

101 Healing Stories for Kids and Teens

Using Metaphors in Therapy

George W. Burns



WILEY

John Wiley & Sons, Inc

Praise for
101 Healing Stories for Children and Teens

George Burns is a highly experienced clinician with the remarkable ability to create, discover and tell engaging stories that can teach us all the most important lessons in life. With *101 Healing Stories for Kids and Teens*, he strives especially to help kids and teens learn these life lessons early on, providing them opportunities for getting help, and even learning to think preventively. Burns has made an invaluable contribution to helping young people build good skills and good lives.

Michael D. Yapko, Ph.D.

Author of *Breaking the Patterns of Depression* and *Hand-Me-Down Blues*

101 Healing Stories for Children and Teens is a must read for everyone working with this age group. George Burns takes the reader on a wonderful journey, balancing metaphor, good therapeutic technique, and empirical foundations during the trip. Given that Burns utilizes all three aspects of the Confucian story referred to in the book—teaching, showing, and involving—any reader using this resource should increase their understanding of how stories can be used therapeutically.

Richard G. Whiteside, MSW

Author of *The Art of Using and Losing Control* and *Working with Difficult Clients*

Burns has done it again, even more thoroughly and usefully than last time! I *loved* the structure, the content, and the stories—particularly the child-generated metaphors and collaborative tales. This book is going to be invaluable to all clinicians who work with children of all ages, and shines with the clear and genuine love that allowed its writing. Thanks, George.

Robert McNeilly, MBBS

Director, Centre of Effective Therapy, Melbourne, Australia

Author of *Healing the Whole Person*

101 Healing Stories for Kids and Teens is a fantastic idea, well executed, by a master! Burns systematically leads readers through every step of constructing and delivering therapeutic stories in general, and then outlines and provides examples of stories for achieving a wide variety of specific goals. This book is a wonderful gift for psychotherapists but it should also be in the hands of every parent who spends loving time with their children.

Stephen Lankton, MSW, DAHB

Executive Director, Phoenix Institute of Ericksonian Therapy

Author of *The Answer Within* and *Tales of Enchantment*.

Information helps youngsters DO different things but stories create experiences that help them to BE different. George Burns is an international expert, and a voluble and vulpine raconteur. *101 Healing Stories for Kids and Teens* is a masterwork—easy to follow, easy to effect. A treasure-trove for parents and professionals in the child-development fields.

Jeffrey K. Zeig, Ph.D.

Director, The Milton H. Erickson Foundation

Inspirational stories for adults.

"George W. Burns is indeed a master in the art of using stories for healing purposes."

—*Metapsychology Review*, January 2003

"This is George Burn's best book yet. He leverages years of professional therapist experience to help individuals uncover insightful and practical solutions to the everyday life challenges encountered in the real world. The stories and metaphors hit the mark again and again."

—Dr. Brian Alman, Author of *Self-Hypnosis, Six Steps to Freedom* and *Thin Meditations*

101 Healing Stories: Using Metaphors in Therapy celebrates the rewards of using parables, fables, and metaphors in therapy as a non-threatening means to help clients discuss problems and consider possible solutions. Just as stories have the power to enrich our lives, shape the way we perceive and interact with the world, and reveal the wonders of the human spirit, so too can they play an important and potent role in therapy. They can help people develop the skills to cope with and survive a myriad of life situations.

In this enriching guide, George W. Burns, examines the healing value of using metaphors in therapy and provides motivating story ideas that you can adapt immediately and share with your clients.

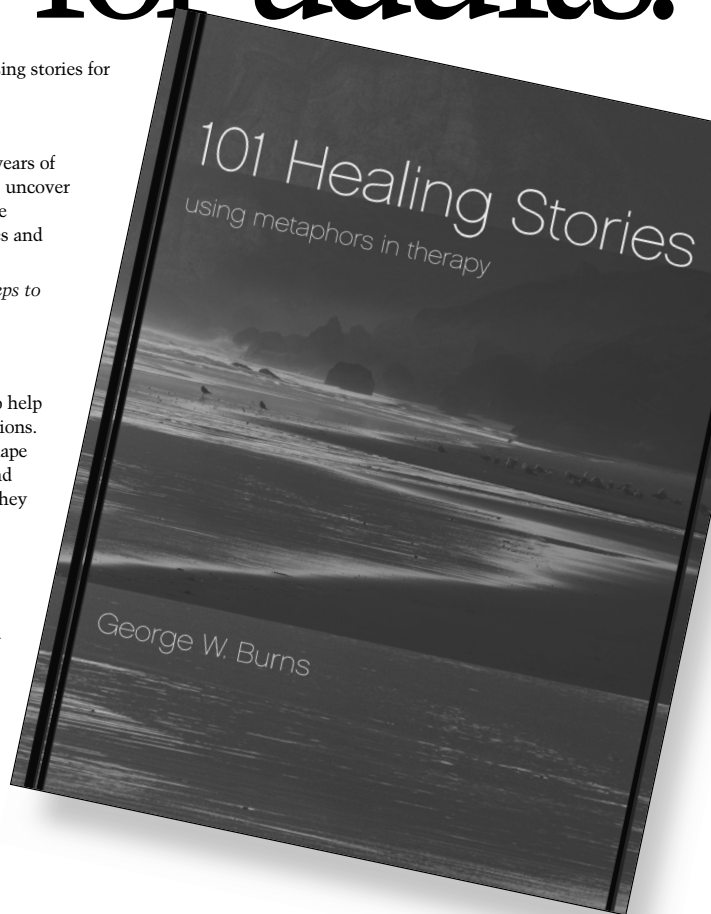
This inspirational, yet practical, book explains how to tell stories that engage your client, make your stories more metaphoric, and where to find sources for inspirational tales. You learn that using metaphoric stories and folktales in therapy can facilitate treatment, especially for clients unresponsive to other approaches.

