Taking a stand against workplace bullying using Narrative Restorative Conferencing

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25 March 2015
The Intention of the Presentation

- The Dominant Story of WPB
- Narrative Restorative Conferencing:
  - What informs Narrative Restorative Conferencing
  - What meaning does this offer for WPB
  - What are the intentions of Narrative Restorative Conferencing
- A map or framework of engagement
- Narrative Restorative Conferencing in practice – a case study
Some Taken-for-Granted Truths about WPB

- The Source: The Authors of the “Truths” or Dominant Story
  - The voices of those alleging bullying
  - The meaning they have given to their experience
  - How these voices and these meanings have been interpreted by others

- Power imbalances

Bringing people together is inappropriate
Some Taken-for-Granted Truths about WPB cont.

- Some of the meanings given to the experience
  - People are targeted, singled out
  - The practices of bullying are systematic intended to intimidate
  - People alleged to have used these practices are totalised, pathologised [e.g. in the naming as “Bullies”]
  - Mediation or Conferencing are considered only as an early intervention
Contradictory “Truths” for Narrative Restorative Conf

- Bringing both/all together leads to co-creation of more preferred relationships
- Facilitates a shift away from ‘adversary’ towards ‘collaboration’
- Uncovers no intentions to single out
- Uncovers no intentions to do harm
- Explores how power relations change in different contexts

Debbie Dunn (2012)
Narrative Restorative Conferencing: Its Intentions

- Creating the relational conditions for an alternative story
- An alternative story in which all parties have legitimate positions from which to act
- This story is incompatible with the continuing dominance of the conflict
- To open space for people to re-position themselves in a story of co-operation, understanding and respect
- Agreements may be plot events in this new story rather than the climax

John Winslade 2003
Narrative practices in action

- Post-structuralist traditions hold that there are many “truths”
- Identity is socially constructed
- Influence of dominant discourses shape workplace culture and practice
- Conflict is understood to be socially constructed
- Operations of power are socially constructed and informed by dominant discourses
Map/Framework of Engagement

- **Stage 1: Individual Meetings (1.5 hrs approx for each)**
  - Hear story of the problem
  - Hear their hopes for the conference and for working relationship
  - Prepare them for the conference

- **Stage 2: The Conference (3.00 hrs approx)**
  - Together hear the stories of hope and the problem
  - Together develop a more preferred story of working relationship and a plan how this will be achieved

- **Stage 3: The Agreement**
  - Agreement on how they will work together documented to keep alive the preferred working relationship
Case Study

- Participants: 8 (the person accused of bullying, the person who experienced the bullying practices, 4 team members, the HR Manager and the Unit Manager)
- Purpose: To repair and rebuild relationships: The beginning of the journey
To keep in mind.....

The Person is **not** the Problem

The Problem is the Problem
Out beyond ideas of wrongdoing and rightdoing, there is a field. I will meet you there.

Jalal al-Din Muhammad Rumi