Mind the Twist in the Tale: The Story as a Channel for Culture-Resonant Career Counseling

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Abstract

In this chapter we present the story, a medium commonly used by traditional counselors such as “elder” or the “wise person” of the community, as a method that could be used for culture-resonant career counseling. Highlighting the role of a story as a receptacle of culture, the connectedness that stories create between not only the members of a culture but also across cultures, locations, and across time is discussed. Although it is located alongside two related bodies of knowledge—the narrative style of counseling and the tradition of storytelling—this writing does not focus on either. In this chapter we blend techniques used by storytellers, with contemporary approaches to counseling and present, a method for the delivery of culture-resonant career counseling services. We show how the career counselor can create channels between pertinent, well-recognized stories and the person, to link him or her to the collective wisdom of the community. The psychological underpinnings of the story, the thoughts, emotions, and behaviors that it evokes are described. These ideas are drawn together to describe three practical techniques for culture-resonant career counseling.

Keywords: story, traditional counselor, new trends in career counseling, narrative, wisdom, meaning making, guided deliberation, vicarious learning, framing and reframing

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Introduction

The contemporary counselor applies the principles of the social and behavioral sciences to help people cope with or find solutions to the problems of daily life. It has been pointed out, however, that many (perhaps all) cultures have *traditional counselors* whose roles are endorsed by the consensus of the collective (e.g., Arulmani, 2009; Frazer, 2009). In Eastern cultures this could be the "elder" or the "wise person" of the village, who based on the collective wisdom of the community, personal experiences of life, and common sense, helps people with the problems they encounter. In a comprehensive survey by the Voluntary Health Association of India (VHAI) it was found, for example, that at some point in their lives more than 90% of Indians turn to the succor offered by the priest, the faith healer, the soothsayer, the astrologer, the holy man/woman, the *guru,* and a wide range of others who are sanctioned representatives of culture, religion, or both, including practitioners of traditional methods of healing. Traditional counselors may also be a respected relative such as the grandparent, the uncle or the aunt, or a friend of the family (VHAI, 1991). Similar findings have been reported with regard to Native Americans (Smith, 2010), African and Caribbean communities (Wane & Sutherland, 2010) as well as indigenous communities in Northeast India (Albert & Kharkongor, 2010). "Whom do you first turn to when you or your family are in distress?" If this question were to be asked in non-Western cultures, it is most likely that an overwhelming proportion of responses would point toward members of the community upon whom culture and/or religion have bestowed the role of "healer" (Arulmani, 2009). The point we are trying to make at the beginning of this chapter is that while the objective study of human behavior has yielded various techniques for effective counseling, culturally-grounded mechanisms that guide, support, and scaffold members of a society as they grapple with the tangles that life presents, have existed and continue to flourish in parallel with methods of counseling that are based on positivist epistemologies. Drawing a lesson from the

fact that people spontaneously turn to these traditional and time-tested sources of comfort and guidance, this chapter focuses on a particular method that seems to characterize many forms of traditional counseling: the story.

A story has an almost irresistible allure. Embedded symbols reflect the human psyche. Characters carry features of the human personality. Situations mirror human predicaments. Plots portray wish fulfillment. And outcomes might be projections of deep yearning. Such features of the story offer the counselor a potentially powerful tool with which to engage the client. In this chapter we explore how the story could become a culture-resonant tool for career counseling in the contemporary context.

We pause at the outset to outline the framework within which we will discuss the story and career counseling. There exist two well-developed bodies of knowledge related to the narrative form. On the one hand, is the narrative approach to career counseling (e.g., see Reid & West, Chapter 23, this *Handbook*). On the other, is the ancient practice of storytelling itself. This chapter was reviewed by experts from both these areas of specialization. Of interest are the key queries raised by both reviewers. The reviewer from the career counseling side pointed to the importance of creating space to listen to the stories of the client. The reviewer from the storytelling side wondered about teaching the career counselor the methods of storytelling. We clarify that this chapter does not deliberate on the narrative method nor does it concentrate on the techniques of storytelling. Our objective is to examine how the story, particularly well-established and well-known stories which are a part of the fabric of a community's culture, could become a tool for career counseling. We will describe how the career counselor could learn from the methods of traditional counselors to create channels between pertinent, well-recognized stories and the person such that he or she could find answers by drawing upon the collective wisdom of the community. Both reviewers placed this writing in the category of new trends in guidance practice! We attempt

now to describe and operationalize ideas that do not as yet seem to have been examined in the career guidance and counseling literature.

What is a Story?

There are many descriptions of the story. A definition provided by Sunwolf is particularly evocative. She defines story as a narrative, either true or fictitious; a way of knowing and remembering information; a shape or pattern into which information can be arranged and experiences preserved; an ancient, natural order of the mind; isolated and disconnected scraps of human experience, bound into a meaningful whole (Sunwolf, 2004).

Forms of Stories

Stories have been classified into types and genres. While it is true that genres overlap and watertight grouping is at best artificial, it is useful to know the broad classifications of stories.

Legends. These are stories that can refer to real people and tell of the feats, deeds, and achievements of historical, semi-historical, or mythical figures. Legends are usually told as if recounting an actual historical event. Legends often are elaborated, expanded, and sometimes embellished versions of an actual event. Legends are located in a specific place and usually, humans play important roles in these stories. Legends tend to evolve with time. Examples of legends include the Ramayana and the Mahabharata (India); Robin Hood, and King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table (England); Beowulf (Scandinavia); and Sun Wu Kong (China).

Folktales. These are tales that describe both the plausible and the implausible and usually have a lot to do with daily life. They usually involve animals and/or people in the plot. Typically, there are no known authors attributed to folk tales and they are transmitted orally, passed down from generation to generation. Their origins tend to be unknown but universal themes that transcend physical and linguistic boundaries can be found in most

folktales. Some well-known examples of folktales are, How Anansi got the Stories (African), Half a Blanket (Irish), Momotaro the Little Peach Boy (Japan), Nasruddin Hodja (Middle East), Stone Soup (European), Baba Yaga, Fire Bird and Vassilissa Stories (Russian), The Lost Horse (China), The Pied Piper (England), Three Billy Goats Gruff (Norway), Sang Kancil (Mousedeer) Tales (Malaysia/Indonesia), and Tiger and the Persimmon (Korea).

Fables. A fable is usually populated by objects and animals with human characteristics and most often leads up to a moral. The fable is the most enduring form of oral literature and its transmission can be found in nearly all societies. Its purpose is most often to convey a lesson, a learning, or a compelling argument for a moral that is tagged at the end. Aesop's Fables (Greece, mid 6th century BCE) are well-known (e.g., Sour Grapes, The Ant and the Grasshopper, The Donkey in the Lion's Skin, The Boy who Cried Wolf, The Hare and the Tortoise). Jean de la Fontaine's fables (France, 1621-1695) are famous not only for their simplicity but for their multiple shades of meaning (e.g., The Crow and the Fox, Town Rat and Country Rat, The Fox and the Stork, The Oak and the Reed). Almost all Indian children grow up listening to the Panchatantra, an age-old collection of fables (e.g., The Crane and the Crab, The Indigo Jackal, The Monkey and the Crocodile, The Crow and the Snake, The Mongoose and the Farmer's Wife).