This beneficial book includes:

- 101 stories grouped by desired therapeutic outcome
- Talking points such as specific insights, outcomes, or skills
- Shaded tabs for easy reference and selection

To order call, toll free, 1-877-762-2974.

Also available online at www.wiley.com, amazon.com, bn.com, and at other fine booksellers.



0-471-39589-7 • Paper • 288 pp. • \$45.00

 **WILEY**

Now you know.

wiley.com

101 Healing Stories for Kids and Teens

101 Healing Stories for Kids and Teens

Using Metaphors in Therapy

George W. Burns



WILEY

John Wiley & Sons, Inc

This book is printed on acid-free paper. ♻️

Copyright © 2005 by John Wiley & Sons. All rights reserved.

Published by John Wiley & Sons, Inc., Hoboken, New Jersey.

Published simultaneously in Canada.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, scanning, or otherwise, except as permitted under Sections 107 or 108 of the 1976 United States Copyright Act, without either the prior written permission of the Publisher, or authorization through payment of the appropriate per-copy fee to the Copyright Clearance Center, Inc., 222 Rosewood Drive, Danvers, MA 01923, (978) 750-8400, fax (978) 646-8600, or on the web at www.copyright.com. Requests to the Publisher for permission should be addressed to the Permissions Department, John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 111 River Street, Hoboken, NJ 07030, (201) 748-6011, fax (201) 748-6008.

Limit of Liability/Disclaimer of Warranty: While the publisher and author have used their best efforts in preparing this book, they make no representations or warranties with respect to the accuracy or completeness of the contents of this book and specifically disclaim any implied warranties of merchantability or fitness for a particular purpose. No warranty may be created or extended by sales representatives or written sales materials. The advice and strategies contained herein may not be suitable for your situation. You should consult with a professional where appropriate. Neither the publisher nor author shall be liable for any loss of profit or any other commercial damages, including but not limited to special, incidental, consequential, or other damages.

For general information on our other products and services please contact our Customer Care Department within the U.S. at (800) 762-2974, outside the United States at (317) 572-3993 or fax (317) 572-4002.

Wiley also publishes its books in a variety of electronic formats. Some content that appears in print may not be available in electronic books. For more information about Wiley products, visit our website at www.wiley.com.

This publication is designed to provide accurate and authoritative information in regard to the subject matter covered. It is sold with the understanding that the publisher is not engaged in rendering professional services. If legal, accounting, medical, psychological or any other expert assistance is required, the services of a competent professional person should be sought.

Designations used by companies to distinguish their products are often claimed as trademarks. In all instances where John Wiley & Sons, Inc. is aware of a claim, the product names appear in initial capital or all capital letters. Readers, however, should contact the appropriate companies for more complete information regarding trademarks and registration.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Burns, George W. (George William)

101 healing stories for kids and teens : using metaphors in therapy / George W. Burns

p. cm.

Includes index.

ISBN 0-471-47167-4 (pbk.)

1. Metaphor—Therapeutic use. 2. Narrative therapy. 3. Storytelling. 4. Children's stories—Psychological aspects. 5. Child psychotherapy. I. Title: One hundred one healing stories for kids and teens. II. Title: One hundred and one healing stories for kids and teens. III. Title.

RJ505.M48B87 2005

618.92'8914—dc22

2004011592

Printed in the United States of America

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

*This one is dedicated to kids,
kids of all ages, all cultures, all religions, everywhere,
especially to Tom and Ella,
and one who is yet to be.*



