
NEW REPUTATIONS



Co-writing New Reputations

In new reputations, people's actions are seen as a reflection of the socially produced stories which shape who they are and how they feel they ought to act. Developing new reputations is one important part of a process of supporting people to know themselves and act differently within their communities.

In seeking to help change the way people know themselves (their reputations) and how they enact themselves in the light of those life-stories, several steps can be taken as appropriate, including:

- Writing new reputations together
- Restoring any harm done
- Re-building significant relationships in the light of new reputations
- Attending to any needs the person might have in support of their preferred reputations.
- Attending to any institutional needs in support of the person's preferred reputations
- Offering opportunities for the person to make a difference in the lives of others and in the institution.
- Celebrating achievements in small and bigger ways
- Offering on-going support as needed.

The balance and importance of each of these steps will vary according to the particular place and person being supported. Guided by these ideas, the goal of the person, their peers, the counsellor and the community is to co-create a unique re-authoring response - new reputations.

Jazz as a guideline for practice

If the guidelines and maps described in these notes are seen as musical scales, the unique response co-created by those involved is jazz music with all its variety and soul!

Let me make this important point clearly here: While we learn a number of conversation maps that support our inquiries with people, the heart of this work is relational and emerging in the moment. Human beings have an innate ability to make sense of their experience in the form of stories – our role is to help provide an environment which supports people to make their preferred meaning of their experience. One thing we can know for sure: we do not know where the stories will go or how they will end up. Therefore the maps of conversation described below are supports for something emerging – curiosity and wonder are our guides as much as any particular map.

Given that, a process of co-authoring new reputations might look something like:

- Meeting with the person to decide whether or not to work together to research and co-author preferred reputations with support of the maps below
- Tell and re-tell emerging new reputations to invited peers and significant family and community members
- Work together to plan how to bring new reputations into everyday life (and how to respond to barriers)
- Work together to restore any harm done to things and to relationships
- Work together to resource any needs the person may have
- Find ways for the person to make a difference in their communities and for particular people
- Celebrate achievements regularly in small and bigger ways
- Keep meeting for as long as is needed

HERE ARE FIVE KEY IDEAS AT WORK WHEN INVITING NEW REPUTATIONS:

Firstly the idea that people often do not fully realise the effects of their actions or their reputations – making the effects of actions and reputations clear goes a long way to producing a desire to do things differently;

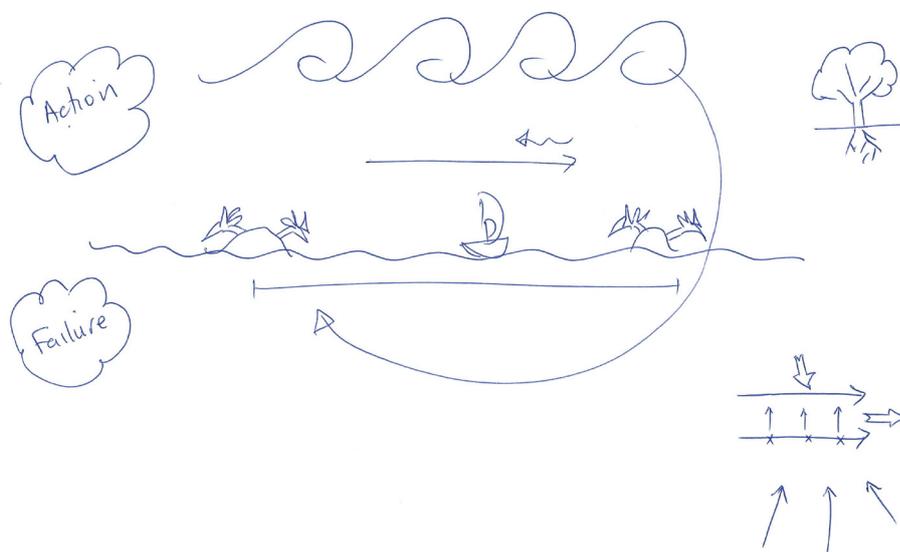
Secondly the idea that people’s actions – how they think they ought to act and why – are shaped by their local and wider communities’ ideas about the right way to live life. Exploring the social ideas about right living that shape a person’s actions can help uncover other ways of doing life;

Thirdly the idea that people almost always act for some purpose – even when they go about that purpose in unacceptable ways. Exploring the purposes behind people’s unacceptable acts can uncover a seed of desire for good which can be grown into a whole new way of looking at one’s self;

Fourthly the idea that no one reputation can sum up the whole of a person or who they prefer to be. There are always times and places where the person acts or is thought of by others in ways that contradict their unacceptable actions or reputation – let’s search for and tell these other stories too. The more these exceptions to the problem story are talked about, the more they become available to shape a person’s sense of self and their actions;

Fifthly the idea that the language used to speak about people and their reputations matters. In new reputations problems such as violence, drugs, or reputations themselves are spoken about as separate to the person. This separation – the problem is the problem, the person is not the problem - allows for the person and others to stand back from the problem and explore its effects on them all, take a stance on those effects, and make decisions about how they will go on in relation to the problem.

As I think about a process of supporting a person to take up new reputation stories, I see three phases or movements across time: A co-research phase, followed by co-authoring and co-publishing phases. In co-research we take whatever it is that brings a person to us, and explore what that says about what the person is about, what they stand for in life. In co-authoring we take whatever it is that a person stands for and develop that into rich new identity stories – new reputations. In co-publishing we take those new reputations and find ways to tell and retell them to supportive people who can stand with the person in their hopes for difference. I think about these phases as a migration of identity – a movement from ways of living that do not sustain life as well as hoped for, towards ways of living seen as more nourishing. I sketch that journey like this. I’ll explain the diagram as we go.



Co-Research: Inviting people to take up a migration of reputation.

I suggest there are at least four ways that people and the counsellors they consult can begin to explore a desire to live life differently:

1. Through exploring the effects of an externalised problem or problem reputation and taking a stand for something else (the first island in the diagram above, also called Statement of Position Map 1 – see below);
2. Through exploring what it is a person hopes for in their life and further clarifying the effects and desirability of that (the second island in the diagram above, also called Statement of Position Map 2 – see below);
3. Through exploring a person's actions as evidence of what they hope for, what they value, what sort of community they would prefer to be a part of (also called Action as Purpose in the diagram and elsewhere Absent but Implicit);
4. Through exploring the social ideas and expectations which shape a person's experience of distress and times they have responded to those ideas and expectations (also called Responding to Failure in the diagram above and elsewhere).

Each of these four starting points helps a person clarify what they prefer for themselves and those they care about. From that starting point – this is what I care about – it is possible to co-author new and influential reputations with people and their supporters.

Building new reputations based on a person's preferences

When new reputation possibilities have been uncovered through one or more of the four conversations named above, it is possible to develop these in both significance and in depth. This can be achieved through three possible conversations:

1. Exploring together times where the person has acted in ways which contradict the problem reputations, together with the effects of those other ways of acting. This second island conversation (also known as Statement of Position Map 2) highlights alternative actions and their effects, making new identity claims more attractive and compelling.
2. Alongside that, or as its own starting point, gathering together several stories about times when the person has acted out their preferred values can lead to the development of new reputations. A Re-authoring Map guides this conversation.
3. Tree of Life is a third conversation which supports people in telling rich stories about their preferred reputation and relationships.

Each of these Second Island, Re-authoring and Tree of Life conversations enrich and develop people's claims of what they prefer for themselves and those they care about.