Parables. These are succinct and concise stories similar but different from the fable since they do not use animals or inanimate objects. Parables feature human characters. The parable is mainly used as an analogy to illustrate a principle. They are short stories that illustrate a universal truth. Parables tend to focus on a character facing a moral dilemma who makes a questionable decision and then has to face the consequences. They usually carry a prescription for leading life according to a certain value system. The parables of Jesus Christ (e.g., The Prodigal Son) are well-known.

Fairytales. These stories are based on fantasy. They involve invented creatures, enchantment, and magic and inevitably end with good triumphing over evil. Fairytales tend to be a more conscious literary endeavor with a definite author attributed to them (e.g., Andersen, Grimms, Perrault). Grimms' fairytales (Germany) are favorites all over the world and have even been made into highly sophisticated cartoon films (e.g., Rapunzel, Hansel and Gretel, Cinderella, Little Red Cap, Rumpelstiltskin). The fairy tales of Hans Christian Andersen (Denmark) have been told and retold at bedtimes across generations and shimmered on movie screens (e.g., Princess and the Pea, Thumbelina, Little Mermaid, Emperor's New Clothes, Ugly Duckling). Charles Perrault's (France) stories have captivated young and old alike (e.g., Sleeping Beauty, Little Red Riding Hood, Bluebeard, Puss In Boots, Tom Thumb).

Myths. This is another category of stories; it stands apart from other genres with its deep meanings and supernatural content. Myths seek to provide explanations of origins, extinctions, causes, and effects. They portray gods and demons, create heroes and heroines, and endow them with supernatural powers. They are usually entwined with religion, are metaphysical in nature, and offer descriptions of how natural and human worlds interact with each other. Sometimes classified as sacred stories, myths are usually endorsed by rulers and religious leaders. Many cultures have myths that are common to other cultures and contain archetypal themes and images. Examples of myths include stories about Thor, Odin, Loki (Norse/Norwegian); and stories about the exploits of Odysseus, Zeus, Hercules, Athena, Perseus (Greek/Roman). Stories about Chang Er and the Queen Mother of Heaven are Chinese myths; stories about Osiris and Ra are from ancient Egypt; and tales about the Sidhe, Chuchulainn, and Finn Mac Cool are from the traditions of Celtic mythology. Shiva and Parvathi, Lord Vishnu and The Churning of the Ocean, Ganesha, Ganga, Hanuman, are

examples of gods and goddesses in Hindu mythology which brims over with accounts of their benevolence, power, frailties, and sometimes indeed, their foolishness!

The most important point to be noted by the career counselor is that stories, whatever the form and genre, are in fact a repository of human history and experience. Bettelheim (1991), a child psychologist stated, "when you read a folk/fairy tale you enter a rich tradition that has been shaped not by one person, but by the consensus of many to what they view as universal human problems, and what they accept as desirable solutions" (p. 10). It must be noted also that the purpose of the story is not always to please. Stories can also be meant to disturb and intentionally mislead the listener (Law, n.d.). As we will see further ahead in this chapter, the story could become a platform upon which the individual can examine intentions and objectives, wishes and desires, in the light of his or her cultural heritage.

Why Do We Tell Stories?

The desire to make meaning out of experiences, to record the learnings that resulted from these experiences, and to pass them on to other generations has been a fundamental feature of human existence. Fisher (1987) has used the term *homo narrans* to label this deep seated human tendency and points out that across time and in every culture, the human being has used the story to give order or structure to human experience and to share personal insights with others. What is special about story creation and storytelling is that learnings and experiences are skillfully embedded within the framework of entertainment and enjoyment. Stories transcend the limits of logic and rationality. They unleash imagination, create vivid images, present symbols, evoke laughter and tears, and thereby attract and hold the attention of the listener.

Stories are receptacles of culture and values. Our rituals, customs, practices, beliefs, indeed all aspects of our cultural lives are mirrored in our stories. Characters in stories depict human values such as strength, honesty, persistence, and valor. At the same time, stories

could also present the opposite of these values. Strength could be contrasted with weakness, honesty with deceit, persistence with transience, courage with cowardice. Positive outcomes such as prosperity, wellbeing, success, and happiness are almost invariably linked to values that are positive within a certain culture. On the other hand, adverse outcomes are associated with values that are labeled as negative by a certain culture. An ancient Chinese legend offers a good example.

> The Phoenix and the Dragon were very dear and close friends. They discovered a flawless pearl and decided to care for the pearl. They spent time polishing and shining the pearl until its brilliance attracted the attention of the Queen Mother of the Heavens. Using stealth and cunning she arranged for the pearl to be stolen while the animals were asleep. She organized a celebration for her birthday and displayed the pearl to all her invited guests as her own treasure. Meanwhile, the phoenix and the dragon searched all day and all night for many days and nights, looking for their precious pearl. They did not give up and one day they saw the unmistakable brilliance coming from the heavens. The animals traveled upwards to heaven and arrived at the celebration. They asked for the pearl and the Queen Mother accused them of being liars. A terrible tussle ensued and the pearl fell down, down all the way down from heaven. The concerned animals flew downwards, towards Earth trying in vain to catch and save their pearl. But the pearl fell to the ground and created the Great West Lake of China. The animals were transformed into Jade Dragon Mountain and Golden Phoenix Mountain that flank either side of the lake, as a testament of their love and friendship.

Stories create connectedness. Stories are shared perceptions. Hence, they allow us to be connected to each other, to our forefathers as well as to future generations. Stories connect us to the natural world in which we live. Stories that are based on universal archetypes and common themes connect us to other cultures. Stories that have deeper

mythical origins connect us to the cosmos and the universe. The folk tale of the Sun and the Moon is an example from the Philippines.

> The Sun and the Moon were married and their children were the stars of the firmament. But the sun was so hot that when he touched the stars, their children, he would burn them. So the moon warned her husband not to touch the stars. However, one day when she was collecting water from the spring, the sun touched and burnt some of the stars and they perished. The moon was so angry with him that she tried to beat him with a banana trunk and he tried to defend himself by throwing sand in her face. That is why until today the moon has dark marks on her face. That is why until today the sun chases the moon. Sometime he catches up with her and is very close to her, but she manages to escape and is once more far ahead of him.

Stories offer guidelines for everyday life. Stories describe situations that parallel everyday life. What the characters do in stories, their responses, and the outcomes of their actions offer guidelines for similar situations in our daily lives. Stories provide role models that could guide our daily behavior. Heroes and their valiant deeds could be emulated. Villains and their dastardly acts could be inspirations of what one's behavior must *not* be. Here is a German fairytale that draws upon the universal human desires for wealth and a better life.

> The story of the fisherman and his wife is a classic tale. The wife demands from her husband more fish so she can make more money selling them at the market. The poor fisherman, the husband, is satisfied with his simple abode, predictable routine, and quiet life. In order to please his wife he tries hard to catch more fish and finds an enormous, brilliantly shining fish in his net. The fish speaks to him and grants him three wishes if he spares its life. The fisherman asks for a better house and his wife is pleased with their improved circumstances. She forces him to ask for more elaborate

and grand wishes from the magic fish and finally ends up asking to be the Queen of the Universe. The fish returns the couple to their original state and they both lose everything that was granted to them.

