

INTRODUCTION TO SPECIAL SERIES FOR “THE CORNER”: EXEMPLARY TALES: VIRTUAL APPRENTICESHIPS

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This is the first of a three-part special series of “The Corner,” co-edited by David Epston and Tom Stone Carlson, intended to highlight the role of exemplary tales as an alternative to traditional approaches to writing about and describing clinical practice. Exemplary tales represent a way of writing about practice that uses an “in the moment” storytelling approach to place the reader in the mind and heart of the therapist. It is a style of writing that is intended to be a form of artistic expression (Merleau-Ponty, 1964) that moves beyond a mere clinical description of practice in order to “awaken the experiences” (p. 19) of the reader and allows the practice to “take root in the consciousness of others” (p. 19). It is our belief that the immersive aspect of exemplary tales invites the reader into a relationship with the ideas and practices of the work, which creates a context for those ideas and practices to come to life for the therapist in ways that would simply not be possible through traditional clinical writing.

Unless you are a regular reader of the exemplary tales that are commonly featured in “The Corner” of this journal or have read similar literature written by Irvin Yalom or Oliver Sachs, you may need to prepare yourself for a very different genre of writing. The tradition of clinical case studies may seem at first glance a parallel, but we expect that after reading several exemplary tales, the distinctions between the two should become readily apparent.

This first issue includes two examples of exemplary tales that demonstrate the ethics and practices of narrative therapy. The first, “Exemplary Tales: Virtual Apprenticeships” by David Epston and his colleagues Travis Heath, Kay Ingamells, and Sasha Pilkington, uses two short stories to invite readers into an experience with exemplary tale telling before introducing them to the theoretical rationale for using storytelling to teach practice. The second exemplary tale, “Insurance Policies for Miracle Cures” by Sasha Pilkington, tells the story of her work with a family negotiating the struggles near the pending death of a loved one.

The second issue of this special series (appearing in *JST*, volume 35, number 3) will include two additional exemplary tales, “The Dirty Pants Problem and

Wonderfulness Interview” by David Epston and “There’s Always a Puppy (and Sometimes a Bunny)” by Tom Stone Carlson and his colleagues Emily Corturillo and Jill Freedman. The third issue (*JST*, volume 35, number 4) will include two articles by Kay Ingamells. The first is her exemplary tale called “Wilbur the Warrior,” which tells the story of her work with a family whose 8-year-old son’s life was on the brink due to a 5-year battle with anorexia. The second article, “Learning How to Counter-Story in Narrative Therapy,” provides the reader with a detailed look at the practices that Kay used in her work with Wilbur and how these practices are an extension of her 12-year apprenticeship with David Epston. The fourth issue (*JST*, volume 36, number 1) will be focused on how readers can use exemplary tales as an alternative pedagogy for teaching narrative practice, with articles written by Travis Heath and his colleagues and Tom Stone Carlson and his students.

REFERENCE

- Merleau-Ponty, M. (1964). *Sense and non-sense* (H. L. Dreyfus & P. A. Dreyfus, Trans.). Chicago, IL: Northwestern University Press.