

## **Using Life Stories and Career Themes in Counselor Preparation**

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Many vocational counselors are innovating their practices by shifting concentration from fostering career development to fostering development through work and relationships.

This shift in practice has been prompted by changes in the social organization of work and occupations.

To respond to these changes, some counselors have turned to narrative counseling models and methods because this approach emphasizes life planning rather than occupational choice. Looking at lives as novels being written focuses attention on the themes that activate and characterize individuals in both the work and partnership/family domains.

From this narrative perspective, vocational interests are solutions to problems that people have experienced and work is an opportunity to actively master what has been passively suffered.

This narrative approach to career counseling enables clients to fit work into their lives, rather than fit themselves to jobs. Thus, mattering replaces congruence as the goal of counseling.

In my time with you, I will discuss and demonstrate practical techniques for using stories and articulating life themes with graduate students and counselors to foster their own career decision making and work adjustment. My goal is to demonstrate how you might use these techniques in your own work as a counselor and counselor educator as well as to urge you to better understand why you became a counselor and how you use the occupation of counselor to advance your own life story.

## **NARRATABILITY**

- ⌘ FIT PROBLEM INTO LARGER PATTERN OF MEANING BEING LIVE
- ⌘ CONSTRUCT NARRATIVE ABOUT PATTERN ORIVING AND CONSTELLATION OF CHOICES
- ⌘ USE NARRATIVE TO REDUCE CONFUSION AND RESOLVE DOUBT
- ⌘ CLARIFY CHOICES SO AS TO ENHANCE THE ABILITY TO DECIDE

## **PAST**

- ⌘ LISTEN FOR THEME
- ⌘ GREAT STORIES HAVE LINEAR INCIDENTS (PLOT) AND UNDERLYING THEMES (TIMELESS)
- ⌘ IDENTIFY THE PREOCCUPATION
- ⌘ ARTICULATE THE THEME AS A LIFE PROJECT

## **GIVE FORM TO IDENTITY (PRESENT)**

- ⌘ DEFINE IDENTITY THROUGH STORIES
- ⌘ STORIES INVEST SITUATIONS WITH MEANING
- ⌘ DEVELOP OUR IDENTITIES BY TELLING STORIES
- ⌘ CHANGE OUR IDENTITIES BY CHANGING OUR STORIES

## **IMAGINE THE FUTURE**

- ⌘ SPEAK OPENLY ABOUT AMBITIONS AND DREAMS
- ⌘ HOW CAN YOU USE WHAT YOU HAVE ALREADY REHEARSED?
  - ☑ Interests are Solutions
  - ☑ Perfect Incomplete Gestalten
  - ☑ Settle Scores
  - ☑ Address Unfinished Business
  - ☑ Make Up for What Was Missing In Childhood

## **CAREER INDECISION IS HESITATION BEFORE TRANSFORMATION**

- ⌘ ABOUT TO LOSE PLACE
- ⌘ WAVERING MOVEMENT TOWARD MEANING NOT A STALL
- ⌘ CONSTRUCT A WHOLE THAT WILL CLARIFY THE PARTS

## **STORIES FOR RESOLVING INDECISION**

- ⌘ STORIES ACHIEVE THEIR MEANING BY EXPLAINING A DEVIATION
- ⌘ STORIES MAKE SENSE BY EXPLAINING A DIFFERENCE
- ⌘ ACCOUNT FOR CHANGE FROM BEGINNING TO END

## Career Style Interview Questions

- A. How can I be useful to you as you construct your career?
1. Who do you admire? Who would you like to pattern your life after?  
- Who did you admire when you were growing up? Why?  
- How are you like \_\_\_\_\_?  
- How are you different from \_\_\_\_\_?
2. Do you read any magazines regularly? Which ones?  
- Why do you like these magazines?  
- How about TV. Do you have any shows you really enjoy?
3. What do you like to do with your free time?  
- What are your hobbies?  
- What do you enjoy about these hobbies?
4. Do you have a favorite saying or motto?  
- Tell me a saying you remember hearing.
5. What are your three favorite subjects in junior high and high school?  
What subjects do you hate?  
- Why did you love \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_?  
- Why did you hate \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_?
6. What are your earliest recollections? I am interested in hearing three stories about things you recall happening to you when you were three to six years old.