

What's Your Story?

a narrative approach to meaning-making

The Gillespie Lectures, 2024
Rogue Valley Manor

Fred Grewe, DMin, BCC

*“We are made not merely
of flesh and blood, but
of stories ...”*

African Proverb

4 Elements of Our Life Narrative



Fred Grewe

Time to Talk about Dying, 2018

Coloring Our Story



CYAN



MAGENTA



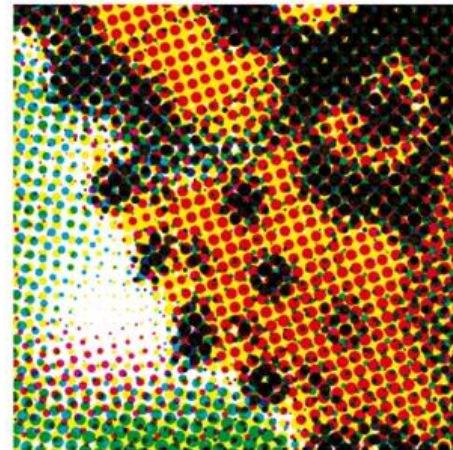
YELLOW



BLACK

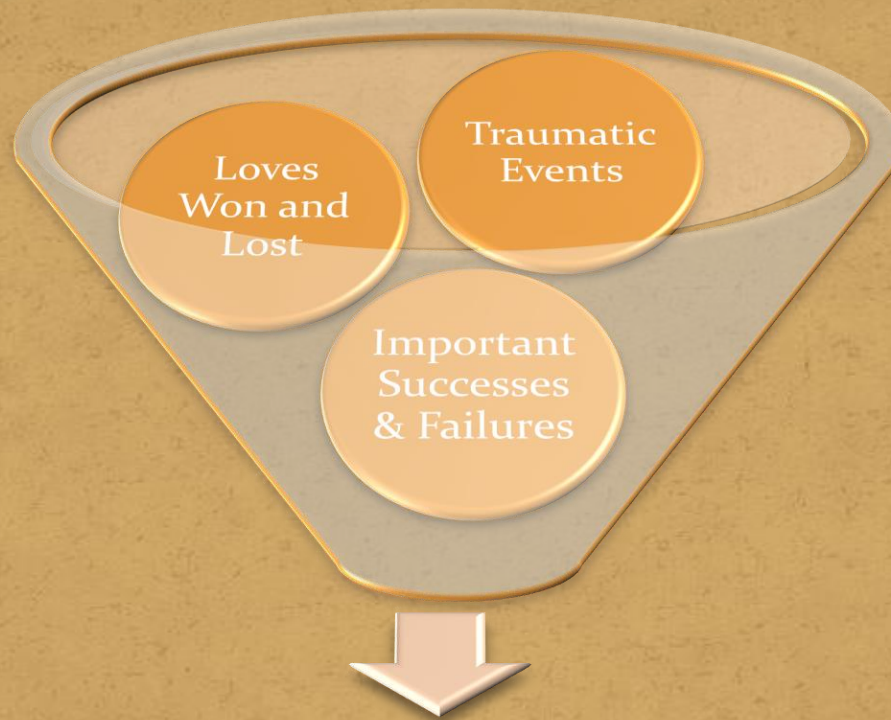


FINAL CMYK



DETAIL VIEW

image courtesy of
The Leslie Company



Life Experiences

Nuclear Family Influence

Learn Family
Myths & Stories

Experience Power
Structure

Family
Influence

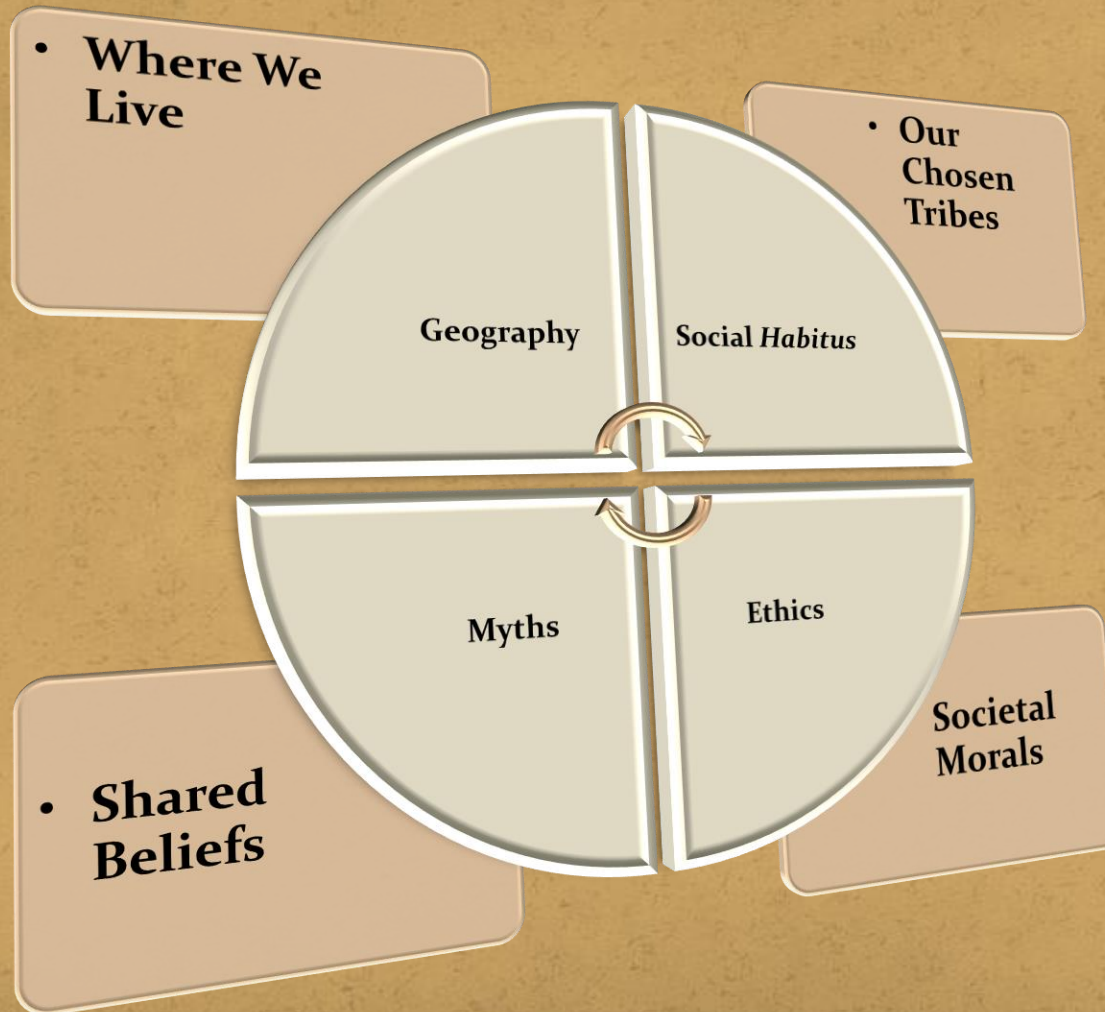
We Are Named

Our Assigned
Roles

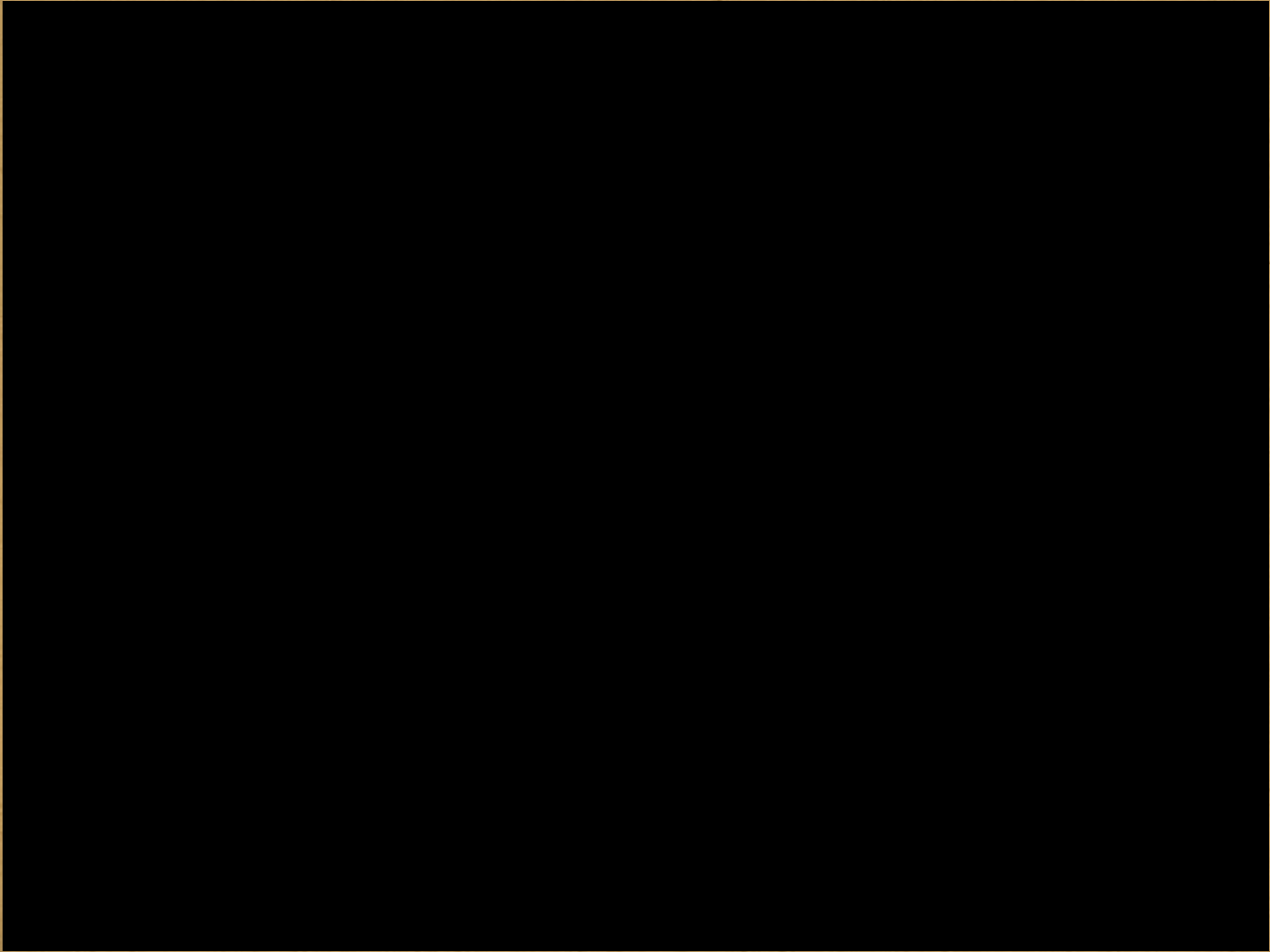
ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES

- domestic violence
- parental abandonment through separation or divorce
- a parent with a mental health condition
- being the victim of abuse (physical, sexual and/or emotional)
- being the victim of neglect (physical and emotional)
- a member of the household being in prison
- growing up in a household in which there are adults experiencing alcohol and drug use problems

