

Curative Stories and its Healing Power

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to understand the elements that make a curative story healing. In my research, I accompany the third year academy students throughout the course The Art of Storytelling at Camphill Special School. In the Art of Storytelling course all students had to undergo a process of writing a curative story for a chosen individual, tell the story, and then share their process with the course instructor. My research consisted of interviews and literature where I gathered information about the student's experiences. Former students of the course and the course instructor were also interviewed. My research will show that the process of writing a curative story is an extreme enriching one, where the students developed great capacities of observation, understanding, love, and empathy, and the child/young adult, who received the curative story, were enhanced by the abundant pictures provided in the curative stories.

Introduction

A colleague once said that to write a good story, one either has to have knowledge to do it (knowing about structure, archetypal images that go with the story, what is appropriate for each age, etc.), or receive it as a gift from the angels.

I was born in a poor sugar cane village where the only stories told were the ones people had heard themselves. My family members didn't know how to read, and the only book I remember seeing in my house was the Bible. The stories I heard were told around the fire on nights when we had electric blackouts. The stories my family and neighbors shared were mostly about those who had died, but were still with us, mainly haunting us, asking for a way to be released. I remember I did not like those stories, they used to keep me up all night. Even though I did not like the content of the stories, I liked the gatherings around the fire. They were always very special. Though my parents did not read well, I had the opportunity to go to school and learn all about reading. I loved reading, but the only books I had access to were the Bible and academic books. In middle school, I had my first experience with creative writing when I was asked to write two poems. The experience of creative writing was interesting because I never thought I could write. In my own narrowed understanding of the world, poetry was for those who were born poets, not for ordinary people. After seeing the results of my poetry writing, I was surprised. It was good. That was the first time I wondered what it takes to write creatively. Perhaps all it takes is a pen, paper, the will to do it, and a tint of imagination. One of the poems I wrote was about the feeling of being alone. I had just moved from my village into a city and I was constantly seen as an outsider, a countryside girl that dressed and spoke differently. The

poem not only helped me to release some of those feelings, but also helped me to inform my friends how I felt since I had to share the poem with the whole class.

The big magic happened when I was in high school. I received a big donation of books from Brazilian classical literature. The books from Machado de Assis, Jose de Alencar and Aluisio Azevedo became my escape from reality and also my foundation to be able to make it to university. I had decided to become a biologist as I thought that was a good way to help people.

In university, the books I was asked to read were never that interesting, but by then I was a grown up and I could also choose my own books. So parallel to the books I was asked to read for school, I was always able to read my books on the side, and they were mostly fantasy/fiction books such as Harry Potter. Towards the end of my biology course, I was able to attend classes on subjects that I chose, and all the topics I had chosen were related to education and social responsibility. In those courses I met some very inspirational teachers. I resumed reading inspirational books, and the possibility of practicing creative writing was back again. When I was done with university I decided to go out into the world and help those I thought needed help. Through an NGO, I found myself in a village in Africa. In the village in Angola, only a few were able to speak Portuguese, which is my native language. The village was still living strongly with the reminiscences of the war which had ended a few years back. Every adult in the village had a strong story to tell about how they survived, but many they knew didn't. The village was poor and struggling with seeing a positive future. My organization was working with empowering area leaders to empower the rest of the village. Even though the adults in the village still seemed to live in fear of a new war, the children, on the other hand, seemed to still be children. They worked hard with their parents, but when evening came, they were free from daily chores and

would play. The village didn't have electricity, and at night you could never see the children in the dark, but you could always hear them. Their singing, their laughter, and their joy.

With a language barrier and a desire to communicate, I thought storytelling would be the perfect media. My friend and I were part of bringing activities to the area leaders training. We were asked to do ice-breaker exercises, to enliven their social interaction. After working with them for some time and realizing they didn't have much hope for the future, I decided to make up a story. That was the first time that I presented a character that followed me to a school in Mozambique and to a few schools and schools in India.

Essentially the story was about a being that had stumbled on the earth and had magically found dreams/children (I used dreams or people who had dreams when I told the story to adults and children when I told the story to children). The planet this being (who dressed very strangely) was coming from had no dreams/children and this being was sent on a mission in search of evidence of it. When this being arrives on the earth, she is utterly shocked to find so many dreams/children. Then the being would tell the adults/children her story, where she came from and what her mission was, and would ask for suggestions on what she should bring back to prove that dreams/children existed. Adults were asked to draw a picture of themselves and write their dreams/goals for the future and something they had already accomplished. The results were quite special. Those men who felt very important in their own roles in the community, and also much older than I, could not get themselves to draw, especially draw themselves. They complained and resisted, but finally decided to do it. When they were done, they shared their drawings and we hung them on the wall for the remainder of the training sessions. I thought the storytelling piece and the fact that I dressed funny helped them to enter into a different mindset so they were able

to overcome shyness and enter into the exercise. I was very happy to help this particular group of adults dream/think about the future, especially because they were living with intense memories of war and the fear that it might come back. To dream about a bright future would be important, especially if they were the ones to bring growth and hope to others in the village.

In Mozambique, I used the story to encourage the students to dream/wish for how they wanted their school to look like. With that in mind, we created a list of what we wanted in the surroundings of the school. Together we created a garden with vegetables and flowers, we painted rocks to embellish the entrance of the school and we we painted the walls of the school with very bright colors. It was very important to encourage the children to dream and to turn some of those dreams into reality.

In India I went to four different schools in the slums. This time the story was focused more on the children themselves. As part of the story the children were asked to provide evidence of their existence. The children were very eager to help this being who came stumbling into their classroom in need of help. The children themselves had many suggestions on which pieces of evidence this being should bring back to its planet. They taught the games they played, they drew pictures of themselves on pieces of paper, sang and danced songs, which they asked to be recorded, and they wrote little letters to be brought back to the being's planet. At the end of each session of telling the story, I ended up with a huge pile of rich material that proved to me that children were children, and they were happy to be so, even if there were living under conditions that were not so desirable.

This particular story, that took so many shapes depending on who the audience was and what the needs were, was my first creation, written and told. I was very touched by the reception

of it and how open everyone seemed to be. I was also very inspired by how the story I created had opened possibilities for grownups to open up about their dreams and for children to share their art, wishes and fundamental child nature.

After a few years of doing volunteer work in Africa and India, I found myself working in England for a residential school for special need children. I chose this particular place because I wanted to continue working with children and learn more about Waldorf Education. I lived in Sheiling School Ringwood for a year and experienced the importance of storytelling in the lives of children and the adults who worked with them. Through plays, festivals celebrations, singing, classroom content and eurythmy, storytelling always found its way to those eager to hear another story. The school was very rich in its work with stories and seeing how the children responded so positively to it was always very inspiring.

After Sheiling School Ringwood, I moved to the USA to work at another residential school for children with special needs. I wanted to continue to live with special need children but mainly I wanted to study Curative Education. This particular course is an interdisciplinary approach to the education and support of children and adolescents in need of special support. It includes education and therapies, but also a recognition that a child's lifestyle and overall life situation can help or hinder development.

It was in 2012 when I moved to Camphill Special School and that has been my home since. It was through the studies in Curative Education that I have really strengthened my connection with creative writing. In the four years of the curative education training the students are constantly asked to write creative pieces that reflect the work they are doing with the students.

In the third year of the curative education training, I did a course called *The Art of Storytelling*. This course was geared towards writing stories. In that course, we were asked to write entire stories about a particular encounter, about somebody else's biographic aspect, or to write a story about pictures we were given. That was the first time I was consciously engaged in writing stories. Because the main instructor of the course was out that year we didn't get to write curative stories as the previous year's students had. So in the following year we were given a few classes on curative story so we could have that as tool to potentially help our students. At that time, I was doing a child study on a particular child and I was struggling with finding a curative gesture for her. So I decided to take a chance and write a curative story. With great intentionality, deep contemplation and the help of my colleagues, I was able to write a story for my student that presented itself so powerfully that it left me with a deep feeling of awe and wonder. It is this deep feeling of awe and wonder that has brought me to the study of curative stories and what makes it healing. It has been my experience with healing and stories that has made me look back into my biography and look forward into the future. I hope that my research brings more light into the elements that make a curative story, that has been written for somebody special, so powerful.

Chapter I

Curative Education and The Art of Storytelling

Curative Education is a broad approach to educate children with developmental and intellectual disabilities, and it was initiated by Rudolf Steiner in 1924 (Luxford, 2004). In 1924, Rudolf Steiner gave a series of lectures that later on turned into a book entitled *Education for Special Needs: The Curative Education Course* (2005). In this book, Steiner (2005) essentially talked about two principles for the educator: observation and love. Steiner stressed that the educators need to learn how to observe children and their unique individualities. The teachers were to observe who the children were underneath all hindrances, so that lovingly the teacher could help the children to overcome their struggles and unfold their true destinies. In order to be able to enter into this space of true observation and love, the educator needs to exercise self-knowledge. “Involvement in the life of such children as have been described leads those who are their parents or teachers to discover limitations in their understanding and perception of the child’s need. The question arises as to whether you can in fact understand the needs of a particular child? You may have to face doubt and uncertainty. Have you the courage to try to help, to risk a particular approach? Curative Education demands this kind of interest and involvement” (Luxford, 2004, p. 60).

Curative Education might have started with Rudolf Steiner, but it was Karl Konig who developed it further and made it known. Karl Konig started the Camphill movement, founding the first Camphill Community in Scotland in 1940 (Luxford, 1994). These communities now exist in many countries around the world, and the Curative Education impulse continues to spread throughout Asia, South America, and the Middle East. Today, Curative educators are

working in special schools, special preschools and kindergartens, disability services and home programs, and in social therapy work with adults (Jackson, 2011).

A Curative Education program is offered through Camphill Academy and it is based at Camphill Special school, a residential school for children with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Students in the Curative Education Program are integrated into the residential life and work of the community. If staying for the complete four years, the Curative Education Program offers the students academic and artistic coursework, supervised practice in childcare, education, and therapy. The experience of life and work in the school forms an integral part of the student's educational experience and provides the foundation for the growth of their personal and professional capacities as practitioners of curative education.

The Art of Storytelling

The Art of Storytelling is a course offered to the third-year students of the Curative Education Program. The course focuses on understanding, telling, and writing stories. Towards the end of the course every student gets to write a curative story for a particular student under their supervision. Also, as part of this particular course, the students create a puppet show. The students choose the story, design the scenery, make the puppets, and present the final product to the children at Camphill Special School.

To live in a residential school with special needs children, storytelling becomes part of everyone's life, especially for the coworkers (adults who work and live with the children at the school) and the children. The coworkers will tell stories to the children when they are walking together in the woods; when the children get stuck on the road; before they go to bed; to help them when they miss their parents, and so on. At Camphill Special School coworkers tell stories

they heard when they were young; they read in books, and a lot of times, they make up their own stories as the need arises. Here is an exhale of a simple made up story to help a child that sat on the floor and refused to continue walking: “Once there was a little girl. She loved cakes...The little girl’s mother was a wonderful baker. Every time the little girl smelled the cakes she would get up and run home, as fast as her legs could carry her. She would bolt through the door and say to her mother “I am here mother, ready for the most wonderful cake of all cakes.” Sometimes that is all you need to do to get a particular student going.

In The Art of Storytelling course, the students went through a developmental process during which stories are told and created for children. “Turning to a variety of fairy tales, myths and folk tales, the student learns to understand certain themes and images that can help them grasp the meaning of the story. Animal stories, biographies, and many modern books for children become a resource and the student will discern what is appropriate for which age group in relation to stages of child development” (The Art of Storytelling course description, 2015, p. 1). In general, the first story the child hears is from his/her mother during the pregnancy. The mother will share with the baby, not yet born, all about his/her becoming. Then, when the child is born, the mother will tell stories of what is happening around the child, things they are doing together, things of the day, so the child will feel loved. Nursery rhymes have that warming quality, where the young child, through the mother’s voice, learns that “the world and I are one.” “Words that sound almost the same, chiming and echoing through a nursery rhyme or story, encourage listening and language development. Many old nursery rhymes are little tales Going to London on mommy's or daddy's knees is the beginning of high adventure. This little piggy goes to market begin the discovery that characters, like toes, are connected within the same plot.” (Mellon,

2004, p. 30).

Children live in the realm of awe and wonder (Lievegoed, 2005). To facilitate this practice, the students were given a word, such as the name of an insect or plant, and then asked to bring that word to life. Every student was encouraged to practice sharing awe and wonder with a child they knew. The awe and wonder of finding a flower that has not yet been seen, or a butterfly that was flying around, was the first practical exercise the students of the Art of Storytelling got to do.

After experiencing and practicing awe and wonder, the students were asked to “dive into the land” of fairy tales. The students explored the importance of fairy tales for the growing child, for which age fairy tales are most appropriate and inherent value of its archetypal images. The students were asked to read three fairy tales and choose one. They were asked to choose from that one its moral images, meaning, and warm aspects as well as to whom they would tell that story, and why. “The Word, imbued with imagination, inspiration and intuition transformed into a story, is an art as ancient as it is profound”. (The Art of Storytelling course description, 2015, p. 1).

In The Art of Storytelling course, the students moved from studying fairy tales to studying folk tales. According to Lievegoed (2005) fairy tales meet the children around 7-9 years old and the folk tales meet them a little older, around 10-12 years old. "After the age of ten a great change occurs in feeling, as the child more or less leaves behind the primitive world of childhood." (Lievegoed, 2005, 171). The folk tales come from people that wondered about how things came about; those people had many questions, but not many answers. In order to practice speaking, the students were asked to choose a folk tale and read its beginning and ending to the

rest of the class. The exercise gave everyone an understanding of how to begin and end a story and how these two parts of a story bring out different soul moods. As another practical exercise, the students were asked to practice their story writing skills. A sentence was given to them, “I opened the ...” followed by words (door, box, cabinet, window, closet, etc.). All students started writing their story with the same sentence, but each had a different word that followed it. The students had a few minutes to write a few sentences down, and then they had to pass their writings to the person on their right and keep adding to the story that came from their left. This process ended when a story had the contribution of three different people.

Here is an example of a story that was created in class from that process,

Word - Heavy door

“I opened the ... heavy door... (person 1) and all was dark. Once my eyes got used to the darkness I was able to see the stairs that was leading downward. (Person 2) I found a little mouse sitting on the bottom of the stairs. I walked to the mouse slowly and quietly. (person 3) He froze for a moment, but the wooden stair creaked once under my weight, and he fled. I was left seemingly alone in the warm dark, the dusty cement floor below musty on the air, its contents stacked and piled in obscurity”.

Many more exercises were given to the students throughout the course so they could experience. “Through writing a story, the student may gain confidence to develop their art. Students are guided to listen for this story hidden behind the story line. It is a great gift to others if one can truly listen”. (The Art of Storytelling course description, 2015, p. 1).

After exploring awe and wonder, fairy tales, and folk tales, the students were guided to stories for older children. The Creation myths were explored through many stories. To

practically work with myths, the students were asked to choose one story and live with it for some time. The students were then asked to draw a picture that would encompass the whole story. All the drawings were brought to class and people shared what their pictures represented. While reading stories, the students were asked quite often to imagine pictures of the stories they would tell. According to Mellon (2004), to live with story images is very important to tell a good story, drawing the story can make its picture more alive for the child. "You may want to sketch the pictures in simple diagrams; or with a palette of water colors or pastels, paint the flow of the whole story on a large piece of paper. As you activate your own imagination, the children will also" (Mellon, 2004, p. 68). Other different types of stories were also mentioned briefly in the course like nature stories, animal fables, sagas, legends (Saint stories), and biographies.

To explore the different types of stories and to practice writing short stories seemed to be the foundation for the students to start writing their own curative story. In order to begin the process of writing a curative story, each student had to choose a child/young adult and also choose which issues they would like to address in the story. The children/young adults chosen by the students were mainly the ones the students were working with on a regular basis.

Goals addressed in their curative story.

"This child is too attached to his mother, but he is already a teenager, so how can I help him have a healthier relationship to her" (NK).

"This child has many obsessions, with people, with clothes. My goal is that she opens up. I want to show her the world" (AB).

"I want her to know that she is not alone in her experience of loneliness" (RS).

"The child I choose is very anxious. She wants affection and friends but doesn't know how to get

there. I want to help her to try new things. That if she fails, that is also okay. One can always try again” (LC)

“She is epileptic and a teenager. She is having a hard time to accept who she is. I want to help her to have courage, to become more confident, and to accept who she is” (EM).

“My child has attachment disorder. I want him to embrace his age, to grow up. He is a teenager, but still behaves like a young child” (AM).

The next step was to look at the ending of the story, and try to envision what wishes the students had for their child/young adult,

“She is alone, yet not lonely” (RS).

“How much he has dreamt, made friends, and laughed like never before. He has seen the world from above and below” (AM).

“He thought of his mother a lot, but he went back to his friends” (NK)

“She is not anymore afraid to fly” (LC).

“Curative story is a stepping stone, allowing the children to trust, open up, and make friendships.” (Lindenberg, N, personal communication, December 6, 2017).

As the process of writing a curative story progressed, two students had to change the child/young adult they had initially chosen (their working situation changed, and they were no longer working closely with their child/young adult). Also, some students refined the goals they would be working on.

Before the students were left on their own to write the curative story, a pathway was given to them. The pathway was meant to help them to write the story. The students were asked to use the pathway for guidance rather than as a list where they had to check off every item.

Pathway

- 1) Find your goal; articulate issues you want to address.
- 2) Find your main character; a boy, a princess, a bear.
- 3) Other characters that appear in the story.
- 4) Describe the initial situation; layout, outdoors; describe the environment.
- 5) What happens at the beginning of the story?
- 6) What is the storyline/plot; the actual story; the action.
- 7) How does the story resolve? How to bring resolution to it?
- 8) What is the end of the story?
- 9) What has changed in the main character? Has the character fulfilled its goal? This is a point that is related to the story writer's goal for the child/young adult.
- 10) Read the story; ask yourself the question: 'should I change anything?'

Other elements in the story

a) Beginning

Opening up the place; set the scene; introduce the main character

b) Happenings

Something unusual happens; a joyful or bad thing happens; a new person appears.

c) General unfolding of the story:

Narrative: telling of the tale

Dialogue: conversation; the "I" and the "you" in the story.

Humor

Anticipation: what's going to happen now; silence, tension, suspense.

Change of scene, traveling, going to different places.

Repetition: like in fairy tales, things that happen three times.

Rhymes and little poems

To know what the interests of your child/young adult is and put it in the story.

d) Coming to a resolution, wholesome.

e) Conclusion that leads to the future.

The Art of Storytelling course ran for four months and the students were still writing and telling their story all the way through spring. That particular class had 10 students, including myself. All of us wrote a curative story to a particular child/young adult; and it is safe to say that all of us were transformed by the writing and telling of the stories we wrote.

Chapter II

My First Curative Story, A Case Study

Heavenly Muse, Spirit who brooded on
The world and raised it shapely out of nothing,
Touch my lips with fire and burn away
All dross of speech, so that I may keep in mind
The truth and end to which my words now move
In hope. Keep my mind within that Mind
Of which it is a part, whose wholeness is
The hope of sense in what I tell.

(Wendell Berry, 1990)

The curative story I wrote was for a girl I will call Katie. She was 6, turning 7 years old when she first came to Camphill Special School. By the time I wrote the story she was 9. She is now 12 years old, she is in fifth grade, and she still lives at the school. Katie was non-verbal, diagnosed as autistic, and had a lot of self-injury behaviors. She had very poor motoric skills, struggled to eat solid food and she had serious issues around sleeping and waking. When she first came to Camphill Special School she would only eat pureed food. She enjoyed nursery rhymes, hikes, pictures of family and her dogs, and she loved to be read stories, especially fairy tales.