Stories are illuminative. At the deepest level, we tell stories to help us make sense of our world and our situation. Our existence is sometimes punctuated by questions that don't seem to have rational or verifiable answers. Where did we come from? Why are we here? What happens after we die? Why is there suffering? What is the purpose and meaning of life? Stories provide answers that go beyond the limits of logic and rationality. Made up of images and symbols, stories capture the essence of human experience in a way that historical accounts do not. The vital point to be noted is that these are descriptions of important truths. One of the key functions of myths is that they present deeper experiences in a language and form that is easily understandable. They are vehicles through which significant revelations are passed on from one generation to another. Stories are beyond the scope of reason and logic. Instead, they stimulate the imagination and touch feelings. They use the language of the common person. Therefore, they are easier to remember, understand, and identify with than complex philosophic discussions. Campbell (1972), a scholar of mythology, described the illuminative function of the symbolism of stories and myths when he said, "we see mythological characters who represent love, youth, death, wealth, virility, fear, evil, and other archetypal facets of life. As we read, we are viewing a dream-like fantasy which portrays the interaction of the elements of our own lives" (p. 56). An example is the well-known chapter in the world's longest epic the *Ramayana*, which describes the battle between the demon-king Ravana and Prince Rama's armies.

Ravana's army was made up of the best warriors and each battalion was led by his relatives and his son. Rama, however, only had a motley collection of monkeys, bears, and other enthusiastic animals. Ravana, due to his arrogance refused to go out and

battle with mere mortals and monkeys and instead sent out to the battlefield, one by one, his twin nephews, his brother, and finally his own son. During one of these battles, Prince Lakshman (Rama's brother) was mortally wounded and Rama's army had dwindled to almost nothing. At this time Hanuman, the general of the monkey army was told to use his magical powers and retrieve the life-restoring herb, *sanjeevani* from the Himalayas. Hanuman grew large and flew fast to the mountains but once he was there he was unable to distinguish the herb from all the other greenery. So, Hanuman lifted the entire mountain in his palm and flew back to the battlefield. In this way, the correct healing herb was administered to Lakshman and the others and Ram's army was restored once more.

These are some of the edifying purposes that lie behind the reason for storytelling. However, it must also be kept in mind that values embedded in stories can be misdirected and can become a means of social control (Law, n.d.) Some of the bloodiest wars throughout history, for example, were inspired and sustained by myths that were deeply valued by those who engaged in such wars.

The Story as a Tool for Learning and Teaching

Across the ages, the story has been used as a tool for teaching and learning. Sunwolf (1999) identified certain stories as learning stories. She points out that the primary function of these stories is not to answer questions. Instead, learning stories stimulate questions and raise issues, rather than resolve them. Kirkwood (1992) described stories as concise, spoken narratives voiced with the intention to teach, guide, or influence listeners, rather than to entertain. It is also interesting to note that different cultures use the story as a teaching tool in different ways. We present some examples here.

Native American lesson stories. The custom of using the story as a vehicle for teaching and learning spans the culture and experiences of 400 different aboriginal people of

North America with a great variety in their languages, history, and geography representing more than 2000 cultures (Bruchac, 1997). In her analysis of the pedagogical and persuasive value of stories, Sunwolf (1999) observed that Native American tribes relied on their oral tradition and believed that teaching is most powerfully accomplished through the telling of stories. These stories were called "lesson stories.'' The telling of Native American stories rested on the deeply-held conviction that teaching is not instructing the child about what he or she "should" or "should not" do. An errant child would not be beaten, scolded, or treated harshly in the fear that it would break the child's spirit. Instead, the elder in the community would take the child aside and he or she would be told a story! The story, therefore, was used in this culture as a method of indirect pedagogy (More, 1987) and it was believed that a well-told tale would be remembered longer than saying either, ''you should'' or ''you should not'' (Bruchac, 1997). Native American stories are usually quite short, typically spanning events of the past and the present to comment on possibilities for the future. They may even be expressed as a joke, the purpose of which is not only to make people laugh but to get across, indirectly, but forcefully that the story carries a message directly applicable to the listener. A good example of a Native American lesson story goes like this.

> "Only after the last tree has been cut down, only after the last river has been poisoned, only after the last fish has been caught, only then will you find that money cannot be eaten" (Speake, 2009, p. 78).

This is a story that has recently become famous and is used all over the world as a slogan for environmental causes. And it indeed it has a deep message for career development as well.

Sufi wisdom tales. Sufism is an aspect of Islam that follows a mystical pathway. Told and retold across hundreds of years, Sufi wisdom stories span a wide range of regions and include Persian, Arabic, and Turkish cultures. A particular character of Sufi tales is that they

use psychological mechanisms to deliver their messages. Sufism believes that the mind functions at various levels and that a certain kind of mental activity can move the individual to what is termed as a *higher working of the mind*, the capacity for which is potentially present in all human beings (Shah, 1968). Within the Sufi understanding, rationality often becomes a filter, allowing as plausible only that which is logical. Yet, not all truth can be contained within the boundaries of logic and reason. Sufi wisdom stories are designed to get past the censoring effect of the rational mind to reach deeper levels within the individual. At a certain level, Sufi stories are told for their entertainment value. Their real purpose, however, is for students of Sufism to find the means to unlock internal dimensions, "without alarming psychic defences" (Shah, 1968, p. 67). The story is used as a tool to unlock the capacity for introspection and contemplation and thereby clear the pathway toward deeper insights. The telling of Sufi tales for the purposes of teaching rests on the premise that since they do not challenge the listener's values and beliefs, the rational mind does not censor or filter them out. The messages embedded within these tales slip through defence mechanisms and thereby influence socially-conditioned perceptions and engrained thought habits. Sufi tales vary in length. But a characteristic feature of this type of teaching story is its succinctness. Here is a short Sufi teaching story.

> A seeker went up to a Sufi mullah (a cleric in the Islamic tradition) and told him that although he lived in a beautiful house and did not want for any pleasures, he always felt unsettled within. "How do I find the true light of Truth?" he asked. "What is your house like inside?'' the mullah asked. "Very nice, oh mullah. I have all the comforts a home can give. But there is one problem with my house: There is no sunshine in it," the seeker replied. "Is there sunshine anywhere near your house?" asked the mullah. "Yes, my garden is always bathed in sunshine," the seeker said. Pat came the mullah's reply, "Then why don't you move the house into your garden?" (Shah, 1968, p. 30).

This is an example of how a Sufi wisdom tale jars conventional thinking and pushes the listener to view an issue from an altogether different perspective.

African dilemma tales. As with other cultures, African tales also include a wide variety of genres including folktales, fables, and myths. They reflect the universal desire to create order and reason out of chaos and accident (Courlander, 1975). Common across many parts of Africa, the dilemma tale fits into African cultures' preference for the indirect and courteous approach to an issue. The storyteller (an important and respected member of the community) would use the dilemma tale to proceed towards the purpose of the communication through a skillful use of digressions. A dilemma is a situation where a choice has to be made between two or possibly multiple options. The defining characteristic of the dilemma tale is that at the completion of its telling, the dilemma is outlined but no answers or solutions are given. Creating solutions or meaning is left to the listener. The characters in a typical dilemma tale all play their roles and it is the decision of the listener as to which of them deserves a reward, or should be punished, or win an argument or a case in court (Bascom, 1975). The storyteller's role is to tell of the adventure and detail the events and in the telling, stimulate the audience's interest and curiosity. Once the telling is done, the audience takes over and begins to debate and ponder over the questions that the story has raised. Hence, dilemma tales are described as unfinished tales (Berry, 1961) and tales which are open-ended rather than conclusive in their culmination (Bascom, 1975). A further objective of the dilemma tale is to demonstrate that in human affairs there are often no answers but only difficult choices. Hence, at the end of a telling, listeners would debate about what is fair and unfair, what is cowardly or courageous, or what is rational or unreasonable (Courlander, 1975). Here is a typical African dilemma tale collected and paraphrased by Bascom (1975).

