

StoryTools for PeaceMaking



Sandy Taylor StoryTeller

STORYTOOLS FOR PEACEMAKING

Resolve Conflicts Non-violently

Steps for resolving conflicts non-violently are imbedded in the stories recorded on the CD, "StoryTools for Peacemaking". Some of the lessons from each story are highlighted on the following pages for the musings of older students and adults. Questions for all ages are posed for contemplation and discussion as a 'new mind' evolves. A 'new mind' chooses ways of resolving conflict without the use of force or violence.

The Keys

- Speak the truth to others and to yourself
- Look to see where you might be wrong
- Take responsibility for and control of your attitude
- Don't take things personally
- Check out your assumptions with the other person
- Blame gets in the way of solving problems
Focus instead on what you can do to make improvements
- Suggest win-win solutions
- Forgive, apologize and make reparations

Ghanaian Proverb



The Ghanaian proverb, "**We share one stomach, but we struggle when we are eating**", along with the accompanying Adinkra symbol (two lizards with one stomach), recognizes the diversity that makes up the whole of human life on the planet. When we struggle to survive we are often at odds with one another. While some are struggling to live, others are struggling for power, power over their lives or the lives of others. Yet, if our intention is to work together, rather than compete, we can find ways to bless one another and live in peace.

Apply the message in the proverb to any conflict that you may be engaged in. When the emphasis shifts from competition to cooperation, a solution can be found where everyone wins.

THE STORYTOOLS

1. Long Fang (India)



The swami, the holy man, was unafraid of Long Fang. Long Fang sensed this and didn't threaten or strike the swami as he did others. The swami, filled with compassion and loving kindness for all beings, was able to communicate with Long Fang. Long Fang listened because the swami didn't blame him and wasn't angry or afraid of him. Long Fang respected the swami's request and agreed to it. However, when Long Fang's defenses were down, he was vulnerable to attack by others. Once he began to use his hiss, everyone understood his boundaries and left him alone.

There are many bullies in the world who terrorize others, be they individuals, groups, or nations. How can you apply the lessons in the story to the bullies you know? How can you apply the lessons to someone who is being victimized? What is your hiss? In other words, how do you demonstrate your boundaries to others?

2. The Black and Red Hat (Nigeria)



When Elegba passed between the two friends the first time, they were quick to make assumptions based on what they observed and on their past experience with hats. What they didn't see, they filled in with their imaginations, then projected their beliefs onto each other. By insisting he was right, each man automatically judged his friend wrong. When Elegba returned, this time turning as he danced, the two men realized each was right from his point of view.

Research shows that assumptions are wrong more than 50% of the time. Although we imagine we know what someone else is thinking, it is wise to ask.

Examine a conflict you are having or have had with someone important in your life. How does the situation look from the other person's point of view? With this new understanding, can you find a solution that will serve both of you?

3. Seiwaa (Ghana)



Seiwaa took personally the words that were meant to harm. Besides the present hurt, the insulting name-calling festered old wounds of rejection and feelings of unworthiness. Seiwaa felt victimized, but said nothing. The children took advantage of this weakness and continued to treat her badly. They had found someone to attack as a way of relieving their own insecurity and emotional pain. Not until Seiwaa's attitude, mood and feelings changed, could she claim her power. Only then, the other children stopped treating her like their prey. By telling her story, her truth, Seiwaa engaged the children's sympathy and empathy. When they recognized their own wounds, the children stopped trying to inflict their pain on Seiwaa.

Seiwaa's mother spoke about wounds that cannot be seen with the eyes. Where do you think these wounds are? To keep from wounding others and causing them pain, how can you break the cycle of teasing, name calling, gossip or other demonizations? How can you transform hurtful words into kind, encouraging ones before they leave your mouth? How can you turn a past enemy into a friend or heal a broken relationship or friendship?

4. Octopus Lady (Nootka – West Coast Native American)



No one liked know-it-all Crow. He was so full of himself. He thought he was so smart; he never listened to anyone's advice, even though they had his best interests at heart. He thought he was right and everyone else was wrong.

Do you know anyone like crow who thinks s/he has all the answers? Do you know anyone like Octopus Lady who manipulates others in order to take advantage of them? In what ways are you like crow and octopus? How can you improve your listening skills?

5. Nunyala (Ghana)



Rather than react out of fear, and blame the chief for her troubles, Nunyala spent time alone in silence communing with Higher Source for an answer to the physically impossible demand, "to bring the chief a cow of no color". If Nunyala had given in to her emotions, she would have cried for three days or spent the time planning her revenge or escape. Either way her life would have been threatened. Instead, relaxed and quiet, an answer came intuitively that not only saved her life, but made the chief laugh. Ultimately, the chief honored Nunyala's wisdom by bringing his problems to her, when he couldn't handle them himself.

