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**Once Upon a Time ... How to Facilitate Change in Others**

**By Susan Dunn**

**Once Upon a Time ... How to Facilitate Change in Others by Susan Dunn, MA, Emotional**

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Once upon a time ... all stories began that way. At least around my house. "Tell me a story," I would beg my mother, or my grandmother, and they would sit back, with a twinkle in their eye, often pulling me into their lap, and begin ... "Once upon a time." [sigh]

Key to the experience, there was no eye contact. I sat beside them, or on their lap, or they were lying down beside me at bedtime, or driving the car. It wasn't an in-your-face experience. This is part of it. Part of what? Let me tell you a story first, and then I'll tell you about telling stories.

So settle back, close your eyes, and let's begin ...

Once upon a time there was a wise and powerful king who had two vassals. One, Sir Rodrick, was known for being stingy and mean. The king sent him out on a task. He was to travel the kingdom and find one good person.

Sir Rodrick returned after many days saying in all the kingdom he hadn't been able to find one good person. He said he had found some who did some things that appeared to be good, but it was an illusion, and underneath they were all selfish and wicked. As to a truly good person, there were none.

Next, the king sent Sir Roland out on a mission. Sir Roland was known for his generosity and love for his people. His task was to travel the kingdom and find one bad person.

Sir Roland failed as well. He returned many days later saying in all the kingdom he had not been able to find one bad person. He had found some who inadvertently went astray, temporarily, but underneath they were all good and kind. As to a truly bad person, there were none.

AND THE MORAL OF THE STORY IS ...

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What do I have to say about this story? Not a thing. Anything I say would damage it for you. It speaks for itself, and it speaks to you in its own way, and that's the way good stories are. The ones that begin with "once upon a time..."

### MYTH, METAPHOR & MAGIC

In a fascinating article called "Myth, Metaphor and Magic," Patrice Guillaume explores the power of the Three Ms as related to the functions of the left and right brain. Our left hemisphere is analytical, logical and linear; it sees the trees and not the forest. Our right hemisphere is highly specialized to manage complex relationships, patterns, configurations and structures; it cannot see the trees for the forest. The two hemispheres function well together, and not so well alone.

Here's how different they are. In research with individuals who've lost the function of one hemisphere

or the other, it's been discovered that when told to "match" a picture of a cake, the left hemisphere will match it functionally - choosing a spoon or a fork. The right hemisphere will match it according to appearance - choosing something with the same shape, such as a hat.

### SPLIT BRAIN RESEARCH

In their book "Left Brain Right Brain," Michael Gazzaniga and Joseph LeDoux draw the conclusion that the major task of the left hemisphere (our "verbal self") is to construct a reality based on our actual behavior. The left brain doesn't always know why we're doing something. "It is as if the verbal self looks out and sees what the person is doing, and from that knowledge it interprets a reality."

So, somewhat simplified, you could say our behaviors originate in the right brain, while our left brain is left to justify our actions. I'm sure you know the feeling of trying to explain something you did, when you really haven't a clue!

Now, follow this line of reasoning:

IF our behavior originates in the right brain (and is only explained intellectually in the left);

AND we want to change someone's behavior (as a parent, coach or therapist, for instance) or change our own;

THEN why not save our selves some trouble and talk to the right brain, not the left brain.

Makes perfect sense. But ... if the right brain doesn't use words, how do we communicate with it? The answer is ...

### ANALOGIC COMMUNICATION

Analogic communication includes figurative language, puns, jokes, metaphor, poetry, art, music, ambiguities and allusions as well as non-verbal communication, such as posture, gestures, facial

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expressions, voice inflection, tone of voice, and the sequence, rhythm and cadence of the words themselves.

It's descriptive, the stuff of myth, metaphor, dreams and "once upon a time" type stories.

In a way that's hard to explain, because "explaining" is what the left brain does, information take into the right hemispheres has far more effect on behavior. It's the way to "reach" someone, to "touch" them. Intuitively we know this.

Along with this is the NOT-IN-YOUR-FACE experience. When we get in someone's face - literally and figuratively - the guard of the Other goes up. Down comes the reflector shield, and up come the defenses. We turn off and tune out. When a story is delivered, without the intimidation of eye contact, the effect is different.

### DOES IT WORK?

Want someone to get up and help you clean house? Try playing a march by John Philip Sousa. Go here: <http://www.laurasmidiheaven.com/Patriotic.shtml> and play "Stars and Stripes Forever." Oh yes!

(My son and I used to clean house to this when he was a preschooler. Not a problem.)

### THE MESSAGE

One of the important things about myths and stories is that the person brings to it his or her own experience. Most of the fairytales, folklore and parables we've passed down through the ages are dense with meaning we can't quite put our finger on. It doesn't matter; we still `get' them. I've never heard someone say, "What does that mean?" after such a story. More typically they are lost in thought, off in their own world which has been deeply touched.

Consider for instance the fairytale of "The Poor Little Match Girl." I've heard this interpreted as a feminist warning against inaction. The child is alone and freezing to death, huddled in a corner, with only matches to burn to keep herself warm.

Eventually she uses them all up and an angel arrives to take her off to heaven. She has frozen to death. The feminist interpretation is that it's a warning against, I guess, staying at home barefoot and pregnant.

Whatever someone else's interpretation, here's how I took it as a child:

I compared myself to the little girl in the story. I knew I was well cared for, smart, strong and brave. I felt sorry for the poor little match girl who must've been beautiful (as all fairytale children are beautiful), but had been left alone in the world without the resources she needed and I had. I wanted to help her and people like her and knew that I could and would.

