



Keeper of Sacred Stories:

*nurturing and affirming the potential
for wholeness in the people we serve*



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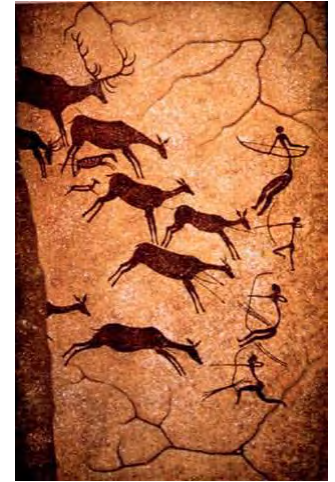
Road Map!

1. Why people tell stories...
2. Spirituality in the context of storytelling
3. Sacred stories - the healing power of “attentive listening”



Why people tell stories...

- From ancient times people have discovered the importance of storytelling as the foundation of communicating human experience. *This* cannot be overestimated.
- Oral traditions were focused upon educating and transmitting knowledge and skills, and evolved into one of the earliest methods of communicating scientific discoveries and developments.
- Stories are the smallest units by which human beings communicate their experience and knowledge of the world.



Haigh & Hardy (2011)



Stories...

- Allow us to **communicate events** using words (prose or poetry), images, and sounds often including improvisation or embellishment.
- Stories are reflective, creative and value laden, usually **revealing something important** about the human condition.

Haigh & Hardy (2011)



Stories...

- Allows an individual to share personal experiences with another; therefore, it is a mechanism for achieving connectedness, intimacy.
- "In the telling of their stories, strangers befriend not only their host but also their own past." (Nouwen – Reaching Out, 1975)

Taylor (1997)



Storytelling in healthcare...

- Storytelling as a method of making sense of the health journey.
- These stories have the power to be seen as both empowering and life affirming.

Haigh & Hardy (2011)



Stories...

- The **story** is the way we create our lives. It's how we tell ourselves who we have been, who we are, and who we might become.
- Dr. Arthur W. Frank, in his book *The Wounded Storyteller: Body, Illness, and Ethics*, talks about the types of stories that people with **serious illness** tell.
 - *The chaos stories (Anti-Narrative)*
 - *The Restitution/Recovery Stories*
 - *Quest/Transformative stories*



The Chaos Story...

1. It's about a person facing a future with no map and no sure destination.
2. Chaos feeds on the sense that no one is in control. Life is expected to follow a sequence of events, where one event follows another. Chaos negates the expectation. There is no order in the sequence of events.
3. We have the feeling of being caught in Eternal Chaos.
... Is there any Hope?



Sacred story

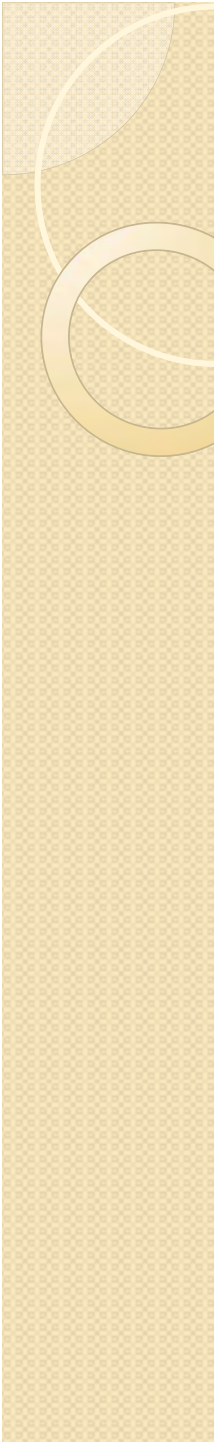
“The sacred appears in acts of caring in a harsh world, and caring constructs the sacred places where people live the meaning of their lives.”

Peter Van Katwyk Spiritual Care and Therapy (2003)

Group discussion...

Please share with the person beside you a time when you experienced a 'sacred moment' in the witnessing/telling of a chaos story.





**So what is the connection
between our stories and
spirituality?**



Spirituality...

- The search for the sacred. A conscious striving to move beyond isolation and self-absorption to a deeper awareness of interconnectedness with the self, other human beings, and the transcendent. (Health Ethics Guide, Pg129-130)
- Spirituality is the belief system focusing on intangible elements that impact vitality and meaning to life's events.

(The SPIRITual History, Archives of Family Medicine, 5:11-16)

Our Greatest Human Needs ...

- Companionship
- To be understood
- To be accepted, respected, and loved
- To be consoled
- Intimacy/Connection



... find an answer in “Spirituality”



Sacred encounters...

**flows from a
common story**

and my willingness to
“believe”



Sacred encounters ...