Contents

Acknowledgments, xv

Introduction, xvii

What This Book Offers, xvii

A Word or Two about Words, xix

Oral versus Written Stories, xix

The Structure of This Book, xx

Story I A Story of the Story, xxiii

PART I EFFECTIVE STORYTELLING FOR KIDS AND TEENS, I

Chapter I The Magic of Metaphor, 3

Why Tell Healing and Teaching Stories to Kids and Teens?, 3

A Brief History of Teaching Tales, 4

How Stories Inform, 5

How Stories Educate, 6

How Stories Teach Values, 7

How Stories Discipline, 8

How Stories Build Experience, 9

How Stories Facilitate Problem-Solving, 10

How Stories Change and Heal, 11

When Not to Speak in Stories, 13

Chapter 2 Guidelines for Effective Storytelling, 15

Ten Guidelines for Effective Storytelling, 16

Six Guidelines for the Storyteller's Voice, 25

Chapter 3 Tools and Techniques, 30

Books as a Source of Healing Stories: Bibliotherapy, 30

Drama as a Source of Healing Stories, 32

Videos or DVDs as a Source of Healing Stories: Videotherapy, 33

Puppets, Dolls, and Toys as Metaphor, 35

Play as Metaphor, 36

Humor as Metaphor, 38

Experiential Metaphors, 39

Child-Generated Metaphors, 41

Collaborative Tales, 42

To Discuss or Not to Discuss?, 43

PART II HEALING STORIES, TEACHING STORIES, 45

Chapter 4 Enriching Learning, 47

Story 2 Kids Can Make a Difference: *A Kid Story*, 47

Story 3 Kids Can Make a Difference: *A Teen Story*, 49

Story 4 Feed What You Want to Grow, 50

Story 5 Look after Yourself, 52

Story 6 Come up Laughing, 53

Story 7 It's in the Way You Do It, 54

Story 8 Making the Most of What You Are Given, 55

Story 9 Doing What You Can, 56

Story 10 Seeking Happiness, 58

Chapter 5 Caring for Yourself, 61

Story 11 Soaring to New Heights: *A Kid Story*, 62

Story 12 Soaring to New Heights: *A Teen Story*, 64

Story 13 Recognizing Your Abilities, 66

Story 14 Let Joe Do It, 68

- Story 15 Discovering Your Specialness, 70
Story 16 The Importance of Accepting Compliments, 72
Story 17 What You Give Is What You Get, 74
Story 18 Good, Not Perfect, 75
Story 19 Be Yourself, 76
Story 20 Increasing Self-Awareness, 78

Chapter 6 Changing Patterns of Behavior, 81

- Story 21 Facing Fears: *A Kid Story*, 82
Story 22 Facing Fears: *A Teen Story*, 84
Story 23 See for Yourself, 86
Story 24 Learning to Think for Yourself, 88
Story 25 Build on What You Are Good At, 90
Story 26 Learning New Tricks, 92
Story 27 A Gesture That Changed a Whole Suburb, 95
Story 28 Making a Difference, 96
Story 29 Changing Patterns of Behavior, 97
Story 30 I'm Not Afraid Anymore, 99

Chapter 7 Managing Relationships, 102

- Story 31 Caught in the Middle: *A Kid Story*, 103
Story 32 Caught in the Middle: *A Teen Story*, 104
Story 33 Making and Maintaining Friendships, 106
Story 34 The Four Faithful Friends, 107
Story 35 Negotiating a Solution, 108
Story 36 New Friends, 110
Story 37 Finding Tenderness, 112
Story 38 Going Inside, 114
Story 39 Putting Yourself in Someone Else's Place, 116
Story 40 Making and Keeping Friends, 118

Chapter 8 Managing Emotions, 121

- Story 41 Heightening Pleasure: *A Kid Story*, 122
Story 42 Heightening Pleasure: *A Teen Story*, 123
Story 43 Having Fun, 125
Story 44 Cultivating Contentment, 127

- Story 45 Nailing Down Anger, 129
- Story 46 Helping with Humor, 131
- Story 47 Flying off the Handle, 132
- Story 48 Learning to Laugh, 133
- Story 49 Change Your Posture, Change Your Feelings, 135
- Story 50 Expressing Emotions Congruently, 136

Chapter 9 Creating Helpful Thoughts, 139

- Story 51 Managing Grief: *A Young Kid Story*, 139
- Story 52 Managing Grief: *A Kid Story*, 141
- Story 53 An Act of Kindness, 142
- Story 54 Things May Not Be What They Seem, 144
- Story 55 Positive Reframing, 145
- Story 56 Thoughts Determine Feelings, 146
- Story 57 Finding Exceptions to Problems, 147
- Story 58 Learning to Use What You Have, 149
- Story 59 Learning to Discriminate, 150
- Story 60 Awakened Confidence, 152

Chapter 10 Developing Life Skills, 155

- Story 61 Facing a Moral Dilemma: *A Kid Story*, 156
- Story 62 Facing a Moral Dilemma: *A Teen Story*, 157
- Story 63 Learning about Rules, 159
- Story 64 Sometimes Terrible Things Happen, 160
- Story 65 Accepting What You Have, 162
- Story 66 Taking Responsibility, 163
- Story 67 Making Decisions, 165
- Story 68 Taking a Different View, 167
- Story 69 Overcoming Fear, 168
- Story 70 The Secrets of Success, 170