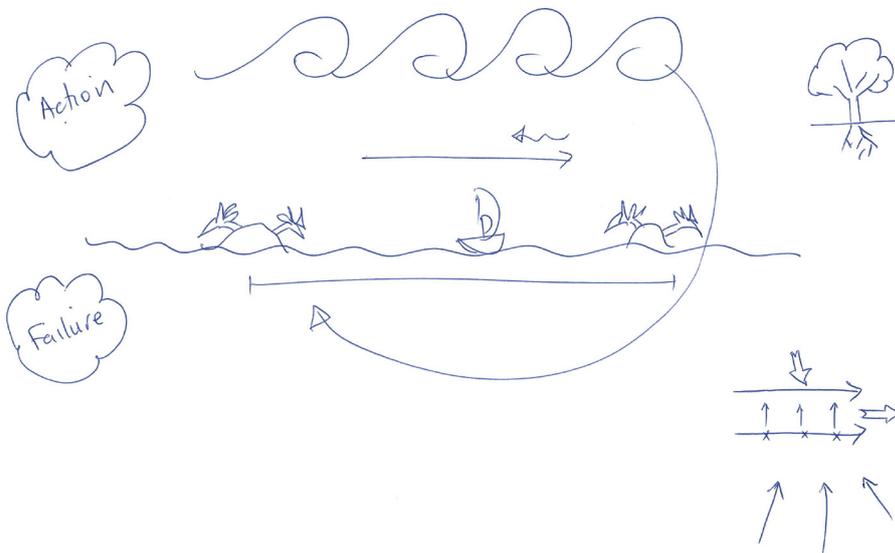
Thus through a process of exploring what is not OK with the way things are, and what might be better, and through expanding what might be better into preferred reputations, the person and the counsellor they are consulting with have the beginnings of new identity stories – new reputations - which they can start sharing with significant others.

The sharing of new and preferred reputations can be achieved through people being invited to listen to tellings and re-tellings of a person's new and preferred reputations (called Outsider witnessing and Re-remembering practices below), through various forms of documents (letters, certificates, poetry, art), and through actions taken by the person which express their preferred reputation.

Other supportive practices

Alongside advancing the conversations described above, it might be necessary to support new reputations by attending to any harm done and any relationships damaged by unacceptable actions. Here we look briefly at some further steps in support of new reputations.

NEXT STEPS



In the diagram above these next steps are represented by the winds blowing the boat towards its goal. These steps are an opportunity to stand back from the new reputations project and ask questions about what might need to be restored or offered in support of that migration of identity. I propose 6 areas to consider here:

1. Restore harm done. Even though they may have been doing things with good intentions, actions taken by a person may well have caused harm to people and property. A restorative process brings affected parties together to discuss what happened, what effects did that have, and what might help make it right? Such a process can go a long way to making things right as well as recruiting help from those offended against for the person in their efforts to change things. As well as helping those harmed, demonstrating an awareness of harm done and showing a desire to make a difference helps people caught up in unhelpful reputations take a step towards alternative ways of being known to themselves and their communities. A restorative map (see below) guides these conversations.
2. Re-build significant relationships in the light of new reputations. The relationships a person has may be clouded by their old reputation and the effects of their actions. Restorative conversations allow for the effects of previous actions to be spoken about and responded to in ways which support restoration of relationship. Alongside restorative meetings described above, significant figures in the person's life can be invited to witness tellings of new and preferred reputations, and be invited to retell those stories through their own experience of the person. Such acts of witnessing can be powerful supports for the person and can help restore relationships damaged by their previous actions. Other useful ways of telling and retelling preferred reputations include letters, documents, emails and art work which can be

sent to significant figures and responded to by them. An outsider witnessing map (see below) guides these conversations.

3. Attend to any needs the person might have to enable full participation. Although not always the case, sometimes people's unacceptable actions represent needs they have for various forms of support or access to resources. Recognising and providing needed resources and support goes a long way to helping the person in their new identity claims.
4. Develop institutional support for the person's preferred reputations. Questions to consider here include exploring any institutional practices which get in the way of the person's hopes for new reputations, and also how institutional practices might be adapted to actively support a person's preferred reputations. For example policies such as automatic responses to wrongdoing can be revised to allow for case by case responses.
5. Offer opportunities for the person to make a difference in the lives of others and in their communities. One of the most significant supports of new reputations is the opportunity for the person to demonstrate their preferred reputation in actions which help in causes or with people they care about or can make a difference in. The invitation here is to explore unique responses for the person involved to make a difference for others and thus demonstrate their preferred reputation in action.
6. Offer on-going support as needed. New reputations take time to develop and become the person's effective reputation in the community. During that time it is helpful to meet regularly with the person, their family and peers and take stock of how things are going, how they managed so far, and what might further support their preferred identity stories. This process may take weeks or months or longer.

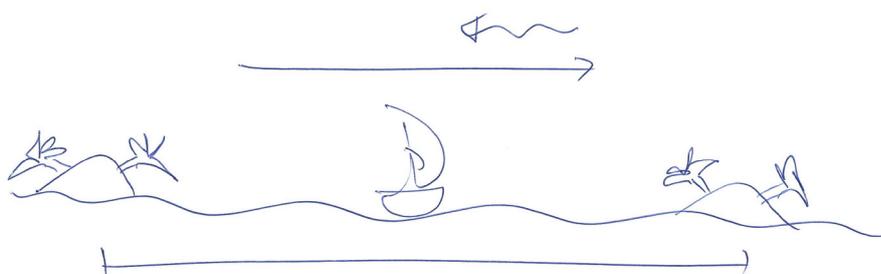
FURTHER READING

Winslade, J. & Williams, M. (2012). *Safe and peaceful schools*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin, pp81ff

See also: <http://pb4l.tki.org.nz/PB4L-Restorative-Practice/Support-material2>

Two islands and a boat: A Migration of identity.

The central metaphor of migration being used here sees new reputations as a migration journey, or as a rite of passage. A migration towards a new reputation can be pictured as two islands and a boat. [Note that any journey metaphor can be used: tramping, train journeys ...]



The image invoked by Two Islands and a Boat is of leaving one island (a problem reputation, harmful ways of being, and so on) because it no longer sufficiently sustains preferred life, and moving towards another island (preferred reputations, ways of living in keeping with hopes for life) that may better sustain a preferred life. This image allows for time between the islands, a time of discovering and taking up of new reputations. In this migration process a person separates from particular roles, responsibilities, and relationship patterns and begins to move towards new ones. In this conversation I draw two islands on a page, and a boat in between (the second island may be over the horizon in some way – I depict that with a dotted line).

There are several parts to this inquiry:

An explicit acknowledgement of what the person is separating from:

What is it about this island that no longer works for you? What are you leaving behind? What effects does living in that way have for you and others? Can you explain why you are for something other than that? Are you interested in living differently? What are you separating from - lifestyle, habits of thought, relationships, orientation to others and so on? Is there anything of this island that is important to take with you?

I often use the Statement of Position Map 1 (see below) to describe this first island, and to invite a person to reflect on how it fits for them.

An account of what the person is moving into and what that might look like when they have arrived.

This involves describing new roles, responsibilities, and new ways of relating. This inquiry can involve planning celebrations of arrival:

What will that island be like when you are settled there? How is it different to the first island? How will you know you have arrived? What effects might that have on you? On your relationships? Can you explain why you prefer that?

I often use Statement of Position Map 2 (see below) to describe this second island, and to invite a person to reflect on how it fits for them.

An account of the journey between in two parts.

This includes an account of the resources needed to get from one place to another, the things and relationships which may support progress towards the preferred island as well as rigorously exploring any things which might get in the way or even draw a person back towards the first island.

This phase of travelling between may take significant time, and be characterised by setbacks as well as times of progress. I draw an arrow pointing towards the preferred island, and an arrow pointing back to the first island, and ask questions like:

What might help you get where you are going? Who might help with that? How can we ask them to help? What specifically might they do? What might you need to get there? How long might that take? Do you need anything to get there? What provides hope for you?

And

What might get in the way? What might pull you back? What can we do about that?

This third inquiry can contain conversations about troubles which may be expected – disorientation, attractions to go back, difficulties and so on. Rather than seeing set-backs as regress, feeling badly can be seen as part of the progress along the way; a part of being on the way rather than a turning back.

As a helpful resource we might talk about or interview people who have made similar migration journeys and ask questions like:

How did you plan for the journey?

What helped or got in the way?

What made it possible for you to endure?

What was it that saved you from turning back, or helped when you did turn back?

The transitional phase does not finish with the arrival in the new place – there is a new language, culture etc.