Cultural Worldview



God Concepts



God Concepts

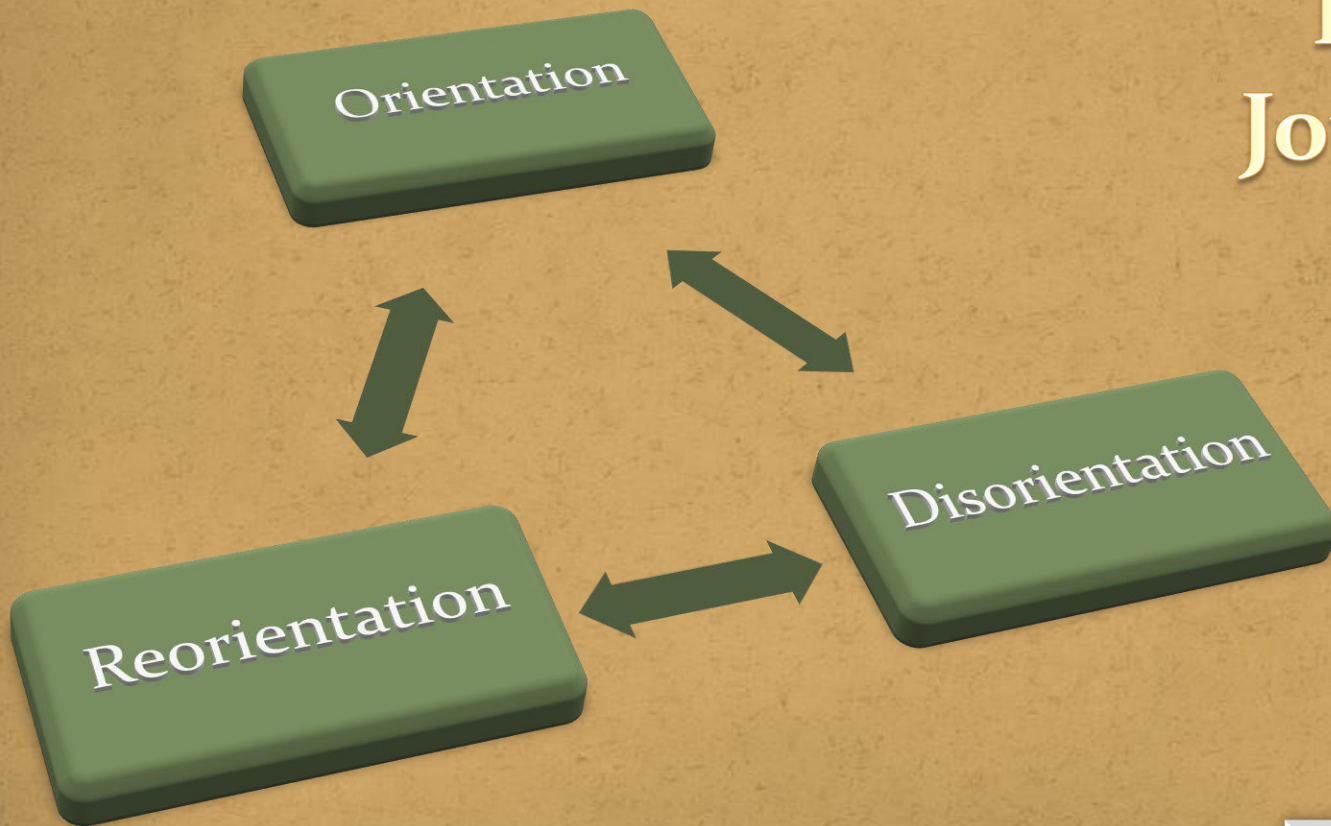
Judge

Observer

Caring

Powerful

The Hero's Journey



Joseph Campbell
Hero with 1,000 Faces, 1998

Orientation

The stories we weave together from these various strands of information create our basic orientation to life and to the way we believe things ought to be. These stories are very fragile and at some point, will be assaulted.

*Dis*orientation

- Divorce
- Death of a Loved One
- Dismissal from a Job
- Disease

*Dis*orientation

The most common response to this disorientation process is *suffering* – which can be fertile soil for spiritual growth.

*Dis*orientation

For those of us in the throes of the disorientation process, it can feel as though our lives have taken a tragic turn. Tragedies come in all shapes and sizes, minor and major, but they all have three things in common: they are sad stories; they have flawed heroes; and they represent conflicts of good and evil.

*Dis*orientation

The aging person is the hero in her or his tragic story – we are all tragic heroes trying to figure out why we are alive and what it all means.

Reorientation

Ronald Dworkin

“Whatever the limits and travails we face, we want to retain the autonomy—the freedom—to be the authors of our own lives. This is the very marrow of being human.”

*Re*orientation

“Our story is the most
precious thing we have.
Our lives depend on it.”

Thomas Moore
Original Self, 2001

Reorientation

Moore continues,

“Whenever a story puts an end to reflection and further storytelling, that story is now serving as a defense. The whole point of a good story is to give birth to other stories and deep reflection.”

Thomas Moore
Original Self, 2001

Reorientation



Fred Grewe

Time to Talk about Dying, 2018

Empty-handed I entered the world
Barefoot I leave it.
My coming, my going –
Two simple happenings
That got entangled.

Kozan Ichikyo (1360)



Podcasts can be heard on Spotify, iTunes,
iHeart Radio, & Amazon Music

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Group Exercise: Story Sharing

- The time that you were happiest;
- The hardest that you ever laughed;
- A time that you were scared or afraid,
- A big success or an unexpected failure;
- A time that you were forgiven;
- A time that you forgave someone else;
- A lesson that you learned;
- A time that your faith sustained you or a time that you felt that faith failed you;
- What is the best thing that your family ever did;
- A special gift that you received or that you gave;
- An experience that you are grateful for but would never want to repeat;
- An, "I can't believe that I just did that moment."