Chapter 11 Building Problem-Solving Skills, 173

- Story 71 Overcoming Adversity: *A Kid Story*, 174
- Story 72 Overcoming Adversity: *A Teen Story*, 175
- Story 73 Collaborative Problem-Solving, 177
- Story 74 Thinking through a Problem, 178

- Story 75 Solving a Problem, 180
- Story 76 Acceptance, 182
- Story 77 Learning to Share, 184
- Story 78 Tending to the Neglected, 185
- Story 79 Taking Control, 187
- Story 80 Creating a Wish, 189

Chapter 12 Managing Life's Challenging Times, 193

- Story 81 Blowing Away Pain: *A Kid Story*, 194
- Story 82 Managing Pain: *A Teen Story*, 195
- Story 83 Beating a Bully, 196
- Story 84 I Am Only Nine, 198
- Story 85 Coping with Illness, 199
- Story 86 Finding Solutions, 201
- Story 87 Facing Challenges, 203
- Story 88 Getting Back on Your Feet, 204
- Story 89 Facing Thoughts of Suicide, 206
- Story 90 Learning to Care for Yourself, 208

Chapter 13 Kids' Own Healing Stories, 211

- Story 91 The Ghost Who Learned to Scare, 212
- Story 92 Girl, 213
- Story 93 Days to Come, 214
- Story 94 Mary-Jane's Story, 216
- Story 95 Sally's Problem, 218
- Story 96 My Life, 220
- Story 97 My Life Story, 221
- Story 98 Rock Your Way out of It, 222
- Story 99 When There Is Nothing I Can Do, 223
- Story 100 Lucy Mac's Story, 225

PART III CREATING YOUR OWN HEALING STORIES FOR KIDS, 227

Chapter 14 How Can I Use Metaphors Effectively?, 229

- Potential Pathways for Effective Metaphor Therapy, 229
- Potential Pitfalls in Effective Metaphor Therapy, 234

Chapter 15 Where Do I Get the Ideas for Healing Stories?, 240

- Metaphors Built on a Basis of Evidence, 240
- Metaphors Built on Heroes, 242
- Metaphors Built on Imagination, 243
- Metaphors Built on Therapeutic Strategies, 244
- Metaphors Built on an Idea, 246
- Metaphors Built on a Child's Own Story, 247
- Metaphors Built on Humor, 249
- Metaphors Built on Cross-Cultural Tales, 250
- Metaphors Built on Client Cases, 251
- Metaphors Built on Everyday Experiences, 252
- Guidelines for Using Personal Life Stories, 253

Chapter 16 How Do I Plan and Present Healing Stories?, 255

- The PRO-Approach, 255
- Make an Outcome-Oriented Assessment, 256
- Plan Your Metaphors, 258
- Present Your Metaphors, 262
- Stop, Look, and Listen, 264
- Ground the Story in Reality, 264

Chapter 17 Teaching Parents to Use Healing Stories, 266

- Stories *for* Parents and Parenting, 266
- Some Values of Teaching Parents to Use Metaphors, 268
- Steps for Teaching Parents Storytelling, 270
- An Example of Effective Parental Storytelling, 271
- Helping Parents Build Storytelling Skills, 274
- . . . And the Story Continues, 275

Story 101 Will You Be My Teacher?, 277**Resources, References, and Other Sources of Metaphoric Stories, 279****Index, 295**



Acknowledgments

No story is complete without its characters, and the stories behind this book are rich in many loved and valued characters who have contributed so generously to its evolution. In keeping with the spirit of this work, let me mention the children first. I am particularly appreciative of *all* the 2003 Year Seven students at Helena College, Western Australia, who wrote some wonderful, creative, expressive stories that had me feeling humble about my own efforts. I was unable to include them all and want to thank, especially, Emma Barley, Anthea Challis, Corin Eicke, Erin Kelley, Jonathon Matthews, Oliver Potts, Nathaniel Watts, and Stephanie Wood for so generously allowing their stories to be included in Chapter 13, and commented on in Chapter 15. For enthusiastically supporting the project I thank Helena College principal John Allen-Williams, MScEd, school psychologist Susan Boyett, BPsych, and Year Seven teacher Claire Scanlon, BEd.

The other kid stories came from the creative pens of Sam Green, son of very dear friends, and Pia Hill, student at John Curtin College of the Arts, Western Australia. For permission to reproduce Pia's story I thank principal Barrie Wells and English teacher Suzanne Covich, MCA. Much appreciated, too, were the story-collecting efforts of Victorian primary school teacher Pamela Wooding, BEd, even though none of the stories made their way into the text.

Julie Nayda has been with me on every book so far, keying in the words, sorting out my grammar, adding constructive comments, and, on this occasion, tossing in some helpful story ideas of her own. She is an invaluable asset to my work and my life and, on projects like this, it feels like we are a real team—workmates *and* friends.