How long was it until you ‘arrived’?

On-going support:

As time goes on we might chart the journey, and re-visit the map week by week discussing progress and setbacks, wondering what that says about the journey, and about our hopes and intentions, and so on:

Where are you on the journey right now? What steps did you take to achieve that? How do you account for this change in where you are on the chart?

We might wonder about celebrating arrivals:

How will we know we have arrived? How shall we celebrate arriving? Who to invite to celebrate with?

Note that some of the answers to these questions may not be available. They may only emerge as the migration continues. Thus some part of the journey may be by faith – I know where I want to be even though I am not yet able to describe it fully. I am prepared to step out along the way ... Migration of reputation conversations such as these help people clarify what they are leaving and why, what they prefer and why, what supports and hindrances they might encounter, who they might travel with, and how they might celebrate steps along the way and arrival. As such, these conversations can be a powerful support for taking up new and preferred reputations.

FURTHER READING

White, M. (2000 a). Challenging the culture of consumption: Rites of passage and communities of acknowledgement. In Reflections on narrative practice: Essays and interviews (pp 25-33). Adelaide, Australia: Dulwich Centre Publications.

A summary so far...

In the above descriptions of a new reputations process I speak about developing new reputations as having three main parts – like three movements in an orchestral piece of music which make up the whole concert:

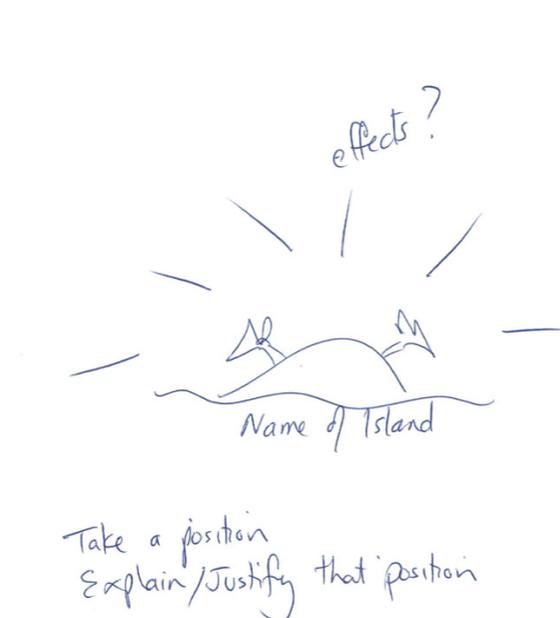
1. Co-researching together whatever it is that is distressing the person, and what that says about what they might prefer;
2. Co-authoring whatever the person prefers into new reputation stories; and
3. Co-publishing a person's new reputation stories with supportive others.

As above there are several ways to start a conversation about what might be distressing a person, and whether they would be interested in making changes, including Statement of Position Map1, Statement of Position Map 2; Action as Purpose Map and Responding to Failure Map. It is worth noting here that these conversation maps are useful at later stages of the migration journey too...

Deciding which conversation map to start with depends the person and the problem they are grappling with – a clear problem such as gambling or anxiety might invite beginning with Statement of Position map 1; an action (positive or negative) taken by the person might suggest Action as Purpose and so on. Once started on a particular conversation it is easy to switch if another inquiry seems more useful.

I turn now to describe each of these conversation maps more fully.

First Island: Statement of position Map 1



This conversation map names and explores the effects of a problem in different parts of a person's life and community. It looks to expose the effects of a problem in a person's life, and to create opportunities for the person to evaluate whether they want to continue in the same sort of relationship with that problem or whether they prefer something different.

This conversation has four areas of inquiry, which help people take a position on the effects of an externalised problem. The four areas of inquiry in this map are:

1. NAME THE PROBLEM

Discuss with the person the problem(s) which have brought them to you. As you speak together, listen for what the problem might be called in the person's own language. The point here is to try and find a way of speaking about the problem – be it actions or reputations – in a way which is external to, or separate from the person, and described in their own language where possible. In *Two Islands and a Boat*, this is used to name and explore the effects of living on the first island.

Some possible questions to use are:

We have been talking for a while about these things that have been going on for you. In behind all that, what would you call what we are talking about?

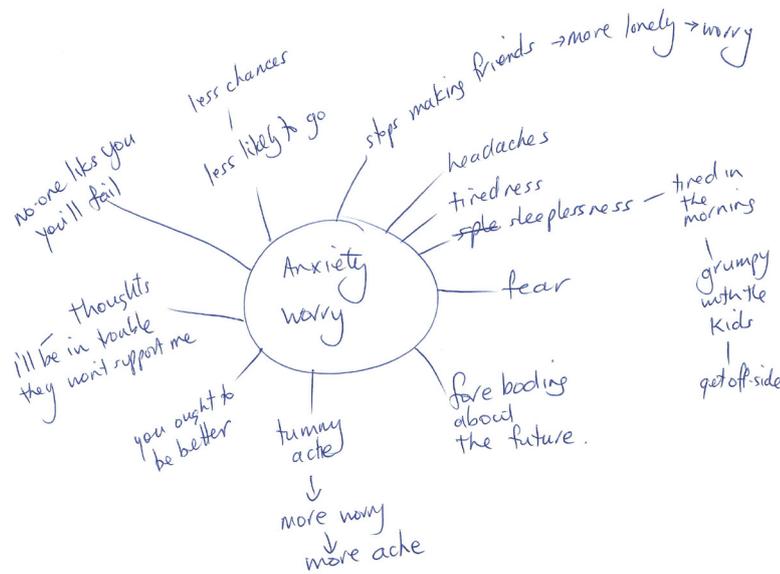
Do you have a name for what it is that we are talking about? If we were to try and name it, what name might fit?

How might others name this problem? Does that perspective change your own in any ways?

Or you may introduce possibilities such as "This reputation seems to be following you around ..." or "It sounds like these drugs have not been the friends they pretended to be..."

However you end up speaking about whatever it is that is causing the problem, it is important that it be spoken about in ways that fit for the person (experience-near naming) and be external to the person (the problem is the problem, the person is not the problem).

2. MAP THE EFFECTS OF THE PROBLEM



In this section of First Island/Statement of Position Map 1 we explore the effects of the named problem through the various times and places where it has been having effects (home, workplace, school, with peers, family relationships, one's relationship with/sense of oneself, effects on a person's body, thoughts, feelings, sense of spirituality, effects on friendships, effects on a person's purposes, hopes, dreams, aspirations, and values, on life's horizons, one's future possibilities, and so on). I often draw a circle with the negotiated name of the problem inside it, and sketch the effects of the problem as a diagram around the circle. Equally a diagram of an island, a drawing of what the problem might look like for the person, sand-tray and small figure modelling of the problem all serve to make a problem visible and able to be explored for its effects. I sometimes use the diagram above to explore effects across time and place.

The name of the problem may change as the conversation develops. That is alright – it is more important that the name fits for the person, and that its effects are clearly mapped.

Some possible questions to use include:

What influence do you see [Problem name, for example, "this experience of anxiety"] having at [some relevant place – school, home, work and so on].

If you think through the various places you go – school, classes, work, town, friends' places etc – what are the places where [Problem name] is having effects?

Map the effects in each of those places. How does [Problem name] being there affect things in that place?

Is [Problem name] affecting your body? Your thoughts? Your feelings? Your relationships? Your spirituality? (I am drawing on ideas from the model Te Whare Tapa Wha here – see reading below)

Is [Problem name] causing you to have an opinion about yourself that you do not like?

How does that affect you? Does [Problem name] cause others to have opinions about you?

As you look at [Problem name's] effects in your life, what possibilities might it produce in the future? Where do you guess it is taking you?

Is [Problem name] taking others places where they might prefer not to go?

What do you think [Problem name] might be calling you (or others) into?

Who or what might be allies for [Problem name] and its effects?

What effects might [Problem name] be having for others in your life? For family members, peers, teachers etc?

What might [Problem name] be talking people in your life into about you? About themselves? About others?

