



# **Leadership Storytelling and Workplace Storymaking**

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# Warming Up to Stories

1. Find some thing from your wallet/purse that says something about who you are ...
2. Then, share a little bit about that thing/who you are with your neighbor.



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# *Homo narrens*

“Each person has a large secret life, dreams, stuff we don’t know how to tell yet, and if we are in a family or community whom we can’t tell our stories to, then we’re not really related, we’re just polite strangers sitting down to dinner. We are all more complicated than we appear to be, even the ones whom everyone makes fun of or pities, and all we ask – all we need – is the chance to say our piece and tell who we are.”

-- Garrison Keillor



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# *Destoryfication*

Just as clear-cutting an old-growth forest leads to a phenomenon called deforestation – the stripping of the landscape of more than just trees – our culture has been devastated by the loss of storytelling as a tool for communicating, passing on values, learning, and, most important, healing ... When you cut down the trees, you also destroy the multitude of microenvironments in which a host of other living creatures make their home ... So it is with *destoryfication*.

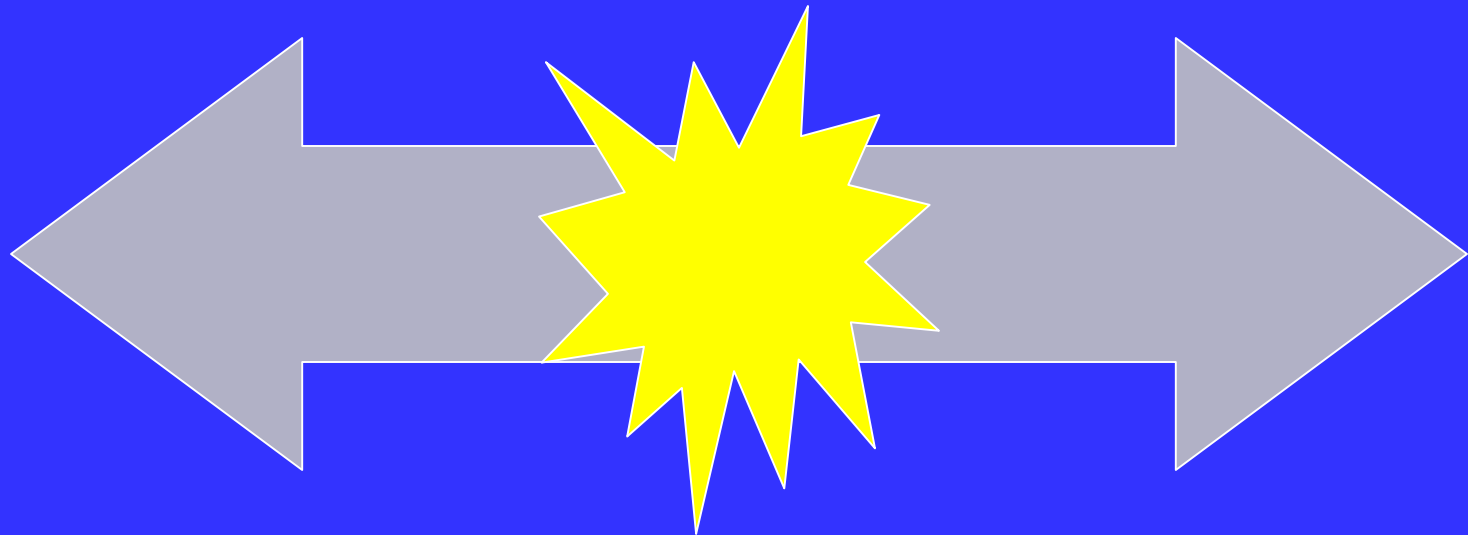
-- Richard Stone



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# A Tension in Our Workplaces



*Destoryfication*

*Homo narrens*



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# Leader Narrative Competence #1

**Stop *Destoryfication!***



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# Stories @ Work: Who, Where, Why, & How

- **Who** does storytelling?
- **Where** do we find stories?
- **Why** do we tell stories?
- **How** do our stories get told?





# *Who Does Storytelling?*



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# *Who* Does Storytelling?

- **Personal Level**
  - parents, family, friends
- **Workplace Context**
  - colleagues, leaders/managers, sales/marketing, Web
- **Wider World**
  - ministers, entertainers, politicians, advertisers



*Where*  
Do We Find  
Stories @ Work?



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# *Where Do We Find Stories @ Work?*

- Marketing/Advertising
- Visioning/Strategic Planning
- Customer Service
- Training/Organizational Learning
- ?



