a story that enables each of us to develop our unique gifts and give them freely to the world.



INSTRUCTIONS / PROCEDURE:

1. Please arrange yourselves into groups of 4, sitting in chairs with 3 people facing 1 person. The 1 person is the Speaker. The other 3 people are the Team. A box of tissues, a hand towel, and a plastic bucket should be available at each group.
2. You are a culture-shift Team, preparing yourselves to be a seed-crystal of the new story in the global ethnosphere.
3. It turns out that if 3 people commit to living together in a shifted story it is equivalent to establishing a new country – a nano-nation. Your active commitment to the new story opens the door for other people to more easily follow.
4. Speaker, your job is to deepen your Teams commitment to the new story in their lives:
 - a. Communicate to the other 3 how daily life goes in the new story.
 - b. Explain the distinctions that make up the context out of which the new story emerges.
 - c. Explain process or steps people can take that help shifting to the new story.
 - d. Communicate your own commitment to this new cultural context, where it comes from in you, what you get from it, why you do it.

- e. Explain aspects of the new story: social, environmental, economic, personal development, celebratory, architectural, governance, child-raising, etc.
5. (3 min) Listeners, you just listen. Every now and then you can ask questions that deepen the communication and your understanding. Please begin.
6. Please come to a stop (pause). Thank you.
7. (3 min) Listeners, please tell the Speaker these 3 things:
 - a. What worked about their communication
 - b. Anything that did not work
 - c. Specific things they could try next time to create better results.
 Make distinctions for them. Speakers you just listen, or take notes if you want. Please begin.
8. Please come to a stop (pause). Thank you.
9. Everyone please stand and rotate so a new Speaker is in front of the single chair and then all sit down again. (Begin over at Step 4, and repeat until all 4 people have had the chance to be Speaker and get feedback and coaching from the Team. Then continue below to set up the second round of practice.)
10. Everyone please stand, move to new chairs and create whole new Teams.
11. Please have a seat (pause). Thank you. (Start over at Step 4.)
12. (After everyone has had a chance to be Speaker the second time) Please come to a stop (pause). Everyone please take a deep breath (pause to let things sink in a moment).
13. Please bring your chairs back to a big circle.

ALTERNATE 1: PROCEDURE SCRIPT (“INCLUDING CONTEXT SHIFT”):

(NOTE: At Step 4 (between cycles) you could consider shifting the practice to the more usual circumstance of speaking the new story to people who are not already in agreement with the necessity of shifting to the new story, as introduced below.)

It is not normal, yet, that you get to speak about the new story to people who already agree about the necessity of shifting to the new story, or who already live at least parts of their daily lives in the new story.

Most often you will be speaking to people who read the daily news, watch TV and sports, work a job, go shopping, take holidays, pay medical insurance, and look forward to early retirement in Palm Springs. It is not that they are against you. They just don't have any idea what you are talking about.

And of course, as soon as you do start successfully explaining what the new story is, there may be automatic fear-of-change reactions coming. Your job will be to shift the context of the conversation and navigate space so that the listeners can start thinking in the context where your distinctions make sense.

But at first you are speaking from one context to another context. Beginnings are the most delicate of times.

One useful skill is to *confront with questions*. That is, rather than banging heads, hitting arguments with arguments, or trying to convert someone's belief system, simply ask honest, non-manipulative, vulnerable questions instead. Here are some examples:

- *I wake up in the morning sometimes in a cold sweat wondering who is right, the climate deniers, or the newscasters of unprecedented floods, storms and fires. What do you think?*
 - *How do you manage to explain to yourself that corporations can keep devouring oil and minerals and can keep dumping endless toxic wastes and we live on a limited planet?*
 - *How long will your job last when the oil production drops to half?*
 - *If you were free to speak deeply about what you see happening in the future, what would you say?*
 - *I have a problem. I am trying to explain in a movie / story about how someone wakes up about global climate change and shifts their worldview to sustainable culture, and I am stuck. Could you help me? How would it go?*
 - *I am totally stuck. Can you explain to me how with so many good-willed and good-hearted people in the world, why there is so much vicious war going on?*
4. Speakers, please choose whether you want 1, 2, or 3 of your listeners to be straight people from typical modern western cultures, or typical indigenous culture people from Borneo, Africa, or the Amazon jungle.

ALTERNATE 2: PROCEDURE SCRIPT (“INCLUDING THE DENYING FORCE”):

(NOTE: At Step 11 (between cycles) you could consider adding the subtly sinister but realistic element of the denying force, as introduced and explained below.)

A classic way to look at any endeavor is that there are 3 forces constantly at work: the asserting force – creating things, the neutral force – sustaining things, and the denying force – destroying things.

It can be a common mistake in a group to identify the person or persons who represent the denying force as being the “Last Guy” in the group, a problem, something negative. From there it is easy to conclude that if you could just get rid of the Last Guy the group would obviously go along much smoother and easier. Has anyone seen this happen in a group?

Has anyone here ever been the Last Guy in a group? How was that for you?

(SIDE CONSIDERATION: Burnout comes from trying to offer what is not wanted.)

By trying to exclude the denying force from within your group, it must enter from outside in the form of tax collectors, bothersome neighbors, police, an accident, or even a storm or other “Acts of God.”

In this ALTERNATE PROCEDURE you get a chance to practice developing ways to include the denying force inside of your group without making a low drama out of it. In this case we are making it a little more challenging but, if you know what is going on out there in the capitalist patriarchal empire, the challenge is not entirely unrealistic.

5. (Insert this instruction as the alternate to Step 5 above). One of the Listeners please put your hand up. You are the Betrayer. You are either:
 - a. Paid by the government to be an informer and to report back to the government what is going on here

- b. Paid by a corporation to betray your own integrity in the web of life on planet Earth by standing for the values of the corporation – making a profit at any cost – rather than Gaia's values.
- c. Holding a hidden agenda to make subtle objections. This does not work if you make the objections too disruptive. Instead, be a disbeliever.
- d. Or you are too afraid, too dependent on modern culture. Find subtle ways to make it so the others cannot commit to each other in the new context by causing uncertainty about the facts, just like climate deniers. You are afraid that if these people commit to the new story then you lose them when they go off into a new world.

(NOTE: After each round where there is a Betrayer, have everyone stand and quickly spin around once to get out of the Betrayer role. It is a nasty role upon which others will often, out of their own awareness, project dark energies. Therefore it is important to spin off any remaining projections and return to your usual self.)

COMPLETION AND WRAP UP:

(Especially if you implement the Alternate 2 procedure with the Betrayer in the Team you should spend time debriefing this practice session. There could be many stories to tell, both about the process itself and related from the past.)

POSSIBLE QUESTIONS:

What did you notice?

What did you experience?

How has this helped you in your work?

Where else could you use this practice exercise with others?

How long can the new story last for you in your thoughts, words, and actions?

Which forces typically cause you to return to the unsustainable story of modern culture?

What can we do as Teams to protect each other from those forces?

Where is your determination about this?

What do you commit to?