3. TAKE A POSITION

Having explored the effects a problem is producing in a person's life, you can invite the person to evaluate the effects of the problem in the light of their hopes for themselves and others. (If these hopes have not already been identified / discussed the Action-as-Purpose map below may be useful). I sometimes read through the effects of the problem that we have noted together or show and discuss with the person the diagram we have drawn together showing the effects of the problem:

Some possible questions to invite a person to take a position include:

As we look at the effects this problem is causing, are you for this, or for something else? Or partly?

Is this OK with you?

How do you feel about this?

What is your position on this?

Is this a positive or a negative development for you? Or would you say both positive and negative, or neither of these? Something in-between?

What position might other people in your life take on this?

Given this outline of the effects of [Problem name], what are you now seeing about its effects on you and on others? How does that fit for who you prefer to be? How might that fit for how others prefer you to be? What are your views on that?

4. JUSTIFY THE POSITION

Having taken a position on the effects of the Problem invite the person to talk about why they have taken the position they just declared. This inquiry aims to support speaking about what is preferred to the problem, what a person would rather see happening, how it is they would rather be known, and so on.

Some possible questions include:

Why is / isn't this OK for you?

Why do you feel this way about this? Can you help me understand that?

Why are you taking this stand?

Would you tell me a story about your life that would help me to understand why you take this position?

What does all this tell me about what is important to you?

What position might others take on all this?

Why might others take the position they have? What does this suggest about what is important to them?

What difference might all this make for your next steps?

What call on you (or others) might this be making?

How might you balance your own and others' interests?

The point of these and similar questions is to arrive at a place where the person identifies and says what is important to them, and what it is they would prefer to see happening. Usually this initial inquiry is shaped by one or other of Statement of Position Map 1 or Absent but Implicit Map, and at times these may be intertwined.

Carrying on from here from here the conversation is often shaped by questions from the Re-authoring Map or the Statement of Position Map 2 described below.

FURTHER READING

Durie, M. (1994). *Whaiora, Maori health development*. Auckland: Oxford University Press.

White, M. (n.d.). Workshop notes. Retrieved from <http://www.dulwichcentre.com.au/michael-white-workshop-notes.pdf>

Statement of position: Map 2

Statement of Position Map 2 (the second island on the diagram above) may be a good place to start a conversation in a way which is not problem focused. I could ask a person “What might I be seeing about you if this problem were not there to cloud the picture?” or “Could you introduce me to your [daughter/partner etc] in a way which avoids talking about the problem?” or “Could you let me know something about the sort of Reputation you would like?” This sort of inquiry can lead to rich descriptions of what a person prefers – and this can undermine the problem’s influence from the outset.

As well as offering descriptions of the second island towards which we are headed, Statement of Position Map 2 is useful for thickening preferred reputations as they arise. For example, if a person concludes that their actions have been on behalf of a sense of fairness, this map can explore the importance of and the effects of “Fairness” in the person’s life, and invite them to take a stand, and explain their stand for Fairness. As with Statement of Position Map 1 (the two maps are the same, except Map 1 starts with naming the problem, and Map 2 starts with naming the preferred) there are four parts to this inquiry, beginning with negotiating a name for what we are talking about, then exploring its effects, taking a position on those effects, and justifying the taking of that position.

Again the four parts are:

1. NAME THE ALTERNATIVE STORY OR PREFERRED REPUTATION

When a person has offered a preferred description, or when the person and the counsellor have explored the problem and stated a preference for something else, it is useful to name what it is that the person prefers so that its effects can be explored. Some questions include:

Do you have a name for what it is that we are talking about?

If we were to try and name it, what name might fit?

2. MAP THE EFFECTS OF THE ALTERNATIVE STORY OR PREFERRED REPUTATION

Here we map of the effects/influence of the preferred stand taken by the person through the various places where it might have an influence (home, school, work, peer contexts, family relationships, one’s relationship with oneself, friendships, purposes, hopes, dreams, aspirations, values, life’s horizons, one’s future possibilities, and so on). Possible questions include:

What influence do you see this [preferred stand] having on your home life? For you?
For others? Across time?

If you think through the various places you go – work, town etc – what are the places where this [preferred stand] is having effects?

Map the effects in each of those places. How does this [preferred stand] being there affect things in that place? For you? For others?

Is this [preferred stand] affecting your relationships? Which ones? In what ways?

What sort of opinion about yourself might this [preferred stand] be promoting?

What reputation might it promote amongst others?

As you look at this [preferred stand’s] effects in your life, what possibilities might it produce in the future? And so on.

2. TAKE THE POSITION

Here we evaluate the effects / influence of the preferred stand in the various parts of a person's life. Possible questions include:

Is this OK with you?

How do you feel about this?

What is your position on this?

Is this a positive or a negative development for you? Or would you say both positive and negative, or in-between?

What might others' positions be on this? How is that for you?

3. JUSTIFY THE POSITION

Lastly we invite a justification of these evaluations. Possible questions include:

Why is / isn't this OK for you? Why do you feel this way about this?

How come you are taking this stand / position on this?

Would you tell me a story about your life that would help me to understand why you take this position on this?

What difference will knowing this about yourself make to your next steps? And so on.

The purpose of this Statement of Position Map 2 conversation is to give the person a chance to name what is important to them, and to richly explore the sort of effects that might be having in their lives. In doing so the person is describing in detail the effects of living on the second island. This in turn leads to a Re-authoring conversation.

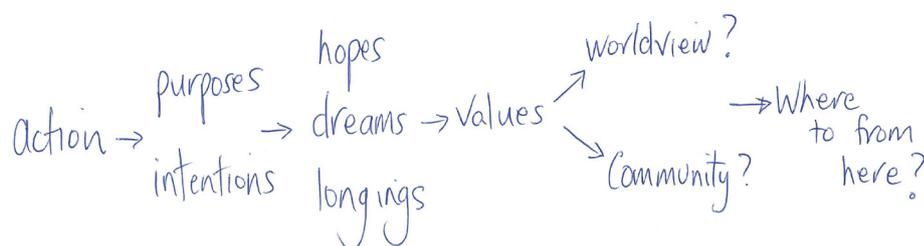
FURTHER READING

Morgan, A. (2000). *What is narrative therapy? An easy-to-read introduction*. Adelaide, Australia: Dulwich Centre Publications.

White, M. (2007). *Maps of narrative practice*. New York, NY: Norton.14

Action as a Purpose

A third place to start looking for alternative reputations in a person's life can be guided by a map called Action as Purpose. This map has several steps which scaffold from an action a person has taken towards a fuller account of what the action says about what the person holds as precious. There are several steps to this conversation: Inquiry about the action itself; exploring any intentions or purposes of that action; wondering about any hopes or dreams associated with those purposes; highlighting values implicit in those hopes; asking about what all that suggests the sort of community the person is hoping to be a part of; and naming any people who might stand with them in these hopes and values.



Following this diagram, Action as Purpose asks about:

The action: Can you tell me about what happened in some detail?

The purpose: What was it that you wanted to achieve? Did you have a plan as you did this? Did you have some idea about what you were trying to do? Did you have a really good reason behind doing that?

The hope: What are your hopes and dreams for this initiative? What is your heart's desire? What were you hoping might come of this action?

The values: Sounds like we are talking about something pretty important to you? Does this have a special meaning for you?

The principles: Do you have personal beliefs about this? Is there a sort of standard that you hold that is guiding what we are talking about? What does that suggest about the sort of community (family, class, school, town etc) you want to be a part of? Is that connected with a vision for how life could be in your wider community?

What does all this say about what you are loyal to? A person or an idea?

Can you tell me a story about that to help me understand its importance to you?

The Community: Does anybody know that about you? How do they know that? What might they say about that?

The next steps:

What step might you take that could be in keeping with what we are talking about here?

If we carried this forward would you be more likely or less likely to do well?

In this way a person's actions can be a doorway into a conversation about what they stand for and who they stand with.

A similar inquiry to Action as Purpose can be described as exploring absent but implicit identity conclusions (see below).