# *Why* Stories?



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# *Why* Stories?

- **Remember Personal *Histories*:**  
*tells storyteller's journey*
- ***Present* Events/Circumstances:**  
*make sense of life experience*
- ***Envision* Future Possibilities:**  
*communicates potentialities and plans  
in ways that inspire*



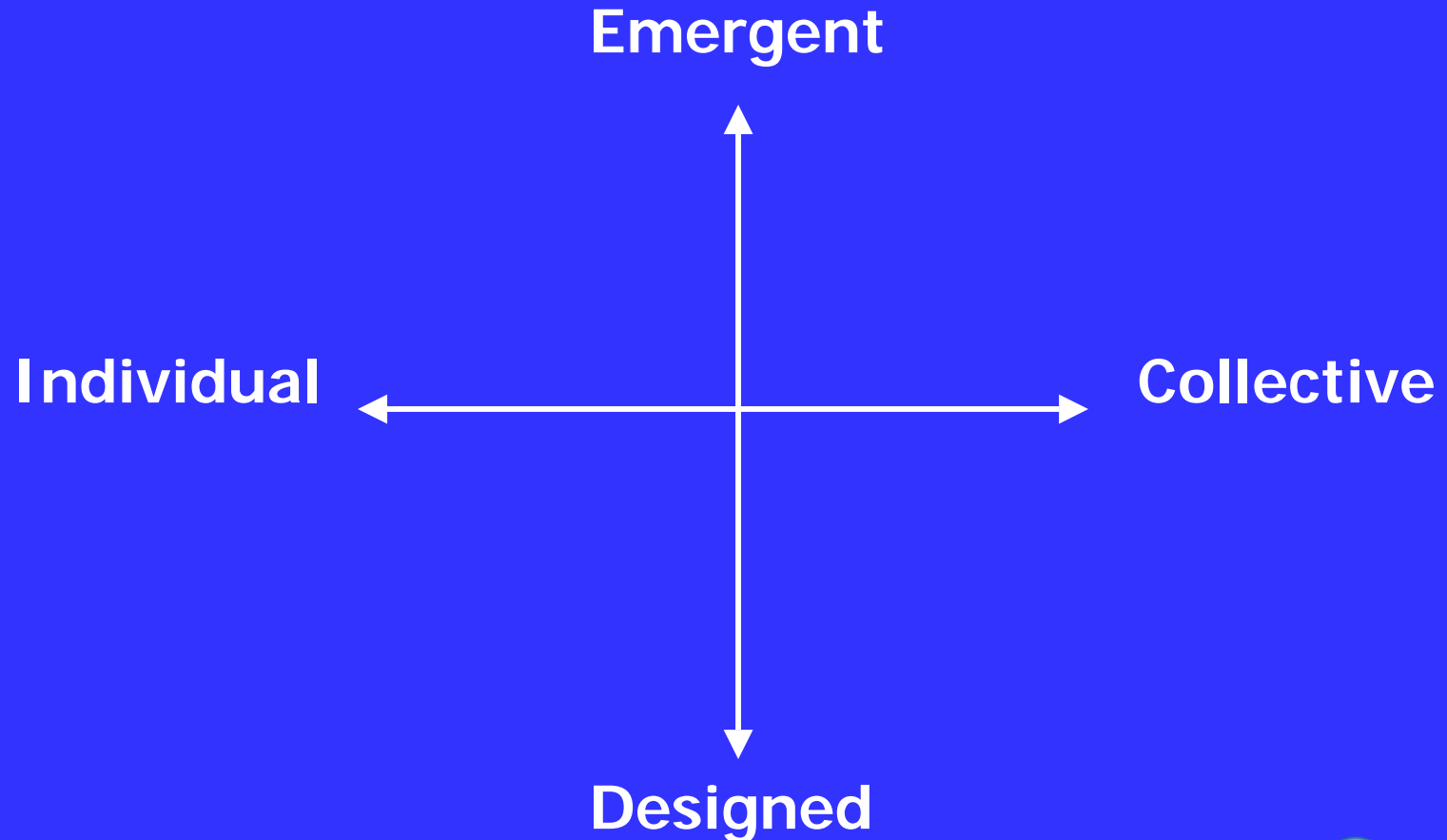
# *How Do Stories Get Told?*



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# Four Ways of Creating Stories