At the time I was working with Katie, she had trouble sleeping at night as well as staying awake during the day. According to her mother, that had been the case since she was born. During the night her body was always in constant motion, and even when she had her eyes

closed, her body would still not rest. Katie's sleep was never restful and rechargeable. The days were equally restless, because Katie could not sleep at night she would be in a sleep state during the day. To be present with her peers and coworkers and to be able to perform daily tasks was very important for her. Because Katie could not let go, she could not fall asleep, those tasks were not easy to be accomplished. Many times during the day Katie would be smiling or crying for no apparent reason or sometimes she would be so upset she would pinch her skin until it bled.

It was evident that Katie needed to sleep at night, so she could be available during the day. So, in order to help Katie, a group of twelve people, who were working closely with her, met to discuss what therapeutic approach would help her. Because I was working very close to her I offered to take that on: To write a curative story to help Katie to sleep at night, meaning that she would let go of day consciousness, and be present and engaged during the day, letting go of night consciousness.

I knew that to be able to write the story I would have to get to know Katie better. I needed to know things about her, to find elements that would make her interested in the story. On consulting with the instructor of the curative story course she said that the river was the archetypal image between night and day consciousness. The instructor also suggested that the main character in the story should go through struggles while crossing the river back to day consciousness. All those elements in the story would potentially meet Katie where she was at and also help her to transition more easily from night to day consciousness and vice-versa.

In order to start writing the story I had to acknowledge that the world Katie lived in during the day was not very appealing, and though she seemed to want to be present with people

around her that was not an easy transition. To acknowledge Katie's wanting to be present, but not being able to, was one of my main goals. Because Katie liked stories, especially fairy tales, I decided to write a fairy tale for her, including in it the world she was living in during the day, the world she was living during the night, her struggles to transition from night to day consciousness and my wish for her future.

While writing the curative story I had to think about her, and what her likes were so I could keep her interested in the story. I had to step in her shoes and try to go through some of the struggles she went through. I had to create a beginning picture of the future I wished for her. For days I wrestled with a little poem that would come again and again as a reminder to her that helpers were available whenever she needed them. For weeks I lived with the story I was writing for Katie; for weeks I thought about little things that would make her laugh like the "dogs barking" and the "smell of cakes". Katie really liked dogs and cakes. Sometimes little sentences would come into my head and I felt I had to create space for them. "Everything nourishes what is already strong." Once the story was done an immense feeling of accomplishment arrived. I felt that the biggest work was done. I had spent weeks thinking about Katie's struggles and for weeks I had tried to become one with her. This long process of empathy had already changed me and how I viewed her. I truly felt that even if I would never tell the story I wrote to Katie the most important work was done.

I had spent weeks thinking about Katie's struggles and for weeks I had tried to become one with her. Our relationship had greatly improved, mainly because of the way I had started viewing her and her struggles.

Here is the story I wrote for Katie,

In Search of the True Light

Once there was a little girl. She lived in a beautiful forest with her mother and her dear dog.

The little cottage they lived in was very small and cozy, and it always smelled of cake, for her mother often baked cakes for the town people. The little girl very often seemed lost in her own world. She paid very little attention to what her mother did or said. The little girl's favorite activity was to lie by the creek that passed by near the house. She could listen to the sound of the water running for hours.

It happened that one day, the little girl was feeling very tired, she laid by the creek and fell asleep very quickly. When she woke up it was already pitch dark, where no stars could be seen. She was returning home, when she saw a very bright light just above her head. The light was moving towards her, becoming brighter and brighter. Suddenly she heard a voice saying, "I will ferry you over to the other side of the river". "Which river?", thought the little girl. For she knew that there was no river anywhere near her house, but only a small creek. The little girl could not see who was saying those words, "Perhaps the light is speaking to me", she thought.

After some time, the girl overcame her fear and spoke back to the light: "There are no rivers here, there is only a small creek that one can easily cross to the other side." "Look again!" responded the voice. The little girl looked again, and this time, to her amazement, she did see a

big river. She also saw a big boat. The little girl was very curious. She got into to the boat and easily crossed the river to the other side.

As soon, as the little girl stepped out of the boat, the voice spoke again, but this time she could see a figure. It was an old woman: "I want you to follow me and see the beauty of this side of the river!". The woman was very old and small, she had a kind smile and beautiful eyes. The little girl decided to follow her.

The other side of the river was splendid! It was beautiful and magical. Holding the old woman's hand, the little girl was guided through beautiful fields of brightly colored flowers, gigantic trees, magnificent castles, and different animals, of different sizes and shapes that the little girl had never seen before. She heard stories about great knights who were strong and courageous, about kings and queens, and how princes and princesses lived happily ever after.

The little girl felt very drawn to all the stories she heard, but mainly, to that place. She felt at home there. "Can I live here?" she asked the old woman. "You don't belong here my dear child! You belong somewhere else." The little girl couldn't hide her disappoint. She had finally found a place she felt at home and she couldn't stay. "Why can't I stay here?" She asked the old woman. The old woman answered in a very strong voice: "You belong to the other side. There you must make your home." And she added: "when the words have been spoken to you, you must follow them!" With that, the old woman disappeared. The little girl was left all alone. She didn't know what to do, or where the river was. She only knew she had to wait for some kind of words to be spoken to her. She was hoping that those words would tell her where to go. "Or maybe, I could just hide here and live here forever. They wouldn't know." She thought. But she

thought about her mother and her dog and her beloved creek, and she felt sad, for if she were to stay here, she might never see them again.

Then, all of a sudden, she heard a voice: a voice that was very soft and gentle:

Come, my little child,

Come with me...

The river is deep,

The river is wide.

Come, dear child,

To the other side.

The voice came from a beautiful angelic being. The girl didn't feel afraid, for she knew that beings like that lived on that side of the river. But the voice did not tell her what to do or how to do it. She still didn't know where the river was or how to get to the other side. But the little girl started to feel that something was different. She started to feel warm inside, like a little light was kindled in her heart. She started to feel courage. So, she decided to walk. She walked for a long time until she came to the river. But to her surprise there was no boat. "How am I to get to the side?" she thought to herself.

Come, my little child,

Come with me...

The river is deep,

The river is wide.

Come, dear child,

To the other side.

She heard those same words again. Those words were coming from a bear. A big, white bear! Again, to her surprise, she was not afraid. She asked the bear if he could help her to cross the river to the other side. The bear agreed to help her, but he said she would have to climb on his shoulder, for the river was very deep. The little girl thanked the bear. Deep inside she felt relief to be making a trip back home. She thought warmly about her mother, and that she might be worried about her.

The little girl had never climbed a bear before. It was very difficult, for the bear's fur was very slippery. After trying for some time, she managed to sit down on his shoulders. When the bear started to move, the little girl realized that it would be a long journey. Every time the bear moved, she had to hold on strongly to his fur. When the bear finally got into the water, she really started to be scared. She knew she couldn't swim. The bear moved into the water and shook so hard that the little girl slipped all the way down to his waist. She held on tighter onto the bear's fur, gasping for air, reaching her hands out to him. After struggling for some time, she managed to get back on his shoulder. Just when she had made herself comfortable, there she went again, but this time, straight into the water. The water was cold and the current very strong; she almost lost contact with the bear. She was so afraid, but she wanted this trip to be over, so that she could cross the river back home. She found within herself enough strength to get back up on the bear's shoulders. They kept going. The little girl thought that the bear didn't seem to worry about how

difficult that trip seemed to be for her. All of a sudden, the bear shook again, and they lost their balance once more. The little girl was thrown into the water with violence. She was trying so hard not to despair. She gripped strongly onto the bear's fur, but it was so wet that she could not make her way back up. She reached out many times for him, trying to grab him. When she thought she couldn't do any more, she felt a warm light inside her, and once more she heard those same words:

Come, my little child,

Come with me...

The river is deep,

The river is wide.

Come, dear child,

To the other side.

This time she felt that the voice was coming from inside her. She suddenly felt stronger and more confident. She said to the bear: "Dear bear, can you help me to get back on your shoulders?" He looked at her warmly and put his hand around her. With the bear's help she was out of the water in no time. After that, the bear did not lose his balance anymore, and they reached the other side safely. She bade farewell to him and heard his last kind words.

"Everything nourishes what is already strong. Remember these words my dear child!" He said softly. And the bear bade farewell with the river.

The little girl found her way home. When she was just approaching the cottage, she started to hear her dog barking; she could see light in the house and mainly she could smell: “Cake! She yelled in excitement, “oh! how much I missed this smell.”

She came back home and gave her mother a big hug. Her mother smiled, but to the little girl's surprise, her mother did not ask her where she had been all day long. She asked her mother what she was doing. “The same old, dear. Just finished a cake and now I am knitting a blanket for those in need,” “Can I help? But you have to teach me!” The little girl said. Her mother smiled contently, for her daughter had never shown any interest in duties of the house. “I will gladly teach you how to bake, how to knit, how to take care of our garden and our animals and so on. But one step at the time,” her mother answered. The little girl nodded her head and said she would like to start with knitting. Under her mother's kind hands and warm heart, the little girl was happily introduced to the craft of knitting. For spinning the wool, she had to use both her hands and feet. She could feel the hardness of the wool spinner and the softness of the wool. The smell of the yarn really awakened her senses. “What a great smell,” she said to her mother. She felt happy, for her senses were awakening to things around her. “This is easier than to ride a bear!” she said. “What did you say about a bear, my dear child?” “Long story mother! I'll tell you when you are older!” said the little girl in amusement. Her mother, seeing the joy in her daughter's face, thought to herself: “My daughter has finally arrived home.”

Katie was a residential student and she lived in a house with other students and coworkers. In this particular house she was living in we read fairy tales every night before the children went to bed. It was in that space I that decided to tell Katie's story for the first time. I did not want it to be confrontational for her. I read the story every single day for a week, then I

didn't tell her for another two weeks and then I told her during her settling routine in her bedroom. I told her the story for about two months three times a week.

Katie's attention at the very beginning of the story indicated to me that she somehow knew the story, or that she knew the story was for her, but half way through the story Katie fell asleep. At the end of the story she literally had to be carried to her bed. That night she slept the whole night through without any problem. The days that followed that week Katie showed a lot of interest in the story, she no longer fell asleep during it, instead she slept during the night. After a week of telling the story to Katie and to the other students I let impressions of the story live with me and with her.

After two weeks break I started to tell her the story again, this time only to her. I told her the story three times a week. I would light a candle and turn off the lights, this little routine soon indicated to her that it was time for our story and she would get very excited, she would sit up and make the noises she usually makes when she is excited.

During the whole process of telling Katie the story, Katie responded to most of it. While listening to the story, Katie always giggled when the dog barked, the same happened whenever the little poem would appear. Katie really struggled to accompany the little girl crossing the river back home, for many times during the crossing of the river Katie cried and got upset, and sometimes she would physically try to harm herself. Once the little girl had crossed the river back and she would hear the dog barking when approaching home, Katie would come down and relax again.

The struggle Katie had to accompany the little girl through the crossing of the river gave me indications I should work more consciously with that while reading that specific part of the story. With that in mind, I decided to inwardly carry her through that process while I was reading that specific part of the story. Mentally I would be saying to Katie that all would be done soon, and she would be alright, that she had people that loved her and would be there for her. I also wrote a little poem to accompany her in the morning after waking up,

Dear Child, you are now at home,

At home you must stay.

The task is big,

The task is mighty.

But stay, dear child

For longer, this time.

Katie started to improve a lot. She was sleeping well at night and was more awake in the morning. In the past Katie used the morning before school to slowly wake up, get dressed and have a little bit of breakfast, but after she started to sleep better she started to be more awake in the morning. She soon started to have a morning chore, which would have been impossible in the past. She started to help to clean her room, she was willing to try more solid foods, and she was laughing more and having fewer temper tantrums. My relationship with Katie improved significantly and we were able to work together in a very productive way. During this time Katie's mother also reported to us how she had seen significant changes in Katie. It is fair to say

that I am not attributing all these changes that had occurred to Katie to the curative story. Katie lives in a residential based program where she has different therapeutic inputs on a daily basis. But it is also fair to say that up to that point where I started to write her the story she had reached a point of where no therapeutic approach was bringing any significant change to her struggles. I truly believe that what the story made possible was for her to be truly seen and enable her to be more available to receive the daily therapeutic approaches we had to offer.

At the end of the school year I had been assigned to a new house, but I left Katie a picture that I had made for her. The picture was of a girl riding on a bear. She had that picture hanging on her bedroom wall. The following year Katie's coworkers told me that she was asking for the story by pointing at the picture on her wall. Katie's new coworkers read her the story when she was in times of crisis. The coworker who told her the story described that Katie seemed to find comfort in the story. She seemed to know it and really enjoyed it. The year after that another coworker tried to retell her the story and she refused it. Katie took the story from the coworker's hand and put it back in the drawer. If curative stories work as medicine, she has probably had enough of it. Katie no longer needs her curative story, but the picture of the little girl crossing the river on a bear's back, is faithfully hanging on her bedroom wall. And if she needs another dose of her story medicine she knows how to ask for it.

Chapter III

Healing Stories - A Review

Many recognize storytelling as a way of healing, in the same way that narrative has been recommended as a therapeutic tool in psychiatry and psychotherapy (e.g., Eron & Lund, 1996; Monk, Winslade; Parry & Doan, 1994; Roberts & Holmes, 1999; Mehl-Madrona, 2010). In her *Blog Myths and Moors*, Windling (2015) gives a wide picture of how so many different indigenous cultures use storytelling as a way to pass on their cultural teachings, but also as rituals of cleansing and healing,

In many Native American cultures, illness indicates that the patient's life, spirit, or relationships have gone out of balance and harmony; a restoration of spiritual balance is required before a physical illness can be cured. Among the Navajo, health and longevity are attained by 'walking in beauty,' living in harmony within oneself and with the natural world. If this harmony is lost, it can be restored through elaborate, days-long ceremonies during which some of the most ancient, sacred stories of the tribe are chanted and painted in sand.

The idea that healing components are present in old tales is also supported by Estes (1995), she says that "stories are medicine" (p. 15). She believes that stories have power and they do not require that we do, be, or act like anything. "The remedies for repair or reclamation of any lost psychic drive are contained in stories" (p.15). Through preserving old images and knowledge, storytelling has informed people about their own culture, history, and ways of living. It gives people opportunity to relate to pristine times when the archetypal human being lived in a

more communal relationship with one another and with nature. The wholesome images given by stories can enable a diseased body to find its balance again.

The number of stories available from different sources is vast: Buddhist tales, Jesus's parables, fairy tales, Native American stories, fables, myths, folktales, and stories people tell of one another about their own life and experience. These stories contain vast knowledge about the archetypal image of the human being and can show us, through archetypal pictures, how to fight fears, how to take care of one another, and how to heal one another. In her book *Body Eloquence*, Mellon (2008) explores healing through stories that relate to different organs in the body. According to her,

Storytelling is a healing art that can draw out the innate wisdom within us. Stories make us more aware of ourselves as part of feeling, creating, laughing, crying, curious, courageous humanity. They can also help us to nourish the body's natural intelligence by speaking directly to and from the intricate weave of our bodies (p.12).

In recent years, people have come to understand more and more the real meaning of stories as a healing tool. Scholars are more interested in understanding why and how people from different cultures use stories in rituals of healing and how that could be transferred to different setting, like clinics and school. Mehl-Madrona (2010) has worked in narrative with his practice for many years and he has also used Native American stories to help his patients to communicate their feelings. He says that recently, many more people have become interested in studying stories and their healing potential. Doctors and psychologists are using storytelling to help their patients open up and speak about their problems. Educators and parents are also trying to help their children with seemingly daily new emerging problems like anxiety, lack of confidence,

ADD, ADHD, depression, and loss. Mellon (2008) has started her path as a storytelling healer in the classroom. That experience taught her about the power of storytelling, which led her to use storytelling later on when she became a psychotherapist.

Standing before a class of children each day to deliver stories from a global curriculum, I quickly found proof that well-spoken stories build life forces. Sometimes as I made up and told stories, and looked out to see the children's eyes shining as they lit up from head to toe, I would feel my whole body resonating like an orchestra. Later, when I became less involved with teaching and was completing my training as a psychotherapist, I was invited to work in a clinical setting with adults who were recovering from a broad range of chronic physical and emotional illnesses. I decided to experiment with storytelling, and I was fascinated to see positive results right away (p.13).

Following the innovating field of research about existing stories that have a healing potential; educators and doctors have also started to use similar structures of existing stories to write their own stories that heal. Those stories written for a single individual, a family, a whole class, and sometimes to entire communities who have gone through a traumatic experience are mainly called therapeutic stories. Therapeutic stories are described as stories that aim to address a specific type of problem like medical, mechanical, educational, and/or emotional. Perrow (2013), who has written a few books on therapeutic stories describe them as a "gentle, easy yet often very effective means of addressing difficult topics" (p. 3). Therapeutic stories can also be used as a tool to get to know the person you are working with better. Golding (2014) has developed her own ways of using storytelling in her clinical work. She has found the work with what she calls 'helping stories' so important that she has developed a book guide to encourage

other practitioners to write their stories for those who need them. In her clinical work with children, Sunderland (2016) has found that pictures are the natural language of children, and when you encourage them to speak in a more imaginative way they are prone to speak more freely of their feelings. Sunderland (2016) has developed a whole method on how to speak the child's language through stories. She also encourages the use of different medias to help the telling of the story like sand and paper drawing. While Golding (2014) and Sunderland (2016) have developed the use of therapeutic/helping stories in their clinic setting, Perrow (2013, 2008), and Mellon (2008) have done most of their work in the education realm. Both educators have focused mainly on parent/teacher guidance, helping them to write their own stories. Both Mellon (2008), Golding (2014) and Perrow (2013, 2018) have offered a rich amount of stories in their books. Sunderland (2016) states that stories can work as an "admission ticket" into the feeling life of a child, which is why she encourages people to listen to stories children tell and find ways to write stories they can relate to. "A therapeutic story can, therefore, enable a child to see, hear, know, and feel more clearly, by providing a deeper truth and empathy than it is possible through literal words" (p. 11).

Lindenberg, who has for years taught The Art of Storytelling course at Camphill Special School, has guided many students to write curative stories for the children/young adults they work/live with.

The course began with storytelling and speech exercises, but it became apparent the importance of writing stories for certain situations: Somebody has died, a birthday, a festival. And only slowly I realized that by doing it instinctively for years, to write a curative story could be a tool (N. Lindenberg, personal communication, May 30, 2018).

The term curative story has been used by Lindenberg since the beginning of her teachings. Even though she uses the term curative for her stories, Lindenberg is very aware that stories do not cure, but they can alleviate some of the disturbances the child might have. She believes that what curative stories can do well is to create possibilities for healing to come about (N. Lindenberg, personal communication, May 30, 2018). It can open up a space where meaningful education and growth can happen. Sometimes a curative story can also be used as a “life anchor” that will help the child to fall asleep, to be more peaceful after a temper tantrum, or to simply giggle after hearing a little song that was written for him/her.

Curative and therapeutic stories work in a very similar way. They are both written stories that aim to bring a particular situation to balance. Both of them follow a similar path of creation: To identify what needs to be addressed, to use imaginative pictures and metaphors to create the story; and to be presented in a threefold way. Like most stories, this threefoldness can be simply described as having a beginning part, where the story is introduced, a middle, where the main character goes on a journey, and an ending that enables resolution.

Based on all that has been said about storytelling as a healing tool and on the amount of books providing rich examples of the use of therapeutic stories, there is no doubt about the healing qualities of stories; be that an old tale from the Lakota tribe or a curative story written by a student for a child at Camphill Special School. Stories can be medicinal. But what is it that makes a story healing? What does a story have that makes it so powerful? Is it the power of stories in the qualities of the writer? Is it in the story itself and its composition? Or is it in the process one goes through while writing it? In the next pages all these questions will be addressed and hopefully answered.

Even though many authors have a lot to say about the healing power of stories (Estes 1995; Mellon, 2008; Perrow, 2008; 2013; Mehl-Madrona, 2010; Golding, 2014; Sunderland, 2016), and even how one can write their own therapeutic story, very little has been said about what makes it healing. The Students of the Art of Storytelling course shared their insights into the process of writing a curative story as well as what they they thought were the fundamental aspects of the story to make it successful.