It is never easy to hand your work over to peer reviewers and ask them to be brutally honest in their criticisms, yet what Stephanie Bennett, MCLinPsych, Susan Boyett, BPsych, Eva Marjanovic, MAppPsych, and John Thompson BA(hons) have contributed in a supportive yet frank way has been invaluable. Discussions, contributions, and feedback have also come from Elaine Atkinson, MPsych,

Stephen Lankton, MSW, Rob McNeilly, MBBS, Julie Nayda, Tracey Weatherhilt, BPsych, Rick Whiteside, MSW, and Michael Yapko, PhD. Thank you, too, to Deborah Clifford for generously permitting the inclusion of her beautiful birthday story-poem in Chapter 17.

Once again I have really enjoyed working with my editor, Tracey Belmont, and thank her for the embryonic ideas about this book. Thanks to Diana Plattner, for her copyediting; Kevin Holm, for his efficient and friendly production editing; Cristina Wojdylo, and the rest of the team at John Wiley & Sons, Inc., I thank you for all your support, encouragement, efficiency, and attention to detail.

Children have and do enrich my life greatly—my own children, my grandchildren, the children I see as clients—for they are ready to offer an unconditional smile, accept you into their world, and share tales of their experience. When my children were young I thought it my responsibility as a father to teach them what they needed for life. With my grandchildren I am discovering I have a lot to learn from what they can teach me. As William Wordsworth said to his own five-year-old boy in “An Anecdote for Fathers:”

Could I but teach the hundredth part
Of what from thee I learn.



Introduction

T*ell me a story.* How many times have you been asked to do this? If you are a parent, teacher, grandparent, uncle, aunt, babysitter, child-care worker, or anyone who has contact with children in some way, I am sure you have not escaped this frequent childhood request. But have you ever wondered what kids want when they make the request? Are they just seeking entertainment? Are they wanting to journey into a world of fantasy? Do they want the intimacy of the special relationship that exists between storyteller and listener? Do they seek to identify with a character that may model what they would like to be? Are they requesting examples of how they should behave, relate, or cope in life?

There is a general principle here: Kids love stories—for many reasons. If we need proof, just listen to them asking, “Tell me a story, please.” Look at the rows and rows of books of children’s stories that fill our bookstores and libraries. Look at the stories that come to life in popular children’s movies, or the tales of conflict, struggle, and victory that tend to be the theme of so many video games. Such is our hunger for stories that we never stop asking to hear them, even though the nature of the questions may change a little—“Can I get a new book?” or “Can we rent a DVD?” Given this desire to learn, to be informed, to acquire problem-solving skills through stories, the prime question addressed by this book is this: If we are constantly sharing stories of learning, health, healing, and wellness with our young clients, how can we do that in a way that is most effective and helpful?

WHAT THIS BOOK OFFERS

Just as artists need two prime ingredients if their work is to have an impact, so the metaphor practitioner also needs those same ingredients: skill and art. *Skill* for the painter is knowledge and use of

the laws of perspective, color, and tone. For the teller of metaphors, it is in the principles of constructing a therapeutic tale that will engage the child, facilitate the child's identification with the problem, and have the child joining in a search for the solution.

Art goes beyond the skilled application of principles. It is what makes a painting stand out from the crowd, or gives a story its personal, relevant impact for an individual listener. The art is in crafting the tale specifically for the child and the child's needs, and communicating it in a way that offers both involvement and meaning.

In this book, I want to cover as comprehensively as possible both the skills and the art that will enable and empower you to work confidently and effectively with healing stories for your child and adolescent students or clients. I want to answer questions I often hear in the workshops I run on metaphors, like "How do you come up with story ideas?" "How do I engage a child in listening?" "Where do you find the materials or sources to create appropriate stories?" "How do I tell a healing story effectively?" Fortunately, there are practical, learnable steps for answering these questions, and my aim is to offer them as clearly as I can in the following chapters which will show you how to tell stories effectively, how to make them metaphoric, and where to find sources for therapeutic tales. There are guidelines for communicating stories and using the storyteller's voice so as to most effectively engage the client and commence the journey of healing. The book gently guides the reader through these pragmatic processes, and on to methods for creating metaphoric stories from your own experiences and other sources.

If you want to work with stories, I recommend you start collecting them right away. Look for them in bookshops, videos, or the computer games children play. Keep a note of the meaningful, significant, and humorous interactions you have with a child that may benefit another child. *I love* to collect stories, for they have long intrigued me with their powerful, yet subtle ability to teach and heal. Look for cultural and children's stories when you travel, scan the bookshelves of friends with children, and look at what children are writing themselves. Listening to the many tragic and triumphant tales children relate to you in your office can teach you about children's strengths, resilience, and capacity for coping. Humbly, we can learn from these youthful experiences of life if we take the time to listen to the creative and imaginative tales of our clients or other children. Often they have known none of the restrictions and structures imposed by adults on what should be told (and what should not) or how it should be told. If you have the opportunity to sit with storytellers, join a storytellers' guild, or attend a storytellers' congress, you will be able to observe their art and absorb their message. Stories with salient metaphor content can be discovered in anthologies, folktales, children's books, and in the jokes or tales that circulate on your e-mail. As with any kind of collecting, there is an acquired skill and art to learning which to discard and which to adopt and nurture for their intrinsic merit—a process that I encourage you to follow, not only with the stories you read here but with any you encounter in the future.