Do you know how to access your intuition when you have a problem to solve? Are you able to release your emotions and open to wisdom from a higher source? Have you ever used humor to help relieve the tensions of conflict?

6. Two Goats (Israel)



Looking beyond their own vistas, both goats thought the grass on their neighbor's mountain was better, greener, richer and sweeter. Dissatisfied with their own grass, the two goats proceeded to the bridge to attain their goal. Unable to pass the other goat on the narrow bridge, each stubbornly blamed the other for his inability to cross the bridge and attain his goal, instead of accepting responsibility for blocking the way himself.

Have you taken a recent inventory of your blessings? Are you envious of other's belongings, talents, successes or looks? Have you put in the effort to develop your own talents and skills so you can realize your dreams? Do you take responsibility for your own mistakes or short-comings instead of blaming others?

Narrow Bridge – song

The world looks entirely different when we perceive it through a lens of fear, or through one of love. Life's narrow bridge is the narrow perception of self-identification and short-sighted view of life's multiplicities and possibilities. When we feel threatened, more often than not, it is our ego that is threatened. Yet, whether it is a threat to our physical being or to our ego, the flight, fight or freeze response is triggered in the same way putting us automatically in a state of fear. With awareness, intention and practice, we can override this automatic limitation.

Have you ever had a crisis that resulted in an opportunity? What on your narrow life bridge scares you? If you were not afraid, what other solutions, opportunities, responses could open up for you?

7. Utanga (India)



Because of Utanga's commentary on the Hindu sacred text, the Mahabhatara, Krishna believed that Utanga truly recognized the Divine in all. Yet, when put to the test, Utanga's words of wisdom were empty. He reacted to the bearer of water as if he was a lowly, unworthy individual, judging him by what he saw with his eyes and smelled with his nose. Illusion, in Indian philosophy known as *maya*, is what Utanga perceived. His arrogance cost him the attainment of a wish-fulfilling gift, the nectar of immortality, that would have been bestowed upon him, had he seen beyond the outer trappings of the hunter. If Utanga had walked his talk, he would have 'seen' with his 'inner eye' the divinity in the hunter, as in all life.

Are you quick to judge people by how they look or can you 'see' their inner radiant beauty, no matter how they outwardly appear? Do you walk your talk and always live up to your values and standards, or do you say one thing and then do another? Have you ever tried to make yourself look good or innocent, only to be caught later when the whole truth came out? How did you feel?

8. Snake and Frog (Iroquois)



This story was one told by the Peacemaker who ended hundreds of years of terror and bloodshed among the Iroquois Five Nations. To show that fighting and war takes its toll on all sides, the peacemaker choose a non-violent means to solve the conflicts and end the inevitable downward spiral of loss, destruction and death. With simple parables such as this, he demonstrated how violent conflicts become self-defeating. Once every move on the chessboard of life is an act of revenge, it is almost impossible to stop until losses are too much to bear.

Have you ever been in a conflict in which you lost something or someone you cared about, or simply lost face? Are you willing to mourn, or finish mourning your losses, put to rest any resentment still lingering and to bring peace to all sides? What are you willing to offer or to give up in order to make peace?

8. The Wishing Tree (India)



The man who sat under the wish-fulfilling tree demonstrates the inner power to keep focused on a positive vision, despite what is perceived as present reality or what others say. At first his thoughts and feelings dictated his success and later brought about his failure. What he manifested when filled with delight and anticipation is very different from what he manifested through fear, in spite of his intentions. Once the object of his affection was demonized in his mind, his emotional state changed accordingly. In reaction to his perception, the beautiful woman now acted like a demon and ate him up.

How good are you at manifesting? When your efforts seem blocked, what fear is getting in your way?

CREDITS

Sandy Taylor

Sandy Taylor is a storyteller, teacher, multicultural artist and Director of RAINBOW CHILD INTERNATIONAL. She tells stories, writes and performs as a way of building bridges and opening doors to one's higher self, other people, cultures and the living Earth. For over thirty years Sandy has been a student of philosophy, psychology and cultural practices. Through her travels and with the help of cultural experts and master teachers, Sandy has put together authentic traditional, indigenous programs for all ages.

Rainbow Child International



Rainbow Child International, incorporated in 1984, is a non-profit organization dedicated to building bridges and opening doors to global awareness and respect for cultural diversity. Programs and services utilize interdisciplinary and multi-sensory approaches to learning about the earth and its many cultures. Programs and products, developed in close collaboration with cultural experts, include performance, in-service training for teachers, workshops for children, festivals, multicultural books, audiotapes, videos and cultural kit

The Rainbow Child Symbol

Represents children

From all directions

Joining hands in friendship

With one like-mind

To bring peace to the Earth

And peace to each other

When we think from the head, we see separation and difference. When we think with the heart we feel the unity of community.

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