Depend on our ability and willingness to create a space for the other. A place that accepts and affirm the other for who they are.

Companionship. ..

The accompanier is there to give support, to reassure, to confirm, and to open new doors.

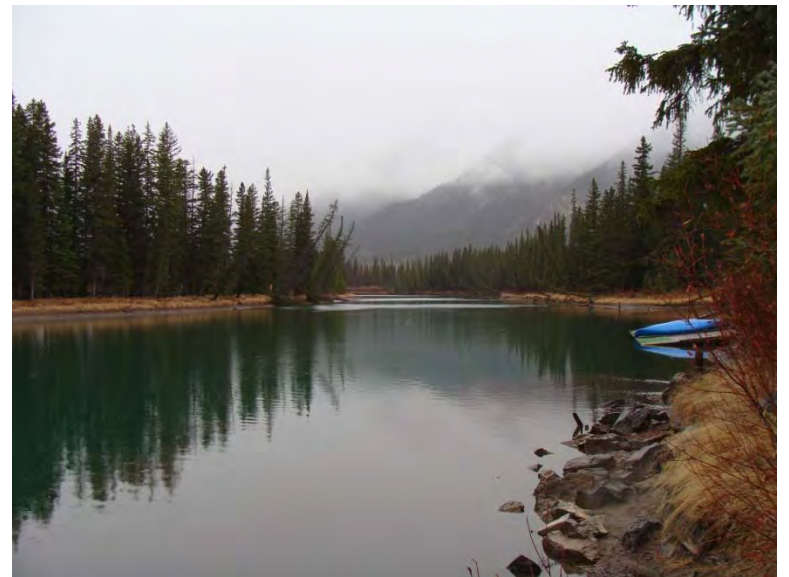
- Jean Vanier – Becoming Human



Sacred space...

The suffering human being needs a place where he/she can rest, a place which breathes genuine hospitality, where fear and hope are permitted to exit side by side... a place where the naked face appeals for compassion and finds response.

- Eriksson & Lindstrom 2003



Group discussion...

Share a time when you felt 'connected' with another in the sharing of your story... Or a time when someone created a "Sacred Space" for you. What was that like? How did that make you feel?





Keepers of sacred stories... rely on
the healing power of “attentive listening”

Places great emphasis on

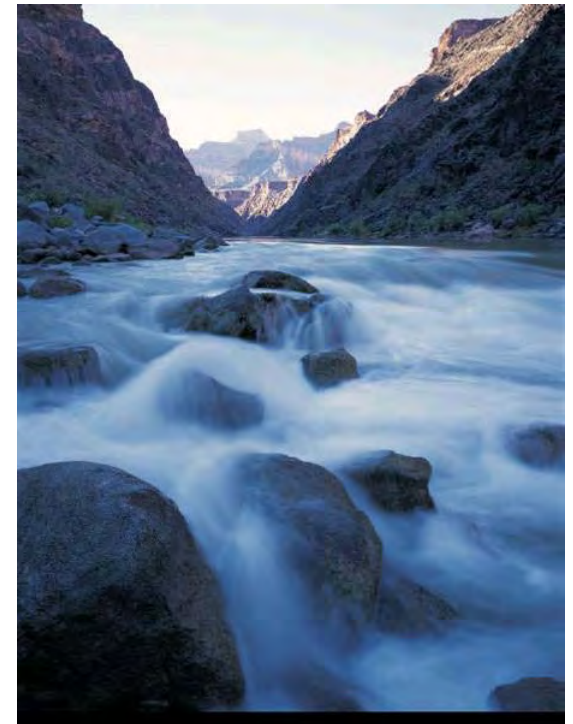
intention and

presence

Deeply **“Relational”**

When people really listen...

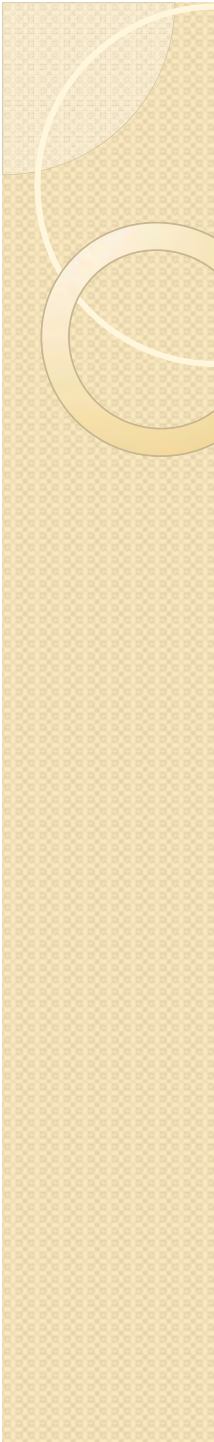
- we feel respected, understood,
- the brightness of hope dispels the darkness of despair.
- we no longer feel alone.