Exploring absent but implicit identity conclusions

In using an absent but implicit metaphor, we are trying to listen for what it is that the person cares about that is implicit in either their actions (e.g. actions causing harm, coming to see you, expressing frustration, self-harm, reaching out to friends and so on) or their protests (e.g. tears, swearing, storming out, silence, anger and so on).

The idea is that the action or the protest stand as evidence for something that the person values; something that has either been threatened or damaged in some way, or is absent when they wish it was present.

Asking 'If this action was about something you value being damaged in some way – what might that something be?' is a way of bringing the absent but implicit into the conversation. Similarly, asking a person who is saying 'I hate this' questions like 'What is it that you were wishing for? Or what did you hope might happen as a result? Or what does this say about what is important to you?' has the same effect. It brings what the person is caring about into the conversation. Rather than focusing on what they have done or are experiencing at the moment, we are looking at what it is the person cares about which is implicit in whatever they have done. (Of course there will be times when it is more important relationally to attend to the expression of feeling in the moment ...)

When the person has talked about what it is that they are valuing, you can ask them to tell you stories about that to help you to understand why it is so important for them. In this way the person begins to give an account of what is important to them. This conversation is a beginning or a continuation of weaving new and preferred reputations.

Some examples of absent but implicit questions include:

If this feeling stood as a testament to something you care about being lost or endangered what might that be?

What is the important thing to you that this emotion is connected to?

What does that tell me about what's important to you in life or in the situation you are thinking of?

Can you tell me a story that helps me understand that?

What are some places where this important thing has shown itself?

What characteristic are we talking about here - how might you describe another person who spoke this way?

Is there something about what we have been speaking about that you feel fits you well?

What might that say about you?

Does anyone know this about you?

Can you tell me a story that shows me how they know that about you?

What are you aware of about yourself now as a result of this conversation?

How does that fit for you?

Might that guide your future in any way?

This conversation aims to explore what it is that a person holds as important in life, and is based on the idea that their actions, even misguided ones, reflect these hopes and values in some way. Where a person's hopes and values have been clarified, these can be developed into richer reputations using the Re-authoring map below.

FURTHER READING

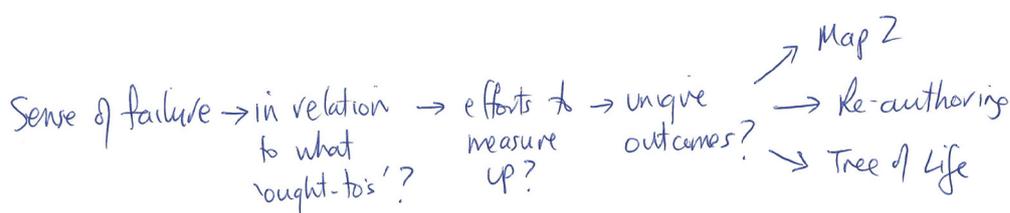
Carey, M., Walther, S., & Russell, S. (2009). The Absent but Implicit: A Map to Support Therapeutic Enquiry. *Family Process*, 48, 3, 319-331.

White, M. (2000). Re-engaging with history: The absent but implicit. In *Reflections on narrative practice: Essays and interviews* (pp. 35-58). Adelaide, Australia: Dulwich Centre Publications.

Responding to Failure Map

Yet another map for exploring what a person stands for is called a Responding to Failure Map. Where Statement of Position Map 1 takes its start from the problem and its effects, and an Action as Purpose map starts with what a person's actions might stand in testament to, this map begins with a sense of failure the person may be experiencing, and uses that sense of failure as an entry point to a conversation about what is important to the person and what that says about their goals in life. In some ways, this is similar to the Absent but Implicit map.

This map is drawn from an article by White (2002) (see readings below) which describes how people's ideas and actions are shaped by their ethical purposes, which in turn are shaped by the commonly held and often taken-for-granted expectations and norms of their social groups (a process referred to as subjectification). In response to social expectations people take action and discipline themselves (asceticism) to live up to a desired idea of the good life (telos).



Based on these ideas White offers an inquiry into people's experiences of failure in order to explore what that might say about the kind of life they are desiring, and the identity (reputation) claims they might make in the light of that. These steps include:

1. WHAT IDEAS OR EXPECTATIONS IS THE SENSE OF FAILURE IN RESPONSE TO?

In Responding to Failure we begin with wondering what ideas or expectations a person is experiencing having failed in. For example a person might experience failure to live up to their understandings of how 'a parent ought to be'. We inquire, what are the 'ought-to's' that a person is experiencing themselves as not living up to?

This first inquiry explores the expectations, the norms and standards that a person believes they have failed to get right in their ways of doing life. These are the expectations, norms and standards that have a person believing that they are inadequate, insufficient, incompetent, useless, and so on.

Examples of these questions include:

You said that you felt that you were inadequate, and that you feel like a failure. What is it that you feel inadequate in relation to? What is it that you feel you have failed to achieve? How ought you have been?

You said that you were too dependent and incompetent. Too dependent in relation to what? Incompetent in relation to what?

What are your thoughts about what you ought to be, that you are not being?

2. A PERSON'S RESPONSES TO EXPERIENCES OF FAILURE

This second inquiry explores the actions that a person has taken to address these failures and inadequacies. Here we explore together the efforts the person has made to measure up. I see this as a generous inquiry which supports the person to speak about all their efforts to measure up to expectations. I.e., what have been their efforts to measure up, to meet these expectations, norms and standards? These questions encourage the person to describe the many actions they have taken in the disciplining of their self and of their relationships in order to try and not be a failure.

Examples of these questions include:

You also said that you have been trying to make it as a student in class. When you find yourself falling short of the mark, what have you been doing? What have you been doing to try and measure up?

Would you say more about what it is like for you at those times that these negative ideas are most strongly present? How do they affect how you feel? How do they affect what you do? How are you trying to make things right?

I would like to understand more about what these ideas demand of you. Could you give me some practical examples of what they have you doing?

3. UNEARTHING UNIQUE OUTCOMES – TIMES THE PERSON HAS PROTESTED OR RESISTED MEASURING UP

This third inquiry explores any unexpected responses or things that might not be predicted by a story of failure. These unique outcomes might be seen in a person's:

a. Times of acceptance that their life does not fit with the expectations, norms and standards (It's not right, but oh well, never mind)

Things they have done that don't fit with these expectations, norms and standards, but over which they are not giving themselves the hard time they could be giving themselves (I just do these things anyway)

b. Actions a person takes that might constitute some form of refusal of, or that might convey a sense of not being wholly available to, or that might be questioning of or protesting about, these expectations, norms and standards. (Blow them! I'm doing it my way; who gave them the right to tell me what to do? Is that the only way to live?)

Examples of these questions include:

You have a sense of not measuring up, and you are giving yourself such a hard time, but you have kept going, and you haven't quit. You have nearly quit, but you haven't. Have you discovered something that encourages you, which makes it possible for you to keep going? Or is it just that you let up on yourself at times? How do you keep going?

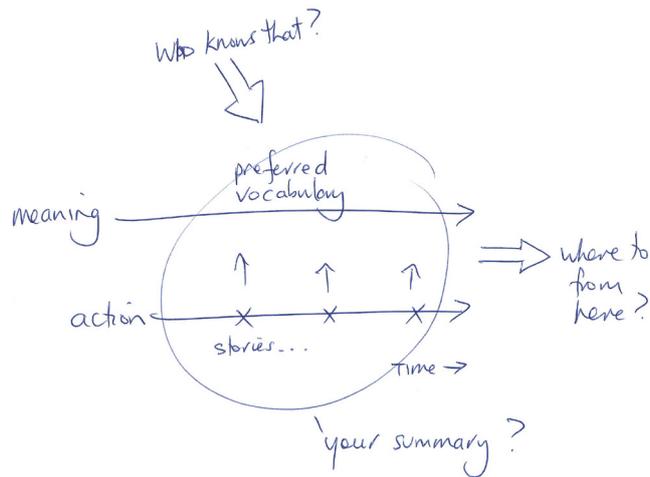
You said that you have pretty well given up. Do you mean that you have stepped back from some of these efforts to measure up?

