



# CASE MANAGERS AS STORY BUILDERS

Helping Others Develop Functional Life Stories



# Agenda

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- Meaning and impacts of life narratives
- How life narratives are created
- Story building
- 4 types of story builders
- Role play with script and empathic responses
- Role play with real examples

# What is a life narrative?

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Stories help share events, build relationships, clarify identity to self and others



# Why a Life Narrative is Important

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# SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIVISM

Internal and external forces affect mood. Mood affects story. Others help create story. Empathic statements are needed!

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# Story Telling is Story Building

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Case managers are story builders with clients

Case managers are story builders with others in “real life”

Stories about a life event are different in each telling:

- They are dependent on co-builders
- Life stories are not about “telling the truth”

Hesitations are important—ask questions and make empathic statements to empower the story teller



# Sample Empathic Statements

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## Identifying Feelings

- You sound so \_\_\_\_\_. Can we talk more about it?
- Do you feel that you....?
- Are you feeling (*not thinking*) \_\_\_\_\_?
- Seems to me that you are feeling \_\_\_\_\_.
- Do I hear \_\_\_\_\_ in your voice?
- If I were you, I think I might feel \_\_\_\_\_.

## Getting at Thoughts

- I'm getting the message that...
- Do you mean \_\_\_\_\_ ?
- So, what you're saying is that...
- I'm hearing you say that...
- Do I understand you correctly that...?
- Is what you're saying that...?
- Could you help me understand...?



# TYPES OF STORY BUILDERS

1. Non-Supportive
2. Supportive/Negative
3. Unconditionally Supportive
4. Supportive/Constructive, Empowering



# Story Builder I: Non-Supportive

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Role Play Experience with 5 participants



# The Worst Will Happen and It Will be All Your Fault

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Teller: *(excited)* I was FINALLY offered a job today!

Builder 1: Yup, and you'll lose it when your kid gets sick just like you lost the others.

Builder 2: Who said you were allowed to look for a job?

Builder 3: *(sarcastically)* Oh, and I suppose the pay will make you rich.

Builder 4: Who is the crazy employer?

Teller: *(crushed)* Never mind.

# Story Builder II: Supportive/Negative

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1:1 role play



# Oh, you poor thing...

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Teller: *(excited)* I was FINALLY offered a job today!

Builder: Where?

Teller: Acme Human Services

Builder: *(face falls)* Oh, you poor thing!

Teller: Wh-Why do you say that?

Builder: Well, I heard the pay is terrible...

Teller: They told me the salary and I guess it's not great, but—

Builder: And I heard the hours are awful...

Teller: They do work nights and weekends—

Builder: And I heard the boss is horrible!

Teller: *(quietly)* I'm not sure about this now...

# Story Builder III: Unconditionally Supportive

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1:1 role play



# You Are Wonderful No Matter What

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Teller: *(excited)* I was FINALLY offered a job today!

Builder: Wow, that's great!

Teller: The pay isn't wonderful, but...

Builder: Who cares, you must have done a GREAT interview!!

Teller: Umm, but I'm not sure how well I'll get along with the boss...

Builder: Oh, you'll do fine, you're a GREAT person.

Teller: They told me the salary and I guess it's not great, but—

Builder: And I heard the hours are awful...

Teller: *(quietly)* I'm not sure about this now...

# Story Builder IV: Supportive/Constructive, Empowering

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1:1 role play





# Share your feelings, think it through.

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Teller: (*excited*) I was FINALLY offered a job today!

Builder: (*smiling*) You sound pretty excited.

Teller: I am! It feels good to know someone sees that I'm worth something, and I think I'll really love this job.

Builder: (*with enthusiasm*) Good for you! You're right—a job offer means someone recognizes your value.

Teller: Yep. But, you know, I'm feeling a little unsure about the pay...

Builder: (*joking*) I'll bet it's not because it's too high. (*serious*) What's your concern?

Teller: I really want the job, but I'm not sure the pay will be enough to pay a sitter...

Builder: How many hours will you need a sitter?

Teller: (*not sure, thinking*) Well...umm...the boss said that she's always looking for people to cover evenings and weekends. I know my mom can watch Ryan at those times, and I don't have to pay her—except in rides to the grocery store, which I do already—so I thought...hmmmm...

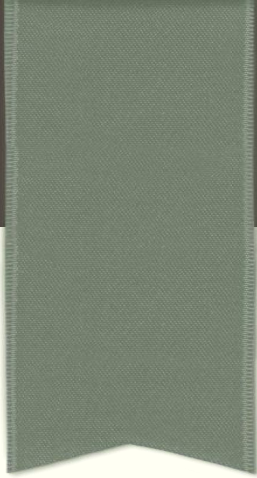
Builder: (*patiently, after a pause*) Yes?

Teller: Well, I thought maybe I'd *offer* to work those hours—to get the experience, you know—and then I wouldn't have to pay a sitter.

Builder: So you're saying you'd like to take the job even though the pay isn't great and you think you could manage on that money if you only work part-time eventings and weekends when your mom can catch Ryan?

Teller: (*relieved, happy*) Yes, *that's* what I'm saying.





# STORIES FROM REAL LIFE

# Take Aways

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Begin story building with an empathic statement.

Pick up on hesitations and gently ask questions.

Remember that you are helping to create a story that may alter the way someone thinks about themselves and the way others see them.