Three general principles ...

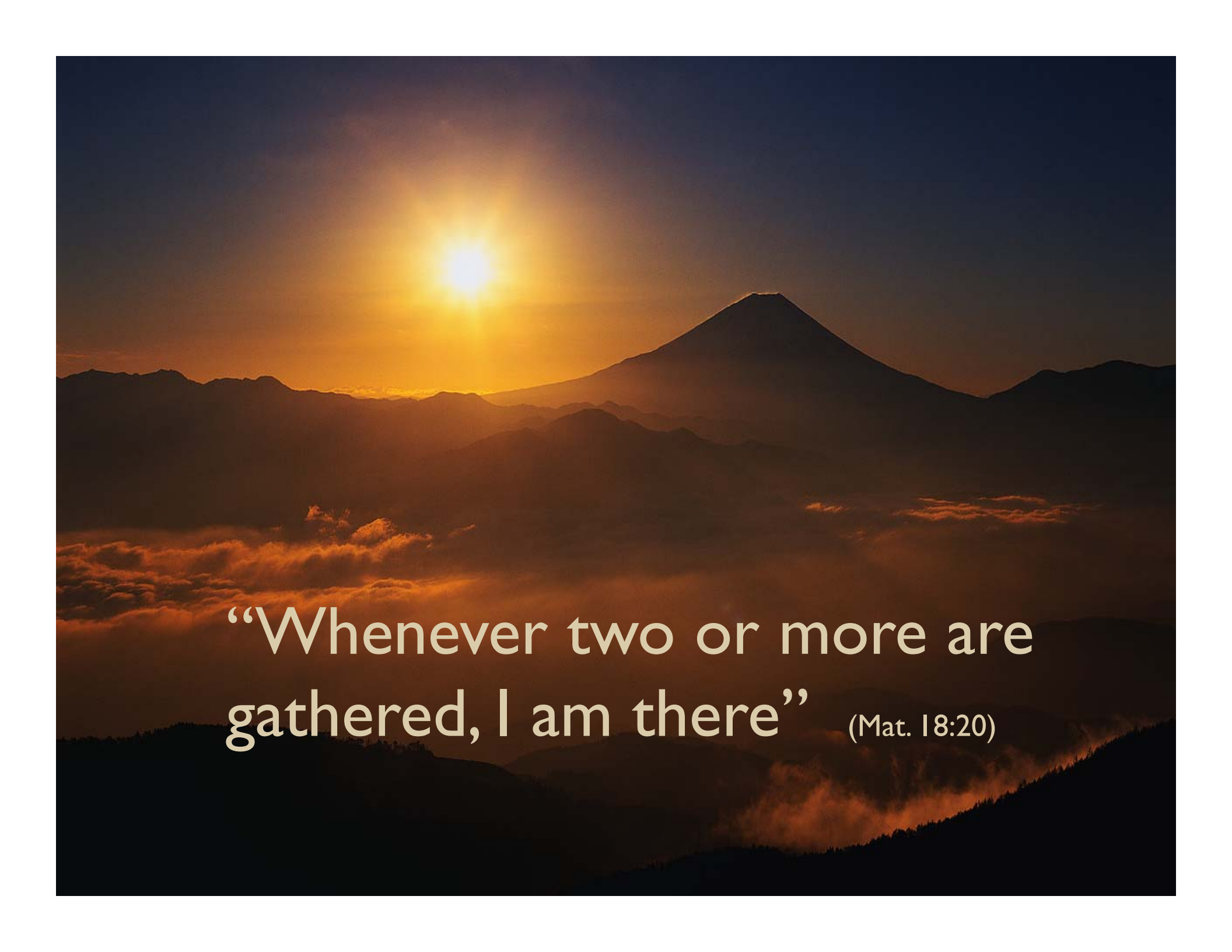
- You can create a space where the other can rest:
 - By opening new doors of genuine hospitality...
- You can deepen your “attentive listening” by:
 - believing what the other is saying...
- You can encourage others to share their story by:
 - affirming their potential for wholeness by witnessing and affirming their story





When one is truly present to another there is:

- An alleviation of loneliness
- Potential for spiritual bonding
- A deeper sense of our common humanity
- A recognition and acknowledgement of the other as a person
- Possibility for greater self reflection & self revelation
- Sharing on a deeper level, spiritual level



“Whenever two or more are
gathered, I am there” (Mat. 18:20)

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Thank you

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