# Types of Organizational Narrative

Fragmentary

Comprehensive



*Remarks ... Proto-Stories ... Stories ... Histories*



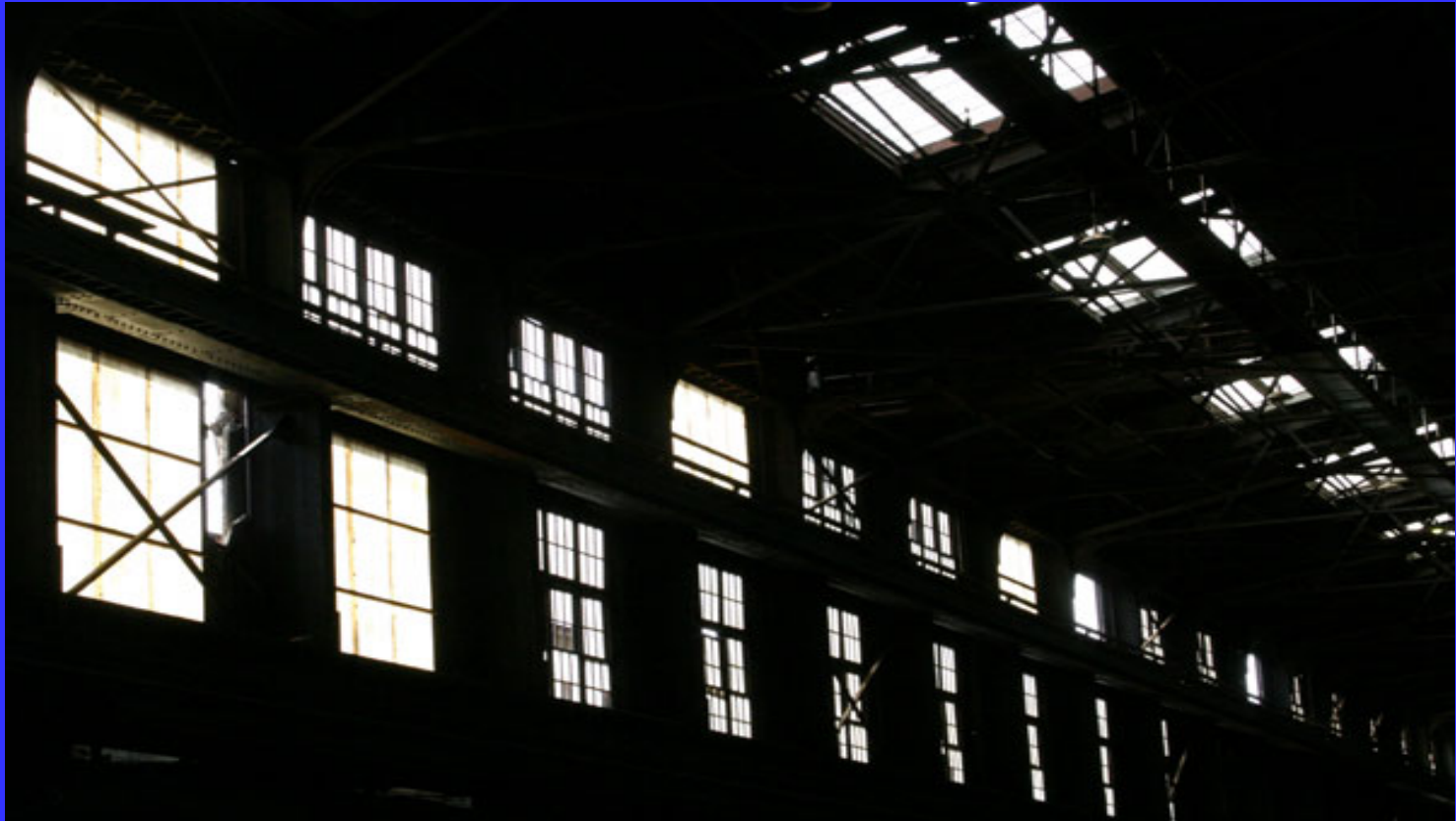
# In the beginning ...



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... and then, one day ...



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and, in the end ...



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# Listening *and* Telling

“First, in the *telling* of our story,  
we come to accept who we are in new ways.  
Second, in the *hearing* of others' stories,  
we come to understand our own stories better.  
And, finally, in the telling *and* hearing,  
we are bound together in new and deep ways.”