> The drum asked the canoe of what use it was. The canoe replied, ‘‘I carry our master wherever he goes, I carry others who pay him for the ride, and because of me our master catches fish. Of what use are you?’’ The drum replied, ‘‘I am the mouth of our master and of the entire clan. I warn people when war comes, and I send messages when our master wants to speak with someone at a distance. During the dances, my voice speaks with joy and gives enthusiasm to the dancers. Am I not the most important of our master’s servants?’’ They went to their master to settle the argument. He bent over to think but has not yet spoken. If you had to answer, what would your reply be: which one, the drum or the canoe has the noblest work?

The question at the end of the tale is in fact an encouragement to contemplate and ponder and at the end draw one’s own conclusions.

Cautionary tales from the Malay tradition. In Malay folklore, the fool stories that depict characters as foolhardy are cautionary tales masked in humor. The stories of Pak Pandir and his numerous adventures is an example from Malaysia. Here is an excerpt to illustrate this point (Knappert, 1980).

> The next day Pak Pandir’s wife asked him to go and buy a bag of salt. While he was walking along the river with his bag, he felt the call of nature. Before squatting in the shallow water, as is the custom, he thought of a place to hide away his jute bag, full of salt, from the thieves. Of course! The best hiding place was …under water! He was much surprised later to find the bag empty as soon as all the water had run out!

Indian story *creators*. The tradition of storytelling in India is rich and of great variety. We present in this section not the story, but a brief glimpse into how the lives and deeds of traditional Indian counselors became stories that are told even today. Indian history is replete with examples of court-jesters, poets, wise advisors and itinerant bards who drawing upon wit and wisdom communicated vital lessons. Avvaiyars, for example, were wise old women

(there are three in recorded history who lived in the 1st, 2nd, and 13th centuries CE) who wandered around South Indian villages, advising commoners and kings alike through their stories and pithy aphorisms. Tenali Ramakrishna was a famous poet and court-jester of the 16th century CE who used humor and satire rooted in the cultural ethos of South India to advise his king. Raja Birbal was the Wazir-e-Azam (grand vizier) of the Mughal court in the 16th century CE. His stories reflect the culture of North India and offer simple but highly effective solutions to political crises and administrative tangles. One of the famous stories about Avvaiyar, for example, is the subtle way in which she prevented a war.

> Thondiaman a young king, eager to test his prowess declared war against the more seasoned veteran Adiyaman of the neighboring kingdom. Adiyaman had no choice other than to prepare his troops for war. Knowing the devastation that would ensue, the wise old Avvaiyar stepped into the political imbroglio and paid Thondiaman a visit. She was welcomed with all the respect she deserved. And then she asked to see the young king's armory. Nothing could have pleased the battle hungry king more! Proud of his arms he showed her around and displayed his weapons. "Hmmm," said the venerable old lady, "what an amazing collection of weapons. They are so new, so shiny, and so clean." Thondiaman glowed with pleasure. But the wise Avvai went on. "How different your weapons are from Adiyaman's weapons which are stained with blood and are marked by the ravages of so many wars. His soldiers are constantly repairing them." And that was when the penny dropped. The young king realized that Avvaiyar was indirectly letting him know that his chances were slim against a battle-hardened veteran. His juvenile lust for battle quickly subsided. Avvai took her leave with the words, "War is like plunging into a river with a grinding stone to help you float. The very rains pour for the sake of the man who prevents women from losing husbands and sons in senseless war" (Saletore, 1981, pp. 153-154).

This story is found even today in almost every primary school textbook in Tamil Nadu (South India) as are tales about the lives and actions of other traditional counselors.

Stories are part and parcel of everyday life and as described above, have been used with great effect as tools for teaching and learning. As we move ahead in this chapter, we will examine how the story could be used in today's world as a teaching and learning device for career counseling.

The Story and Meaning Making

The power of a story arises from the fact that it uses a metaphor. Stories use symbols, images, and comparisons to tangibly represent something that is not easy to grasp. The symbols embedded in stories are in fact representations of real life. For example, the coyote in Native American folklore is a symbol of a trickster, the fox in Western folklore is a symbol of cunning and elusiveness, the crane in Japanese mythology is a symbol of long life. In other traditions, a utensil or cooking pot may symbolize plentiful and an unending supply of food, a flower or fruit may symbolize fertility and result in the discovery of something that has been long awaited. Interpreting symbols and images and bringing out their relevance to daily life could help people understand their own thoughts, feelings, and actions.

Illogically sound. When things go wrong and our wellbeing is low, it is difficult to maintain a clear view of self and of life. Our rational minds get clogged and all we can see is the problem. "Must" and "should," "do" and "don't," in such situations, can evoke a resistance in the person who hears these phrases. The story, on the other hand, is not judgmental of us. Since stories are not based on logic and reason, they enter our consciousness through other pathways: the pathways of wonder, of emotions and feelings. Stories allow for the imagination of alternative possibilities. In fact, when we daydream, we imagine what "could be." Stories open listeners' access to the resources available within themselves. Simms (2000) asserted that as the characters in a fairytale cross thresholds into

other realms, listeners are drawn inward, past the boundaries of their logical minds. She highlights that when the listener is able to engage with the story, storytelling allows the doors of his or her logical mind to "fall open inward," allowing the person to "dream awake" (p. 62), thereby creating the possibility for introspection that transcends the constraints of logic and reason. Indeed at the surface, in the Sufi tale described earlier, it seems illogical when the mullah says, *"Why don't you move the house into your garden?''* But if the seeker were to consider more deeply, the question would take him beyond logic to the deeper principles that underlie the issues that surround the satiation of desire and the search for lasting peace.

The larger picture. Problems and difficulties tend to foreshorten our view. When we become preoccupied with ourselves and our discomforts we could lose touch with the larger world. Stories can take us out of ourselves and reorient us once again to the bigger world and the larger community of which we are a part. Daniel Taylor, who has analyzed the impact that stories have on human thought, has pointed out that stories can help the listener perceive his or her own position in the larger picture. A story can reveal to an individual that he or she is part of a world of other characters who are all under the influence of different kinds of forces. Helping people realize their roles in the broader story of life takes them out of a narrow focus on self, urging them towards a focus on their communities and the shared interwoven stories around them (Taylor, 1996). Let us go back to the Avvaiyar story summarized earlier. By drawing the younger king's attention to the fact that he was ranging his inexperienced army against a battle-hardened warlord, the wise old lady not only drew his attention to the futility of his efforts but to the deeper value of being a peacemaker rather than a warmonger.

The Story as a Tool for Career Counseling

The sections in the chapter so far have hinted at the many possibilities that the story offers for a culture-resonant form of career counseling. We will now draw these possibilities together to consider specific applications for the practice of career counseling.

Understanding Psychological Underpinnings

Using the story as a counseling tool requires us, first of all, to learn to analyze its behavioral/psychological structure and its inner dynamics. Let us consider four psychological constructs to understand what it is about the telling of a story that allows it to be used as a tool for career counseling.