Chapter IV

Building Bridges Through Curative Stories: Findings From Interviews

I have described The Art of Storytelling course and the process the students went through to write a curative story in order to understand what elements make a curative story healing. It is important to note that the writing of a curative story was part of an assignment for The Art of Storytelling course and that in order to pass the course all the students had to complete that assignment, which meant the students were not writing their stories completely out of free will and they had a deadline to finish their curative story.

At the end of The Art of Storytelling course all nine students had written a curative story for their chosen child/young adult. This chapter will describe the process of the class from the point to view of three former students and nine current students.

After the students had written and told the story, a questionnaire was used to understand the process the students went through. All 12 students were asked questions about their process of writing and telling the curative story to their chosen individual. They were asked about changes in the process and to give insights into which elements the story has that can create healing. All the students made their stories available before the interviews.

Questionnaire

How did you decide which child/young adult to write a curative story for?

What aspects of the child/young adult have you chosen to address in the curative story?

Did you have any struggles while writing the curative story?

Did your relationship with the child/young adult change throughout the process of writing the curative story?

Did anything significant happen while you were telling the story to the child/young adult?

Have you perceived any changes in the child/young adult throughout the process of writing, telling and afterward?

Do you have any idea of what makes a curative story healing?

Relevant Findings

Choosing the Child/Young Adult

The students had to pick a child/young adult to whom to write a curative story. The reasons for choosing a particular student varied significantly. Some picked their student because they already had a connection, some because they were already doing different assignments with the same individual for another course, and some of them because they thought the assignment would help them to make a connection. A couple of students were very aware that the chosen student was in a crisis and wanted to help them. Independent of the reasons mentioned above, all students chose students that they worked with on daily basis, to make it possible for detailed observations and the telling of the story.

Goals Addressed

Apart from two students, everyone knew right away what goals they wanted to address in their curative stories. Even though we work in a school for special needs where most of the population is autistic, meaning that most of them have what many would consider odd behaviors, none of the students were interested in addressing those aspects in their stories. The students

were carrying significant questions for the child/young adult they had chosen; they were carrying larger questions about their future and destiny. The students wished wholeness for the ones they would be writing to. According to Konig (2009), there are essential steps a curative educator needs to follow in their work with children with special needs, “Firstly, a positive social environment, which in the context of Camphill is achieved through small family units of carers and children; secondly, that the carers’ work is based on an insightful understanding of the nature and potential of each individual child and disability; and thirdly that medical treatment is imbued with courage to keep believing that the impossible is possible” (Konig, 2009, book cover). Here is a list of all the goals the students were hoping to achieve with the curative story:

help her to look up, to open up. (AB)
She is not alone in her feeling of loneliness. (RS)
To build a healthier relationship to his mother. (NK)
To feel secure, to be okay with not having a perfect certainty about things. (HW)
To grow up and have sense of responsibility
To become a teenager that wants to work, to help others, and to become part of the world.
To know what love is. (AM)
To empower her and give her strength to try new things and make friends. (LC)
To have interest in the world, to want to do work and take hold of his own life. (NJ)
To loosen up and make friends.
Accept who she is, to find confidence and courage. (EM)

To fill his soul emptiness with his own gifts. (KK)
To say 'yes' to who he is and to his destiny. (NG)
To let go of the things she is holding on to, like her breath and her childhood. (GY)
To be able to give and to develop more empathy towards others. (WJ)

Struggles to Write a Curative Story

Konig (2009) wrote "Believing that the impossible is possible". These beautiful words can also be applied to the whole process the students went through to write their curative stories. As a student said, "either one has knowledge to write stories or one receives it as a gift from the angels" (AB, personal communication, April 14, 2018). Most students in The Art of Storytelling course had never written a story before. All students shared they had moments of struggling with the curative story process, some struggled with one aspect of it, like which goal to choose, and most struggled with many different aspects of it. Many students shared their struggles with how to start the process, how to end the story, and what to write about, "It is hard to find something to write because there is really no limit to what to write." (LC, personal communication, April 15, 2018). Some had doubts if they had picked the right students and/or the right goal to address. Six of the twelve students had done drafts for their story that were not appropriate for their child/young adult; either their story was too long and too complex for their particular child/young adult, or the story was written for the writer himself and not for the child/young adult. Three of them shared that their first drafts had too much of themselves in it and very little of the student. "I struggled through the whole process. My first draft was very melancholic, and

then I thought: this is really not him, this is me. This is my melancholic nature. So, I had to change it” (NG, personal communication, April 9, 2018). Another student realized that she was writing a beautiful story, but was not accessible to her student,

Breaking Through the Struggles

Few were the students that wrote their stories in a short time. Most students struggled with their stories for months. In order to break through the stoppage they had come to, they sought help. Most students sought help from the course instructor, some got help from their individual mentors, and some had to simply let go of their preconceived ideas and find the will to push through. One of the students described the process of wrestling particularly with how to end the curative story.

To see beyond her situation and to bring some of that what you would hope for in the end of the story, was a real challenge. I think I must have written the end four or five times. Just because it is hard to see beyond where someone is at and live into that expectation in a way that is non-judgmental. I think the first ending I wrote was something like ‘this is where you should be’. And that is also not a great approach, because everybody has their own story, so you cannot demand how somebody develops. So it took a lot of wrestling with it and asking questions to my instructor and tutors so I could find the best ending for it (RS, personal communication, April 13, 2018).

The inner courage to push through allowed the students to write their curative story. Some students mentioned they had been thinking about their child/young adult for a long time, and after months struggling with it they were able to write the whole story in a short time. “I had

to ponder a lot about ‘who is this child?’ trying to find out what I want to say about this child and what I wish for this child to evolve; ‘what capacities does this child need to develop in order to move forward?’ I asked myself those questions again and again, and after many drafts I came out with the story of the troll who wants to become human, but does not quite know how to get there” (WJ, personal communication, June 4, 2018). Steiner (1998) states that inner courage is not only important, but necessary in the path of a curative educator,

In ordinary life, man is protected from the necessity of this inner courage, for in ordinary life he can simply continue doing what he has been accustomed to do. He can jog on in conformity with the motives and standards that are so deeply rooted in him, taking for granted that these are correct, and feeling no necessity to adopt new ones. This answers quite well for the life that proceeds merely in the physical world. But when we come to working out of spiritual sources, we are inevitably confronted, daily and hourly, with decisions; in regard to each single action, we stand face to face with the possibility of either doing it or leaving it undone — or else maintaining an entirely neutral attitude. And the decisions require courage. This inner courage is the very first thing needed, if we want to accomplish anything in the domain of Curative Education (p. 49).

Storytelling Setting

The question about where and how the students told their curative stories to their child/young adult was not part of the questionnaire, but all students shared that aspect of their process. All the children/young adults picked to be read to were part of the residential program, except one, and from that group only three had chosen to tell their story during the day. All the other students shared their stories just before bedtime. Some of the students decided to share

their curative story with the child/young adult in their bedroom, in a one-on-one setting; some shared the story with the entire house community, where their child/young adult was present but not singled out; and some students shared their curative story with the entire house community, but then after a week or so, also moved on to a one-one setting, in the child's bedroom. For all the students it was very important to choose the right settings in which to tell their curative story. For them the setting needed to enable warmth and peace, so the children could take the story in. For Mellon (2004), to create a space of silence and peace is very important for storytelling. According to her "Silence unites all the faculties of the child. It embraces thinking feeling and willing; allows expectation to flourish; minds to open; stomachs to relax. Silence is the kindest, and the most powerful starting point for stories (p. 18).

Significant Happenings while Telling the Curative Story

Living with special needs children can become quite loud, and to create moments of peace and quiet is not always easy. The students seemed to be aware of it and had to choose carefully where, when, and how they would share their story. The careful choosing of the setting allowed the children/young adults to respond to the story. Most students shared how their child/young adult was so very engaged in the story. KK described how the young man she was reading became completely quiet while listening to his story,

Fred loves to be read to and usually when I would read to him in the evening, in his room, just the two of us, it was nice to have a space. Whenever I would read to him other things he would be really fidgety, couldn't quite sit still, he would shift a lot, you could tell he was still listening, but he wasn't letting go very much. When I read that story to

him he was the most still and peaceful he has ever been. It was like some incredible peace came over him.” (KK, personal communication, March 10, 2018).

Some students shared their enthusiasm with the story,

I told the story with the whole house in the evening and I didn't make a big deal.

He was very into it, he was responding to it with 'ahs!' 'Ohs' 'oh oh!' and 'wows'. He was involved during the whole story. He was really interested and he really listened. It spoke to him, because it was about him or for him. We have read stories in the house before and I have never seen him interact with a story like that. His answers always happened in the right moments, like 'oh oh, what happens now?' His reactions told me that that was the right story for him (NG, personal communication, April 9, 2018).

A young adult fell asleep after listening to his story,

He is very restless and I was a little concerned if sharing the curative story with him would work. I shared the story in the afternoon during rest hour. He sat by my side and listened quietly to the whole story. After that he fell asleep. He never sleeps during the day, he is always moving around, he was asleep for a whole hour (HW, personal communication, April 11, 2018).

A particular student said that her child recognized her story after the first time she had heard it,

“The first time I told the story to her, I did it with the whole house community, with a candle on. I asked her to sit next to me and she was very with it, fully awake. The next day the setting was the same, when I read the first line she jumped out the couch set on the floor and took her socks off and started massaging her feet. The evening before she

was also massaging her feet and I asked her to sit next to me that I would read a story to everyone. But it was funny that she jumped up as soon as she heard the first line of the story. I think she remembered the story from the night before and that she somehow connected to her feet, and sometimes when I was telling her the story in her bedroom she would do the same thing, take her socks off and start to massage her feet (AB, personal communication, April 14, 2018).

Another significant event happened when RS decided because she was very tired, not to read the story to her young adult, “At the third time I was supposed to read her the story, I was very tired and I was not planning on telling her that day, but once she got into bed she opened the drawer and looked at me. We kept her story in that drawer. So I read the story for her” (RS, personal communication, April 11, 2018).

Not all students have had a positive response from the child/young adult they choose. Some children/young adults completely refused their story at first, by either being too restless to listen to it or by stating verbally they did not want it. Those students were concerned if their story could bring the children/young adults any harm, like increasing negative behavior. However the instructor of the course reassured them that sometimes when a story enables the child/young adult to face something they do not want to face they might push the story away. Maybe the writer needs to carefully and thoughtfully relook at the story, maybe change the setting which the story was read, or sometimes read it again, but this time reassuring the child/young adult that all will be fine and that you (the writer) will be with them through the moments of struggles, and that a light will shine on at the end of this story. “No one out of this setting [The Art of Storytelling course] had never written a story where they had chosen a goal or

gone a path that was inappropriate and therefore it [curative story] can only be of help. It might be a struggle help, but it would not bring damage to the child” (N. Lindenberg, personal communication, May 30, 2018).

From all the questions asked of the students, the question “did anything significant happen while you were telling the story to the child/young adult?” was the one where they answered with the most enthusiasm. They were truly happy that the curative story they spent months working on was being so well received. To write a curative story for the children has perhaps reminded the students of the magic of stories. “It is easy to forget how mysterious and mighty stories are. They do their work in silence, invisibly. They work with all the internal materials of the mind and self. They become part of you while changing you” (Okri, 1996, p. 34). And I would add to Okri’s words, they become part of you while changing you and changing others around you.

Changes Perceived Throughout the Process

At the time of the interview many students had just begun telling their story, which means not many had seen any concrete changes in the child/young adult they were working with. Though the students were let free to dream big as they wrote their curative story for their particular child/young adult, they were also made aware that a curative story is not a quick fix, that the results might come slowly, or that one might never really see whether or not it is working.

A story as successful therapeutic intervention can also show itself by a child starting to use some of the creative ways of being or coping in the story, in his own life. But he

might not do this immediately. It might not be right for him to do this straight away.

Rather, the story may plant a seed in his mind that grows into a fully-fledged idea or way of being that he acts on in later life (Sunderland, 2016, p. 29).

Though most students did not yet have any concrete changes to share some students had seen improvement in their child/young adult's behavior. One student saw a difference in her young adult right from the beginning,

I noticed a change right after I started to write the story. I was her trigger person, so every time I walked into a room she was in she would start getting upset. And as soon as I started writing something started to happen. At first it started by us being able to be in the same room without being triggered. Then I started to be her point person at the table, which we could never have done before the last school term. Then I was able to ask her to do things, that I could only dream of, like using her iPad to communicate. Even her temper tantrums changed, because they were not so habitual, it was like, 'I am upset because I am confused, and you are not communicating with me and I am demanding you communicate.' Which was very different from usual tempers, this time through her tempers she was able to communicate. Then after this whole process my coworker and I were talking about her and we realized that we didn't have nice things for her. We realized that people were so frustrated with her that we didn't do anything nice for her. We started to put things that she really liked in her week, we started seeing her again. She goes swimming, she got an iPod that she listens to during rest hour. So through this process we started seeing her and she has allowed us to be more creative and do nice things for her (RS, personal communication, April, 2018).

A particular student noted that her child, who was having trouble sleeping, would sleep very well after listening to her curative story,

Around the time I was writing the story she had developed a problem going to sleep, she was unsettled, she had been very sick during the whole winter, having fevers and trouble to go to sleep. Once we started our evening routines she started to go to sleep without any problems. That [the story] really seemed to help her” (AB, personal communication, April 14, 2018). Another student noticed small progress in her child right from the beginning, “During rest hour she can engage more with things and people, therefore she has less episodes of holding her breath. Before she had many toilet accidents and after starting to write the curative story, coincidentally or not, she hasn’t had any accidents since. Also, she is a lot more peaceful during rest hour, not grabbing things and disturbing people so much anymore (GY, personal communication, June 3, 2018).

Relationship Building

Building relationship seemed to be one of the greatest outcomes of the process of writing a curative story. This agrees with Steiner’s (2004) idea “Only that which I love will reveal itself to me” (p. 102). Steiner’s words allude to the fact that only through love can I truly get insight into somebody else’s essence and it is only through loving and knowing that meaningful relationships can happen.

When asked the question, “did your relationship with the child/young adult change throughout the process of writing the curative story?” Every student answered yes, their relationship had either been strengthened, or a relationship had been formed that was not present

before. NG stated that “once you approach the child in this way, more meditative, trying to really understand who they are and what they need, it changes it” (personal communication, April 9, 2018). To look at the child differently and to move away from the day to day affairs seemed to be one of the key element for AB to strengthen her relationship with the child.

Our Relationship has changed a lot. While I was trying to write the story, I was trying to look at her differently, trying to move away from the ordinary working life and trying to see her from a different perspective, looking at her more closely, spending more time with her, doing fun things together. This whole process made me more aware of her and how important it is important to look at every person individually. And also to realize that one needs to actively work to really see everyone that is not given just because we live together. This is the process I am going through now, to really see her and see everyone (AB, personal communication, April 14, 2018).

For some students the fact that they chose to spend more quality together with their chosen child was essential,

The relationship has been strengthened, mainly by the contact time we have in his room while I tell him the story. I made sure to bridge our time together before I would tell him the story, so spending more quality time with him that wasn't related to primarily care. So this one-one time we had together made our relationship better. It also made me look at him differently (NK, personal communication, April 9, 2018).

When one spends so much time thinking about someone, it will be impossible for that particular relationship to stay the same. In order to write a curative story, the students spent months trying

to figure out what their child/young adult liked, what things made them happy, what were their struggles and why they struggled. The process of trying to put oneself into someone else's shoes seemed to make relationships more meaningful.

Anytime you have a relationship with someone and you decide that you are going to be fully aware of the other person, your interest in the other person is at a heightened state. Your observation is at a heightened state, your complete awe of that person is at a heightened state. So, if those things are happening then of course you are going to be able to forge this connection with that person. If that culminates in a curative story that is beautiful (KK, personal communication, March 10, 2018).

Elements that Make a Curative Story Work

Many things has been said about the process of writing a curative story, but what makes it work? The students of The Art of Storytelling course had many insights. Some of them, mainly the skeptical ones, were also very intrigued by the same question,

I was very skeptical coming into this, more on the practical side. When I was presented to this I was like, well here we go, just another assignment, sure! But having gone through the process, it's a powerful tool if you get it right, but I don't know why it works, that has also been a question for me too. Being skeptical and having gone through the process and then seen like very concrete changes, not only in her, but in the way I look at her and the way I look at the house and the house dynamics and why is that? Essentially, I just wrote some thoughts down on a piece of paper, but a lot more went into it, which I do not really know what it was (RS, personal communication, April 13, 2018).

Even though none of the students could attest for sure what it is that make a curative story work they were all able to give suggestions and insights,

The process you go through [to write a curative story] is striving towards understanding of the human being. And I think that is very important. I think if someone is understood by another person to a certain degree I think it is powerful. If someone can understand me I would feel different. And to hear that understanding back as a story, that is not so obviously indicated out is very powerful. I think once you understand the child and the child's soul that can be nourishment for the child. The magic is in the understanding (NJ, personal communication, May 13, 2018).

With the curative story you are giving out something to the child, you are reaching out to them. You are giving the child that focus, that opportunity that you are giving to them, and that giving yourself to it is what makes the story effective (EM, personal communication, April 11, 2018).

For me what makes a curative story work is the space in the middle, between the child and the one writing the story. What is coming towards them [children/young adults] can be healing. The child meets the story and works with it, to further develop something new within them which can then develop their true nature... The words are as powerful as touch, it envelops and cuddles them and it helps them to develop (NK, personal communication, April 9, 2018).

According to most students' remarks, many aspects are needed for a story to be healing. Those remarks can be grouped in three different categories: **What the writer should have as qualities, what the story should have as elements, and what the process needs to allow.**

For the students **the writer needs to have** understanding, a great deal of love and care, interest, 'putting oneself in the shoes of the other' (empathy), the ability to listen to the child, to have a contemplative quality, commitment, commitment. "You will only be able to write a story the child will identify with if, you as a writer, are able to somehow relate to the struggle the child is going through" (AB, personal communication, April 14, 2018).

For it to be healing, **the curative story needs to have** substance, humor, lightness, warmth (both the writer and the story itself). It needs to be about the child/young adult you are writing for and also be accessible to them. It has to be enriching and address something higher, it needs to address the child as a whole. The story needs to have the right imaginative pictures that are relatable to the child, and it has to be simple, gentle, and not used as a reproof of the child's behavior.

The writing of a curative story involves enormous care in the selection of images, symbols, situations, and elements (e.g. what is happening in the nature world in the story, are you there by the ocean or in this great forest). It involves a great deal of care, in the elements it has and which images to you use. Because that is substance (HW, personal communication, April 11 2018).

The process needs to allow trust, relationship building, a continuous living picture of the child's needs. "[The curative story] healing gestures work through truly asking the child: What

do you need? In this process of writing a curative story you [the writer] are the one carrying all the ‘whys’ for the child, and that is very powerful!” (NG, personal communication, April 9, 2018).

A former student who has written her second story, mentioned that she had decided to write another curative story because she felt that the curative story is a great tool to understand the child. “The curative story helps to understand the child better, especially those ones that are more complex. During this process the writer needs to meditate a lot about the child, to create a more accurate picture of who is the child and what are their needs” (WJ, personal communication, June 4, 2018).

Curative Story: A Gift Received and a Gift Given

Many students had referred to the story as a gift they had given to the children or they referred to it as a kind of endowment gesture where they received the story from “somewhere else.” For example, “I remember it was a very long process. Some parts of the story I felt just came to me, like the building of the bridge, I didn’t think that, I didn’t come up with that, it just came to me from somewhere else I don’t where” (NG, personal communication, April 9, 2018).