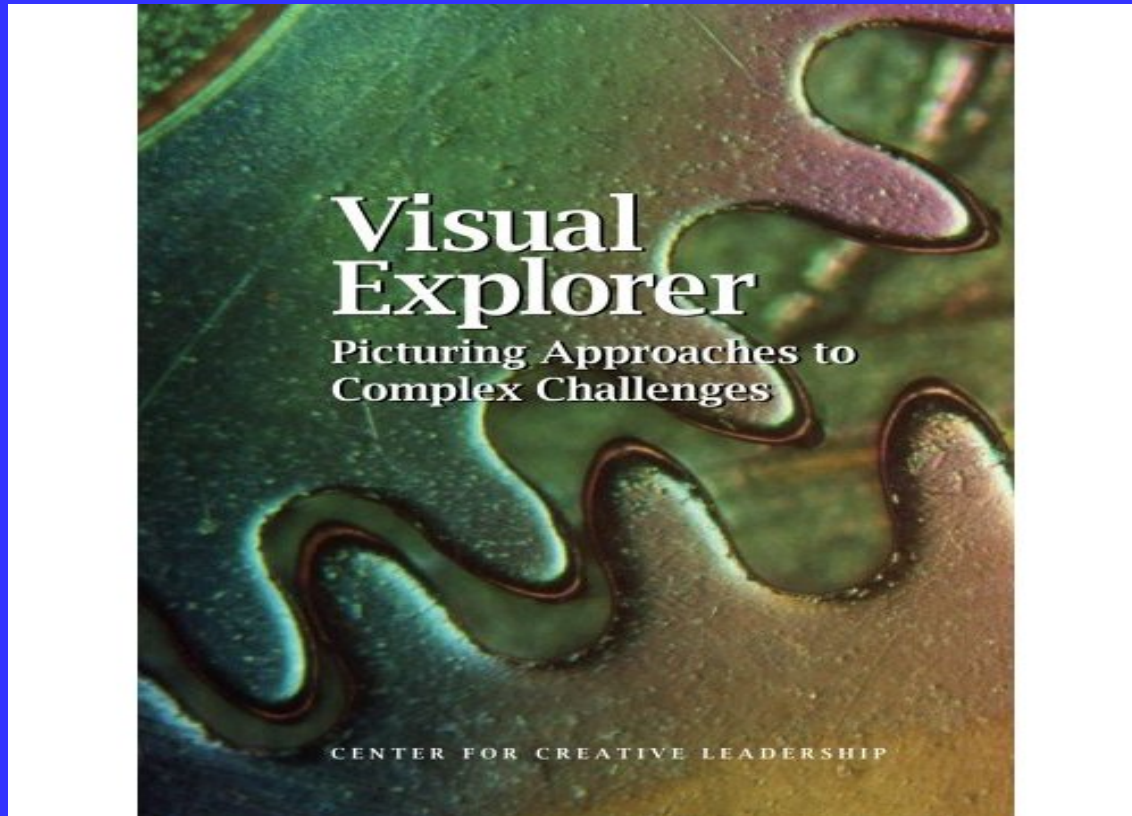
-- Richard Peace



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# Your Story ...



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# *Who I am Storysharing*

1. First, you describe your image.
2. Second, you make connections between your image and the question – tell the story.
3. Third, your partner describes what he/she sees in your image.
4. Fourth, your partner makes his/her own connections (from your image).
5. Fifth, your partner asks questions and explores meanings – searching for insights (don't problem solve, prescribe, or impose judgment).
6. Finally, the presenting person thanks the other (they are the final author of meaning of the image they chose).



# Why Your Story Matters?

"Leadership is autobiographical.  
If I don't know your life story,  
I don't know a thing about you  
as a leader."

Noel Tichy,  
University of Michigan  
Business School



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# Leader Narrative Competence #2

## Leader – Know Thy Story!



# So, what story are we a part?

I can only answer the question

“What am I to do?”

if I can answer the prior question

“Of what story do I find myself a part?”

-- Alasdair Macintyre



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# Change and Stories

**“Change begins  
when a few people  
start talking with one another  
about something they care about.”**

-- Margaret Wheatley



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# Restoryation: How Story & Change Connect

Similar to the process of restoration, where we seek to breathe new life into an old house; **restoryation** is a process that allows us to make sense of our life stories – to tell, retell, reconstruct, and envision – to restory our lives.

The act of restoryation allows us to honor who we have been, who we are, and who we are becoming.



# Change and Transition



**CHANGE**

What is being altered?