Mindful consideration. Listeners' responses to a story could vary. The same story may evoke different thoughts and emotions in different people. Some may be deeply touched, others may not understand the story, others may be disinterested, and still others may listen merely to be entertained. Our target when using the story as a counseling tool is to engage listeners' active cognitive and emotional involvement with the psychological elements of the story. If the story is to be used successfully, the first step is to engage the mindful consideration of the listener.

Themes and motifs. At the heart of every story is a motif. This is the perceivable and salient recurring theme in a story. It is a repeated pattern that occurs through the story. Motifs may appear as word pictures, symbols, and linguistic images, in fragments and parts. But together they become a complete picture. The identification of these motifs would lead the listener to the meanings embedded within the story. The central motif of the Native American tale quoted earlier, is the impact that human activities have on the environment: *"…only then will you find that money cannot be eaten."* In a career counseling session, this theme could be extended into a discussion to focus on the meaning of work, the impact of one's occupation upon the environment, or the questions that surround monetary gain and the importance of considering the larger issues related to the world that one inhabits.

Thoughts and cognitions. Thoughts and cognitions are one aspect of the psychological content of a story. Thoughts are the result of the mental activity of thinking, deliberation, and reflection. Thoughts are related to concepts, opinions, and ideas. Cognition refers to the mental processes that underlie knowledge acquisition, understanding, and comprehension. This includes thinking, knowing, remembering, judging, and problem-solving. These are higher-order functions of the brain and are supported by language, imagination, reasoning, perception, and planning. Let's go back to the question at the end of the African dilemma tale quoted earlier: *"Which one, the drum or the canoe, has the noblest work?"* Finding an answer at the cognitive level would mean listing the different contributions made by the canoe versus the drum. For career counseling, a story such as this could be used to get the career chooser to begin thinking about attributes of careers and occupations and then debating the relative merits of each one. Keeping in tune with the dilemma tale's objective, a point that could be drawn out from a story like this is that a career by itself is neutral in its characteristics. What the drum offers and the canoe offers are in effect not comparable with each other. It is the actions of the practitioner of a career that matter in the end.

Emotions and feelings. Stories carry emotions, moods, and sentiments. Emotions are subjective, conscious experiences, distinguished from mental phenomena such as reasoning, knowing, or comprehending. Love, joy, surprise, anger, sadness, and fear are said to be examples of primary emotions. Each primary emotion can be experienced at different levels of intensity. Love could be experienced as affection, fondness, adoration, lust, or longing. Joy could be associated with cheerfulness, amusement, gaiety, glee, jolliness, or ecstasy. Surprise could be related to amazement and astonishment. Anger could be linked to rage, irritation, and annoyance. Sadness could reflect hopelessness, gloom, grief, or sorrow. Fear could be seen as terror, panic, hysteria, nervousness, anxiety, and worry. Avvaiyar, in the

South Indian story, approaches the young king's lust for war at the cognitive level. She presents him with a set of facts pertaining to his adversary's prowess: "*They are stained with blood and are marked by the ravages of so many wars.*" But in effect, the thoughts that she triggered had an impact on emotions which ultimately doused the young king's desire for battle.

As the listener engages with a story, he or she becomes aware of the actions and the behaviors of the characters in the story. As the story plays out, the listener becomes mindful of the consequences, results, and outcomes of these actions and behaviors. The plot, content, and manner of the telling stimulate thoughts and emotions in the listener. These thoughts and emotions could in turn move the listener toward certain kinds of actions and behaviors. Keeping these basic psychological constructs in mind we will now consider three techniques that could be used to create channels between the story and the person for practice of culture resonant career counseling.

Technique 1: Guided Deliberation

It has been pointed out earlier in the chapter that a story is not the result of a single person's conjecture. It has emerged from the distillation of human experience and rests upon the consensus of the members of the community (Bettelheim, 1991). It is these kinds of stories that the career counselor should search for, identify, and collect. Stories that are already accepted by a community as a part of its fabric would have a higher power of influence. A critical point to be noted is that it may not be the story itself that influences the person, but the thinking and feeling that results from the telling of the story and the ideas and arguments that emerge after exposure to a story (Sunwolf, 1999).

Listening to a story would generate thoughts and emotions within the listener. If unguided, the thoughts and emotions that arise would be random and arbitrary and dissipate after a while. However, when provided with a thematic frame of reference, thoughts and

emotions that arise would be within that frame. This material could be garnered by the career counselor and used to promote deeper insights. Given here is an excerpt from an interaction with 39-year-old Indian female employee of a large information technology company, who was doing well at her career but was quite unhappy within herself. This person came from a Muslim background and hence the Sufi wisdom tale recounted above was used with her. She was asked to reflect upon the motifs of the "beautiful house" and "sunshine." Here is a brief glimpse into the interaction between the woman and the counselor (Arulmani, 2006). This is an abbreviated version of the interaction and only aspects that serve to illustrate the point being made in this section are reported.

Client: Yes! That's a story my father has often told me. It rings many bells. Ah! Such memories! But I never thought about it from the work angle.

Counselor: Use the images of the "beautiful house" and the image of "sunshine" to reflect upon the unhappiness you are experiencing with your work.

Client: I have been at this job for 12 years or so. I have done well. In fact I have been able to build my own beautiful house! But the story makes me think. My "career house" is not so beautiful. It has everything… money, position and all the perks. But the sunshine's not there.

Counselor: Let's talk some more about the sunshine. What are the thoughts that come into your mind and the feelings you experience when you think about sunshine?

Client: I came into information technology because it was the thing to do. In the beginning all seemed fine. But even then this job really wasn't me. I don't really like programming and as the days went on I found the people I worked with were also not my sort. My real desire was to be a jewelry designer. I do that on the side as a sort of hobby when my job gets too much! This story

> seems to tell me that jewelry designing is the sunshine in my garden! I want to move my house into the sunshine in my garden! But how will I make such a shift? Is there a way to do that?

Shortly after this, the counseling interactions moved on to the specifics of making a career shift. The point to be noted is that the telling of this story triggered old and pleasant memories and offered insights that were helpful to the client. It is also possible that stories trigger unpleasant memories. This too could be offered as material to promote insights.

Guided deliberation: Counseling watch-points. Here are some points to consider when using guided deliberation in career counseling:

- Select a story that has close resonance with the individual's situation and cultural background.
- Identify motifs in the story that can be linked to the client's situation.
- Outline a frame for deliberation within which the client could engage with the story. In the case of the woman from the information technology company, the client's unhappiness with her career was used as the frame for deliberation.
- Guide deliberation such that focus is brought to bear upon thoughts and emotions that emerge in relation to the identified motifs.
- Use the material that emerges from the deliberation to help the client move toward resolution.

Technique 2: Stories as Vicarious Learning

The term *vicarious* refers to imaginary experiences a person can have when exposed to the actions of another person. If one were to observe someone (a role model) similar to oneself succeed by consistent effort, this observation would raise that person's belief that he or she too can master similar activities (Bandura, 1995). In the same way, observations of others' failures despite strong efforts, undermine observers' judgment of their own efficacy.

The greater the real or assumed similarity of the model to the observer, the more powerful will be the impact of the model's success/failure on the observer (Bandura, 1995). Stories break boundaries. Through stories we can walk beside gods and deities, heroes and heroines, as well as hold hands with people just like ourselves. When a character in a story suffers an injustice or struggles in a way similar to what we experience, we indirectly feel that somehow our own difficulties have meaning and personal pains and disappointments may become more bearable. Stories are powerful vehicles for the facilitation of vicarious learning experiences.