Instead of thinking "why isn't she doing something?" or "what could she have done?" or even "I

would've done this and this," I was thinking, "I'll never be in that position myself, and I know how to help others who are."

What some readers interpret as a dire warning against inaction, I took as inspiration - an affirmation of my resourcefulness, and a call to action. I was the Big Sister, after all, accustomed to comforting and caring for my younger siblings. It was no big deal to me.

I also felt that since I (or some other helpful person) hadn't been there to help her, how nice it was to know that when she died, she was carried off to heaven in the loving arms of an angel. If not love and comfort in one plane, then love and comfort in another. What a warm, wonderful world.

Yes, I was that kind of kid, and yes, I remember those reactions clearly, though they were many decades ago.

We bring to the story what we have to bring to it, and we take away with us what we need to take away with us.

#### USE IT

If you are very clever, you can learn to construct stories to fit your needs in communication. They can be as short as a metaphor or a simile --- "You're badgering me," or "You act like there's no tomorrow," or "You were my knight in shining armor, darling," or "Sorry, but I'm taking off the red shoes."

And when you do, use that special tone of voice, the one that gets into the right brain. Don't know

what it is? Let me teach you.

But don't mistake this for manipulation. It isn't like hypnotism, either. You can't control another person, nor is it nice to try, and this isn't designed to do it. Rather, it pulls on what's already there, and what the person is inclined toward in the first place, or it wouldn't be happening.

Consider it more like saying something without the barriers and obstacles your own left-brain puts out in your own path that fogs your communication. Communication is a two-way street.

You can also use the many myths and stories already out there. Classic myths have endured for a reason; they talk about human nature and the challenges we have faced since time immemorial that transcend time, gender, age and culture.

"Cinderella," for instance, is very good for little girls who have mothers who make them do things they don't want to. Several different cultures have Cinderella-type stories, because every little girl has a wicked stepmother, yes?

I, on the other hand, had most of my conflicts with me dad, and my favorite fairytale was "The Twelve Dancing Princesses." You know, the one where the girls get locked up in their rooms every night by their FATHER, the king, but sneak out to go dancing [wink wink] and where at the end, the handsome soldier chooses the ELDEST SISTER to be his bride, not the baby [wink wink].

## APPLICATIONS

If you're a coach, therapist, teacher, manager, or even a partner in a relationship, consider using myth, metaphor and magic to communicate. If you've been around the block a few thousand times, you know that in-your-face doesn't work. In fact, "You can talk till you're blue in the face ..." Words - left-brain type words - don't work. Try something different.

Studying The EQ Foundation Course© (see my website) can help you, and is taught from a right-brained standpoint.

One last thing before you leave. Take a look at this brain candy produced by The International Association of Intercultural Education: [www.bigmyth.com](http://www.bigmyth.com) . Then ponder it (right brain), don't think about it (left brain).

©Susan Dunn, MA, Emotional Intelligence Coach & Consultant, <http://www.susandunn.cc> . Coaching, business programs, Internet courses, teleclasses and ebooks on EQ. I train and certify emotional intelligence coaches, and am the author of "The Magic of Myths," an Internet course, and "Can You Read Nonverbal Communication," <http://www.webstrategies.cc/ebooklibrary.html> .  
Mailto:[sdunn@susandunn.cc](mailto:sdunn@susandunn.cc) for FREE ezine; put "ezine" for SL.

## **Improve Your Life Naturally**

**By Sherry Frewerd**

There's always room for improvement. We've all heard this phrase; some of us may have been given this advice by well-meaning friends or family. Do you need to make changes in your career, your love life, your health? Whatever your need, there really is room for improvement for most of us. One area that you can make immediate changes, and feel results is in your health.

With all of the ads in the media bombarding us with quick fixes to everything that ails you, many people fall prey to the lure of pills and other concoctions that make promises that few actually keep.

Natural supplements and healthy foods is your first line of defence against germs or viruses that will inevitably try and attack you on the inside. It is never late to start making improvements to your lifestyle. These changes will make you feel better inside as well as looking better on the outside. Natural health is one of the best ways to keep your body going and to keep it in good working shape.

When faced with an illness that requires some form of medication to alter symptoms or cure a disease, make sure to do research and become well informed on all of the alternatives that are available to you. Discuss these with your physician, and do not eliminate the idea of going with a natural alternative if at all possible. Rather than taking some form of drug that will probably make you well, but severely destroy your body's immune system in the process, seek instead a healthy alternative to bypass the forced chemical reaction you will get with traditional medicine—and instead facilitate your body's healing at its own pace.

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In general, however, these natural supplements will not instantly eliminate all of your symptoms, as chemical medicines do; instead, they will facilitate the healing process and at the same time infuse you with essential vitamins to fortify your body against future attacks. Natural health alternatives are not a quick fix all.

What about your everyday life and making improvements naturally that will help you maintain a healthy lifestyle; preventing potentially life altering diseases and symptoms? Natural vitamin and mineral supplements are a great alternative if you are not getting enough of the required amounts in your daily food. Remember to follow the recommended guidelines as overdosing is a waste and possibly hazardous to your health.

There is always room for improvement in our lives, and making positive changes in your health is one of the best places to start, and where you can take charge and feel results.

Sherry Frewerd is a 'Marlo Quinn' Founding Team Leader specializing in helping women achieve their dreams of financial freedom and natural health:

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