Another student mentioned that the curative story simply “came to her,”

I do not think I have all that knowledge that it takes to write a story, and for some reason I think that story just came and it fits her. I do not think if it is the whole of her, but definitely aspects of her. You prepare yourself as vessel, you are creating something new. You gather the information about the child, but the story came as a whole. What do you

do when you have gathered the info? You create an image and then you offer it to them (AB, personal communication, April 14, 2018).

A Few students mentioned, in different ways, that one of the elements that make a story healing is the gift the writer gives to the children in a story form, here are three examples:

The person who is writing the story also has to be in the story, not as a character, but you have to immerse yourself in it, feel like something is coming from deep inside. 'this is my gift to you,' something that you give. You are giving something, you are not just writing a story, you are giving a gift to somebody (AM, personal communication, April 7, 2018).

The curative story has elements of the heart, it is much more from the heart. It brings pictures alive, much more alive. The story helped me a lot to understand him better. And that is the gesture of offering: I give you something and I do it from the bottom of my heart. That makes a difference in every relationship. It is a gift and the child can really take it. Nobody can ever take it away from them. There is a lot of power it (NG, personal communication, April 9, 2018).

One of the things about the story is that it's really a gift, where you say 'I am giving it to you. You are the one I chose, you are the one I have been thinking of.' It is like when someone has written you a song and they really get it, and they have taken time to understand. It is a law that is indescribable" (RS, personal communication, April 14, 2018).

The students of the Art of Storytelling have given many insights into what potentially would make a curative story work: from a wide range of human capacities to elements that should be

present in the story, to how the process of writing the story should develop. Taking those insights into consideration, are there, among those insights mentioned, one that is more important than others or are they all necessary? Is there a path one should follow in order to write a story that is healing? Can anyone write a curative story?

Chapter V

Building Bridges Through Curative Stories: The writer, the story and the process

Qualities of the Writer

Researchers indicate that elements of therapeutic stories can be healing (Mellon, 2008; Perrow, 2008; 2013; Golding, 2014; Sunderland, 2016). Most elements are related to the story itself: what should and should not be in the story; what elements in the story do children relate to; and how the story is told. A lot has been said about motifs, metaphors and a lot of guidance is provided on how to write your own therapeutic story for somebody who needs one. However, very little is said about the writer and the qualities he/she should cultivate as inner qualities.

Interestingly, students of The Art of Storytelling class mainly spoke about what they, as writers, had to cultivate in their willing, feeling and thinking lives to write a curative story that works. Some students were convinced that what makes a story healing is the writer soul's quality; what he/she cultivates as inner attributes. These attributes need to be cultivated, given to the story, given to the process, and consequently to the person one is working with. The qualities that were most prevalent in the list of the students were **empathy, commitment, love and care**, and the cultivation of a **listening and contemplative quality**.

Empathy

Empathy has many different definitions (Decety & Ickes, 2009). Most scholars agree that empathy requires three distinct capacities: "The ability to share the other person's feelings, the cognitive ability to intuit what another person is feeling, and a 'socially beneficial' intention to

respond compassionately to that person's distress" (p.19). In one of Rogers (1995) most famous books, *On Becoming Human*, he explores the relationship between doctor and patient. He believes that if a person is truly met with compassion and empathy, the person can gradually develop courage to face their challenges in life.

The therapist experiences an accurate, empathic understanding of the client's own world as if seen from the inside. To sense the client's private world as if were your own, but without ever losing the 'as if' quality - this is empathy, and this seems essential to therapy. To sense the client's anger, fear, or confusion as if it were your own, yet without your own anger, fear, or confusion getting bound up in it. (Rogers, 1995, p. 284)

In the doctor/patient relationship, there should be no space for judgment, especially when one is dealing with children. Sunderland (2016) says that everything children say should carefully be taken into consideration. The educator, therapist, and parent should not straight away jump into conclusions about what the child is saying or expressing in their behavior, they should instead listen to it without judgement.

To have empathy for the child was the most mentioned topic in the interviews . According to Oelrich (2015), empathy and understanding develop as we practice imaginative faculties and "shift from our own narrow view of the world and ... step into another's shoes...To imagine is to stretch our scope of seeing and experiencing, entering into the feeling of what is like to have another life" (p. 153). Like Oelrich (2015), the students of the Art of Storytelling often mentioned how much the relationship with the child they wrote a curative story for, changed. They attributed changes in the relationship to a greater understanding of the child/young adult's struggles. For months they put themselves into the shoes of those they were writing for. They

had to feel what they were feeling and they tried to see the world as the child/young adult was seeing it. For Sunderland (2016) a major part of the therapeutic change that happens in a child's behavior that comes through a therapeutic story, is due to empathy.

Throughout the interviews, students said they were only able to write the curative story when they were able empathize with the child. They had to go through a process of seeing the child/young adult without judging their external behavior. Putting one's self into someone else's shoes is not an easy task; it takes time, commitment, and care. Sunderland (2016) said,

The task of any counsellor, teacher or social worker is to imagine themselves into the world of the child's story, and then to reflect on that world. What would you feel, being there? Would you be lonely and hopeless, or happy and comforted?... You can do a great deal just by 'imagining yourself in' like this. (p.46)

Only one student wrote their story within a few weeks, all the others worked for months on final versions that reflected their understanding of the child/young adult experience.

Steiner (2005) states working with special needs children is not easy. To have real results, the educator needs to become one with the child. The educator needs to get rid of any trace of subjective reaction, judgements, antipathy and sympathy. The educator needs to develop empathy as its primary force for healing. While writing the creative stories, the students' inner capacities did not happen overnight and most of the work had to start with themselves, only then, could their story begin to be written.

Commitment being reflected in NJ's curative story for Peter. NJ (personal communication, May 13, 2018) went through a long process to write her curative story. At the beginning she

sympathized too much with the young man's struggles. She could see a lot of herself in him and could not find a way to write something that was true to what he needed. When she was finally able to look at him objectively, she was able to write her curative story for Peter.

One day, Tony's teacher Michael announced some news: their school joined a musical competition with the reward of building a music hall. Each school will have one candidate to play a song with an instrument. But the candidate would not be selected by the teachers, but be drawn out from a lottery. So, every student has the possibility to be picked. All the students were very excited, even Tony, for he likes music and songs. With the music hall, he could enjoy many musical performances.

One week later, the drawing result came out. To everyone's surprise, it was Tony who was picked! How come? All the students were very disappointed, for everyone knew that Tony did not practice his flute at all. But Tony was the one who felt most miserable. He never expected that he would be responsible for the building of the music hall. When he heard the news, he ran fast to his secret spot, and cried for a long time. He wanted to stay at his place forever. But as the sun set in the west and the day was getting darker, his tummy started to make sounds. Poor Tony he was hungry. He missed the pizza his Mom made, so he went back home eventually, back to that world full of hard work.

Commitment

Even though writing the curative story was an assignment, students took the work seriously. Their commitment to writing the story and later telling it to the child/young adult seemed to be an important component to make the curative story work. Time and patience is

essential for healing. According to Kohler (2013), we must stand by the child's side with a waiting and listening gesture, one that accompanies the child, but that is not desperate to fix things. He believes "the gesture of accompanying adds a quality that ensures consistency, *faithfulness* and persevering trust" (p.129).

Most students chose to address big wishes in their curative stories. None of their goals were challenges that could be fixed in weeks or months, they were lifetime questions. In that sense, it was important to accompany the child in their struggles while they were telling the story and after it. It is impossible to think about a child at all times, but it is necessary to be aware of the responsibility one has taken on. The students committed to their chosen individuals and said so in their interviews.

There are three phases in writing a curative story: (a) writing the curative story), (b) telling the story for however long it needs to, and (c) the afterward. Phase three is one of the most difficult to work on because it is not so active. One will, for example, tell the story to the child either every day, a few times a week, or once a week depending on who you are telling the story to. In that case, how does one continue to accompany the child and this phase where inner silence is so needed, but nothing external is happening? Kohler (2013) believes that after a period of great activity with the child, a period of rest needs to follow. This is when adults need to stop all the inner talking and worries about how the child will respond to the therapeutic approaches, and allow inner patience to come in. Healing needs time and commitment, he adds.

Some students have continued to tell their story to their individuals, and some have given the story to the child/young adult for them to keep it. Some students shared that it was important to place the story somewhere where the child/young adult would have access to it. They wanted

to make sure the child/young adult could request the story if they needed it. That simple gesture of placing the story somewhere the child/young adult can have access to it when they need is a great gesture of commitment and trust in the process the students have started. In relation to this inner silence one might say to oneself “I will not read your story on a regular basis anymore, but I am here to read it to you if and whenever you need it.” This gesture of inner silence is no longer active, but still carries the child/young adult who still might need support (Kohler, 2013).

Lindenberg (personal communication, 2018) truly believes that the faithfulness [commitment] the students devote to the child/young adult they chose to write for is the vital element for a story to work as healing. She says,

Faithfulness [commitment] is what makes a curative story work. That you have written a story and you don't just tell it once or twice. But actually, you follow it through. That it is available to the student. Again, that goes back to the relationship, if people only do it as an assignment it may or may not be of any help for the student. But if they do it out of faithfulness to the task of helping somebody, that will for sure have an impact on the child/young adult's life.

Commitment being reflected in EM's curative story for Maria. EM was inspired by the ending of her curative story to Maria. They decided to start a journal together to share what they were grateful for. They no longer read the curative story together, but the journaling has continued.

My leg was not the same as it used to be before as, after they took the cast off, I could not walk completely normally. The bones in both legs were not the same length so that, when I walk now, I have to limp as my left foot, having been dislocated, only has limited movement. Although I am sad about that, I know that, because of my accident, I won friendship and trust from the people who did not give up on me.

Now I can record my last 'thank you' before I sign off.

1. I am thankful for my mother for giving me her unconditional love.

2. I am thankful for Miss Jones for believing in me, even if I gave her a lot to work to do.

3. I am thankful for Miss Philips who, even when I cried hard, wiped away my tears and gave me strength again.

4. I am thankful for everyone around me who never stop loving me, believing in me, and taking care of me; my teachers, friends, classmates and, of course Dewi my beloved horse, for always being there for me.

5. I am thankful for Dr. Chupati, who believed in me, even when I did not believe in myself and for never giving up on me, even when I had myself and for his taking care of me.

I love you all. I would not be here where I am now if not for you. "Diolch yn fawr iawn ac dw'yn caru ch'in gyd." Thank you so much and I love you all.

Love and Care

Many students shared that love and the element of care are needed when writing curative stories.

Watch for yourselves and observe the difference - first, when you approach a child more or less indifferently, and then again when you approach him with real love. As soon as ever you approach him with love and cease to believe that you can do more with technical dodges than you can with love, at once your educating becomes effective, becomes a thing of power. And this is more than ever true when you are having to do with children with special needs. (Steiner, 2005, p. 214)

The way Steiner (2005) speaks about love is similar to what the students of The Art of Storytelling course have experienced while writing their curative stories. The students have shown love and care to the individuals they wrote for through the goals they addressed, by committing to the individuals they picked, by facing the struggles and overcoming them, and by continuously striving for a more accurate picture to be reflected in the stories. Frankl (2006) states that love is necessary if one is truly striving to understand another human being.

No one can become fully aware of the very essence of another human being unless he loves him. By his love he is enabled to see the essential traits and features in the beloved person; and even more, he sees that which is potential in him, which is not yet actualized but yet ought to be actualized. (Frankl, 2006, p. 111)

All the stories written by students were thoughtful, and carefully balanced with what each student thought the child/young adult might need to develop their potentials.

Understanding that comes through love is essential when one is working therapeutically. In a story that has been written with love and care can provide, through its images, a sense of

security, warmth and understanding of what the struggles really are; and within that, the story can offer images of comfort and of a future that is full of possibilities.

In his book *Freeing the Soul from Fear*, Sardello (1999) talks about fear and the qualities one needs to develop in order to face it in the right way. For him, love is the main force that can counteract fear and work in a way that would bring healing. RS wrote a curative story that addressed a young woman's feeling of loneliness and fear of being alone in her loneliness. Already in the early stages of writing the curative story RS seemed to be able to grasp what this young woman was experiencing and fearing. Through her story, RS was able to show this young woman that she understood what she was going through and that she was not alone in her feeling of loneliness. Likewise, she was able to convey through the struggles and resolution of the story that a future of many possibilities was ahead of her. The young woman received her curative story with great response and enthusiasm and their relationship improved greatly (RS, personal communication, April 11, 2018).

A fragment of AB's curative story to Mel. AB struggled to write a curative story for Mel. It was so difficult that she asked the course instructor if she could pick a different child to write for. The instructor told AB to persevere and develop loving interest in Mel and the right images would come. AB worked for months on her story. Mel liked her story so much that her troubles with going to bed were greatly diminished.

The old man looked deep into Maddy's eyes. Like with the touch of his hand on her shoulder before, Maddy felt a warmth streaming out from her heart and filling her whole body when she

returned the old man's gentle gaze. She felt that he looked deep into her soul, touched her heart and filled it with positivity and warmth. Maddy felt calm and relaxed and she took a deep breath. The man nodded slowly.

“Open up to the world.

Enjoy the little things.

Help out others.

And a friend will be yours.”

Listening and Contemplative Quality

The students shared that being able to ask the children/young adults the right questions and meditate on their needs are among elements that make a curative story successful. Kohler (2013) talked about the importance of an inquiring gesture towards the child in distress. For him, to ask questions is much more important than to have the answers. The questions live in the realm of imagination and spiritual inquiry. In that space, one can freely and truly find out what the child really needs/wishes. Answers bring the inquirer into facts, and far away from intuition. He also suggests that when the child is addressed in the realm of inquiry that the higher self of the child should be the one taken into consideration. Kohler (2013) calls this higher self of the child “Thou”. In a mood of reverence for the child, he adds,

I must step before the child fervently questioning and filled with wishes, so that my attitude signals to him: you give me a gift when you contemplate yourself. I must with my entire person - ‘touched and melted by becoming thou’ - be the question: Who are you? This is comforting! (p. 131)

NG (personal communication, April 9, 2018) shared in her interview that she did not know how to write stories and she got stuck several times with the images she was trying to create. By thinking about the child and inwardly asking questions about what the child needs, NG was able to write a beautiful fairy tale.

The students of the Art of Storytelling course had to make themselves available to the children and to create space in their busy lives. If one is meditating on what the child wants/needs one also needs to create a listening space to be able to receive the insights. Rogers (1995) talked widely about the importance of creating a listening space in order for relationships to develop. He states that listening is not an easy thing to do. To be able to truly listen one needs to actively perceive the other person. To be able to write a story to someone the writer needs to listen to what the person is saying. In the case of a nonverbal child, the writer needs to be attentive to their, body language, mood swings, little smiles, and gestures that might indicate feelings towards the story. If the individual cannot tell what they feel, what is left but to meditate on what their struggles are?

Students talked about how the awareness for the one they were writing for was in a heightened state. Therefore they were able to perceive things that were not perceptible before. When Sunderland (2016) was asked the question “how can one be sure to have chosen the right emotional theme for child,” her answer was that one way to even start a story is by imagining that you have asked the child to draw a picture, then you draw the picture, and you think what the child would create. “In doing this exercise, it means you are listening to the wisdom of your own imagination, rather than just using your thinking” (Sunderland, 2016, p. 26). By making a picture and listening to the child one can get more pieces of information about their emotional

life and therefore be more accurate when deciding which imaginative pictures to use. Another moment of active listening is when one is telling the story to the individual. One should be aware of the individual's reaction to the story, to any trace of excitement, attentiveness, as well as signs of uneasiness and discomfort.

A fragment of NG's curative story for Leo. NG (personal communication, April 9, 2018)

described that to write a curative story was very difficult and it took her a long time to finish. In her interview she says that it was important to keep inquiring what the child needed from her. That allowed her to gain insights about elements in the story, including the whole idea of the "magical key" the third son receives in the story.

One day, as he was alone in his small house, he heard a knock on his door. The young son had never invited anyone to his house nor had any unexpected visitors. Therefore, he thought it was his imagination or perhaps a bird or the wind. But then the knock repeated itself for the second time. The young man slowly reached the door and opened a small crack. It was a young woman. In her hands she had a small box. "I am traveling from village to village, trying to sell my mother's old treasures. She is very sick and we need the money to buy her new remedies. Would you be interested in anything?" The young man looked in the box from the distance. "I don't think I need anything from you, young lady. I have all I need" Said the young son. The woman looked at him and said: "I have something for you!" With her hand she reached into the box and got out an old rusty key, attached to an old rusty chain. She wrapped the chain with the key around the son's neck. "This is my gift to you." She said with a smile and left. The young son

looked at the woman for a few moments. When she disappeared into the distance he entered, once more, his house.

The Story

As stated in the previous paragraphs, it is very important that one pays careful attention to what one brings of themselves when working with therapeutic approaches. But other aspects of writing a curative story also needs to be taken into consideration, for example, the story itself.

According to the students of the Art of Storytelling, choosing the right images seemed to be an important step in writing a curative story. They mentioned that the curative story needs to have rich content and within it humor, lightness, and warmth. The curative story needs to be simple, gentle, and about the child. Lastly, the story needs to address the wholeness of the individual, and it should not be used to reprimand.

Imaginative Pictures

Imaginative pictures are images present in the story enabling it to be lifted from reality. Sunderland (2016) has been working with therapeutic stories with her patients for years. She believes that therapeutic stories work and help children because they speak to them in the realm of imagination and not in the realm of cognition. “A therapeutic story aims to speak with empathy and precision about the emotional issue or problem with which a child is struggling. Unlike everyday language, it speaks through highly charged expressive images” (Sunderland, 2016, p.10). These imaginative pictures Sunderland (2016) described can be related to archetypal images that Estes (1995) describes as containing knowledge of primeval times that turn stories into medicine, and that Perrow (2008, 2013) calls metaphors. For Perrow (2018), metaphors are a

vital element in story because they help to build the imaginative connections that are needed for the listeners. All these imaginative images help to lift the story from the cognition plane, by imbuing it with knowledge that comes from understanding the individual you are working with. In both her books Perrow (2008, 2013) stresses that the use of metaphor also helps the writer to enliven his/her own perception of the world by seeing one thing as another. Perrow (2013) goes further to say, “metaphor touches the heart and it is only with the heart that one can see rightly. For this reason metaphor has long been the language of mystics, spiritual teachers, poets, storytellers and other expressive art forms” (p. 10). The students chose their images based on what they wanted to address in the curative story. The images were related to the main character, the environment where the story took place, and what their wishes were for the child/young adult they were writing for. A student identified the child she was writing for as a troll. The image of the troll seemed to encompass this child’s feelings of being too different from the others around him.

Another student had an image of a hollow tree trunk that was dark and scary, and that particular child would have to gather up all her courage in order to go through it. The student was writing for a girl who had great anxiety with new situations. In another story, the writer used the roar of a lion to encourage a feeling of comfort, that the familiarity of the roar brought him home to his mother without having to really go there. Those imaginative pictures the students thought of have the capacity to tell a story to the child/young adult that is relatable, but that is not directly talking about their struggles. They can read it, identify with it, and yet not think the story was used to reprimand their behavior.

Imaginative pictures are an important element of the therapeutic stories. It is through these images that the writer opens up to the realm of imagination and creativity. The imaginative pictures live out there, but it is only through the will of the writer that they can manifest itself in a healing story. Golding (2014) is a strong believer of the power of symbols in the stories. She has found that when she is able to think up a metaphor for the child that helps her to find a new perspective of the situation.

Often these [writing of the stories] begin with a single image or metaphor that has come to me as I work with families. In writing the story inspired by symbols, I find my own insight enhanced. The stories rely on metaphor, symbol and themes that mirror but are at a distance from the person or persons who inspired the story. Names are changed, and troubles or burdens disguised through the structure and content of the story. This allows me, and others with whom I share the stories, to find perspectives or enhanced understanding without the pain or distress of direct contact with the issue. (Golding, 2014, p. 22)

Imaginative pictures, metaphors, archetypal images, and symbols are words, sentences, or qualities in the healing story that enable the pain of the other to be lifted to a plane where it can be better digested. By understanding somebody's else's pain and turning that into a story one is able to create a healing environment that is gentle and loving.