Are there times when you find yourself accepting that you do not fit with these expectations? And being OK with that somehow? What do you do or think at those times?

Are there times you do things even to spite those expectations? Tell me more about that?

4. EXPLORING UNIQUE OUTCOMES AND CO-AUTHORING PREFERRED IDENTITY STORIES

Unique outcomes are times in a person's life that do not fit in some way with the problem story that is affecting them. Once unearthed, unique outcomes can be developed into richer accounts of what the person stands for and values through several different narrative conversation maps. These include maps Statement of Position Map 2 (which explores the effects of unique outcomes), Re-authoring map (which connects a series of events across time according to the preferred plot or theme of the unique outcomes) and Tree of Life which develops a rich account of the relationships which shape a person's hopes, skills, past and future (see below for how to develop unique outcomes further).



FURTHER READING

White, M. (2002). Addressing personal failure. *The International Journal of Narrative Therapy and Community Work*, 3, 35-71.

Co-Authoring: Producing rich new reputations

Re-authoring conversation

Having used one or a combination of the four conversation maps described above, the second 'movement' of a new reputations project (co-research, co-authoring, co-publishing) develops a person's preferred claims into a rich account of their new reputation. Taking the beginnings of a preferred reputation (as explored through Statement of Position Maps 1 and 2, Action as Purpose map, and/or Responding to Failure map as above) we develop alternative reputations by:

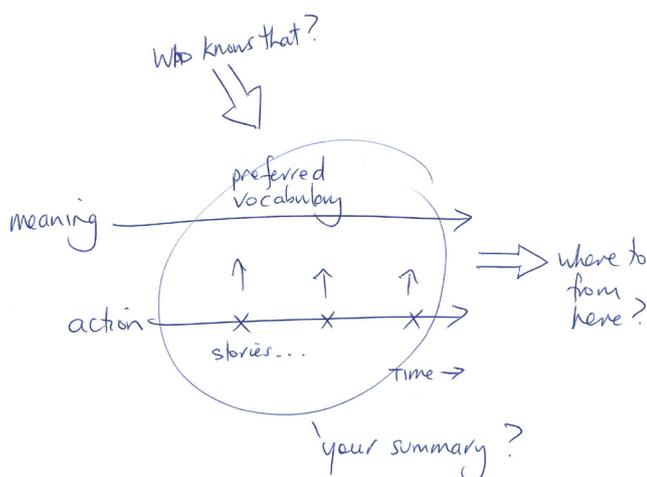
Naming the type of actions taken, the preferences described or the characteristics that have emerged in the above conversations (e.g. a standing for justice, a desire for a fuller life); and

Asking for stories about times in the person's life when that type of initiative or characteristic has been important. This provides a growing vocabulary for describing the person in terms of their hopes in life.

Inquiring about who else might know the person in these terms, and how they might describe them in that light. This adds to the growing preferred vocabulary.

Asking the person to review what has emerged thus far and how that fits with their hopes for themselves.

Wondering where this preferred account might be making a difference or taking them in life.



Referring to the diagram above, a re-authoring conversation might ask:

Have there been other times in your life that this characteristic or this stand you have taken has been important for you? Can you tell me a story that helps me understand that? [This is explored with curiosity and interest]

Now that you are thinking about it, have there been other times that fit with this theme? Can you tell me stories about those times too? [These are explored with curiosity and interest too!]

As we are talking about these stories, what is it that you are hearing about yourself that you appreciate? How might you describe others who acted in these ways? What are some character traits that are being expressed here? [This emerging vocabulary is noted]

Who might know this about you? Who might not be surprised to hear you talk these ways? How would they know that about you? What might they say about you based on the stories you have told me? [This emerging vocabulary is also noted]

If you were to summarise what we have been talking about, what are you hearing about yourself that seems most important to you?

If you were to hold that knowing close to yourself, what difference might that make to your next steps?

In this way we co-author a preferred reputation story by bringing together a series of events, across time, according to the theme or plot unearthed in the earlier conversations. An alternative reputation takes shape as the person gives accounts of a number of times these preferred actions, or characteristics (or others like them) have occurred. Thus, if a person has acted on behalf of caring for friends, you may ask “Where else have you acted on behalf of friends, or on behalf of sticking up for others?” This may lead to several accounts of such actions, which together can be explored and developed as accounts of preferred identity claims: e.g. I am someone who cares for others.

Have there been other times in your life that this characteristic or this stand you have taken has been important for you? Can you tell me a story that helps me understand that? [This is explored with curiosity and interest]

Now that you are thinking about it, have there been other times that fit with this theme? Can you tell me stories about those times too? [These are explored with curiosity and interest too!]

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Having explored alternative stories about the person’s life and hopes (sometimes called landscape of action) we turn to exploring what these stories might suggest about the person and what they stand for in life (sometimes called landscape of meaning). This is done through wondering what these stories suggest a person might stand for or value in life, and who might know that about them.

What we are about here is helping to hold a conversation not about the problem, but about what it is that the person cares about. We are interrupting known and familiar problem or deficit accounts of life, and inviting preferred ones, ones about what it is that the person holds precious, and therefore what that says about who they prefer to be, and how they want to enact themselves in the future.

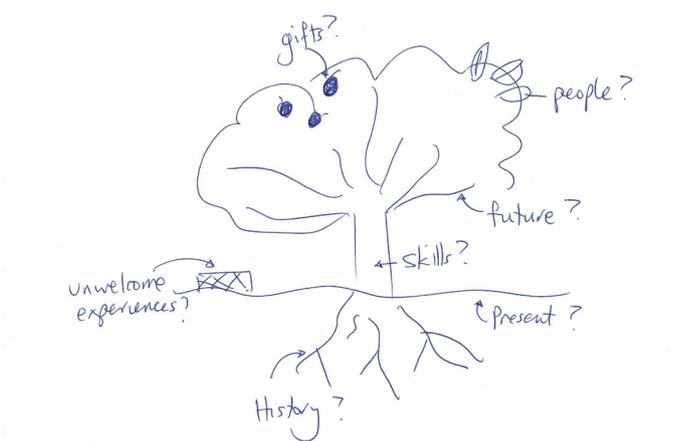
The Re-authoring conversation described above serves to take a person's preferred claims for reputation and connect them to other experiences in their life. In the landscape of meaning questions these stories are searched for what they say about a person's hopes as well as connecting their hopes with the hopes of others they care about.

FURTHER READING

White, M. (2007). *Maps of narrative practice*. New York, NY: Norton. p. 61ff

Tree of Life

Another way to support a rich description of what is important to a person is shaped by a Tree of Life map. Using a picture of a tree, and later several trees, a Tree of Life conversation supports a rich exploration of a person's relational and cultural background, as well as their present and hoped for future experiences. In this conversation a person's skills are clarified as well as gifts they have received and they have to offer.



The Tree of Life map can be used with an individual person exploring their relationships, skills and futures, or it can be part of a collective conversation with several people about where we come from and are going. In both situations, the process can have up to four parts:

PART ONE: TREE OF LIFE

Building and acknowledging a preferred story of skills, abilities, hopes and dreams, and a history of these, this first part includes:

A brief discussion of trees a person or people know and see.

Uses that metaphor to talk about people's experiences of trees.

Introduces the Tree of Life metaphor (see below)

May tell the leader's own story using the Tree of Life metaphor.

Invites people interested to draw their Tree of Life

Collected drawings are put up as an example of a forest.

After drawings are complete people are invited to tell their story. During tellings we can ask

About the history of any hopes and dreams

How people managed to hold on to those hopes and dreams

Who else would know about their hopes and dreams

PART TWO: THE FOREST OF LIFE

Where there are several, the trees are displayed as a forest. Where there is one drawing only, we can ask to draw a forest of different sorts of trees. Looking at the displayed forest reflect on the trees of various shapes and sizes. Reflect on the role of the strong roots and wonder who the people might be that are represented there. We can explore the dreams and hopes people have for life and discuss any people connected with hopes and dreams and who supports people in them. Give examples of the sorts of people who offer support in various settings. Acknowledge those that have died and the memories we hold of what they have done for us. Explore how these relationships might still be active and effective in life.