Thoughts-emotions-outcomes. Human behavior is the totality of responses or reactions made by a person or a group of persons in any situation. The cognitive-behavioral theories propounded by Aaron Beck (Beck, Rush, Shaw, & Emery, 1979) and Albert Ellis (Ellis, 1994), and their colleagues are based on the observation that underlying cognitive (thinking) patterns play a definitive role in influencing behavior. Thoughts, emotions, and outcomes (behavior) are described as interlocking variables. The origin of a behavior accordingly is traced to the kind of thought patterns that have become habitual in a person's mind. A requirement or situation in one's life triggers a thought pattern. The thought pattern leads to the experience of a certain type of emotion. This emotion triggers a particular action or behavioral response. Therefore, just behind a person's behavior are emotions and behind the emotions are thought patterns.

Cognitive-behavioral theorists further hold that inaccurate perceptions and distortions of reality lead to systematic biases in the interpretation of experiences causing errors in cognition (thinking). These cognitive errors are also called cognitive distortions (Beck et al., 1979). Cognitive distortions become automatic and the person is unaware of their operation. Behavior, according to this perspective, is the outcome of internally occurring, automatic, and habitual mindsets, thinking patterns, schema, and beliefs. Here is an illustration: A 17-year-old student who was completing higher secondary education in about three months requested

to be seen individually, after she had participated in group career counseling workshops held routinely for her class. During the first session she indicated that although a number of friends, teachers, and parents suggested that she selects careers in the field of design, she was still very confused. In keeping with the methods suggested by Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, she was asked to start a diary. Given in Table 1 is an extract of a few entries from her diary (Arulmani, 2010). The entries in the diary illustrate how thoughts can become habits. Quite often it is not events that upset us but our perception of these events. Our thoughts can be a filter through which we interpret and give meaning to events. Thought-emotion-action sequences that people are habituated to, can influence their belief in personal efficacy to manage life's demands which in turn affects psychological wellbeing, accomplishments, and the general direction their lives take.

Insert Table 1 around here

Thoughts-emotions-outcomes in stories. Thoughts, emotions, and behaviors are the material with which the counselor works. At the heart of almost all stories are thoughts and beliefs, emotions and feelings which in turn reflect in behaviors and actions. Identifying the thought-emotion-action sequences in a story is a powerful means of creating insights into personal states of mind and behaviors. When a story is interpreted to a listener in this manner, he or she could learn more about the reasons behind his or her own actions. Let us now attempt to apply this idea at the level of practical career counseling.

The story we are using as an illustration is an episode from the Ramayana: how Rama (the crown prince) won the hand of the beautiful princess, Sita. Box 1 provides a worksheet that could be used for this exercise. In the worksheet in the example provided was completed by a 31-year-old Indian female employee of an advertising firm, who was doing well at some of her job requirements but not so well at other tasks. She came from a traditional Hindu background and hence, the Ramayana was used in the interaction with her. This is an

abbreviated version of the interaction and only aspects that serve to illustrate the point being made in this section are reported (Arulmani, 2006). Text that has been italicized in the table represents material that the client had entered. In an unused worksheet, these parts of the table would be left blank for the client to fill in.

Insert Box 1 around here

This was the first session with the client. The content of the interactions thereafter focused more closely on helping the client understand how her negative thinking affected her emotions and ultimately her performance at work. Other stories were used and the client was also encouraged to bring stories to the sessions that paralleled her situation.

Vicarious Learning: Counseling watch-points. Here are some points to consider when using vicarious experience as a technique in career counseling:

- Prepare a worksheet similar to the illustration in Box 1.
- Orient the client, with examples, to the manner in which thoughts, emotions, and actions reciprocally influence each other. It is important that this concept is clearly understood, if the method is to be effective. Hence, include this as a brief write-up in the worksheet (see Note to Counselor in Box 1).
- Give the background, set the context, and then tell the story.
- As with the earlier example, select stories that have close resonance with the individual's situation and cultural background; identify motifs in the story that can be linked to the client's situation.
- Provide the client with a template to maintain a daily diary as shown in Table 1. Instruct the client to log daily experiences into the diary and to bring the diary to the counseling sessions. Discuss and interpret the material that the client has recorded.

- As counseling moves on, take care to draw the client's attention back to the character/s or aspects of the story that carry the main message. In this case, the client's attention was brought back to Rama's success: *I must crack this like Lord Rama did!*
- Be prepared with fresh stories to reinforce the client's learning.
- Encourage the client to search for stories that he/she feels are relevant to his/her situation and bring them to the counseling sessions for discussion.

Technique 3: Framing and Reframing

The story when used for entertainment only requires the listener to sit back and enjoy the telling. Our objective in using the story goes much beyond and aims at deeper issues such as attitude change, decision making, and helping the individual find solutions. The impact is likely to be stronger when the listener is not merely the passive recipient of a story. The active involvement of the listener is known to engender more lasting effects than if the teller of the tale supplies the correct reasoning and answer (Sunwolf, 1999). Framing and reframing a story is an exercise that requires the listener to play a more active and self-mediated role. This exercise will use a famous story from the Panchatantra (an ancient Indian compendium of animal fables): The Indigo Jackal. See Appendix for the complete story as retold by Ramachandran (2011).

Framing the story. The first step when using this method is for the counselor to clearly delineate the story's plot. A story plot describes a series of circumstances befalling a set of characters with a fairly clear sense of a beginning and an end, linked together by a cohesive narrative. The counselor is required to identify the central motif and theme of the story and establish its relevance to the issue. The next step is to frame the story. This means, reducing the story to its outline and its key points. Ideally, the reframed story should be condensed to 10-to-12 points. The first point should highlight the beginning and the last

point should depict the final outcome of the story. Framing the story is an activity that the counselor completes before the interaction with the listener. Box 2 (column 1) illustrates the framing of the Indigo Jackal story. Having framed the story, the counselor tells the entire, unedited story to the whole group. It would be particularly effective if the listener (or one of the members of the group) told or read the story.

Insert Box 2 around here

Reframing the story. One of the key objectives of using the story in counseling is to unveil new pathways and point to fresh perspectives. It is to achieve this objective that the technique of reframing is used. Once the listener has completely understood the story, the counselor is to draw the listener's attention to the story outline. This is the stage at which the listener's active participation begins. Reframing comprises changing the *outcome* of the story to a different conclusion, while no changes are made to the *beginning* of the story. As indicated by the non-italicized text in Box 2 (column 2), the counselor is to point out the situation at the beginning of the story: *dark cold night; no food* and the changed outcome at the end: *recognized for true qualities and therefore became king*. A discussion could be stimulated to highlight contrast between the conclusion in the original story outline and the changed outcome. In effect, the context and the circumstances remain the same, while the outcome is different. The exercise the listener is to engage in, is to ask the question "what if" (Box 2, column 2) and imagine events that could lead up to this new outcome. In other words, the listener applies his or her mind to reframe the story and propose changes in behavior that could culminate in a new and different outcome.

