

THE USE OF STORIES AND METAPHORS

Stories and metaphors can be used :

1. To make, demonstrate or illustrate a point.
2. To cause something to be remembered.
3. To sow seed ideas.
4. To open up possibilities for others.
5. To normalize or otherwise re-contextualize a particular position or content.
6. To reframe or redefine a problem.
7. To introduce doubt into a position that holds that there is only "one" way.
8. To provide or guide associations and thinking along certain lines.
9. For indirection. Offer a series of stories and allow the customer to form a choice or find his own direction.
10. To suggest solutions.
11. To increase rapport.
12. To lighten up the mood.
13. To regain the floor.
14. To shift the subject or redirect the discussion.
15. To entertain.

The Four Steps to Success

1. Know what your want. Decide and write down exactly what you want. Use the Well Formed Outcome to do this.
2. Take Action. Do what you think get you your outcome and avoid unnecessary problems. ACT NOW!
3. Begin to notice the results of what you do. Are you getting closer to your goal/outcome or you getting further away from it? Observe what is happening as a result your actions/behavior. What is the feedback you are getting?
4. Continue to change your actions/behavior until you get your goal or outcome. If what you are doing is not working -- do something different!

Achieving a Well Formed Goal or Outcome

Since language affects our thoughts, behavior and actions, it would be to our advantage to understand whether the method we are using to set and achieve goals and outcomes is appropriate or not.

Typically when we have trouble getting our goal or outcome we ask ourselves these questions:

1. What's wrong?
2. Why do you have this problem?
3. How many ways does this limit you and what you can do?
4. What does this problem stop you from doing that you want to do?
5. Whose fault is it that you have this problem?
6. When is the worst time you have experienced this problem?
7. How long have you had it?

Notice that these questions tend to lead us into considering who's to blame, what's wrong and lead us away from the actual goal or outcome we want.

Now, consider these questions towards achieving a Well Formed Outcome:

What is it that you want?

- Ensure that it is stated in the positive (reframe as necessary).
- Can it be initiated and controlled by self?
- What will you and others see and hear when you have achieved your goal? (Sensory based description of the vision)
- What is the appropriate scope for the project/concern?
- Is this something that is one project/concern or should it be broken down further? Is this part of a larger concern? Is this one of a series of similar concerns?
- For what purpose? What's important to you about this?

How will you know when you have it? What's the evidence? Where, when and with whom do you want it? (In what context)

- Is your choice of context ecological?
- Is it sensory and information based?
- Are there times and situations when you don't want it?

Ecology: How will your desired outcome affect your activities? The activities of others?

- What will you gain or lose? What will others gain or lose?

What stops you from having your desired outcome now?

- Sensory and information based.
- Identify limiting assumptions and beliefs.
- How is it possible?

What resources do you already have to get your outcome?

- How is it possible?

What resources do you need in order to get your outcome?

How are you going to get there?

- Do you have more than one way?
- Milestones: Is the first step specified and achievable?

Is it worth having?

- Is it of valuable? Does it have a good bottomline? Does it add value?
- Notice the differences between using the first set of questions and using the last set of questions. Consider what the different questions did to alter the mood, the direction the solution of the problem took, how well formed an outcome being developed would be, how inspired would a person be to reach a solution, etc.

Perceptual Positions

Often we experience the world from only our own perspective and thereby limit ourselves to only one description of what we call "reality". Using the three perceptual - positions described here, we can become more flexible, gain understanding and increase our resourcefulness. Work in Neuro-Linguistic Programming has found these three perceptual positions useful in developing and maintaining relationships, increasing our understanding of the world around us and being more creative.

The three perceptual positions are:

- **SELF POSITION.** "Self" position is our most common way of looking at the world. I see other people and the world around me through my own eyes. I hear with my own ears and experience my own feelings.
- **OTHER POSITION.** Assuming the "Other" position is experiencing the world from some other person's viewpoint. I hear things as they would hear them, see things as they would see them and feel what they would feel. I have the values, beliefs and emotions of the other person.
- **OBSERVER POSITION.** From "Observer" position, I experience the world from the outside as an observer would. In this position I literally see and hear "self" and "other" as an observer. I have neutral "observer" feelings.

These three perceptual position distinctions encompass all possible multiple perspectives. The ability to control the shift from one perceptual position to another is a critical skill in all contexts. **WALT DISNEY.** Examinations of some of the quotes from Walt Disney indicate that he used all three perceptual positions in creating his stories.

Self position -- "The story man must see clearly in his own mind how every piece of business in story will be put."

Other position -- "He should feel every expression. every reaction." "Mickey's voice was always done by Walt, and he felt the lines and situation so completely that he could not keep from acting out the gestures and even the body attitudes as he said the dialog."

Observer position -- "He should get far enough away from his story to take a second look at it."

EINSTEIN. Einstein used "observer" position when he imagined seeing himself riding on a beam of light plus he viewed himself riding that beam of light from two other positions. From this he determined that the only constant was the speed of light and the rest were relative. From this he developed the Theory of Relativity.

IN RELATIONSHIPS. Using all three perceptual positions is particularly valuable in building and maintaining relationships. For example, conflict between team members may result because each member views the situation from his or her perspective. By putting themselves in the "other" perceptual position, they can begin to understand the situation from the other team members' perspective. In addition, by taking the "observer" position, they will gain insights into relationships, meanings and patterns between "self" and "other" that are not available from any other position.

Viewing the world from only one or two of the perceptual positions does not provide as rich a description as is possible. Gregory Bateson suggests that a double description is required before we can observe "the difference that makes the difference."

SELF. Using only "self" position, our fundamental way of looking at things, has several limitations and tends to lead to a "self-centered" attitude, **OTHER.** The use of "other" position is important in relationships, writing, speaking and general communications. For example, this position allows identification with all people with whom we come in contact (actually or in our own imaginations). This position may refer to individuals such as our friends, family members, fellow workers, clients, teachers, professors, heroes, and fictional characters to name but a few. Incidentally, there may be more than one "other". In this case, the "other" position is used to obtain the perspective of each of them. The "other" position may also be groups of people like readers, audiences, senior management, stakeholders, clients, and competitors, When thinking creatively the "other" can also be an animate or inanimate object, such as "If I were a cat or a piece of wire I could be graceful and flexible."

OBSERVER. The "observer" position is vital for obtaining an objective perspective. This position gives insight into patterns, differences, similarities, relationships and meanings, usually between "self" and "other(s)." The characteristics of the "observer" position may be varied over time. For example, if you are a writer you may start with a less critical audience for your first draft and increase the level of criticism over subsequent drafts.

These three perceptual position distinctions are all that is really needed when considering multiple perspectives. Every perspective can be considered as one of these distinctions. Perceptual positions are not new, but seldom are they used consciously. By using them consciously, we can obtain a richer, fuller description of any situation, thereby greatly improving the information available to us for further consideration.