A fragment of KK's curative story for Fred. KK wrote a curative story for Fred that had very strong images he could relate to. In her story KK was able to capture Fred's gifts and wish to be helpful and kind, as well as his destructive drives. In the end of the story the main character finds

redemption in creating something beautiful to help his entire village. The story KK wrote for Fred became his anchor, and he would ask for the story when he needed it.

The day came for the wealthy patron to arrive again at Paupionne to see David's ship. The villagers held their breath. David could feel the anticipation, worry and excitement in the air. He knew that the well-being of his village depended on his Ship. At first, upon gazing at the ship, the patron said nothing. As he turned to address David and the crowd, however, his eyes were shining and his smile was warm. "My dear friends," said the patron, "the money is yours, for life and for work. May Paupionne prosper from this day forth!" The villagers cheered, hardly believing their ears! David, joyful tears welling at his eyes, was hoisted into the air. He couldn't believe it! He had managed to build the most beautiful ship in the world without any fancy new materials or heaps of money. Indeed, the Ship was built upon three things alone: hands that were destined to build and not destroy, a heart that loves the work, and the longing to do what is good for all. David's Ship of Dreams was forevermore the pride and joy of the happy village, and the natural beauty of the sea that surrounded Paupionne was now echoed within the village itself and within all its people.

The Story Content

Imaginative pictures can be called the backbone of a healing story (Estes, 1995), but there are many other elements that are also important when writing a curative story. The students of the Art of Storytelling course said that the curative story needs to be gentle, simple, and about the child. Sunderland (2016) agrees that a story written for a child needs to be simple and freed from

what is not the essential message. If the story has too many words, it might either distract the listener or make them move their attention to what is unnecessary. HW (personal communication, April 11 2018) has written a curative story for a young adult that initially was long and full of details. She described the story as being “artistically beautiful”, but not appropriate for her individual. She wrote a curative story for a very restless, autistic young man. When she realized the story was not suited for him she decided to keep the same imaginative picture and write a story that was short and in a poem form. The young man paid attention to the short poem, and was able to fall into a restful sleep afterwards. HW wrote a gentle and simple curative story that was able to meet the needs of the young man she wrote for.

Another element to pay attention when writing a story is to place the individual you are writing for in the center of everything. If you are writing a story for someone that needs help, all your likes and dislikes need to be put aside in favor of that person. Sunderland (2016) states that when gathering information from a child to write a story, one needs to be aware of their own unconscious “deafness” and “blindness” to what the child is saying. For her, if one is busy with their own feelings they will not be able to listen to what the child is saying. “You *listen*, but do not *hear*” (p.48), she says. Four of the 12 students interviewed mentioned that their first drafts were written for themselves instead of the child/young adult. They said that in the beginning they did not have the best interest of the child in mind, so their drafts were either too long or matched their own struggles in life and not the child/young adult’s. Rogers (1995) emphasized that in a therapeutic environment, the needs of the patient should be put first. According to him the concerns of therapist and the treatment process should be seen as secondary. Similarly Sunderland says that for a “therapeutic story to have a deep psychological impact on the child”

(p. 22), it must speak to him, and about his emotional issues. Ideally, she adds, the story maker should be very familiar with the struggles the child is going through before starting to write a therapeutic story.

When instructing the students in *The Art of Storytelling*, Lindenberg (personal communication, May 30, 2018) encouraged all students to add to their curative story little verses and poems. She believes that wrestling with language to create little poems within the story is very important, especially when one is trying to create something beautiful and musical, that encompasses what the child/young adult is experiencing. To work with language in this poetic form can contribute to the healing qualities of the story. Sunderland (2016) encourages the use of poetry to enrich the emotional vocabulary of the story writer. She also believes that poetry offers more sensitive and “finely-tuned” empathic responses to the child’s story.

RS (personal communication, April 14, 2018) wrote a simple song as part of her curative story. RS described that Luna liked the song very much and she would smile every time it was sung to her. The little song was also picked up by Luna’s roommate who would sing the song often. I had similar experience to RS’s. I wrote two poems in my curative story and whenever Katie would hear it she would giggle. The poem, which had simple rhymes and musicality to it, gave her joy and comfort. Perrow (2008) encourages the use of rhymes and little verses, especially if writing for young children. She has incorporated poetry and simple rhymes in her own stories. “I quickly learnt from telling stories to group of young children that it was often the repetition and rhyme that kept their concentration” (Perrow, 2008, p. 28).

A fragment of RS's curative story for Luna. RS (personal communication, April 11, 2018)

described in her interview that whenever Luna would hear the little song in the curative story she would giggle.

She felt a pang of fear and panic. Was she alone? Had they forgotten her? Was she late for the last show which she had promised to attend? Worried, she began to search the meadow. There was a painful silence, even the squirrel had disappeared. She tried to take a deep breath but the air had become thick, hard to breathe. She felt as if she was being smothered from the inside out. Out of nowhere she heard a faint cry in the distance. She jumped startled by the sound. Not really sure she had actually heard a sound, she stood frozen every muscle tense. The cry came again breaking the still silence. Despite her best efforts curiosity got the better of her. She slowly walked towards the sound. As she came around the bushes she saw a little girl sitting all alone with dirty tear streaks down her face. Sabrina was surprised, what was a little girl doing all alone in the bushes. She reached out to her but the little girl shrunk back. Sabrina began to get frustrated. She knew she could not just leave the child behind but needed to get back before it was dark. She took a step forward attempting to take the girl. Shrinking back even further the little girl began to cry.

Sabrina realized she had frightened the child. Slowly she sat a little ways off unsure of what to do. She knew she could not leave the child but had no experience with children. At once she remembered something someone had said to her a long time ago. "Whenever you are scared and alone, sing this prayer, and hope shall be there" she opened her eyes and began to sing.

“I give my love a cherry without a stone.

I give my love a chicken that has no bones.

I give my love a baby with no crying.

I give my love a story that has no end.”

The Process

The students of The Art of Storytelling course said that for a curative story to work, the writing process needs to allow trust, relationship building, the development of a “middle space” between child and writer, and a continuous living picture of the child/young adult’s needs. For the students, the process of writing a curative story was long, full of struggles, and with many meaningful encounters.

The therapeutic story has a number of steps one should take into consideration. Most writers agree that a therapeutic story has at least three phases: the beginning, where setting, theme, and main character are introduced; the middle, where the events, actions, and suspense occur; and the end, where the story comes to a resolution and the message of the story is presented (Sunderland, 2016; Golding, 2014). Perrow (2008) also divides a therapeutic story into three phases, and calls them Metaphor, Journey, and Resolution. She also states that these phases are used as guidance and should not be taken as strict rules.

Like the therapeutic story, the process of writing the curative story can also be described in three phases: the beginning or exploratory phase, where the needs/goals for the child are considered; the middle, where the curative story is written; and the ending, where the story is

shared with the child/young adult. Some stories are very long, and therefore, the three phases can enter into each other, even though each phase has its own qualities. When one is writing a short story or a poem for a young child, those phases will most likely be absent.

The Beginning

At the beginning of a story the imaginative pictures appear, the characters are described, and the environment where the story takes place is laid out. Usually, in a therapeutic story, the qualities and weaknesses of the main character are also presented.

Beginning of HW's curative story.

*Far away in the East, a mighty queen ruled a vast kingdom,
but she was lonely until, one day, she gave birth to a little son.
She adored him beyond all of her riches, but he was never afraid,
and when he could walk, he slipped out of the city gates, and was found on the road
by a monk, and so he grew up far away, amongst holy people,
and did not learn whose son he was, nor know his place in the world.*

HW (personal communication, April 11, 2018) described in her interview that she found an image for her young adult rather quickly; she saw him as a prince. Even though the first image came quickly, the rest of the story took much longer to be finished.

For most students, coming up with the right image/metaphor for their individuals took a long time. They needed to be sure about which imaginative picture to use, where the story would take place, and to be able to foresee what the next step would be. According to Perrow (2012), during this phase it is very important to understand the individual you are working with and not jump into “quick fix.” In this phase, the students had to take the needs of the child/young adult into consideration and begin to develop a different kind of relationship with them, one based on genuine interest.

At the beginning of the process, many students mentioned being confused, lost, and feeling incapable of finding the right images for the story. For that reason, some students mentioned they took their child/young adult into their thinking before bed and during the day they were actively engaging in activities so they could learn more about the child/young adult.

A student mentioned if the writer is able to develop and cultivate a “middle space” between him and the child/young adult that is filled with warmth it can be “incredibly healing.” (NK, personal communication, April 9, 2018). The middle space is often described as a space in between two or more individuals that arises through interaction, and it can appear either through positive or negative interaction. Oelrich (2015) calls it the “third space.” There is a power of transformation, of freeing up when two people are connecting in a space of positivity, and healing is part of that (Oelrich, 2016). In the first phase of writing, the space in between was mostly strengthened and regulated by the students interest in the child/young adult.

The end of the beginning phase was characterized by a strong wish to accomplish the task of writing the curative story; by the students having a better picture of what the child/young adult needed; and the inner qualities of empathy, love, and care starting to develop. The beginning

phase ended with the students beginning to trust the process, with relationships emerging, and the awareness of the child/young adult being in a heightened state.

The Middle

The middle of the story is represented by the main character's journey. The phase where humor, action, and suspense can take place. According to Sunderland (2016), the middle of the story should show the main character having difficulties, making the wrong decisions that can lead to trouble. The middle of the story ends with the main character "reaching some kind of internal or external crisis in life" (p. 23).

The Middle of NK's Curative Story.

One day, when Tselane's class was going for a walk in the nearby forest, both Tselane and Ncedo got lost because of how much they were wandering around. It was late afternoon. They went in circles in the forest and eventually realized they could not find their way out. Soon it got dark and Ncedo started crying. At first Tselane did not know how to help Ncedo until he remembered how he overcame his fear of the jungle back at home. Tselane taught Ncedo how to make animal sounds and roar like a lion.

Like the middle phase of the story, the students went on a journey to write their curative stories, a journey where they had to continuously develop their coping and listening skills. They

had to learn how to overcome struggles and keep going. The end of this phase, which was short for some and long for many, ended with the curative story being written.

The students experienced many challenges during the middle phase. The lack of trust in themselves and in the process caused some stress. That was when most student sought guidance from the course instructor. The course instructor helped the students out of their troubles with words of wisdom: “Have patience, trust the process, have courage, start over again, look at the child once more,” and with renewed strength, the students tried again. Some students mentioned they were encouraged by renewed trust in themselves and in the process, and also by continuing to engage with the child/young adult in a meditative way. But what happens when the outside is not enough to make you push it through? Steiner (1994) strongly believes that it is through one’s own willpower that one are able to accomplish things:

We find ourselves in a situation where nothing moves us to act. We must each find our own way, by ourselves and out of ourselves. There are no things or people who might help us to act... If we don’t find this strength within ourselves, we will be back where we were before. (p. 78)

Like Steiner (1994), Oelrich (2015) also believes in the force of will to move through challenges. According to her, an important thing to do when is faced with difficulties it is to keep your focus on what matters, on what it is important. “First and foremost, you must WANT peace and transformation. You have to put your will into it, your imagination, and your longing” (p. 5).

The struggles the students went through helped them wrestle with questions about themselves, the validity of the process, and if they were on the right track about the individuals

they were writing for. As for the students, if struggles gave them doubts and questions, pushing through gave them renewed forces to begin again. Steiner (1994) states that we need to trust in the goals we undertake to move through struggles that will face us. He adds,

We must always remain receptive to whatever approaches us. We should trust in the effectiveness of whatever we undertake. All doubt and timidity should be banished from our being. If we have a goal, we must have faith in the power of our goal. (p. 122)

When The Art of Storytelling course began most students shared their inability to write stories. Zajonc (2009) stated that suffering and struggle are closely related to “aspiration and compassionate concern” (p. 90). He suggests that when we meditate we focus our attention beyond ourselves. Through compassionately thinking and meditation we turn to others and the world. The students carried on with their work with new life forces, creating pictures for the children/young adults, improving their relationships and making sure the healing middle space they were creating was growing. By the end of the second phase, all students had their stories ready to be told.

During the interviews, many students attributed their capacity to write a curative story to a force outside them that had potentially “given” them the story. According to them, after months of wrestling with questions about the story and about the child/young adult, the story came all at once and was written in a day or two. Others shared that important aspects of their curative story simply “popped into their heads”. This quality of endowment was very characteristic of the middle phase when the students were actively thinking about the child/young adult and creating the curative stories. According to Steiner (1994), when one is engaged in the path of knowledge of the supersensible one needs to direct their thoughts and feelings to the right place so one can

see what “ordinarily would remain invisible” (p. 55). Similar to Steiner (1994), Zajonc (2009), states that having a life guided by contemplative inquiry enhances one’s capacity for insightful thoughts. By contemplating on the child/young adult’s needs, the students gained insights that seemed to come from somewhere outside them, when it might have come from within; from their active wish to help. All the abundant energy created had its culmination in a story that would soon be given away. Months of conscious work reflected in a few pages of paper aimed to help one single individual.

By the end of the middle phase the students were faced with a different kind of challenge: How will the child/young adult respond to the story? Will they like it or will they push it away?

The Ending

In this phase the story needs resolution. The main character, who has gone through a journey full of struggles in the middle phase, needs to slowly arrive at a place of more balance and harmony.

The ending of WJ’s Curative Story.

When it was time for the troll to leave, the troll apologized again for taken things from the little boy, the little boy understood what had happened and said to the troll, “Thank you for bringing them back, and thank you for your beautiful gift, I loved it. I understand you, I think you

just need some friends; I really enjoyed playing with you; I'm happy to be your friend, can you come and play with me again tomorrow?"

The troll said yes gladly. He doesn't feel sad and lonely anymore, because he has a friend now! Then he happily went home. Only the way he thought to himself: "giving to others is truly joyful, and it's the best treasure I can have."

The little boy invited the troll to come to play every Sunday; the little boy's family welcomed him and asked him to stay for meals. The troll always came with a gift that he found from the woods, sometime was a flower or a nut, other times was a beautiful leaf. He also helped them with their garden and shared his jokes and songs.

Every Sunday the troll came to his cozy home with full belly, his shining eyes filled with joy, he felt so happy and loved by the little boy's family, his heart filled with warm light.

The ending phase began with two distinct energies: anxiety and excitement. Some students shared that because their child/young adult was restless and non-verbal they did not know how the story would be received. Once more the students were faced with challenges they had to overcome to move forward.

Many students were thrilled by the response of the children/young adult and what it did to them. Though some had difficulties with the setting they chose or the initial lack of interest from the child/young adult, those students were encouraged to change the storytelling setting and try again. This phase ended when the students stopped telling the child/young adult their curative

story. This phase also ended with a question from the students: “How do I end this process?” That is a difficult question to answer, especially after months of intense work and relationship forming, how one finds a way to move forward without undoing what has been done. The trust in the process came full circle towards the end when the students realized that not only they had written a curative story, they also had learned a lot about themselves and others. Some students were also thrilled to experience the transformations the child/young adult went through during storytelling. That seemed to surprise quite a few of the students, especially the skeptical ones.

The living picture of the child was an easy one to hold during this phase as well as to cultivate the middle space. To finally be able to interact with the child/young adult in a more direct manner helped both processes. The students reached out with their curative stories and the children/young adults responded to it by listening to it. In this phase, the story was the one enabling the living picture of the child/young adult’s needs to be alive.

Even though working together was an intimate process, it did not mean that they were now best friends. Rather, the understanding for the pain of the other brought them together. What was formed was a relationship based on understanding and mutual struggle. For Zajonc (2009), when concerning love is the motor of actions the awareness will likely shift from me to the other. In these moments of loving concern between individuals, “actions are not guided by self-interest but by our compassionate interest in the other. On such occasions, loving has become a way of knowing that leads to action.” (p. 204).

Another fact worth mentioning was the gift quality attributed to the story. RS describes the quality of gift in a very special way,

One of the things about the story is that it's really a gift, where you say 'I am giving it to you. You are the one I chose, you are the one I have been thinking of.' It is like when someone has written you a song and they really get it, and they have taken the time to understand. (RS, personal communication, April 14, 2018).

Sardello (1999) also talked about the quality of giving something to someone that has a special meaning to it. He said that if we put a lot of thought into something we give to someone, we bring more than a demonstration of affection. By looking for a gift for a special person, “we search and look for just the right thing that expresses something of what we see of that person, of the deepest level of that person, not just what he or she may like and thus feel flattered by” (p. 197). This giving quality permeated the whole process of writing the curative stories, where the students gave themselves to the process, and by the end of it offered their love, care, empathy, and understanding in a story form; and the children/young adults received their gifts with their arms and hearts open.

A Fourth Phase?

It was described above that the therapeutic story has three phases, and so does the process of writing a curative story. But what happens when a story is written? It needs to be told, otherwise, it will fly with the wind. Fairy tales are real works of art, but they mean nothing if they are not shared with others. And what happens with the gifts of empathy, love, care, commitment, and active listening the students received throughout the process of writing the

curative stories? Steiner (1994) states that the path of supersensible learning is not a path to learn only for the sake of accumulating it, but that we have to use it to serve the world.

Writing the curative story was a path of contemplation, self-knowledge, developing skills, and finding a sense of responsibility for another human being. When one undertakes work in the field of contemplation, the way one views oneself and the world changes (Zajonc, 2009). “Our practice meditatively living into experiences, words, images carries over into life, and we listen more deeply to the views of others, not threatened by diversity and difference” (p. 207). The person receiving the story can find healing in its images, in the way they are seen, recognized, understood and loved; the writer can find healing by being able to understand the others and himself better. A story is not just a story when it is curative. As Estes (1999) stated, “stories are medicine” (p. 15), for the one who gives, and for the one who receives.

CONCLUSION

Parsifal:

Amfortas! -

The wound! The wound!

It burns within my heart!

O sorrow, sorrow!

Fearful sorrow!

From the depths of my heart it cries aloud.

Oh! Oh!

Most wretched!

Most pitiable!

I saw the wound bleeding:

now it bleeds in me!

Here - here!

No, no! It is not the wound.

Flow in streams, my blood, from it!

Here! Here in my heart is the flame!

The longing, the terrible longing

which seizes and grips all my senses!

O torment of love!

How everything trembles, quakes and quivers

in sinful desire!

(Parsifal, Act II. Wagner, 1882)

I have been working with curative education for a few years and the story of Parsifal (Eschenbach, 1980) has always been part of it. Though I like the story, I never fully understood why this particular story seemed so important for work in curative education. My relationship to the story changed when I saw this very story performed as an opera. The opera written by Wagner is also called Parsifal and was inspired by Eschenbach's story. In Act II, after going through a journey of loss and confusion, Parsifal meets Kundry, who tries to seduce him in the same way she seduced Anfortas, the wounded king of the Grail Castle. As soon as Parsifal receives the kiss from Kundry, he feels Anfortas's pain, and the urge to heal him from his forever bleeding wound.

As I watched the opera, I saw Parsifal become enlightened by experiencing the pain of Anfortas. It then became clear to me that one of the most archetypal images of Parsifal has been bestowed with the capacity for empathy.

Parsifal:

*My dull gaze is fixed on the sacred vessel;
the holy blood flows:
the bliss of redemption, divinely mild,
trembles within every soul around:
only here, in my heart, will the pangs not be stilled.
The Saviour's lament I hear there,
the lament, ah! The lamentation
from His profaned sanctuary:
"Redeem Me, rescue Me
from hands defiled by sin!"
Thus rang the divine lament
in terrible clarity in my soul.
And I - fool, coward,
fled hither to wild childish deeds!*

(Parsifal, Act II. Wagner, 1882)

When I wrote my first curative story, I was amazed by its result. I remember feeling the child's struggles and difficulties while I was trying to write the story. In those moments I was able to create images that challenged her and also seemed to give her hope and courage to face the future. Since then I have written two more curative stories for the students in my second grade class. The stories I have written provided me with a different kind of understanding about the needs of my students and also insights on how to meet those needs. Even though I have known most of them for two years, to write these curative stories gave me a renewed perspective into their beings.