For experienced therapists, this volume will hopefully introduce a variety of new story ideas on which to construct meaningful therapeutic metaphors. It will provide techniques for honing skills, enhancing communication, and making the effectiveness of what we do more empowering and more enjoyable.

For novice metaphor therapists, who are just discovering the potency of therapeutic metaphors, this book offers step-by-step procedures, case examples, and a rich source of therapeutic stories that will enable you to apply them immediately in your work no matter what your theoretical back-

ground. As well as learning about the methods of applying metaphors, you will be able to cultivate competence in the art of therapeutic communication, processes of change, and the rewards of facilitating outcome.

A WORD OR TWO ABOUT WORDS

By *metaphor*, I refer to one form of communication (along with stories, tales, and anecdotes) in the story genre in which an expression is taken from one field of experience and used to say something about another field of experience. To describe a bully as being as angry as a bear with a sore paw does not mean the bully and bear are literally alike but that the description, phrase, or story about the bear and its demeanor communicates an imaginative image of the bully and his or her behavior. It is this symbolic association that gives metaphors their literary and therapeutic potency.

Metaphors in therapy and teaching are designed as a form of indirect, imaginative, and implied communication with clients, about experiences, processes, or outcomes that may help solve the child's literal problem and offer new means of coping. The therapist may talk about what a person needs to do to protect himself from a bear with a sore paw as a means for managing the circumstantial or emotional issues the listening child is encountering with a bully. Such metaphors may include stories, tales, anecdotes, jokes, proverbs, analogies, or other communications. Some of these different tools and techniques for communicating in metaphors with children are expanded in Chapter 3. What distinguishes therapeutic metaphors from other tales, stories, or anecdotes is the combination of (a) a purposefully designed, symbolic communication and (b) a specific healing or therapeutic intention.

It is not my objective in this book to be too pedantic about the differential characteristics of stories, tales, and anecdotes. In fact, most times I will use the terms synonymously. Where I employ the words *metaphor*, *healing story*, or *therapeutic tale*, it is with the purpose of emphasizing that this is neither just a casual, anecdotal account nor an inconsequential tale such as we may relate at a party. By *metaphor* or *healing story* I refer to a deliberately crafted story that has a clear, rational, and ethical therapeutic goal. It is, in other words, a tale that is based on our long human history of storytelling, grounded in the science of effective communication, demonstrating specific therapeutic relevance to the needs of the client, and told with the art of a good storyteller.

ORAL VERSUS WRITTEN STORIES

While I have long been told stories by my parents and in turn told them to my children, grandchildren, and clients, both young and old, I have found that *storytelling* and *story writing* are two different processes. In fact, it feels strange to be communicating with you about storytelling in a written format. Once stories are written, in black and white, they tend to take on an immutable quality as though that is the way they always have been and always should be told. The reality is that stories are dynamic. They evolve, they change, and they adapt from teller to teller as well as from listener to listener. Hopefully, you will discover that you never tell a similar story idea exactly the same way twice, for the power of the story is often in its flexibility and adaptability to the needs of the listener and the listener's circumstances.

Therefore, I cannot guarantee the stories in this book are as I originally heard them or initially developed them. Nor can I guarantee that the way you read them is the way I told them to my last client, or will tell them to the next. May I suggest you see in the stories I have written their themes, ideas or meaning rather than the exact words with which they have been expressed in this format. Look for the therapeutic message in each story rather than trying to memorize or relate it to a child verbatim. These stories were not designed to be told and retold as an actor may faithfully memorize and reiterate the words of a playwright. I hope you will allow the tales to evolve and, along with them, your own stories and storytelling skills. Stories emerge from within us, they communicate about our own experiences and, in turn, help define us as individuals. In stories it is possible for us, and our young clients, to find happiness and well-being, as well as the means for creating and maintaining positive emotional states.

THE STRUCTURE OF THIS BOOK

The book is divided into four parts to allow ready referencing of the sections you may want to revisit for story ideas when working with a particular child in therapy. Part One, “Effective Storytelling for Kids and Teens,” examines the magic of metaphor to inform, educate, teach values, discipline, build experience, facilitate problem solving, change, and heal. There are guidelines for effectively telling stories and using the storyteller’s voice. The last chapter of this section discusses useful tools, techniques, and vehicles for communicating therapeutic messages metaphorically. How do you use books, drama, videos, puppets, toys, play, humor, collaborative tales, and other media in metaphor therapy?

Part Two, “Healing Stories, Teaching Stories,” is divided into ten chapters, each containing ten stories (except for Chap. 4, which contains 9) relevant to the therapeutic–outcome theme of that chapter. Each chapter is prefaced with a brief description of the nature of the outcome theme and concludes with an exercise to record and develop your own story ideas for that particular outcome goal.

