Story Listening and the Geography of Meaning

As a listener, you have the most important role in the story experience. Your role is to draw out the meaning from the narrative. You do this by listening from three different spatial orientations:

Listener serves as

Witness

"I noticed something about you (or us as we listened.)"

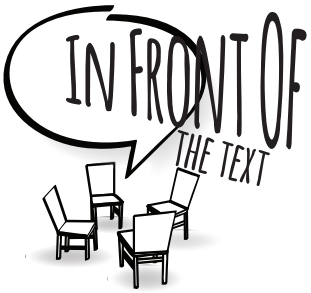
- How did the story affect you? How did it affect others?
- Who is the teller? What does he or she bring with them to this moment?
- What is his or her intent?
- Why did the teller tell this story?
- What did you appreciate about the teller as she told this story?
- Were there some parts of this story that you already knew? Were there parts that don't match or add new information to what you already knew?
- What did you notice about the teller's physicality while he/she told the story? What did you notice about the audience's? (Did you see any changes?)
- What feelings did you experience during the story? What surprised you?
- Where did you feel the story in your body?
- What metaphors would you use to describe the story? If the story were a musical style, what style would it be? (Jazz? Rock? etc.)

Listener serves as

Harvester

"I heard something in your story..."

- What happened in the story?
- What was your favorite part?
- What was the *challenge* and what was the *choice?*
- What changed? (And how?)
- Who changed? (And how?)
- What were the risks you heard in the story?
- What were the strengths you heard in the story?
- What values did you hear in the story?
- What leadership behaviors did you hear?
- What discoveries happened? Where were the breakthroughs? What made the breakthroughs possible?



Listener serves as

Connector

"That made me think of something. You gave me an idea..."

- What does the story connect to? What does it make you think of?
- What was a valuable behavior you heard in the story that we could take forward? What made you think *I wish more people around here would do that…*
- What are the themes of this story? (E.g., "The power of collaboration"; "The risk of vulnerability," etc.)
- What does it tell you about our team/organization? (To what extent were the events of the story typical or atypical of our world?)
- What does the story reveal about us that is unique to us?
- What assumptions, beliefs, or mental models does this story reveal? To what extent are these also present in our team or organizational system?
- What new possibilities does this story have to offer our team? What would happen if some of the key behaviors or mental models in the story were brought to life elsewhere in our team/organization?
- What do we want others to hear from this story?
- If the team is gathered to discuss a specific theme (such as "innovation," "trust," "operational excellence," etc.) where did you hear that theme in the story? What did the story illuminate about our theme?

the STORY TELLING Leader

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