Through watching the opera by Wagner, I understood better Eschenbach's story of Parsifal. Through writing this thesis, I understood more about what happens when one engages in creative writing. The changes that can come about when one engages with qualities as empathy, love and care; when one writes stories rich in pictures/metaphors that capture the person's essence and aspirations; and when one goes through a process of real struggle for the sake of helping someone else.

Although this thesis has not fully grasped the theme of curative stories and the elements that make it healing, I feel that great understanding has been reached in regard to the inner qualities the writer needs to cultivate, the elements the story may have as well as attributes the process enables. Future research on the subject would bring more clarity to this research by expanding it and exploring questions that have not been answered here such as: How can one continue developing empathy after one has done curative stories? What is the best way to let go of the process with the individual one is working with without endangering what has been

created in terms of relationship and mindfulness? What would the process of writing a curative story be like if a course/deadline was not there to frame it?

Even though Parsifal had what was needed to save Anfortas from his pain at the end of Act II, he was not able to instantly heal him. He first had to endure a long path of struggles and pain, but at the end of Act III, he was able to bring healing to Anfortas and to many who believe in the power of stories.

Parsifal:

To him whose deep lamenting

I once heard in foolish wonder,

to bring him salvation

I dare think myself ordained.

But ah!

An evil curse drove me about

in trackless wandering,

never to find the way to healing;

numberless dangers,

battles and conflicts

forced me from my path

even when I thought I knew it.

Then I was forced to despair

of holding unsullied the treasure

to defend and guard which

I earned wounds from every weapon;

for I dared not wield this

itself in conflict;

unprofaned

I have borne it beside me

and now bring it home,

gleaming clean and bright before you,

the holy Spear of the Grail.

(Parsifal, Act III. Wagner, 1882)

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Appendix

Stories written by the students of The Art of Storytelling course

AB's curative story for Mel

Mel was 13 years old when she came to live in Beaver Run. She was in 8th grade and it was her first year in this school. She had an epileptic constitution, is non-verbal and very small for her age. She could be extremely stubborn and was obsessed with clothing, but she had a way of getting into people's hearts and was loved by her teachers and friends. She was very engaged and helpful with all kinds of chores and she enjoyed to do them, however often it was hard for her to share something, even a task, with others.

Goal addressed in the curative story: To help her to look up, to open up.

Open up to the world

"I'm leaving" Maddy shouted angrily.

She turned around, left the house and slammed the door behind herself. She didn't want to see anyone, talk to anyone or care about anything but herself. All she wanted was to be by herself. She had helped her mother with the laundry all morning and had found an old red jacket that she wanted to keep. But her mother had told her it was too old and ripped, so she took it away. This was why Maddy was so angry.

In the yard Maddy kicked the ball that was laying around. She hit it hard, it banged into the wall of the shed and got right back at Maddy. "Great", she mumbled while she rubbed her forehead where the ball had hit her. It was raining. Maddy had stormed out of the house and not taken her coat along. Now her gray sweater started to turn darker and darker where the rain soaked through.

Maddy kept walking; out of the yard, towards the path that was heading to the fields and forest. She didn't think about her mother, or why she wouldn't let her keep the jacket that she wanted so badly. So she walked, all alone and refusing to care for anything around her.

As she was walking, with her head down, she didn't see the old man that was sitting by the side of the path until she almost stumbled over him. Maddy didn't want to slow down and stop at first, but the man reached out and gently touched her shoulder. Maddy wanted to shake it off and move on. But a warmth that was streaming out from the spot where he had touched her made Maddy pause and turn around. She looked at the old man's face. He had clear blue eyes, a wide smile, and lots and lots of wrinkles on his face. His hair was short and gray and he was wearing a brown jacket that looked as if it was three sizes too big. His boots were full of mud and seemed old and worn out. The rain had soaked his clothes so that they were hanging on him like a sad bag.

Except for the path that they were standing on, everything around her, the fields and the ground in the forest was muddy and full of puddles. It was still raining and also Maddy's shirt was quite wet now.

The old man looked deep into Maddy's eyes. Like with the touch of his hand on her shoulder before, Maddy felt a warmth streaming out from her heart and filling her whole body when she

returned the old man's gentle gaze. She felt that he looked deep into her soul, touched her heart and filled it with positivity and warmth. Maddy felt calm and relaxed and she took a deep breath. The man nodded slowly.

“Open up to the world.

Enjoy the little things.

Help out others.

And a friend will be yours.”

He said with a calm and friendly voice. He nodded again, looked deep into Maddy's eyes one more time, then took his hand off her shoulder.

Maddy was puzzled. What did he just say?

“Open up to the world.

Enjoy the little things.

Help out others.

And a friend will be yours.”

Before she could ask him any questions the old man turned around and walked away. Maddy was left alone again. She shook her head and slowly started walking. Something had changed. She wasn't quite as upset anymore. She was thinking about the old man's words now.

After a while Maddy reached a fork in her path. On the left the path was leading into the forest. The trees were shaking their leaves and Maddy could hear the water dripping off their heavy branches. The path was wide here, but it seemed to become more narrow the further she followed it with her eyes into the woods. To her right the path was winding itself into an open field and

over a little hill. Maddy could see a river flowing in the far distance. It seemed to carry a lot of water, probably because of the rain.

Which path should she follow?

What would await her if she turned left and went into the woods? And who would she meet on her path if she took the right one going into the fields? Maddy thought about the old man's words.

“Open up to the world” he had said. The forest looked pretty dark and lonely. If she wanted to be alone and not care about anyone or anything else but herself this was the path she should take.

But the man had told her to open up to the world. Maddy recalled the warm feeling that had filled her after he had touched her shoulder. What would happen if she took the path leading towards the open fields?

“Let's find out!” Maddy shouted in a sudden jolt of enthusiasm. She turned to the right and started running down the path. The rain had stopped and Maddy noticed that the heavy clouds of rain were behind her and a single sun ray was shining down on the path in front of her. A gentle smile stole itself on Maddy's face. At first she wasn't sure about what she was feeling, but as she kept running towards the sun, leaving the heavy clouds, the rain and the dark forest behind her, the smile grew wider and wider until suddenly Maddy realized that she was happy. She had chosen to take the path leading to the open field and to “*open up to the world*” like the old man had said. And there she was, running, smiling, being happy.

Again she remembered the old man's words:

“Enjoy the little things.”

What did he mean by that? Maddy wondered. She slowed down her running, until she was walking and had time to look around, to the right and to the left. Fields were spreading as far as she could see. There was a hill to her left, the river that she had seen before was winding its way down. The sun was shining and made the water sparkle. Maddy looked at the path she was walking on; a small flower was growing there, and here was a little stone shaped like a heart. There was a bush growing at the side of the path. Maddy saw a hole underneath it and suddenly a bunny appeared and it almost seemed as if it was greeting her. Were these the little things the man was talking about?

“Hello?” Maddy heard a voice, very quietly and very far in the distance. She stopped. Maddy remembered she was angry. She didn't want to talk to anyone. She didn't want to care for anyone. She didn't want to know who was talking.

Again. “Hello? Is anyone there?”

Maddy hesitated. She wanted to turn around. Go back and leave whoever it was behind her so she wouldn't have to care.

“Hello? I need help. Please help me.”

Maddy stood silently. How did the person know she was there? Then Maddy remembered the old man's advice.

“Help out others.”

She sighed. And turned around to walk towards the voice.

“Who is there?” she asked.

When Maddy walked around the bush from where the voice came, she saw a little girl. She was next to the path, in the field. It was very muddy and the girl seemed to be stuck in the mud.

“I tried to take a shortcut and got stuck in the muddy field. I also lost my bag.” The girl lifted up her arms and pointed towards a backpack that was also stuck in the mud. She tried to reach out to Maddy but she was too far away.

Now Maddy wanted to help. She had to help the girl to get out of the mud. She looked around, trying to find a tool to help and finally found a stick that seemed long and strong enough for her to pull the girl out with it. She held the stick and reached out to the girl with it.

Maddy was balancing herself while holding on tightly to the stick. The girl was able to reach it. Her small hands grabbed the other end of the stick. Maddy called over. “Do you have it?” The girl nodded. “Hold on tight!” Maddy shouted. Then she threw herself back, trying to pull the girl out of the mud. She continued this for a little while until the girl finally was free and Maddy could pull her all the way to the safe ground of the path.

Maddy tried to reach out to catch hold of the girl's bag, but stumbled and fell forward into the mud. When Maddy got herself up and turned around, the girl burst out laughing. Maddy's face was covered in mud. But when she started smiling about the girl's laughter, she showed her white teeth and her eyes were sparkling with joy. The girl's green sweatshirt was completely covered in mud, so were her pants and now Maddy's face. Together the girls were laughing about how funny they looked. Then Maddy went over, took the girl in her arms and said: “Friends?”

“Friends.” Replied the girl.

Forgotten was all of Maddy's anger about the red jacket and her mother.

The old man's advice had become true. Maddy had opened up to the world, she had enjoyed the little things along the path, she had helped someone else and found a friend.

Hand in hand she walked home together with her new friend.

“Open up to the world.

Enjoy the little things.

Help out others.

And a friend will be yours.”

KK's story for Fred

Fred came to Beaver Run in 2007, when he was about 14 years old. By the time I wrote the story for Fred was turning 17. He will be 25 in September. Fred was prone to outbursts and would have a tendency to destroy his own things, especially things he created himself, when he had these outbursts. He would shout and slam doors, sometimes throwing things. He flushed easily. He had a restlessness, and could get fixated, even on certain people. Fred's Sense of shame was strong. He had a good appetite, difficulties with reading and writing (caused some shyness). He had a good sense of humor, loved animals and loved to work with his hands. Fred enjoyed being read to, especially before bed. His speech was fast and could be difficult to understand, like a fast mumble.

Goal addressed in the curative story: To fill his soul emptiness with his own gifts.

David and the Ship

The seaside village of Paupionne was a beautiful place. From its shores one could view the most glorious sunrises and sunsets. The waters near the pier lapped the rocky jetties, sounding of full, deep sighing with each swell and recede. Even while surrounded by all this natural beauty, however, Paupionne was a poor village. The people there, many of them fishermen or sailors, put their blood and sweat into their work. David was no exception. David was a boat builder, a trade he had taught himself. He had learned throughout his years in Paupionne to craft canoes from fiberglass that were light as a feather, so sleek that they seemed to slice the water. He built rowboats, strong and steady, using logs from white pines. They were sturdy and buoyant enough to hold six men. David's skilled hand could artfully complete even the tiniest, most intricate ships-in-bottles, and his endurance and strength also allowed him to help build some of the grandest steel barges that the shores of Paupionne had ever seen. David was admired for his skilled craftsmanship, and throughout the years he had supported himself in the poverty-stricken village by building ships for wealthy patrons from the rich inland cities. All of his materials were given to him by the patrons, and he was also given a modest allowance for his labor. As long as David was building boats, his heart felt full and his hands did what they seemed destined to do.

Now it happened one day that one of David's sailor friends, secretly full of envy of the talent and success of the young boat builder, invited David to come with him and some other sailors to the tavern. It wasn't long before the sailor had drunk more than his fill of ale. Out of jealous spite the sailor turned to David and told him that he didn't deserve to be making such beautiful boats. "Without the materials showered upon you from those rich muckity-muck sponsors, you'd never be able to make anything but ramshackle rafts!" spat the sailor. And with

that the sailor and his comrades laughed mockingly as they clamored out of the tavern, leaving David alone.

David's heart was deeply hurt. As he walked back to his little house from the pub he felt as if he was drowning in the sea. Worthless. For the first time since he was a small child he believed himself to be undeserving; undeserving of the generosity that had been offered to him. He took for truth what the young sailor had said: his ships were worth only what the wealthy patrons had invested in them: exotic woods, richly polished steel, and lots of money. The work of his hands and his heart suddenly no longer held value to David. In an anguished rage he flung himself into his workshop and fumbled through his toolbox. He pulled out his hammer. "Gahhh! Paid for by a patron!" and he threw it down. He grabbed hold of his welding torch. "Also bought for me! Nothing is of my own!" and he slammed it against the wall. Just as he was about to run to the shore to throw his entire beloved tool box into the sea he saw his mighty steel drill, capable of punching holes into even the thickest of ship floors. He grabbed the drill and ran to the small but beautiful fleet of boats that he had been working on and fast as lightning drilled a hole into the floor of every last one of them. Then, still shaking with grief and anger, he pushed them out to sea and watched with glazed, sore eyes as the blackened sea slowly swallowed them into the watery depths.

Paupionne, being a small village where, as you know, word travels fast, picked up quickly on David's grief-stricken rage, and many more sailors, for want of distracting themselves from the poverty that surrounded them, decided to have a go at teasing David into sinking yet another one of his lovely ships. David was not able to stop building the ships because he still loved to do it, but he also was so hurt at the repeated attacks by the sailors that each time it

happened again he would rush to his mighty steel drill and send another of his boats to its watery grave. Eventually David's actions caught the attention of his once-supportive patrons and the requests for him to build beautiful ships disappeared. David was devastated and had never before felt so disappointed and hopeless. He had destroyed his entire fleet, and now he had also destroyed his hope of continuing to do what he loved.

The patrons who had once been supportive of David looked to give their money instead to other boat builders, but soon it was revealed that David was, indeed, the best boat builder that Paupionne had ever known. Indeed, his craftsmanship had, some time ago, attracted the attention of an especially wealthy patron, and this patron happened to have a heart of comparable size to David's. The wealthy patron proposed that if David would again build a ship then he would provide Paupionne with a large sum of money, large enough to lift the village out of poverty. There was, however, a two-fold catch to the offer: the ship had to be more glorious than any ship the patron had previously seen and also no help of money or of newly bought materials was to be given to David for his ship. David, understandably, felt immediately that it was an impossible task. "After all," he thought, "the only way that I could build my great ships was because of the pricey materials supplied to me by the patrons." Just as he was about to completely give up he walked over to the window of his workshop and looked out onto his beloved village. Paupionne, his home, was suffering greatly. He suddenly felt that he must not let this opportunity slip by. He wanted, needed, to help his poor village, and he knew that what the patron was offering would be the saving grace for Paupionne.

David set right to work. He went to the carpenter's house and asked if he had any scrap wood in exchange for David's promise to clean up the carpenter's workspace for him. The

carpenter gave him what he had. David then went to the blacksmith's shop and asked if he could acquire some nails and the use of his anvil and other tools in exchange for a promise of a gift of a beautiful ship-in-a-bottle. The blacksmith gladly obliged. Soon the whole village of Paupionne got wind of the special project that David was undertaking, and despite their doubts they did all they could to get him the necessary tools and supplies for him to build their Ship of Dreams.

Although the villagers all were poor, they accumulated a great array of scrap materials for David, and with his skill and patience and love for his work he toiled diligently on the Ship. When it was finally completed, it was indeed the most incredible vessel ever to grace the shores of Paupionne. It had a lovely wooden hull, constructed with precision from a whole mosaic of different woods. Its masts and rudders were steady and strong, welded with scrap iron and bolts of all shapes and sizes. Its billowing sails boasted an intricate patchwork of all different fabrics: discarded curtains, linens, sheets; all arranged in an colorful quilt-like pattern. The Ship was undoubtedly the most unique, beautiful ship that anyone in the village had ever seen.

The day came for the wealthy patron to arrive again at Paupionne to see David's ship. The villagers held their breath. David could feel the anticipation, worry and excitement in the air. He knew that the well-being of his village depended on his Ship. At first, upon gazing at the ship, the patron said nothing. As he turned to address David and the crowd, however, his eyes were shining and his smile was warm. "My dear friends," said the patron, "the money is yours, for life and for work. May Paupionne prosper from this day forth!" The villagers cheered, hardly believing their ears! David, joyful tears welling at his eyes, was hoisted into the air. He couldn't believe it! He had managed to build the most beautiful ship in the world without any fancy new materials or heaps of money. Indeed, the Ship was built upon three things alone:

hands that were destined to build and not destroy, a heart that loves the work, and the longing to do what is good for all. David's Ship of Dreams was forevermore the pride and joy of the happy village, and the natural beauty of the sea that surrounded Paupionne was now echoed within the village itself and within all its people.

RS's curative story for Luna

Luna is a residential senior at The Camphill School. She became residential after years of being a day student in ninth grade. She is currently eighteen years old. When she smiles the whole room lights up. She was given an autism diagnosis at the age of sixteen months. She had about twenty words until she had a regression at the age of four and a half and lost all language. To this day she only uses guttural sounds and whooshing sounds in extreme moments of happiness or frustration. One of her biggest challenges is that she has no form of expressive communication, which results in violent behaviorism.

Goal addressed in the curative story: She is not alone in her feeling of loneliness.

A Story for You

Once upon a time, in a meadow far away, a girl named Sabrina sat contemplating her journey. All of the places she had been, the difficulties she had faced since leaving home; the pains and joys of simply being alive. Her last adventure had taken her to the banks of a wide river. She had met a group of traveling circus folk at an Inn not so far off. They had invited her on their last afternoon in town to go apple picking. They were excited to celebrate their last show for the season with lots of apple pie and vanilla ice cream; it was an old tradition. They did not

really understand her and they spoke a different language, but she was content with the company. She was contemplating all of this with a deep sense of longing, a heartache she was unfamiliar with. All at once a little squirrel jumped out right in front of her, carrying a huge acorn. The acorn was the same size as the squirrels head, it was a sight to behold. Exuberated by what she had seen, she jumped up shouting to the others to see if they had seen it too, knowing they would be thrilled by the little everyday surprises.

No one answered in reply. So she shouted again thinking maybe they hadn't heard her. Again there was no answer. She quickly moved from her place around the grand old oak tree to see why no one was answering. Standing at the edge of the flowing river she gazed at the empty meadow. The grove of apple trees was completely empty. No one was picking apples, no one was carrying any baskets, and no one was talking about the smells of fresh apple pie.

She felt a pang of fear and panic. Was she alone? Had they forgotten her? Was she late for the last show which she had promised to attend? Worried, she began to search the meadow. There was a painful silence, even the squirrel had disappeared. She tried to take a deep breath but the air had become thick, hard to breathe. She felt as if she was being smothered from the inside out. Out of nowhere she heard a faint cry in the distance. She jumped startled by the sound. Not really sure she had actually heard a sound, she stood frozen every muscle tense. The cry came again breaking the still silence. Despite her best efforts curiosity got the better of her. She slowly walked towards the sound. As she came around the bushes she saw a little girl sitting all alone with dirty tear streaks down her face. Sabrina was surprised, what was a little girl doing all alone in the bushes. She reached out to her but the little girl shrunk back. Sabrina began to get frustrated. She knew she could not just leave the child behind but needed to get back before it

was dark. She took a step forward attempting to take the girl. Shrinking back even further the little girl began to cry.

Sabrina realized she had frightened the child. Slowly she sat a little ways off unsure of what to do. She knew she could not leave the child but had no experience with children. At once she remembered something someone had said to her a long time ago. “Whenever you are scared and alone, sing this prayer, and hope shall be there” she opened her eyes and began to sing.

“I give my love a cherry without a stone.

I give my love a chicken that has no bones.

I give my love a baby with no crying.

I give my love a story that has no end.”

And to Sabrina's surprise the little girl stood up and walked over to where she sat and reached out her hand. Sabrina stood and took it, slowly they began to walk hand in hand. After a little while Sabrina asked gently, “What’s your name child?”

The little girl answered shyly, “My name is Grace.” And with a grand gesture Sabrina bowed low to the ground and said, “My name is Sabrina. It is a great pleasure to make your acquaintance.” The little girl let out a tinkling laugh.