The topics around which the stories of each chapter are woven represent a common therapeutic goal. These topics are not meant to be all-inclusive or totally definitive of pediatric therapeutic goals. They are derived from experience in my own clinical practice, from discussions with other clinical, educational, pediatric, and developmental psychologists, and from the results of an unpublished study I conducted of congress attendants in which they were asked to list what they saw as the ten most common therapeutic goals. The outcome goals I have used just happen to be a convenient framework for me to structure my healing stories. I hope they will provide a guide on which you can develop metaphor ideas of your own—but I want to offer the caution that they are not the *only* therapeutic outcomes and may not be relevant for you or your young clients. If they are helpful, please feel free to use them but, if not, do not limit your stories—or therapy—to what happens to be a convenient structure for someone else.

The stories in Chapter 13 are an exception to the general format of this section, as they are stories *by* children rather than stories *by* an adult *for* children. They mainly come from a project with a school in which children were asked to write their own healing stories.

Part Three, “Creating Your Own Healing Stories for Kids,” guides you through the processes

for developing your own outcome-oriented stories. It discusses some of the pitfalls to avoid in structuring metaphors, and some of the pathways that may be helpful to follow. You will be introduced to various sources from which you can build metaphors, and offered simple, how-to-do-it procedures for creating, structuring, and presenting effective therapeutic metaphors. The final chapter is devoted to how to teach parents to use metaphors as a way of enhancing the efficacy of these therapeutic interventions for their children.

The emphasis of this book is on the pragmatics of how to tell stories, how to find metaphor ideas, and how to structure your own therapeutic tales, rather than on the reiteration of the research underlying metaphor therapy. As both the art *and* science of metaphor therapy are important, I have provided a detailed resources section at the end of the book that will enable interested readers to further explore the nature of metaphors as a language form, the research into their efficacy, and the variety of their therapeutic applications. It will also help you to find further therapeutic story material in a variety of sources, from children's books and traditional folktales to Internet Web sites.

An additional reference feature of the book is that the major sections have shaded tabs on the pages' leading edges to enable rapid accessing of the outcome-oriented chapters and other information you may wish to revisit. By structuring the book in this way, I hope it will provide a source of readily available ideas for working with the child sitting in your office with you at any given time. Writing it and structuring it in this way has also posed me with a dilemma. I have wanted *101 Healing Stories for Kids and Teens* to be clear, practical, and accessible without being, or even seeming to be, too prescriptive. I hope to communicate that for a metaphor to be relevant it needs to be personal, it is best developed collaboratively with the individual child, and it needs to take into account that child's character, problem, resources, and desired outcome. I hope you enjoy your journey into children's metaphors as much as I have enjoyed writing about them.

STORY I



A Story of the Story

Let me introduce you to a character you will encounter several times in stories and discussions throughout this book. His name is Fred Mouse, and he lives in a hole in the wall in the corner of the house as he always has done since he first joined our family two generations ago. He came along one night when my daughter wanted a bedside story but was not interested in the tired old storybooks she had heard time and time again. He came from nowhere in particular, a necessity of the situation, and told a simple tale that replicated her activities of the day. The next night, despite a fresh supply of colorful storybooks from the library, my daughter wanted Fred Mouse . . . and he stayed, entertaining and informing my daughter, my son, and my grandson, and is just entering the life of my little granddaughter.

For a tiny—and sometimes timid—mouse, Fred has two special qualities that make him such a good storyteller. First, he listens with his heart, and second, he spins a story based on his observations. Once, for example, he told a tale of a special adventure with his very dear friend Thomas (my grandson) that began when Fred found a fragile, dusty old treasure map while exploring the hidden gaps in the walls of the house. Carefully, he and Thomas unrolled it on the floor and began to study it.

“Look!” said Thomas, “It is right here near Grandpa George’s house.”

“And it has a dotted trail leading to Mount Thomas,” added Fred.

“I know where that is,” exclaimed Thomas, “because I climbed it and Grandpa George named it after me.”

So Fred and Thomas followed the map to the summit from where they heard, way below, a heavy thump, thump, thump, and peered down to see a huge, mean-looking dinosaur stomping around squishing people under his bigger-than-elephant feet. The people called him *Tyrannosaurus Bad Rex*, and as they ran to escape him they were stomping on ants. What a disaster! The dinosaur

was squishing people, and the people were squishing ants, and none of them heard each other's cries for help.

The map pointed Fred Mouse and Thomas to a secret cave just below the summit that was easy to enter for a mouse of Fred's size, but a tight, wriggly squeeze for Thomas. Inside, they were in a different world, walking through swamps and jungles, along beaches and over islands until they found a big, old wooden treasure chest, right where the cross was marked on the map.

Can you imagine their excitement? And then their disappointment to discover the old wooden treasure chest was secured with a rusty old padlock for which they had no key. Thomas climbed down to Grandpa George's house to borrow a tool box, and with a lot pushing and tugging, pulling and shoving, banging and twisting, the padlock eventually popped open, allowing them to lift the stiff lid with a long, slow *creeaking* sound.