After this re-telling, discuss how trees in a forest have things in common and things in difference and how they support each other. How is this the same for the people involved?

PART THREE: WHEN THE STORMS COME.

Discuss how, even with all that beauty, are trees free from danger? What hazards might a tree face? What hazards might a forest face? If we likened our lives to those trees, what hazards might we face? What are the effects of these hazards?

Discuss ways that people have responded to these hazards?

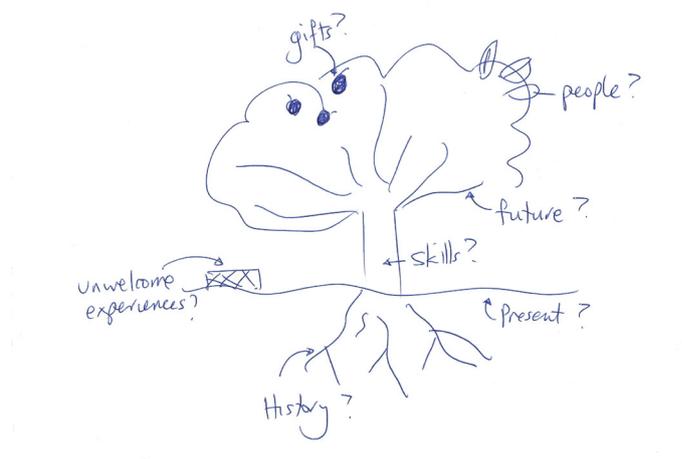
Are storms always present? Are lives sometimes free of storms? What do we do then?

PART FOUR: CERTIFICATES AND SONG

Groups can work to create certificates, poetry and songs based on the Tree of Life drawings. These certificates, poems and songs can honour the contribution of others. It is possible to arrange to invite interested others for a certificate ceremony where support people can witness these tellings and re-tellings of preferred stories. Letters can be written to chosen care givers including descriptions of people's values, skills, hopes and dreams, and the contribution of others.

Drawing the Tree of Life

Another way to support a rich description of what is important to a person is shaped by a Tree of Life map. Using a picture of a tree, and later several trees, a Tree of Life conversation supports a rich exploration of a person's relational and cultural background, as well as their present and hoped for future experiences. In this conversation a person's skills are clarified as well as gifts they have received and they have to offer.



The metaphor of a tree allows for conversation about:

- Roots: where I am from, family history, those who taught me most in life, favourite places at home, treasured songs or dances.
- Ground: Where I live at present, activities I am engaged in daily life. This can also explore daily life at a previous home.
- Trunk: Skills from daily life, skills at school or work or sport and questions about the history of those skills – how long, where learnt, from whom, special memories?
- Branches: Hopes and dreams I have for life direction. Ask about history of these hopes, links to significant others, how they have held on to those dreams?
- Leaves: People who are important to me – alive or passed on. Ask why are they important, what times you had with this person, what was special about them to you, what effect of you in their life, what might they think about this conversation?
- Fruits: Gifts I have been given – material as well as acts of kindness, care, love. Ask why you think this person gave you this, what did they appreciate about you that led them to that, what might you have contributed to their life? This also includes gifts I may have to offer and where that might take me.

Having developed rich accounts of what a person stands for, it is important that these stories are told to supportive others. As above this can be achieved through documents and letters (see below), and through people being invited to witness tellings and re-tellings – either in person (outsider witnessing) or in imagination (Re-Membering practices)(see below).

FURTHER READING

<http://dulwichcentre.com.au/the-tree-of-life/>

Co-Publishing: Telling and re-telling preferred reputations

There are as many ways to tell and retell a person's preferred reputation stories as you can creatively imagine. Here I describe three possibilities: Outsider witnessing, re-membering conversations and letters and documents.

OUTSIDER WITNESSING

One way of helping a new reputation become stronger and more influential is to share it with people who will support it. Outsider witnessing is an effective way to achieve this. By asking "Who might already know this about you? Who might not be surprised to hear you talk this way" or "Who might support you in this new reputation?" the names of key supporters can be found. These can be one, two or three peers, chosen teachers, family or community members – whomever the person thinks will listen to the new reputation and support it.

In preparation, and before we come together for an Outsider Witnessing conversation, I explain the process described below to each of the people invited. I then ask them to recall a time they have been well listened to, and suggest that is the sort of listening they might use in this case. I make clear that Outsider Witnessing is not the same as giving advice or preaching or pointing out where a person went wrong and so on. I make clear that I will ask four questions that will guide their responses and I tell them the questions I use. If during the Outsider Witness process someone slips into advice giving or similar, I gently remind them that this is a different sort of conversation and invite them back to the question.

An Outsider Witnessing process is a conversation between a person and their supportive audience through three areas of inquiry:

A telling, in which the person recounts their new reputation hopes;

A re-telling, in which the people listening respond, following the four questions below;

A final re-telling, in which the person responds by taking up those aspects of the audience's response which fit with and extend their preferred identity story.

At the end it is good to ask all involved "How was that experience?" so people get a chance to speak about what that was like for them.

In the first telling, I interview the person about how their old reputation affected them and their relationships (the story of the first island in Two Islands and a Boat diagram) and what their preferred reputation is and its effects for them and others (the story of the second island). I ask about the steps they have planned and/or taken towards their goal of a new reputation, and what resources might be helpful in that (moving towards the second island) and also what might get in the way and how they might plan for managing that. That interview makes up the first telling.

I then ask the person if it is OK would they listen while I speak with the people listening as witnesses. I suggest it might help the person to take brief notes of anything they hear from the witnesses that seems important to them if they want to. I then ask these four questions of the people listening (asking the four questions of each person then moving on to the next):

1. What stood out for you as you listened to that story? What struck a chord with you?
2. What does that suggest for you about what is important to this person? What do you think it might say about what they stand for, or hold as important? Does that invoke an image or a metaphor for you?

3. Does that connect with your own life experience? As time allows, I ask for a short story that highlights any connection.
4. How are you changed as a result of hearing and responding to this story? How might you acknowledge the effects of being in this conversation? Does it make any difference for you? (White, 2007)

This makes up the re-telling of the new reputation.

I then ask those people to sit and listen while I turn back to the first person. I ask that person "Does any of that stand out for you? What of that connects with your hopes for a new reputation?" Together we discuss whatever stood out for them.

This makes up the re-telling of the re-telling.

This process of outsider witnessing is influential both for the person describing their new reputation, and for the people listening and responding to that reputation. For the person as teller of the story, it will have strengthened their descriptions of what they are heading towards. The experience of being listened to, of hearing how their story connects with others' stories, and of reflecting on the responses all powerfully support new reputations. For the listeners, it can be influential in inviting them to be even more supportive of the steps the person is taking, as well as growing a vision of how they might work together in their sense of community.

Peers, family and teachers as audience to new reputation stories are a means of spreading the news of alternative identity claims more widely within the school and other communities. The more widely this account is spread, the more it can contribute to shaping the person's life and to giving a sense of authenticity to their preferred identity claims.

In this context, people and their communities are able to experience their lives as joined around shared and precious themes in ways that significantly thicken their preferred identity claims (White, 2007).

FURTHER READING

Walther, S., & Fox, H. (2012). Narrative therapy and outsider witness practice: Teachers as a community of acknowledgement. *Educational and Child Psychology*, 29(2), 10–19.

Morgan, A. (2000). *What is narrative therapy? An easy-to-read introduction*. Adelaide, Australia: Dulwich Centre Publications.

White, M. (2007) *Maps of Narrative Practice*. New York, NY: Norton.