At that moment they heard a call. Sabrina taking the girls hand more tightly said, “Quickly this way.” Together they ran down the hill along the river and around a bend. Grace let out a yip of joy, for standing in front of them was Grace's mother. Sabrina stood off a little ways watching the happy tearful reunion. The mother turned and said, “Thank you so much for keeping my Grace safe”. With that she scooped up Grace and turned to leave. But before they

had gone very far Grace said, “Wait, wait I have a question. How can you have a story with no end?”

Sabrina smiled and leaned down to whisper in the little girl's ear and sang the last line of the song, “And when I say I love you it has no end.” The little girl turned to Sabrina and said, “Thank you for being my guardian angel.” With that the little girl waved and started her journey home. Sabrina knew where she had to go and slowly turned in the direction of home. She had a gentle smile on her face, for she had a secret, she was not alone.

HW's curative story for Ray

Ray was 20 years old when I wrote this story for him and had been enrolled with Camphill Special School for several years. He came to our school from the United Arab Emirates. Ray was verbal, though limited in his expression, and carried the diagnoses of microcephaly and autism. He was intensively hyperactive, obsessive, and anxious.

Goal addressed in the curative story: To feel secure, to be okay with not having a perfect certainty about things.

Sestina for Raymond

Far away in the East, a mighty queen ruled a vast kingdom,
but she was lonely until, one day, she gave birth to a little son.
She adored him beyond all of her riches, but he was never afraid,
and when he could walk, he slipped out of the city gates, and was found on the road
by a monk, and so he grew up far away, amongst holy people,

and did not learn whose son he was, nor know his place in the world.

And so he tended livestock, and learned the work of living in the world, but when he was nearly a young man, he set out into the wider kingdom to find his destiny, and make a home for himself with people.

And he walked toward the capital city for two days under the hot Sun until he met a vendor of fruit whose cart had broken along the road, and because the man was delirious with thirst, the young prince felt afraid,

for he saw then how easily misfortune takes hold of one, and he felt afraid in his heart because he realized the uncertainty of living in the world.

But he gave the man water to drink, and lifted the man's cart off the road so that he could repair it, and they set off toward the heart of the kingdom together when it was done, and the boy who did not know he was a Queen's son felt joy in having a friend, and knew that his bonds with people

would make him safe, even though life was so uncertain. Other people passed them on the road, hurrying past them. One woman looked afraid, and the boy stopped her and asked why she hurried. She clutched her own small son to her, and said there were bad men robbing travelers in that part of the world, and she hoped, before nightfall, to find some place in that kingdom that would hide her and her small son from those bad men who traveled that road.

And the boy again felt fear in his heart. He did not understand why the road should be a dangerous place, nor how evil intentions took hold of some people, but the boy and his friend invited the woman to make her way through the kingdom in the bed of the fruit cart, and comforted her that she should not be afraid for herself or her small son. And the boy knew the peace of living in a world where one could help another. And when, at first daylight, the Sun

spilled over the humble fruit cart, and lit the face of the woman's sleeping son, the boy was filled again with peace and the certainty of their safety on the road. Then the travelers continued on, and the boy saw more of the world than he had ever seen. And on his way he met many people, and many of them had met with misfortune, but the boy learned not to be afraid of the unexpected, but discovered his power to help the people of that kingdom.

When at last the Queen's son found himself in the capital city, one of the people of the palace recognized him on the road. He learned who he was, and was unafraid to take his place in the world, and ruled then many years of peace in that kingdom.

LC's curative story for Lucy

Lucy is new in Camphill Special School this year (2017). She joined 8th grade in September. She is now 14 years old. Lucy was diagnosed as autistic with intellectual and

language impairment. She has OCD and ADHD combined. She is verbal. She can read and write, and she can learn quickly by imitation. Lucy is anxious regarding the outside world. Many things which are unfamiliar or new to her will make her really nervous. She will scream, shout, or push people when she can't handle her anxiety.

Goal addressed in the curative story: To empower her and give her strength to try new things and make friends.

(1) The journey went on

A Long long time ago, there was a mother who lived with her daughter, Ella, in a big house. Ella was shy and afraid of many things when she was young. She always followed her mother everywhere, just like her shadow. She would not try anything new except her mother asked her to. With the time, the little girl were braver and could stay in the house when her mother was not around. For the love and the beautiful world nourished her mind, she enjoyed more of every happening in her life even though she was still careful and conservative.

“I felt peaceful and contented every night, knowing my daughter is stronger and ready for a bigger challenge.” Her mother thought.

At Emily's thirteen years old birthday, her mother told her, “Emily, it's time for you to leave home and start your new journey.”

She went to Emily and held her hand firmly as if she was giving her her strength, courage and trust. She lead Emily to the huge old oak tree near their house. They went into the hole in the trunk of the tree together. Surprisingly, Emily found out in the dark that there was a path in the hollow. Her Mother walked with her quietly. After Emily got used to the

dark, she saw golden stairs going downward in front of them a little distance away.

When they arrived at the stairs, her mother told her, “Emily, I can only walk with you as far as this. Now you need to go on your journey on your own.” Then she gave Emily an envelope. She said, “Don’t be afraid, the envelope will protect you and help you in the journey.” After she said that, she hugged her and left very quickly. It happened too fast, Emily did not even have time to reply anything. She tried to go back to her mother and refuse to leave but the golden stairs seemed to call her.

She was so frustrated, angry and sad. She cried loudly until she was tired and fell asleep. When she woke up, she was still in the dark. She didn’t know the time and she could not see or hear anything.

She thought about the envelope her mother had given her. She took it out and opened it right away, but she could hardly read anything due to the dark. She wanted to get away from the dark so badly. So, she stood up, found the railing of the golden stairs and following the stairs began on her journey.

She walked for a long time, she was so tired but she did not want to stop. She did not even allow herself to look back. Somehow she knew that there was something waiting for her to go forward. From then on, she did not realize that she had changed, was different and that she would find her way in the world.

(2) Ocean

She followed the stairs, going up and going down. She did not know how long she walked and how many days had passed. Gradually, she did not feel so afraid anymore since she realized that

there was nothing dangerous in the dark. But she was still lonely. She missed her mother and her two sisters.

Finally she began to hear something different. it was a sound of water, clear and rhythmically flowing. The sound calmed her down and regulated her breathing. So, she could climb up and down the stairs at a steady pace.

She stopped to catch her breath and looked in front of her. Suddenly, her view was expanded widely. The vast, unlimited, magnificent ocean came into sight. From far away, there was a small boat coming towards her. She got in and found that instead of a paddle, there was only a mirror. But she was grateful for what she got. She looked at the mirror, she saw a young lady who looked like her mother. She felt loved and not lonely anymore. She lay down and let the boat take her away. Away from the dark, Away from the loneliness.

The boat followed the flow of the ocean. In the beginning, it went very smoothly. Emily enjoyed lying down and being immersed in the starry starry sky.

Open the door and Go on the journey

For the horizon, What do you see ?

Time and the tide, winds and mind rolling.

Day and the Night, Spring and the Summer. I am here finding.

Open the door and Go on the journey

Open your heart, What do you see ?

Fog and the storm, the sun spirit rising

Mist in the deep and the sound of my steps. I am here coming.

She fell into a deep deep sleep. However, her good fortune did not last long. A strong wind came, and another stronger wind came, and gradually it became a wild storm. The boat could not hold its balance and was swamped by the waves. Emily felt panic and did not know what to do. But somehow she believed the waves and the winds would protect her and lead her to a safe place. Then, she lost her consciousness in the storm.

She woke up near an small island. When she opened her eyes, she couldn't believe that she saw light. She had not see light for so long. She was so happy that the world became clear and colorful again. Red, yellow, purple and orange flowers and green meadows and blue sky that she missed so much. She opened her eyes wide and did not even want to blink. She was totally fascinated by the outside world and ready to see everything again.

(3) The bird

She was amazed by all the scenery, then she remember her mirror and looked in it again. Now she saw a different lady who was strong and mighty, but at the same time so sweet like the flowers that are ready to bloom.

A bird flew to her. And the bird said, "Hello, welcome to our island. Who are you? Would you be my friend?" Emily was so happy and agreed to be the bird's friend right away. They played together for a long time. She whistled and danced with the bird. When they were both tired, they sat down by an apple tree. They enjoyed the apples together. Emily played with the bird everyday. She was happy that she had a friend now, but she missed her family. She had no idea how to go back home. The worst thing was that she had lost the envelope that her mother had given her. She could not find it after the stormy night. She became unhappy and home sick day by day. Her friend, the bird wanted to help Emily and promised her that she would go to find her

home and come back to tell her how to get there. Then, they said goodbye. And the bird was gone. Now she was alone again.

(4) the young man

She missed her family and her bird friend so much. She was wondering whether she could make another friend on the island. She walked around and reached a hill top. At the top of the hill, she saw there was a village not far away. She wanted to go there, to talk to the people and maybe she would find another friend. But she hesitated to do that since she was so shy and did not know whether they would be nice to her.

Everyday she hiked to the hilltop and watched the people below. Every morning she made up her mind to go to the village, but she every time gave up. She was too shy and afraid to see the people in the village. One day,

she went to the hill top to look at the people again. She heard someone riding a horse, approaching. She was nervous and quickly hid herself behind a tree. A few minutes later there came a young man on a horse. He stopped to look at the view. He brought his horse to the tree and wanted to tie it there.

“Oh no, he is coming here. He will find me.” Emily thought. She watched the young man grasp a branch of the tree ; she could not even breathe. She could not imagine that someone would find her and know of her existence on the island. She was so scared. When her anxiety had reached the highest point, she closed her eyes. But surprise, surprise, she heard herself say, “Hello.”

Then, she heard a gentle voice.

“Oh, you are here.” The young man said and gave her his hand.

He held her hand and helped her to get up. He said he had found an envelope with her picture in it. In the picture, she looked younger and delicate; her eyes was staring at the sky, it seemed as if she was wondering about something. Then, the young man said, “but now you looked stronger and braver. You are so beautiful this way.”

(5) Singing

She was so surprise at what she heard. She took out the mirror and looked in it again. Indeed, she saw a strong and brave woman. She could not believe that it was her. And, she felt so confident. She asked the young man to take her to the village. She was ready to go there and get to know the people. She was not so afraid anymore.

The young man took her to his house. His father was a musician and was playing the piano.

Emily was excited that she knew the songs the musician was playing. She followed the melody and started to sing for the first time. Her voice was so lovely that many people stopped at the young man’s house to listen.

Emily knew all the songs that her mother used to sing to her. But she was too shy to sing herself. Not only singing, but she spoke in a very little voice when needed. But now, the voice just came out of her mouth beautifully and melodiously. The young man’s father was so touched by her voice that he kept playing, she kept singing. And the people kept staying and enjoying her sweet voice.

Emily was so happy. That was the happiest moment of her life. She thought, “I must sing to my mother one day.” Because her mom loved music. She would enjoy it and even sing along with her.

After she had found her lovely voice, she started to sing for the people in the village. She sang for the people who were happy or sad, who were sick or tired, who were working or resting. She sang for them not only with her lovely voice but with her kind heart. She found she loved the people so much that she wanted to offer the music to them. Now she had found a way to enjoy being with people.

(6) Go back

Many months passed by, until she started to feel home sick again. Everyday she was looking forward to see her bird friend come back. But she did not come. Gradually, she became sad and weak. The young man was worried about her. He did not want to see her feeling worried and sad. He wanted to encourage her to go to find the bird and her way home, even though he loved her so much that he did not want to let her go. One day he took Emily's envelope that he had kept for so long and gave it back to her. He looked at Emily deeply and said, "It is time to go on your journey again. You are so kind and brave that you will be able to meet your friend and find your home again. Take this envelope and go and show your mother that you are different now." Emily felt strong and safe after hearing what the young man said to her. She stood up and went on her journey again.

Open the door and Go on the journey

For the horizon, What do you see ?

Time and the tide, winds and mind rolling.

Day and the Night, Spring and the Summer. I am here finding.

Open the door and Go on the journey

Open your heart, What do you see ?

Fog and the storm, and the sun spirit rising

Mist in the deep and the sound of my steps. I am here coming.

GY's curative story to Rose

Rose is a 14 years old girl. She has been in Camphill Special School since kindergarten. She just graduated from 8th grade and will go to high school next school year. Rose was diagnosed as developmentally delayed, ataxia, tremor and epilepsy. For most of the time, Rose appears to be a very delightful and happy. She shows affection to people and loves interact with them, but does not know how. Rose has many favorite things like dress, singing, horse, hair and food but also easily gets fixed on them and doesn't know how to let them go. Last summer, Rose went into a real crisis, and developed new behaviors of breath-holding and twitching her neck and head. Her tremors increased remarkably. Her movements appeared to be more unsteady than before. Trying to hold everything and not to let go has been Rose's picture, which is very interesting that her favorite song is "let it go" from "Frozen". She does not have language except the word "hi", but she can hum "let it go" clearly. It is like she was trying to tell people that "I want to let it go, but I do not know how. Please help me"

Goal Addressed in the curative story: To let go of the things she is holding on to, like her breath and her childhood.

When Bella was a baby girl,
She was always little and fragile.
Her parents built a doll's house which looked like a castle, for her to play in.
They told her "Princess, you can have everything you want,

Let the castle protect you before the long journey begins”

From that day,
Bella grew up slowly in her own wonderland.
She likes tying her long brown hair with a bow,
Wearing the most beautiful dresses,
Playing with her thousands of dolls.
“I will be a princess in my castle forever”
She told her parents seriously,
“And this is my vow.”

As time passed by,
Bella is now 14 years old.
Her parents begin to remind her,
“Bella, you are not a baby girl anymore.
You are healthier and stronger,
It is time for you to leave the castle, to go outside.
The world is waiting for you,
You just need to open the door.”

Bella does not understand,
“Why do I need to be outside?
I’m already a princess having everything in my hand.
Long hair, dresses and my castle, this is the life I want just as I always planned”.

Finally one day,
Her parents give her a final warning,
“Bella, you have one more night with your castle,
It is already too small for you,
And it is past time to grow up.
Tomorrow we will take all your childish belongings away.”

“I will never let them go”
Bella cries for a whole night,
“Even if it means I need to leave my home and never come back.”
So she put on her favorite dress, carries her castle,
And packs a few belongings including a sewing kit.
“This could be useful for mending my precious dress.”

Bella tells herself.
She leaves home with the first sunlight.

Bella walks mile after mile,
Until her arms are sore and her back hurts.
Finally, she has to stop and put the castle down.
Then she looks up,
It is the first time she sees the rising sun.
The sun with its loving light shines on Bella
She feels the warmth and brightness rising inside her.
“Maybe this world is more beautiful than my wonderland”
Bella wonders.

Suddenly a dog comes out of nowhere,
Frightening poor Bella who never saw a creature like this before.
“I need to run.” She starts to panic.
Bella tries so hard to move her body,
But her legs just don’t listen to her command.
She steps into a puddle,
Stumbles into bushes,
And keeps tripping over her long hair.
But Bella dares not stop.
Gradually the barking disappears
Strangely a new feeling starts to stir.
The warmth from the movement is growing inside her.
For the first time she hears the sound of her heart pounding in her chest.
“I am alive” she says to herself.

Bella keeps going forward,
Until in the front there is no other way but a log connecting two cliffs.
In the past, the princess Bella definitely would cry and ask for mom’s help.
But now, she decides to walk across it all by herself.
“I know I can do everything and go anywhere.
The world awaits me and finally, I am ready”
Bella never felt so good about herself.
She sets her feet on the log.
All goes well, until she trips over her long dress.
Bella suddenly loses balance and the control of her body.

She falls from the log.
She keeps falling.
Falling.

On a tree half down the cliff Bella gets stuck.
Her long hair is caught in the branches.
It's impossible to climb up.
It's dangerous to go down.

“Will I survive this?”
“Where will I end if I fall down?”
“What should I do?”

... ..

A thousand questions come across her mind.
Then Bella realizes that only she can make the decision.
And she trusts herself.
She takes the scissors out from her sewing kit,
And cuts her beautiful long hair to be free of the branches.
Then she falls again.
But this time, she does not scream.

She lands in a swamp and is stuck in the mud up to her neck.
In that moment, Bella realizes she couldn't do anything to help herself.
Hands and feet seem so far away.
Not long ago,
Bella thought she could do everything
Now she cannot even control her breathing
“Maybe I shouldn't trust myself.
After all, I still cannot do everything and go anywhere.”
Bella closes her eyes and gives up trying.

The next thing Bella knows,
She is surrounded by a mother swan and her young ones at the side of the swamp.
A young swan says to her,
“Mom said we could save you by how much courage we show.
So we put all our strength together to pull.
Mommy was right. We all pulled together, mom most of all.
But her wings got injured from dragging you as you had already sunk so low in the mud.

Bella rips her favorite dress as a bandage for mom swan's leg,
And makes her a promise,
"I will stay,
And bring food and water to you.
I will take good care of you every day."

To get fish to the swans,
Bella learns how to swim in the deep river.
To get fruits for herself,
Bella learns how to climb tall trees without a shiver.

She likes watching the young swans learning how to fly.
They try and fall.
Once, twice, ten times, a hundred times, a thousand times.
The day they finally fly up high,
Bella runs so fast after them.
Laughter and squeaking echo in the sky.

The summer days slide by,
The harvest time arrives.
One day, Bella stands beside the river.
Suddenly she cannot believe her eyes.
The reflection of herself in the water is a totally different girl.
Her hair is still shiny brown, but short and stuck up in all directions.
Her sweat shirt and pants which she made from her old long dress just fit her.
She looks incredibly strong and happy.
Finally, Bella understands,
What she has harvested are not only the healthy body, but the courage, confidence and
friendship.
Those are the things she needs to value most in her life.
Close by, the mom swan, who has been fully recovered under Bella's careful care, is gliding
gracefully on the river.
And the young swans are swimming around her.
Mom swan winks at Bella,
She knows they want her to join them, so she jumps into the river without hesitating.

In the river, mom swan says,

“My children, you are not small young swans anymore.
You all have become strong and courageous.
We are going on a trip to the south.
We will fly for days and nights which you have never done before.
But do not worry, because you are all ready
The sky is waiting for you and you will find everything you are looking for.”

Bella suddenly realizes
How much she misses her parents.
A long time ago, she also heard the similar words.
But then, she was still a lonely princess in her small castle.
Never wishing to go out, have friends and run.
“Look at me now!” Bella cries,
“How time flies!”
Mom swan looks at Bella.
“My bravest girl,
You have done enough for us and for yourself
And have changed so much.
When the day comes,
We can give you a ride home.”

Finally, one bright and crisp day,
Under the warm fall sunshine,
Bella runs with all the swans in the vast golden field at full speed.
Mom swan winks at Bella,
So she holds mom swan’s neck and jumps on her back.
Together they soar into the sky.

At the top of the cliff Bella asks to get down.
She waves to the first friends she has ever made,
Saying goodbye to the memories as precious as jade
She let them go peacefully,
Because now the future will not make her afraid.

She starts to run
Running through the bushes
Running over the puddle
Running together with the setting sun.

The babbling stream jumps and asks
“Who is this girl as fast as a horse?”
The dog in its house barks and laughs
“That’s the girl who left me her house”
But Bella passes them without noticing.

Then she sees
At the end of the road her parents are waving.
Home, the long way around.
Bella keeps running.
She knows, everything is just the beginning.

WJ’s curative stories to George

George is 17 years old and he is in 11th grade. George joined camphill school in 2016. He is verbal and has been diagnosed with ADHD and reactive attachment disorder. He was adopted at age of six before moving through eight foster homes. He loves reading and been read story to , loves puzzle and games. He struggles with personal boundaries, but loves animals. Goal addressed in the curative story: To be able to give and to develop more empathy towards others.

A furry wild troll really wanted to be a human, because he wanted to be loved and be happy, just like the human beings.

So he disguised himself like a man, he put on man’s clothes and covered his hair with a cool cowboy hat he found in an abandoned house. Off he went to an adventure.

He came to a small cottage, from the window he saw an old woman making supper. The delicious smell of her food came to the troll; he couldn’t stop moving his feet towards the door.