Imagine how much more disappointed they were to find the chest held no gold or precious jewels. Just as well, thought Fred, for gold and jewels could not help them save the people or the ants from Tyrannosaurus *Bad Rex*. Thomas had hoped for a mighty sword with which, heroically, he could slay the bad dinosaur, but the chest contained nothing more than a story. They were about to drop the lid shut when the Story spoke.

"Wait," it called, "I am a magic story bestowed with all the powers of every story that has ever been told or written. As you have discovered me, it is my duty to help you. Tell me what I can do?"

"Well," said Fred Mouse, "we have a *very* big problem," thinking of the size of Tyrannosaurus *Bad Rex* when viewed from the lowly height of a mouse, and he told how people, who were squishing ants, were being squished by a big bad Tyrannosaurus.

"Let us visit the ants," said the Story, so they followed a long, busy line of ants to their nest where ants chaotically scurried in every direction—for someone had stood on the nest, squishing their homes and many of their friends. As Fred Mouse and Thomas gently handed the Story to the queen ant, it began a tale in the ants' own language. Silence fell on the confusion as ants stopped scurrying and gathered to listen to a tale Fred and Thomas could not understand. Silence remained for a while after the story finished, then the ants spoke in hushed voices among themselves and with the Story. Fred and Thomas saw them nodding as if in agreement.

Eventually the Story said, "Let us go visit the people."

They, too, were running about in confusion. Tyrannosaurus *Bad Rex* had just stomped through their village, flattening cars, knocking down houses, destroying schools, and squishing people. Fred Mouse and Thomas listened to their distress and, not knowing how else to help, gave them the Story. Again the Story brought calm to the confusion as people stopped to listen, entranced, comforted, encouraged, guided, and hopeful.

"Now," said the Story, "It is time for us to find one Tyrannosaurus *Bad Rex*."

This was a scary suggestion for a tiny, timid mouse like Fred and even a boy as brave as Thomas, but it wasn't hard to follow the trail of a careless dinosaur whose huge feet punched imprints into farmers' paddocks, flattened bushes, and knocked over trees, finally leading to a tall tree under which Tyrannosaurus *Bad Rex* lay snoring peacefully. Thomas quietly crept past his long greenish tail, around his big strong legs, past his fat belly, and up his neck, and placed the Story gently by his ear. The Tyrannosaurus pricked up his ear, slowly opened an eye, and listened to a story in dinosaur language. A tear rolled from his eye and down his cheek, dropping to the ground near Fred Mouse and

Thomas, who had to duck quickly, for it was like someone throwing a bucket of water at them from an upstairs window.

“Come,” beckoned the Story, “Climb up on Rex’s head. We are going back to visit the people and the ants.”

Wow! How exciting! Fred and Thomas had never dreamed of riding on a dinosaur’s head. How carefully he placed his feet to avoid flattening farmers’ crops and people’s homes. Back in the village the Story broke down the barriers and bridged the gaps, translating among dinosaur, people, and ants in a way that all could understand.

“Let’s celebrate,” someone shouted, and they put on the weirdest party you could imagine. Rex blew up the balloons, for he had more puff than anyone else. The people supplied the food that they had cultivated and stored, while the ants offered to clean up the scraps after. And everyone felt happier than they had for a long time.

In a quiet moment, Fred Mouse and Thomas asked the Story, “How did you do it? What was the story you told?”

“It is easy to become so involved in our own story,” replied the Story, “that we don’t hear the stories of others. As our stories shape the ways we see things and the ways we respond to events, I simply told the ants the people’s story: how, like the ants, their homes and lives were being destroyed—so they were not deliberately squishing ants but, in looking up and watching out for the Tyrannosaurus *Bad* Rex, they were not looking down to see what they were doing to the ants. Then I told the people the ants’ story, and the dinosaur the people’s story, for he, wrapped in his own loneliness, had not realized what he was doing to the people.

Hearing the stories, the ants offered to help the people by cleaning up after them if the people took care where they stepped, and the people offered to befriend lonely Rex if he watched where *he* stepped, and Rex offered to tread carefully if the people and ants would be his friends.

“Stories,” continued the Story, “can make and stop wars, destroy and build friendships, confuse and inform our thinking, burden and enrich our world. Used as carefully as Rex has learned to walk, they have the power to solve our problems and shape our lives.”

If there was more to hear from the Story, Fred Mouse and Thomas didn’t hear it for in gratitude, everyone had begun to thump the table, calling, “Speech! speech!” to Fred. Rex was so enthusiastic that he almost smashed the table before reminding himself it was okay to be enthusiastic carefully. When Fred spoke he thanked everyone for listening to, and acting on, the stories. He announced that Rex should henceforth be known as Tyrannosaurus *Good* Rex, and that the Story should no longer be hidden in a dusty old chest but be available as a treasure for everyone.

PART ONE



Effective Storytelling for Kids and Teens
