

Following the INPsych feature on Psychology and Creativity, our Narrative Theory & Practice in Psychology Interest Group is delighted to share something about the foundations of our work and some of our hopes and intentions.

Narrative therapy pays attention to how people make sense of their experiences and assists in changing their relationship with problems affecting their lives. Best known for “externalising conversations” that separate a person from a problem, and for letter-writing practices, this approach is guided by its philosophical foundations, interviewing techniques, and range of playful possibilities. In addition to guiding counselling conversations, these principles and ways of working offer tremendous possibilities in community, organizational and coaching contexts. For this reason, the term “narrative practice” is sometimes used instead of “narrative therapy.”¹

Narrative therapy is a post-structuralist approach founded by Michael White and David Epston which focuses on the effects of problems and locates problems in their socio-cultural context. It is a collaborative approach which is culturally sensitive, and flexible, and the positioning and intentions of the therapist are critical to the work. Narrative therapy acknowledges that we have many stories that exist about our lives and relationships. As humans, we are meaning makers and link particular events together in a sequence to tell a story. By doing this we privilege certain stories over others. Narrative therapy involves deconstructing problem saturated accounts and co-researching to gather “insider knowledge” about times when people have responded in ways that fit with their values, and exploring rituals and practises which are sustaining. Creative practices such as integrating the use of music, art and social media are particularly useful in working with young people.

Narrative practice has been used widely in areas where communities have been impacted by war and conflict, and can play a powerful role in recovery, resistance, and trauma work. This can include working with individuals and families who have experienced domestic violence, sexual assault, loss, and those struggling with self-harm or anorexia.

The valuing of social justice and human rights underpins Narrative work, and manifests in part by challenging dominant or oppressive norms. For example, this has been effective in working with the LGBTQTI+ communities and individuals by deconstructing the discourse around cultural views of sexuality and how a “problem” might be viewed in this context.

Narrative practitioners are able “to help liberate people from stories of oppression and to reconnect with moments of personal agency, “ explains University of Melbourne professor Louise Harms, who is involved in the new Masters of Narrative Therapy and Community Work. “In that way it’s quite a political therapeutic act, which challenges broader cultural stories.”

¹ <http://reauthoringteaching.com/what-is-narrative-therapy-2/>

Resonating with these intentions, our committee has recently offered a number of enriching presentations and workshops as well as creating closer connections with other Interest groups and the APS Counselling College. We have also encouraged our membership to develop research and opportunities for reflective supervisory conversations to invigorate the spirit of their work. Some recent highlights include:

Sydney, 14th November 2014

International speaker Jill Freeman presenting on her work with couples:

“Listening, witnessing and Intimate Relationships: using Narrative Therapy in working with couples”

Melbourne, February 2015

APS Counselling College Conference:

“The letter as an untangler”: Applying Narrative Practices and Enriching Conversations” by: Rina Taub, Lisa Bognar and Shirley Heilemann.

Sydney, 6 May 2015

“Islands of safety: Narrative Approaches to working with the Effects of Trauma” with Shona Russell.

May-July 2015

Webinar series (3) for the Culture and Psychology Interest group: Nourishing Diversity Through Collaborative Conversations: A Narrative Approach to Working In A Multicultural Context

Sydney, 19th August 2015

“Artfully Enriching Therapeutic Conversations” This interactive and practice-based workshop was aimed at those newer to Narrative Therapy.

Presenter: Rina Taub

UPCOMING EVENT: SAVE THE DATE: Tuesday October 20th 2015

Our committee is also delighted that we will be co-hosting with Charing Cross Narrative Therapy:

“Therapeutic Conversations with Queer Young People” with Julie Tilsen (Canada).

<http://2stories.com/>

for more information on
Julie

Click on the link or copy and paste to your
browser or go to the events calendar on the APS
website. <https://events.psychology.org.au/ei/getdemo.ei?id=1618&s=3800QTCGN>

We would also like to share some of the LATEST NEWS from The Dulwich Centre (A
gateway to narrative therapy & community work):

- New Book: Aboriginal narrative practice: Honouring storylines of pride, strength and creativity. Barbara Wingard, Carolynanha Johnson & Tileah Drahm-Butler
- Master Programme for 2016. Now Open: at <http://dulwichcentre.com.au/training-in-narrative-therapy/masters-program-in-narrative-therapy-and-community-work>
- Working Relationally with Conflicted Couple Relationships

Two day masterclass with internationally acclaimed Stephen Madigan (MSW MSc PhD, Canada) 5 & ^ November 2015 Canberra.

We welcome new members to join us as we explore values informing our work, and enhance our professional journeys as psychologists. Feel free to contact: Mariana Cardozo Kay (Admin assistant) marianakay@bigpond.com.