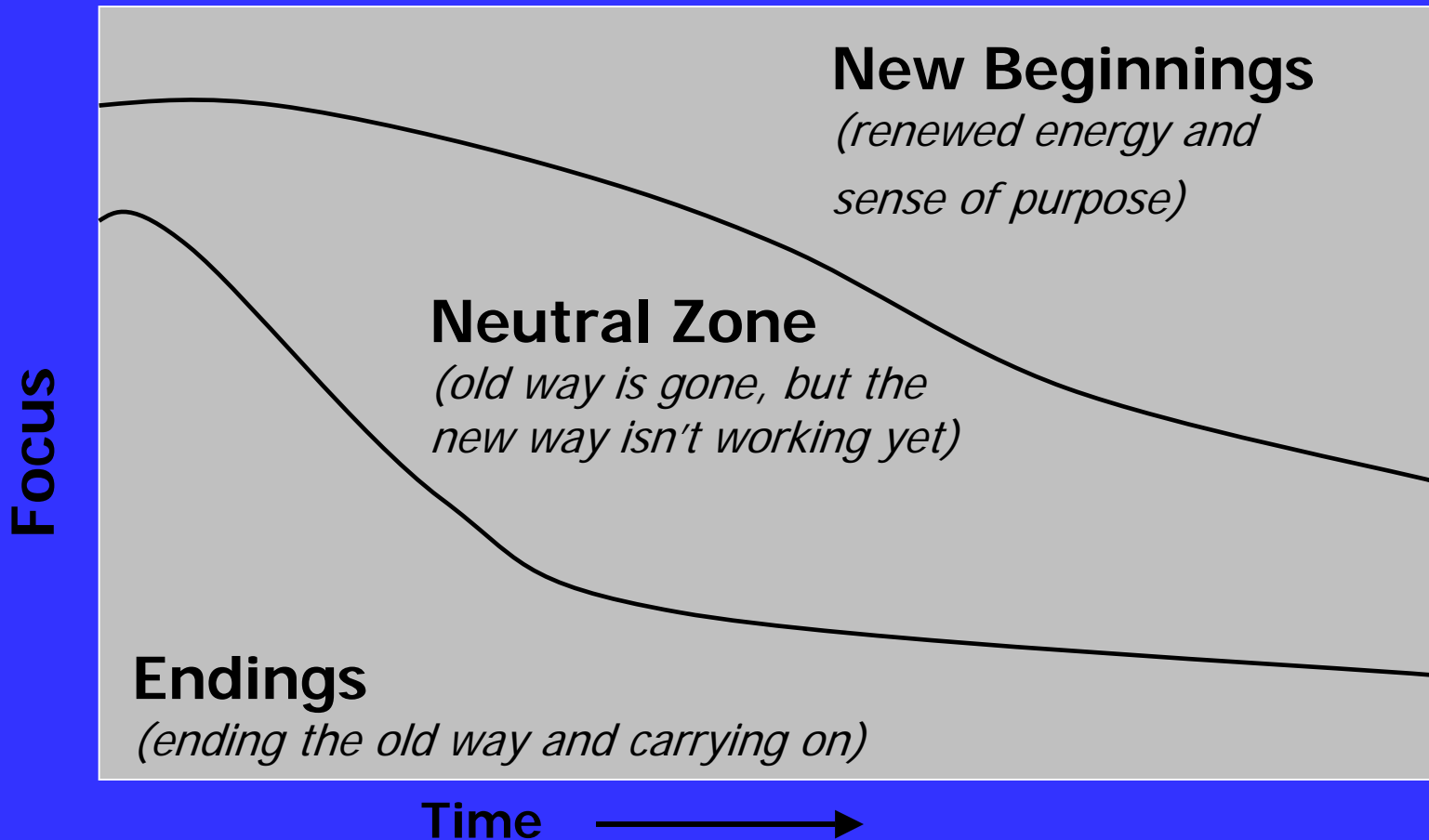


**TRANSITION**

How am I experiencing  
this change – what is my  
emotional response?



# A Model for Understanding Transitions



# Leader Narrative Competence #3

We Change Our Organizations  
by  
Changing Our Stories



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# Stories and Performance ... There's a Connection



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# Emotional Connections Strengthen Organizational Performance

When the Corporate Executive Board studied Employee Engagement in 2004, by surveying 50,000 employees at 59 global companies, it concluded that emotional factors were four times more effective at engaging employees than rational factors.



# Leader Narrative Competencies

1. Stop Destoryfication
2. Know thy Story
3. We Change Our Organizations by Changing Our Stories





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