

The Goods alt.health: Tattle-tale tonic

Stories Can Heal, But Don't Let Your Narrative Own You

by Sibyle Preuschat

DO A LITTLE EAVESDROPPING IN ANY bus, restaurant or office or just listen in on yourself and you'll realize that huge chunks of what we have to say to each other take the form of stories. "I did that, she said this, and the cow jumped over the moon * " We tell stories to explain ourselves to the world, to understand the complicated things that happen to us, to mythologize our ancestry.

Affinity with narrative, in fact, seems to be hard wired into us at a fundamental level. It stands to reason that anything this basic to our nature might have something to do with maintaining a sense of balance in our lives. As Western medicine starts catching on to the power of the mind, serious research into tale telling has begun. Preliminary reports suggest that writing down our personal epics,

But not just any recitation will do the trick. You must be careful not to be too seduced by your own personal mythology. There are many ways to describe the tale of your woes and accomplishments in this life. Finding alternative storylines is what healing is all about.

What the experts say

"Story is secret revealed. When secret becomes story; then perception and consciousness have a chance to start evolving. But sometimes we get that stuck record going, where we say, 'Johnny hurt me' 15 times over. That's either because we've lost connection with our imagination or no one has really heard us. In that situation, it may also be time to look for the secret, to listen with an authentic ear for what we're not disclosing! * ,

ANDREA MATHIESON flower essence producer and practitioner

"I see people's stories from a mythic perspective. Everyone is on a journey. And everyone who has gone through a major event, a trauma or has really had a big adventure. When you begin to story your past experiences as adventures, YOU begin to realize all the discoveries you made. You've survived an ordeal that has changed you and taught you something, and it's -that especially our most traumatic ones, helps our immune system function better. , precious understanding that you then return to the community in the form of a story,"

MICHELLE TOCHER, author How To Ride A Dragon: Breast Cancer Survivors Tell Their Stories

"People form patterns. If a person is always expecting negative stuff, that will be apparent in the narratives. They'll say things like I knew he was going to be like that,'or 'I let him know who was

boss; he wasn't going to get away with that.' They just jump to negative conclusions. In treatment we try to give people insight into their narrative."

JEAN VICTOR WITTENBERG, staff psychiatrist at the Hospital for Sick Children, head of the divisional program in child and adolescent psychotherapies at the University of Toronto

"Archaeologists find artifacts, Past life regression takes you back to find your own artifacts, your own story. You can get to the root cause of a lot of your health, relationship and financial issues, It doesn't matter if the story is objectively true. I use it as a healing tool. The unconscious works in symbols and gives us symbolic messages. Sometimes I think the whole past life could be symbolic."

- Debbie Papadakis, Consulting Hypnotist

"I think healing stories began amongst us before we had language. We would have made grunts and gestures. I feel that we create healing stories every night in our dreams, which have to do with the body speaking to itself about its experience. With the immense amount of stimulation out there, people really 'have to work at slowing down and getting into the dimension of what's happening in their lives instead of just letting that pulse drive them."

GREGORY NYE, director; Institute for Psychotherapy and Emotional Bodywork

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