

# Honor Your Journey Through Your Story

by Wendy C. Horikoshi

Discovering and honoring my own stories have helped me integrate all of the important parts of my life's journey and have enabled me to connect with clients, especially when their stories are different than mine. According to Carol S. Pearson in her book *Archetypes in Organization Settings*:

“Workplaces are thus the settings in which they live out the great human stories—whether in their comic (happy) or tragic (unhappy) modes. As we pull back the veil of appearances, we may notice great heroism and pernicious villainy, devotion and antipathy, the pride of victory and the indignity of defeat—all right before us, every day. The great challenge is to be certain that the organization and those in it are living the optimal story available to them.”

What are the stories of your workplace? Are they stories of Stability/Structure, Learning/Freedom, Results/Mastery, or People/Belonging? What is your story? Are you focusing on material results, self-actualization, production, or human community?

What is the story of Stability/Structure? Is it the caregiver providing products and services and caring for people? Is it the ruler, who centralizes the power to wield results and affect social responsibility? Is it the creator who invents and redesigns structures or creates new products? These stories focus on material results.

What is the story of Learning/Freedom? Is it the explorer seeking out meaning and effectiveness? Is it the sage, the researcher, the pursuer of knowledge or experience, who sees somewhat from a distance? Is it the happy family, where employees and clients are well taken care of and life is predictable? These stories focus on self-actualization.

What is the story of Results/Mastery? Is it the hero that is championing some cause or the leader in some industry service or product who is competing to win? Is it the revolutionary, who through unconventional methods strives for innovation to break tradition and implement the cutting edge? Or is it the magician, who with intuitive insight and magic move toward unprecedented success? These stories focus on production.

What is the story of People/Belonging? Is it the peer group story where everyone matters and who band together to get through tough times and create a happy ending? Is it the lover of beauty in life, whether that be products, services, people or experiences? Is it the jester, who loves fun, taking things lightly and responding to difficulties with playfulness? These stories focus on human community.

Discovering which stories were active in my life and which ones offered the silver lining or new learning that I wanted to pursue has helped me to travel my career

journey—contribute what I needed to with the current organization, leave a 13-year stable position that was a great job, continue my inward growth about myself, and move to a field of work that I love and feel most privileged about engaging in. Unearthing the stories help me integrate all the important parts in my life: my calling, my family and community and my desire to live a responsible, productive and meaningful life. I keep rediscovering that life is a continuous process where each storyline helps me to feel more whole and better equipped to face the challenges and difficulties of each stage of my journey.

As a coach, hearing the story of each client and inquiring about the storyline has helped me to metaphorically accompany each of them in their lives, especially when their stories are very different from mine. Alternately, when the underlying storylines are similar, each narrative within the social, political and economic milieu provides for a different telling of the same story. Through hearing and reflecting upon these stories, we can recognize and experience the meaning and lessons which can be gleaned from each symbolic pattern.

Similarly, understanding the collective storylines of one's workplace, family and community can help one live out one's own storylines, choosing and selecting the optimal story available. For example, the founding principle and priority of most persons working within non-profits is often the story of the *caregiver*, tending to people and being of service in some way. The caregiver's story is also prevalent in parenting and with persons who want to contribute to the well-being of other people. Also, at some point the client's story may be about the *ruler*, dealing with scarcity, or creating order in one's inner world so that the outer world can mirror one's inner world or vice versa. Or, the client may have flowed through the *creator* story, designing a new product or method. Although all of these stories help establish stability and structure, the outcomes or the processes are different and selecting one over another can be more effective for achieving a desired material result.

Quite often, I see clients when they desire to move beyond providing structure and stability to their organizations, communities, and families; they desire new meaning. Clients may be compelled to explore (*explorer*), simply have faith and hope that there will be a happy ending (*innocent*), or find deeper truth or understanding (*sage*) their lives.

Many clients who have been working in the corporate world seem to have lived stories that have been about bringing forth change. The most commonly known story of change is the *hero*, striving to help one's organization make a profit, increase those profits and win the competition in their fields. Similarly, many clients living the hero story from non-profits may be fighting to survive, and are almost always championing a cause. Other clients embrace the storyline of the *revolutionary*, breaking out of convention so that new growth and change can occur. Another storyline about change is the *magician*, which may emerge through the renaming of something or a shift of thinking.

In the workplace as well as in their personal lives, clients live stories about one's human community. Almost all clients have lived the great story of the "*every person*," where the storyline is about opportunity and equality for each person. This story ends

with a happy ending as people work together, receive, give, and embrace their interdependence. Still other clients are living the story of the *lover*, people creating beautiful experiences, services and products. Clients resonate with this story when asking if they feel a call to “follow their bliss,” to actively engage with their passion, commitment and loved one(s). Another storyline that helps people to belong is the *jester*, which creates pathways for enjoyment and lightness in life.

Honoring one’s stories is a way of illuminating one’s continual journey in life. As Bill Moyers said in *The Power of Myth*, during an interview with Joseph Campbell:

*“Myths are stories of our search through the ages for truth, for meaning, for significance. We all need to tell our story and to understand our story... We need for life to signify, to touch the eternal, to understand the mysterious, to find out who we are.”*

Questions for Reflections:

- What are your stories?
- What are the stories of your workplace, family and community settings?
- How can the stories you live optimize the health, wholeness and meaning in your life?

The preceding chapter is taken from Collective Wisdom: Powerful Stories and Practical Advice for Achieving Success, edited by Donald Gerard. This book shares intimate stories of transformation and growth from coaches, therapists, artists and writers.

To order Collective Wisdom:

[http://www.amazon.com/Collective-Wisdom-Powerful-Practical-Achieving/dp/1441477462/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1360784190&sr=8-1&keywords=collective+wisdom+douglas+gerard](http://www.amazon.com/Collective-Wisdom-Powerful-Practical-Achieving/dp/1441477462/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1360784190&sr=8-1&keywords=collective+wisdom+douglas+gerard)