

The Power of Story

Example: 'You Create Your World'

I have a concept I want to get across, about how you create the world you live in. I could explain this in great detail and seek to persuade you that you can decide how you want your world to be and how you influence how people treat you. I could create bullet-pointed slides on all the key points of this.

Or I could tell you a story:

“I used to be afraid of dogs. Friends told me I was silly, that dogs were nice, friendly creatures.

“However I knew differently. Every time I went to the park I encountered dogs, that barked at me and chased me. It was clear to me how the world was, that dogs were nasty, aggressive creatures.

“One day, as a result of going to a personal development conference, I decided to take courage. I was still clear that dogs were nasty and aggressive but I decided it didn't make sense to live my life in fear of them.

“So next time I went to the park I held myself high and decided to be confident and free of fear. And the world changed.

“Dogs no longer barked at me or chased me. From that day to this (about 10 years) I have rarely met an aggressive dog. I have been able to get close to alsations, Dobermans ... dogs I would have run a mile from in the past.”

“I realised that however much I believed that the world was one way, that world was entirely create by me.

“Think about it. Where in your life do you create your world? Where do you have a limited view of other people, or how they will treat you, and make it come true?”

(I generally finish the story with an inter-active session, asking people what was going on. Most are clear that the story is true of dogs, that they can smell fear. I may then give examples of how this also works with people.)

Follow Up a Story with Speaking in Turns

How do people take on board the lesson of a story? If you really want them to think about it, get them to discuss it afterwards. Break them into pairs or small groups and simply get them to talk about what it meant to them.

Some stories are merely illustrative. Some (like the one above) are intended to get the listeners to rethink their behaviour. IN this case a good method is:

- Split the audience into pairs
- Instead of a discussion ask each, in turn, to talk for a set number of minutes while the other listens.

| |
|--|
| “If you want to change somebody’s opinion, try listening to them.” |
|--|

Notes on Story Telling