Transpose to real life. Reframing is connected to the characters and plot of the original story. Still in the realm of fantasy and imagination, changes that are projected may be far removed from the client's real life situation. Reframing rests on the understanding that it is an intermediate stage in the counseling process before the client begins to become

personally involved with the change process. Reframing is a simulation of real events and situations and helps the client project, create, and imagine the steps to a new and better outcome. We have found, when using stories for career counseling, that reframing is an effective way to help a career chooser learn about his or her thoughts, perceptions, and unexpressed feelings about matters related to career choice and development (Arulmani, 2006). Of particular importance is the fact that reframing offers a convenient psychological distance and prepares the individual to confront the difficulties that he or she is facing in real life (Arulmani, 2010). Once the client has become comfortable with the process, the counseling objective is to help the client use the images, symbols, and messages embedded in the story to resolve the issues he or she is facing. Career counseling, therefore, moves to the third step in the process: transposition of the story to real life. In effect, the client begins to ask him/herself, "How does this matter to me?" As illustrated in Box 2 (column 3), the beginning of the story is recast to link more directly with the client's situation: *unhappy with studies; criticized by all for my poor performance*. The outcome is also recast to project what the client would like to happen in his or her life: *be happy with my studies and my career development.* The client and counselor then work collaboratively, against the backdrop of the story, to delineate the steps that could be taken to achieve the outcome desired by the client. These steps then become a guideline for the action to be taken by the client.

The example in Box 2 is a worksheet completed by a 21-year-old Indian male student in the 1st year of Bachelor's program in Engineering. He had taken up the course to please his parents and was deeply unhappy and uninterested in the course. Although he was doing poorly in the course he was still trying to please his parents. But in real life, he had withdrawn from interacting with them. He was well acquainted with the Panchatantra and hence, the Indigo Jackal story was used with him (Arulmani, 2006). This is an abbreviated version of the interaction and only aspects that serve to illustrate the point being made in this

section are reported. Text that has been italicized in the table represents material that the client recorded.

Reframing: Counseling watch-points. Keep the following in mind when using reframing as a technique in career counseling:

- Select a story and prepare a worksheet similar to the illustration in Box 2.
- As with the earlier examples, it is essential that the story selected has close resonance with the individual's situation and cultural background.
- Frame the story in up to 10-to-12 steps and keep it ready.
- Give the background, set the context, and then tell the unedited story. Alternatively, the client could read and then tell the story.
- Now share the story outline with the client. Alternatively, the client and the counselor could work together to frame the story and develop the outline.
- Point out the situation at the beginning and the end (the outcome).
- In consultation with the client, change the outcome, keeping the beginning unchanged.
- Ask the client to reframe the story by working out the steps to reach the new outcome; discuss the steps that the client outlines.
- Move to transposing the images and messages in the story to the client's real life situation, by asking the client to reframe the beginning of the story to link more directly with his or her situation. Also, ask the client to redefine the outcome and to articulate what the client would like to happen in his or her life.
- Work collaboratively with the client to reframe the story and describe the actions that could be taken to achieve the outcome that the client has envisaged. The main task is to experiment with making modifications within the plot to alter the outcome of the client's story.

- Point out how these steps are the guideline for the action to be taken by the client.
- As counseling moves on, take care to draw the client's attention back to the character/s or aspects of the story that carry the main message.
- Follow up in further sessions as to how the client progresses with the guidelines developed from the story. Be prepared to make alterations in the guidelines. Support the client until the issue is resolved.

Stories could be used as a career counseling tool at the individual and group levels. The key difference between individual and group career counseling is that the group intervention is preplanned and based on the counselor's knowledge of a "common" need. Therefore, while at the individual level counseling is focused on personal, individualized scripts, at the group level, counseling is concentrated on socially shared cognitions, emotions, motives, and meanings. Each of the three techniques described in this chapter could be adapted for group workshops that target needs which are shared by a group of individuals.

Conclusion

Relevance for Multiple Cultures: Sensitivity to the Universal and the Particular

The learning that occurs between an individual and his or her culture is drawn from a storehouse of experience that has accumulated and grown over the ages. The story evolved within all human societies as the articulation of experiences and occurrences, incidents and encounters, imagination and inspiration, thoughts, ideas, and beliefs about what was, what is, and what is going to be. Only at the most superficial level is the story a medium of entertainment. Stories are in fact repositories of culture, describing ways of living. They are commentaries on social values defining codes of behavior. They are documents of history, recording the vagaries of humankind's journey. They are receptacles of collective human wisdom. Moreover, the commonalities of mythologies and folklore across cultures are intriguing. This has perhaps prompted psychologists to point out that a fundamental

character of the story is that it is closely connected to deeper psychological forces (e.g., Jung, 1964). The story, therefore, could perhaps be described as a feature that characterizes human society as a whole. In this sense, the story spans all cultures demonstrating its universal nature. At the same time, every story has its culture specific dimension, whereby meaning emerges from the manner in which a story is interpreted and this could vary from one context to another. A story with a theme that spans multiple cultures can be understood in a very personal way, just as the voices in a story with a specific theme can be amplified to be heard across multiple cultures. It must be noted that sometimes the values depicted in stories may not reflect current values. Many stories are gender-stereotyped or promote typically patriarchal ways. As illustrated in the technique of reframing, these are opportunities to stimulate reflection and deliberately adopt a different set of values. Of relevance to career counseling is the fact that in today's multicultural societies, there is a high likelihood of counselor and counselee coming from differing cultural contexts, each influenced and guided by their own orientations to work and career. A characteristic of the story is that it does not demand acceptance and that it has the potential to connect the universal with the particular. Hence, stories could be a highly effective means of coming close to the psychological dynamics that are at play in the lives of our clients. We extend this point, to highlight the possibility that the story could in fact be a bridge between career counselor and client who each come from different cultural backgrounds. Indeed, by using the story we are drawing upon one of the oldest forms of counseling, one that offers the possibility of interpreting universal themes into local contexts and at the same time of extending culture-specific themes to broader contexts.

New Concepts and Viewpoints: Charting New Directions

We began this chapter began by pointing out that counseling, as it is most commonly practiced today, emerged within Western cultures and to that extent the methods and

techniques of counseling are largely attuned to Western ways of life. Today, the relevance of these models and techniques to contexts outside which they were developed is being increasingly questioned (e.g., Reese & Vera, 2007). Hence, over the last few years, the importance of culture-resonant forms of counseling has begun to be increasingly discussed in the literature. The story has been used across the ages and across cultures as a teaching-learning tool as well as a form of counseling by traditional counselors. In Eastern cultures, the central function of storytelling is not amusement. Traditional counselors typically use illustrations from parables, stories from the holy books and folk tales that depict the gods, folk heroes, and other characters whom the help-seeker is already culturally prepared to revere and respect. In these interactions, the attention of the help-seeker is drawn to how the characters in the stories deal with life's vicissitudes and the help-seeker is exhorted to emulate them. It is to this Eastern practice of directing the help seeker's attention to the collective wisdom of his or her community, that we draw the contemporary career counselor's attention. Traditional counselors use the story to lift the help-seeker above the strictures of logic, reason, and causality. Taking a leaf out of the traditional counselor's approach, we propose that creating a channel between the person and an appropriate traditional story has the potential to effectively touch the person, inform the person, and create an environment wherein the person does not merely identify solutions but constructs them within the fabric of his or her culture.

In this chapter we have demonstrated how the story can be used for contemporary career counseling. If the techniques presented above are to be effective, it is critical that the listener is able to identify with the stories being used. We, therefore, conclude by highlighting an obvious but essential point. To use the story as a part of his or her work, the career counselor must be committed to story collection! As is clear from this writing, individuals differ from each other with regard to their needs. These needs are further

qualified by the culture of which the individual is a part. Hence, it is essential that the story telling career counselor has a wide collection of stories in his or her repertoire. While story collection is important, it is perhaps even more important that the counselor is fluent in the telling of the story. A story can have many themes. Being able to emphasize the motif that is appropriate to the situation is a fundamental skill that the career counselor must perfect! Indeed it is the skill of being able to *mind the twist in the tale* that lies at the heart of successful story telling for career counseling.

