

# *STRENGTHENING CASE MANAGEMENT: INTRODUCING NARRATIVE CONCEPTS*

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# Workshop Summary



- This webinar presents narrative therapy as a potential therapeutic approach that can be appropriately adjusted for use in a case management (CM) setting. Using narrative concepts, case managers can use narrative interviewing as a way to help clients deconstruct problems in order to create an alternative, preferred identity.

# Workshop Objectives



- To gain a basic understanding of narrative therapy
- To discuss the potential for narrative theory in case management
- To identify and utilize basic narrative concepts
- To understand the limitations of the narrative model in CM

# What is Narrative Therapy?

- ❑ Form of psychotherapy pioneered in Australia and New Zealand in the 1980's
- ❑ Focuses on the stories of people's lives
- ❑ Problems are manufactured in social, cultural, and political contexts
- ❑ Based in social constructionism
- ❑ Post-modern approach
  - ❑ Lives seen as multi-storied vs. single storied

# Focus on the Self-Story



- “Self-story” provides insight into social contexts
  - ▣ Life events are selected, ranked, and linked together
  - ▣ Self-story told to ourselves and others
  - ▣ Narrative constantly changing
- Reasons that “because our lives are shaped by our stories, then individuals also have the power to change their lives by changing their stories”

# Dominant Cultural Narratives



- Cultures send powerful messages about social groups
- Dominant cultural narratives are communicated via one's self-story
- Negative cultural narratives often create negative personal narratives

# Narrative Concepts in CM



- Uses therapeutic questioning to deconstruct client narratives
- Listener focuses on the effects of problem vs. the cause of problem
- Push to develop a “richer,” more complex self-story
- Emphasis on the construction of a preferred client identity
- Collaboration is client-lead

# Narrative Opportunities in CM



- ❑ Resettlement & acculturation offer clients new social contexts
- ❑ Concepts are universal, culturally sensitive, flexible, and responsive
- ❑ Compliments a strength-based approach
- ❑ Does not require psychotherapy training

# Narrative Opportunities in CM



- Concepts have been useful working with:
  - LGBTQ clients
  - Rape survivors
  - Cultural outcasts
  - Clients with strong feelings of failure
  - Clients in conflict with cultural norms
- “The person is not the problem, the problem is the problem.”

# Client Example: Angela



Image courtesy of [clutchmagonline.com](http://clutchmagonline.com)

# “Problem-Saturated Story”



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  - ▣ Stories become “disabling” when clients feel they have lost control over their lives and unable to change their future.

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**CM: You said you don't have any strengths. Why is that?**

Angela: I just don't. It's like I'm not good at anything. My sisters are beautiful and they can do many things but I'm not good at anything. My mother tells me I should be married with babies by now. I can't even do that right.

# Renaming the Problem



- Encourage the client to come up with their own description of the problem.
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**CM: What would you call this problem if you saw it in another person?**

Angela: I'd call it feeling like trash. People just told me so long that I'm no good so now I can't think about things that I like about me.

# “Externalizing” the Problem



- Distance the client from problem by locating it outside the individual and within the culture.
  - CM and client can ally against problem.

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  - CM and client can ally against problem.

**CM: Where did the idea of feeling like trash come from?**

Angela: I've felt that way for a long time, ever since I was back home [in Africa.] My mother has always been mean to me. And because of other people too...

# Exploring the Effects



- Explore the influence the problem has on the client's life and how the client has influence over the problem.

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**CM: Can you think of a time when feeling like trash didn't control you? Tell me about these.**

Angela: I don't know, but, uh, sometimes when people give me compliments I feel good. Like when I was at the bus stop, a woman said she liked my scarf.

# Searching for Exceptions



- Help client replace the problem-saturated story by constructing a preferred story
  - ▣ Emphasize hopeful moments, thoughts, and events that do not fit with the problem story

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**CM: Tell me more about your conversation with the woman at the bus stop? What exactly happened?**

Angela: She just said she like my scarf. That's all. [Pause] Um, I really like fashion, you know. Before my sisters go out, they always ask me to come over and style them. I really like doing that. It's fun.

# Constructing a Preferred Identity



- Encourage client to recognize preferred qualities in themselves.

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**CM: So what does it say about you that your sisters ask for your help?**

Angela: Um, it says that they like me and I'm not trash to them. And I think it also means that I like to help people.

**CM: So now that we've talked, if someone asked you about your strengths, what would you say?**

Angela: I'd say that I like to help people and I love fashion and styling. And that I like help my sisters and I like to make people feel good.

## TYPES OF NARRATIVE QUESTIONS

TERM	PURPOSE	EXAMPLE
Deconstructive	Show how stories are constructed; situate narratives in larger system	<b>Where did this idea of not being good at anything come from? Can you remember when it first began?</b>
Renaming	Support patient efficacy by sharing authorship and expertise with client	<b>What would you call this problem of not being good at anything?</b>
Perspective	Explore other people's views of client	<b>Does everyone think you are trash, or can you think of someone who doesn't?</b>
Opening Space	Allowing hopeful thoughts, actions to surface and be explored; highlight patient efficacy regarding problem	<b>Are there ever times when feeling like trash doesn't control you? Tell me about this.</b>
Hypothetical (Miracle)	Stimulate client's imagination to envision different, more hopeful futures	<b>Suppose a miracle happened and you no longer felt like trash. How would your life be different?</b>

## TYPES OF NARRATIVE QUESTIONS (cont.)

TERM	PURPOSE	EXAMPLE
Preference	Check to make sure that exceptional moments are actually preferred to the problem story	<b>How did you feel when you think of yourself as trash? Is this something that you want?</b>
Story Development	Explore and linger on elements of the preferred story	<b>Tell me more about your conversation with the woman at the bus stop. What exactly happened?</b>
Redescription	Help client recognize preferred qualities in themselves and probe implications for identity	<b>What does it say about you that your sisters ask you to help style them?</b>
Bifurcation	Encourage client to align him/herself against the problem	<b>Is the event you're describing on the side of feeling like trash or not feeling like trash?</b>
Audience	Identify supportive witnesses to the new or developing story	<b>Who in your life would be least surprised that you discovered your strengths?</b>



**“You needed to incorporate some stretching into your fitness routine, so I glued all of your snacks to the ceiling!”**

# Generating Support



- “Outsider witnesses” can be invited into the CM session to serve as a therapeutic support (therapist, friend, family member, symbolic figures, etc.)

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**CM: Who in your life would be least surprised that you discovered your strengths?**

Angela: My sisters because they always help me. And Jesus. You can do anything with Jesus.

# Recognizing Achievement



- Solidify and memorialize client milestones
- Certificates, awards, letter writing, diplomas, encouraging emails, etc.



THE “BEING ME” AWARD

AWARDED TO

**Angela T.**

For realizing that you have the power to change your life,  
And for discovering your strengths within.

Awarded the 7th day of November 2012

*Joan Hodges*

Joan Hodges, PSTT Lead Case Manager

# Limitations



- ❑ Clients do not seek CM services to access therapy.
- ❑ CMs should not persuade/coerce/convince clients to rewrite self-stories.
- ❑ CMs need to let the client lead and avoid the temptation to cheerlead for change.
- ❑ Clients communicating in a second language may present challenges as well as opportunities.

# Conclusions



- Narrative concepts can be appropriately adjusted for use in a CM setting.
- Narrative concepts can illuminate client self-stories that can better direct CM goals.
- CMs can work with client to support preferred client self-stories.

# Resources & References



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