Re-Membering practices

It is possible to invite people who are not actually present to be witnesses to preferred stories in a person's life. One way to do this is through a Re-Membering conversation. This conversation has four parts wherein we explore:

1. The absent person's contribution to your life
2. Seeing you through their eyes
3. Your contribution to their life
4. How this might have touched them

This conversation might include questions like:

Can you tell me any stories about this person to help me see how they have had a part in your life? What difference have they made for you? Does anything special come alive in you around them? How were you able to receive what was offered in this relationship? What were you hoping for in this relationship? How do you see yourself through the eyes of this relationship?

If I was looking at you through their eyes, what might I see? What is it that they appreciate about you? How might they describe you? Does any of that fit OK with you?

What difference do you think it might have made in their life that you were there? What became possible for them through their relationship with you? If she were here now, what would that be like for her? What might it be like for her to know her part in your life?

In this way a conversation shaped by Re-Membering practices connects people with their cherished relationships, and makes visible descriptions of them which can contribute to their preferred reputation stories.

LETTER AND DOCUMENT WRITING

I often write letters after I have spoken with people. These serve to summarise and clarify what we have talked about. I try and keep letters short enough so that I will actually write them. If it makes sense, sometimes the letters I write are shaped by the map I was guided by in the conversation. That allows me to gather up an often wide-ranging conversation and re-present it in the form of the map. At other times my letters are shaped by outsider witnessing and I write about what struck me, what that suggests to me about the person, connections with my experience and how I have been moved through their stories.

I use the word 'letters' here, but these documents can be in standard letter form, in poetry, in various forms of art. They can include photos of notes on paper or white board, photos of sand tray creations or small figure arrangements. They may be certificates of achievement and so on. Here I invite creativity in re-telling and further exploring whatever it is that was talked about in the counselling conversation.

Some tips for document writing include:

Speak in your own voice – write simply and from the heart

Use the person's own language and metaphors

Describe some of the main ideas or thoughts that emerged during the conversation

Note unique outcomes that have been unearthed

Qualify what you are writing with questions such as "Are you saying that..?" or "How would you put that?"

In poetry writing as a retelling practice, the counsellor arranges the person's own words in poetic form in order to document unexpected and unstoried events of people's lives, and in so doing, helps keep those words alive and

available to the person. Writing of the effect of such poetry, Speedy (2005) asserts that “there are times when people are sustained by more subversive and creative poetic texts that represent the ‘heart and soul’ of their words and phrases” (Speedy, 2005, p. 206).

Documents to record what has been unearthed in our conversations are often cherished by the people who receive them, and I warmly recommend the practice.

FURTHER READING

Morgan, A. (2000). What is narrative therapy. Adelaide, South Australia: Dulwich Centre Publications, p. 85ff
Sax, P. (2008). Re-authoring teaching: Creating a collaborator. Rotterdam, Netherlands: Sense Publishers, p. 198ff

Speedy, J. (2005). Using poetic documents: An exploration of poststructuralist ideas and poetic practices in narrative therapy. *British Journal of Guidance & Counselling*, 33(3), 283–298.

Restorative practices

When actions taken by person cause harm to people and relationships, it is good to attend to restoring the effects of any harm done and to restoring relationships. Restorative practices present an important opportunity for community development through restoring harm done and supporting re-integration of the person to their community. Workman (2011) highlights that restorative practices offer both practical and emotional support and also offer challenge and accountability leading to the person offering to make good the damage done. Where practicable, involvement of the person’s family/whānau is important in reintegration planning and preparation, including in ‘de-labelling’ processes, perhaps including some sort of symbolic reintegration ritual to balance the shaming of punishment rituals.

In a simple restorative conversation I meet with the people beforehand to explain how it will run, and to make as sure as possible that the result is likely to be restorative. Participation is voluntary.

In the meeting I simply interview each party – starting with the aggrieved party – asking in turn: What happened? Each party gets to tell their story about what happened. I support each party to tell their version of events as fully as possible. I am not so much interested in ‘truth’ as I am in each party being well heard. What effects did that have for you? Each party gets to speak about the effects they saw what happened having on them, on others, on things. I try and make this as full a telling as possible.

What might help make it right? Here we explore what each party thinks might help restore whatever has been harmed – relationships and physical things. Often this section results in a plan being agreed on.

Once a way forward has been agreed on, we plan to meet again at some point to check how the restoratuon has been going for each party.

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Braithwaite, J. (1989). *Crime, shame, and reintegration*. Cambridge [Cambridgeshire: Cambridge University Press.
Corrigan, M. (2012). Restorative practices in NZ: The evidence base. Retrieved from <http://www.vln.school.nz/pg/groups/622607/pb4l-restorative-practice-forum/>

Drewery, W., Winslade, J., & McMenamin, D. (2002). *Restorative Practices for Schools*. Hamilton, NZ: Waikato

University Publications.

Thorsborne, M., & Vinegrad, D. (2008). Restorative practices in classrooms. Milton Keynes, England: Speechmark.

Workman, K. (2011). Prisoner Reintegration in New Zealand – The Past and a Possible Future. Paper presented to the 5th Restorative Justice Aotearoa Conference, and the 3rd Restorative Practices International Annual Conference, 23-27 November 2011, Amora Hotel, Wellington, New Zealand

Zehr and Mika (1998) Zehr, Howard and Mika, Harry (1998). Fundamental Concepts of Restorative Justice Contemporary Justice Review. 1: 47-55.

Interviewing Problems

One useful approach to externalising problems is to treat them as guests at an interview and inquire about how they work in people's lives and what supports or hinders them!

Roth and Epston (1996) have developed an exercise with a problem-externalising conversation. Titled "Whose Life Is It Anyway?" this exercise involves interviewing the Problem about its influence on people and their lives. Some participants are invited to take up the roles of the Problem itself and others as Investigative Reporters interested in how the Problem works. The investigative reporters ask the Problem about

- a. its purposes
- b. its hopes and dreams for the person's life
- c. the myriad techniques it uses to get its way
- d. the voice, tone, and content that it finds most persuasive, and
- e. who stands beside it, that is, what people and forces are in league with it.

Having clarified the Problem's tactics and goals the exercise goes on to question the Problem as to it's experiences of failure to influence the person. The reporters ask about

- a. times the person has frustrated the Problems plans, schemes, dreams
- b. what the person has done to keep some of his or her territory safe from the Problems grasp or to defy the Problem
- c. what plans the Problem has to re-assert itself in the face of such resistance or defiance
- d. what voice, tone and language the Problem plans to use to re-assert itself towards regaining influence in 'the person's life'

In all this interviewing the reporters address their questions directly to the Problem by name such as "Jacks Fear of the Unknown"... or "Amy's Temper" and so on.

This exercise introduces the possibility of having a conversation directly with the Problem (or at least by role-play). This allows for any number of people to participate in the questioning and in the listening to the often insightful answers.

I usually ask someone (or more) to pay the role of the Problem, and the others to think up questions based on the ideas below. Then we hold an interview where the people role-playing the Problem try and answer the questions in the Problem's voice.

PART ONE

- a. The Problem's influence on subjects life, relationships, feelings, thoughts, story....
- b. The strategies, techniques, deceits, tricks it uses.
- c. Special qualities of the Problem which it relies on to undermine subjects own knowledge's.

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- d. The purposes which guide the Problem. - its dreams and hopes.
 - e. The plans already in action should it's dominance be threatened..

PART TWO

- a. Areas of the subjects life still free of Problem's influence?
- b. Counter-techniques/tricks used by person to avoid the Problem's dominance?
- c. Special qualities, knowledge's, skills of the person which have proven difficult for the Problem.
- d. Purposes and commitments which guide the person's efforts to challenge the problem?
- e. Who stands with the person?
- f. Options available to the person for taking advantage of Problem's vulnerabilities?

This exercise can be used with one or two people, and also with quite large groups.

FURTHER READING:

Roth, S. & Epston, D. (1996). Developing externalizing conversations: An exercise. *Journal of Systemic Therapies*, 15(1), 5-12.

Roth, S. & Epston, D. (1996a). Consulting the problem about the problematic relationship: An exercise for experiencing a relationship with an externalized problem. In M. Hoyt (Ed.) *Constructive therapies: Volume 2.*, (148-162). New York: Guilford.