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Appendix

The Indigo Jackal: A story from the Panchatantra adapted by: Kamini Ramachandran, MoonShadow Stories, Singapore.

Once, on a dark, cold winter's night, a jackal wandered into a village looking for food. The jackal was very hungry. The winter had been long and hard, and there was no food left in the forest. “Perhaps,” said the jackal to himself, “I will find something to eat in the village.” The jackal soon found a rubbish heap in the village. He began sniffing and scratching and rummaging about in the rubbish, looking for scraps to eat. Soon he was making such a noise that the village dogs heard him. Now, these dogs did not like jackals. They began barking and growling, and attacked the jackals from all sides. They scratched and bit the jackal with their sharp claws and big teeth. Terrified, the poor jackal ran from the dogs as fast as he could, through the dark deserted streets of the village. But the dogs did not give up. They ran after him, growling and snarling and barking even more loudly. The jackal did not know what to do. He did not dare to stop, and he knew he could not run for much longer. Suddenly he saw the wall of a courtyard before him. Without waiting to think he jumped over the wall, and straight into a large pot of indigo dye! The dye had been left there by a dyer, all ready to be used in the morning. The jackal was now dyed a rich indigo color! Meanwhile the dogs had stopped barking. They couldn't see or smell the jackal any more. They decided to wait near the courtyard wall, just in case he appeared again. But instead of the jackal, a strange blue creature came creeping out of the dyer's house! The dogs were terrified. They had never seen such an animal before. Much to the jackal's surprise, instead of attacking him, the dogs ran away yelping in fright.

A bit puzzled, but also very pleased with the dogs' fright, the jackal returned to the forest. Every forest creature that saw him also ran away, squealing in terror. The jackal soon realized it was his strange new color that was scaring all the animals away. They did not

recognize him as a jackal any more. The cunning jackal now hatched a plan. He called all the animals to him. When they had gathered, trembling, before him, he said, “Dear animals, do not be afraid. I will not harm you. I have been sent by the gods themselves to look after you, to make sure you come to no harm. In return, you will have to make me your king, and do as I say. Otherwise the gods will be angry with you.” The frightened animals agreed. They made him the king of the forest and did all that he asked. The jackal now had plenty to eat. He was never cold or hungry any more. Many months passed this way. One day, a pack of jackals came to live in the forest. Whenever the indigo jackal would see them, he would feel a strange desire to be with them, to be a jackal once again. One night, when the moon was full, the entire jackal pack lifted up their heads and howled. The indigo jackal could not stop himself. Forgetting his lies, he too lifted up his head and howled with the other jackals. When the animals saw this, they realized they had been tricked. Their king was nothing but a common jackal! They were angry with themselves for having been fooled, and were furious with the jackal. When the jackal saw that the animals knew the truth, he tried to run away. But the furious animals chased him and caught and tore him to bits.

In the end, it wasn't a very good idea of the jackal to pretend to be someone he was not, was it?

Table 1

Extracts from a Career Beliefs Diary

Date	Activity	Thought	Emotion	Outcomes
14th Jan 2010	Read about entrance examination to design school.	Oh God! I have to prepare a portfolio.	My work is not good to be shown to others.	Stopped thinking about design as a career.
15th Jan 2010	Completed Art Class record books for internal assessment.	I will not get good marks.	Felt so scared that I will fail.	Didn't submit the book to teacher.
16th Jan 2010	Have to go to principal for certificate to submit to design school.	He will say he won't give a certificate.	Everyone says I'm good, but I know I'm not...it's no use.	Postponed going to principal.

Box 1

A sample worksheet using principles from Cognitive Behavioral Therapy

The story behind your actions!

Thoughts, emotions, and actions: What are they and how are they related?
Note to counselor: As in the text of the chapter, provide information here on thoughts, emotions and actions and their interactions.

Rama wins Sita's hand: An episode from the Ramayana
Sage Vishwamitra (the most famous guru and teacher of the time) took Rama and Lakshmana (Rama's brother) to the City of Mithila to King Janaka's royal court. The King had an only daughter, Sita, and he was looking for a perfect husband for Sita. In the royal palace was an enormous bow belonging to Lord Shiva (one of the most powerful gods in the Hindu pantheon). Nobody had been able to lift the bow let alone string it. The man who could do so would win the hand of Sita. Bewitched by Sita's beauty, many, many princes, kings, emperors, and warriors had come to try and lift this bow, but they had all failed. When Rama arrived at Mithila Palace, he calmly walked up to the bow, lifted it easily, strung it and broke it in two! The crowd was overjoyed and cheered Rama as he won Sita's hand in marriage. Their wedding was a wonderful celebration and Rama returned to Ayodhya, his kingdom, with his bride Sita by his side.

Thoughts-Emotions-Outcomes
Use the table below to look behind Rama's success. What do you think would have been the thoughts and emotions Rama experienced?

Requirement	Thoughts	Emotions	Outcome
Prove he is worthy of Sita's hand.	*I can do this. It's easy. The gods are on my side!*	*Confident; focused; anticipating success.*	Picked up the bow and broke it into two pieces.

Consider the *successes* you are experiencing at work. Start with your actions and work backwards to trace the links with your emotions and thoughts.

Requirement	Thoughts	Emotions	Outcome
Train junior team members	*I'm good at this; I have always been a success.*	*Confident; happy to do this task; motivated.*	Successful at training juniors

Consider the *difficulties* you are experiencing at work. Start with your actions and work backwards to trace the links with your emotions and thoughts.

Requirement	Thoughts	Emotions	Outcome
Making presentations to clients	*My last presentation was bad! This is not my strength at all.*	*Nervous; uncertain; not confident; low motivation.*	Presentations not effective.

How could you *change* your thinking in order to be successful?

Requirement	Thoughts	Emotions	Outcome
Making presentations to clients	*Let me prepare well. I must crack this like Lord Rama did!*	*Still a bit nervous; but more hopeful and motivated.*	Better presentation.

Box 2

A sample worksheet to illustrate the reframing technique

Original Outline	**What if?**	**How does it matter to me?**
Dark cold night; no food	Dark cold night; no food	*Unhappy with studies; criticized by all for my poor performance*
Attacked by dogs; ran away	*Attacked but did not run away*	*Rather than withdraw, try to face the criticism*
Covered by indigo dye; discovered a suitable identity	*Used intelligence; apologized and argued his way out*	*Work out why I don't want to study this course*
Dogs ran away; other animals terrified	*Made friends*	*Write to my father and mother; meet and explain to them*
Became the king of the forest on pretenses	*No need to change; does not become king; won acceptance*	*Get details about the course I want to study and explain to my parents*
Comfortable; got everything he wanted	*Comfortable; because remained true to self*	*This way I will able to satisfy my wishes; try not to offend family*
Desire to be a jackal; howled with the jackals	*Used his talents for self and others*	*Plug into what I am good at and like doing*
True identity revealed	*Identity grew stronger*	*I will be myself*
Torn to pieces; lost everything	Recognized for true qualities and therefore became king	*Be happy with my studies and my career development*