The troll in his cowboy hat banged on the door like a troll and shouted: “Hey, old woman there, it’s the cowboy here, get me your food, I’m hungry! Quick! Otherwise I will eat you up!” The troll forgot to speak in a human manner. The old woman jumped from the loud voice and she became very angry. “Who’s there? Nobody had ever spoken to me so rude and loud!” she shouted back and took a bucket of stinky compost, then opened the door, poured compost right onto the troll. “Now, be off, you stupid cowboy!” she said to the troll then she shut the door behind her.

The troll with stinky compost all over his body, ran away as fast as he could! He didn’t want to get stinkier! His cowboy hat even had a piece of old cheese hanging. “ewh! This is not fun!” The troll said to himself then cried so hard.

The troll came back to his cave with an empty stomach and smelly body. He felt so sad and hungry. He decided he never wanted to do it again.

The next day he became even hungrier and it had started to rain. He came to a big house; he heard children’s laughter, his heart also filled with joy. They looked nice, he decided to ask if he could come in to be out of the rain. He was just about to bang on the door like he before, but then he remembered what happened with the old woman. So he knocked on the door politely just like a human would do.

Soon came a little boy, he opened the door with a bright smile. The troll was just about to shout at him with his loud troll voice, but the memory of the old woman reminded him not to make the same mistake. So the troll with a gentle voice asked the little boy if he could sit by their fire because he was so cold and wet. After he spoke he also put up a big smile just like the little boy, his big troll teeth showed. The little boy burst out with laughter at the sight and said happily: “of

course! Please come in, we are just about to have supper, we would be happy to have a guest to join us.”

The troll was happy he was invited into the house, but he was so cold and hungry that he went in stamping with his big troll feet.

“Oh, no, our house is shaking! It’s shaking!” cried out the little sister who was playing with her building blocks. The troll heard that and quickly rose onto his tiptoes and pretended nothing had happened. This only left the little boy amused again. The troll looked around; so many interesting objects were placed in the room. His eyes were glued on the children toys, they looked very interesting. Soon the little boy’s family invited him to sit around the table and served him delicious soup and bread. Everybody was speaking so softly and touching so tenderly when they passed the food to each other. The troll felt so moved. He wanted to be a human, and he knew he had better learn how to speak and act like human, with tenderness and a soft voice. When it was time for the troll to leave, he had another look around the room and thought to himself: “This is just what I want.”

The troll went back to his cave and thought more about the idea that he wanted to have a home like the humans’, “Then I will be happy like the little human boy.” He said to himself. So he started to collect beautiful flowers and crystals from the woods. He decorated his cave with his collections, when it was done; he compared his cave to the child’s house, he felt so sad, because his home is still so empty. “I need something more!” said the troll. So he set off to look for more things to fill up his little cave.

The troll looked hard in the woods, but found nothing. He passed the little boy’s house, the memory of the little boy’s family came back, they were sitting around the table, talking and

laughing with each other, passing food and drinks for each other. The house filled with a warmth mood. He looked into the window, but nobody was there. A quiet sly voice came to him “all you need is inside this house.” He hesitated for a while, but finally took a step forward and sneaked inside the little boy’s house. He filled his pocket with exquisite objects that he loved once his eyes caught them; there were beautiful candles, wooden angels, little puppy dolls and books. Then he ran back as fast as he could to his cave. He placed all the things he had stolen from the little boy’s house in his cave. Then he looked around, still felt empty. He was not happy but felt so tired, that he went to sleep.

He began to dream. He found himself on a gigantic ship. He looked overboard and saw the ocean roaring, and the dark clouds pressing down. It seemed a thunder storm was coming. He was so confused and wanted to find out where he was. Then he heard somebody called with a squeaky voice “Captain, Captain! The storm is pressing; we have to sail to the east island, there we can find the ship with lots of treasure from faraway lands!” With a shock the troll realized HE is now a Captain! He gestured to the sailor to go ahead set for the east island. He caught his reflection in the ship’s window; he has only one eye, the other was cover with a black leather patch! What’s more, he only has one hand; the other was a shining golden hook! “I’m a pirate!” he said to himself astonished with excitement. “I will have more treasure for my cave, and it will be thousand times better than the human house! Woohoo! I’ll be better than a human!” he jumped up with extreme happiness and went to help the sailor steering the ship.

Soon, they were close to the east island where another ship had landed. The troll led his pirate crew, and quickly conquered the ship that was loaded with vast treasure from faraway land. In his dream, the troll jumped into piles and piles of treasure, with a look of ecstasy on his face. He

had never see so much gold and so many precious stones, diamonds and pearls. He wanted to have it all for himself, thinking this would make him happy forever. He sent away his crew because he didn't want to share the treasure with them. He gloated with his treasure in his pirate ship. "I'm rich! I'm rich!" he shouted "This will make me human!"

A little while later he felt hungry, but he didn't want to leave his treasure because somebody might try to steal it. So he stayed close to his treasure, getting hungrier and hungrier and his stomach began to ache and he started to cry. An old fisherman came with his little boat fishing. The old fisherman asked him why he was crying. The troll told the old fisherman that he was very hungry and that caused his stomach ache. The old fisherman heard him, took out one of his sandwich and passed it to the troll. The troll was surprised that anyone would give away their food, and wondered what made the fisherman to do so. The old fisherman said to him: "Giving to others brings me true joy; the joy came from offering my love to others is the most precious treasure to me and I can create myself; nobody can take my joy away from me." Then the old fisherman said goodbye to the troll and rowed away. The troll was thinking about what the fisherman had said, he realized that giving to the others can bring happiness and happiness is a great treasure. The boy gave me shelter, the fisherman gave me food. "Human beings can be happy because they give each other what they have, and they offer each other love by giving and sharing, this is how I can feel happy!" The troll said to himself.

Suddenly He heard water flooded into the ship and the ship started to sink. It was too heavy from all the treasure. He started to panic and he woke up! He realized it was only a dream!

The troll looked around his cave again. It seemed sad and lonely despite the things he had stolen from the little boy's house. The things reminded him how the little boy has been so kind to him and gave him food; he decided to return back what he had stolen from the little boy's house.

But the troll was afraid to see the little boy, and what the little boy will say about him taken things from the little boy's house. The troll thought for a long time, finally he carefully packed all the things he took from the little boy's house and set off to return it back. On his way, he found a beautiful feather, it was a long peacock tail feather with bright color; he loved it once his eyes caught it. He carefully put the feather together with the pack of things he was about to return to where it belonged. "This can be a wonderful gift for the little boy, and maybe he will forgive me for taking things from his house."

The troll was just about to arrive at the door; he felt ashamed for what he did and was hesitate to move further. But he sincerely felt sorry for what he did and wanted to apologies to the little boy, so he took a deep breath and knocked on the door.

Out came a little girl, she is the little boy's younger sister; she opened the door with an angelic smile. The troll was so nervous and afraid to see the little boy, felt little relieved and his heart felt warm when he saw the little "angel" girl. The troll carefully passed the things he stole from their house to the little girl and said to her:

"I'm so sorry; I stole these things from your house because I wanted to decorate my cave like your home. I felt so sad and lonely in my cave; I wanted to have a home like yours. I thought if I have a home like your home, I will be happy. I realized I was wrong, so I want to return the things back, and I want to give you this beautiful peacock feather as a gift."

The little girl saw the beautiful feather; her eyes lightened up and called out for her brother, “brother, come quick! Look at this feather; this is the most beautiful feather I have ever seen!”

The little boy came, his eyes drew to it immediately, and he took the feather in his hand and looked at it, he said “Wow, this is gorgeous! Thank you!” the little boy was so happy with the feather that her sister showed him. He invited the troll to come in and played together with the troll for the rest of the day.

When it’s time for the troll to leave, the troll apologized again for taken things from the little boy, the little boy understood what had happened and said to the troll, “Thank you for bring them back, and thank you for your beautiful gift, I loved it. I understand you, I think you just need some friends; I really enjoyed playing with you; I’m happy to be your friend, can you come and play with me again tomorrow?”

The troll said yes gladly. He doesn’t feel sad and lonely anymore, because he has a friend now! Then he happily went home. Only the way he thought to himself: “giving to others is truly joyful, and it’s the best treasure I can have.”

The little boy invited the troll to come to play every Sunday; the little boy’s family welcomed him and asked him to stay for meals. The troll always came with a gift that he found from the woods, sometime was a flower or a nut, other times was a beautiful leaf. He also helped them with their garden and shared his jokes and songs.

Every Sunday the troll came to his cozy home with full belly, his shining eyes filled with joy, he felt so happy and loved by the little boy’s family, his heart filled with warm light.

EM's curative story to Maria

Maria is a 14 years old, she was 13 when she joined the school. Maria is a talented lady, she loves to sing, do gymnastics, do horse riding, and she loves her family. She was diagnosed with epilepsy and cerebral palsy on the left side of her body. She is a strong willed person. She has good expressive and receptive communication.

Goal addressed in the curative story: To loosen up and make friends; accept who she is, to find confidence and courage.

The Horse Show

My name is Angharad Thomas. I live in one of the small villages in Wales called Myddfai. It is a small village in Carmarthenshire in South-West Wales and has a population of four hundred people. The famous neighbour we have there is the Prince of Wales, Prince Charles who grows his organic garden there. Just do not ask me about the coordinates of where he lives as I was sworn to secrecy! I loved to dance, sing, explore, hike and ride my horse and when I was five years old, I had my very first pony...Elizabeth. She was the sweetest pony ever. Then, when I was seven, my grandmother gave me the best present of my life; it was my horse, Dewi. We loved to be together and I took care of him every day. He was my best friend and, before I went to school, I always made sure that he had his food, his mane brushed and his hooves cleaned. When I returned from school each day, we spent time together and I rode him and explored the fields around us; I was a pretty good rider at that age. Riding was my world and I just loved doing it, planning to be part of the Olympic team when I grew up.

It was a beautiful sunny Saturday afternoon one day and Dewi and I walked towards the middle of the show field to prepare for our routine in the Llanymynech Horse Trials, a Welsh horse show that happens every year. They pick the best rider to compete for the Horse of the Year Show in London. Dewi, as always, was in his best shape, standing proud and ready to give everyone the performance of a lifetime. I, on the other hand, started to feel butterflies in my stomach. My heart was pounding so loudly that I had a hard time hearing the commentator and my hands were also shaking. I felt very afraid and exposed, having doubts that I would be able to perform well at all. The music began and Dewi, on cue, stood proudly and then started to walk, a slow walk, just as we did at every practice. I tried to feel better and to remember every step that we had rehearsed. Three steps on the right, three steps on the left, jump, and stand then on and on we go. Whilst performing our routine, I then felt a great deal better, gradually relaxing and beginning to enjoy our performance. Dewi managed to move and sway; indeed, everything was going the way it should and as I hoped it would.

Then, In the middle of our routine, I mistakenly pulled Dewi's rein a little too tight and he started to gallop. He ran faster and faster, circling the arena. I panicked, totally forgetting to do what I had to do. I looked into the crowd, hoping that someone - my coach, my mentors, my teammates - would help me but it seemed there was no one to aid me. Frustrated, I started to cry, as I did not know what to do or even how to go on from there. Dewi just continued to gallop, faster and faster and I felt the wind blowing strong on my face. Going stronger and faster, my body felt very light; just like a bird and I saw people as though they were whizzing by in the arena, even those at the back row. I felt a strong pull; gravity was pulling me down and I realised that my face was getting closer, and closer to the greseacround, until, wham! Falling from Dewi's back

like a rag-doll, I hit my face on the ground. I saw stars floating in front of my eyes, my arms hurt, my shoulder seemed disconnected from my body and I felt as though someone had rearranged my legs, arms, and shoulder. The last thing that I could remember was the face of my mother, in shock.

Darkness took over.

I tried to open my eyes and adjust to the light but I felt sore. My back hurt, my shoulder hurt, in fact, everything hurt. I attempted to survey my surroundings and I realised that I was certainly not in my own room. I saw my mother and, although she was smiling, I saw a mixture of sadness and happiness as well as looks of worry and tiredness.

She came closer to me and said,

“Bore da Cariad, how do you feel?”

“I am sore Mother, I said “but better.”

My mother smiled a sad smile. My intuition was telling me that she was hiding something. I knew she wanted to tell me something but she could not and she slowly looked into the direction of my left leg. Realisation slowly dawned on me as all areas of my body hurt, as though someone had been using me as a punch bag. I could not even feel my left leg and I felt fear, afraid that my left leg had gone. What if the doctors have amputated it?! I had so many ‘what if’s’ running through my mind, being terrified that I would not be able to walk anymore. I saw fear in my mother’s eyes...fear, guilt, and sadness. I was afraid even to look at her. I had a lot of questions. What if my assumption was true? What if I had lost my leg? What if I could not walk or run? Or worse, what if I could not ride again? Who would ride Dewi? Indeed, how was Dewi? Was he all right? All these questions flooded into my mind. I needed to know and I needed to look; to see if

I really had lost my left leg. I tried to slowly turn my head and, taking a deep breath, I closed my eyes, gathering all my energy before slowly opening my eyes. I was holding my breath as I looked, checking my leg. Was it still there? Yes! It was but it was covered with a metal brace. I could neither move it nor feel it. What was happening to me? I started to cry because all my fears seemed to be coming true about not being able to walk, run or dance again. Worse still, I would not be able to ride my horse ever again. I cried and cried. I could not believe this was happening to me. I wailed in self-pity. Why me? Why was this happening to me? Why was it always me? I was devastated. My mother also cried with me, hugging me and squeezing me tight. It was the worst day of my life.

I stayed in the hospital for a long time and while I was there, I met Dr. Chupati who was one of those old doctors who talked a lot. He always came into my room with a big smile and asked me how my day was. At first, I did not want to engage him at all in conversation. My world was over...I could not walk. Why was he so happy? Was he somehow mocking me for not being able to walk? Was he a heartless doctor? I heard that some doctors were like that. Then, one day he came in and looked me in the eye and said. " Now young lady, you have cried enough, wailed enough, and have been sombre and depressed enough; now it is time for you to move on."

I was so shocked, how could this person be talking to me like this. Who was he? He did not know how much I suffered or how I felt. How dare he talked to me like this! I was very upset with him. I told my mother about his rudeness and how completely indifferent he seemed to be about my condition. One time, stooping down to my eye level, he told me that I could do better...even that perhaps I would be able ride again.

At first, I was very excited but then that initial excitement fizzled away. What if he was only just mocking me, making me feel better and then laughing at me if I could not do it? Was he perhaps just being nice because it was his job to be nice? What if he was being kind because he just felt sorry for me? I just didn't know if I could trust him. I could not do that to myself. I could not just give in. However, Dr. Chupati was nothing if not a persistent doctor! He told me that every time he came to my room, I needed to make a list of things that I was grateful for and to smile at everyone who came into my room. Of course, knowing myself as I did, these were things I could not do straight away. Why should I? I was not ready, feeling that I needed to protect myself from more devastation. I knew people would laugh at me as I had scars all over my body, together with a leg that could not walk; I just could not be that forgiving.

Dr. Chupati, true to his word, came to my room with a pen and paper and, handing it to me, said, "Write down all those things for which you are thankful and you can start with this. " I am thankful for the air that I breathe!" Now write down another four things and I am not leaving until you do so."

I looked at him in shock and gave him my most evil look but I still did what he asked me and I wrote:

1. I am thankful for the air that I breathe
2. I am thankful for the food that I eat (even if it was not particularly tasty!)
3. I am thankful for the nurses who help me.
4. I am thankful for my bed.
5. I am thankful for water.

After writing these, I handed him the paper and even gave him a smile. He smiled back and said, "it's a start."

Every day we had to do this. He came into my room, asked me to write, not repeating what I had written. I found that I began to actually like Dr. Chupati. He was a good doctor and he asked me about things that I like, things that I enjoyed when I was in school, people that I loved. He became a good friend and, developing a bond with him, I enjoyed my days with him, being always ready to write my 'thank you's'. Until the time came that I had to go home. It was a sad time but it was all right as well. I needed to recover at home and to wear my cast for six months. It became one of the longest periods of my life. I wanted to do so many things but, obviously, I was not able. My mother tried different activities to entertain me but it could not take away the thought that I was not going to ride again. The days were getting longer, the hours were stretching out. I did not know what to do.

One day, when I was sulking, sad and desperate in my room, I heard my mother knocking at the door. I did not feel ready for conversation but mothers are always mothers and in she came...but she was not alone. I had a visitor. It was Dr. Chupati. When I saw him it lightened up my whole day. I was so happy to see him as he was a symbol of hope for me and I knew that he was actually trying everything he could to help me. He came into my room and asked me how everything was. I told him all the things that I wanted to tell him but, even as I was telling him my story, I was feeling sad as I knew I could not do all the things I wanted to anymore. However, I was proud to tell him that I was still writing the 'thank you' list. He told me that in a few days my cast was coming off and I was to have physical therapy. That news gave me hope. I could at least walk again and, perhaps, ride again. The day that my cast came off, I remember

that my heart was pounding...this was it! I could use my leg again. However, little did I know then that that day was to be one of my greatest mysteries?

In one of the many rooms in the hospital, I met Miss Jones. She was my physical therapist and on that special day, we started to work on my left leg. I was not looking forward to this meeting. I wanted to ask her if she knew whether my leg was useable anymore. Dr. Chupati came in then and explained to me what was needed to be done. He said that, since I was thankful for all the things around me, my body was now actually strong enough for me to walk again. Mother was there and I saw her happy smiling. She was so hopeful and encouraging, giving me the strength that I could really do everything again. As Dr. Chupati was there, as well as my mother, I had the courage to try. I looked at Miss Jones, and, taking a deep breath, I hoped that, truly, this day was to be a brand new start. That day I also met Ms. Philips who was my Occupational Therapist and, together with the doctor, she helped me. Day in and day out we worked. We worked hard so I could eventually move my left leg again. There were days when I felt like I could not do it anymore but Dr. Chupati was always there, encouraging me and believing in me, He even thought that I could perhaps ride again. He really believed in me. I did all the exercises they gave me, sometimes with tears in my eyes, because it was so very painful. It was not at all easy and my body suffered but, because I knew all those people believed in me...my mother, Ms. Jones and Ms. Philips (and of course the big driving force of Dr. Chupati) I knew I could do it, even though I knew the journey was going to be long. Dr. Chupati asked my mother to bring Dewi to stand outside my window so I could imagine myself riding him again.

So, it was a sunny Saturday afternoon when eventually I did sit in Dewi's saddle and I looked out into the fields. I felt the wind caressing my cheeks, my heart was pounding and the sun

giving me some sunny kisses. I looked around to see my mother, Ms. Jones and Ms. Philips with wide smiles and I suddenly felt very excited. Dr. Chupati too was smiling and nodding and giving me the encouragement that I needed. I gave Dewi a little kick and then the music started. This was my debut after my legendary fall and I felt Dewi's heart synchronising with mine as we moved in unison together. We finished our routine with a few small mistakes but what was more important to me was that I could see that people were there for me in times of weakness; especially Dr. Chupati who had stood by me and had not given up on me, even when I was being so difficult. I trusted him because of that belief he showed in me and I gained his respect because he gained mine. It was a long road to take and it certainly was not easy but it was really worth everything. I was back in the Special Olympics and I won my first prize!

My leg was not the same as it used to be before as, after they took the cast off, I could not walk completely normally. The bones in both legs were not the same length so that, when I walk now, I have to limp as my left foot, having been dislocated, only has limited movement. Although I am sad about that, I know that, because of my accident, I won friendship and trust from the people who did not give up on me.

Now I can record my last 'thank you' before I sign off.

1. I am thankful for my mother for giving me her unconditional love.
2. I am thankful for Miss Jones for believing in me, even if I gave her a lot to work to do.
3. I am thankful for Miss Philips who, even when I cried hard, wiped away my tears and gave me strength again.

4. I am thankful for everyone around me who never stop loving me, believing in me, and taking care of me; my teachers, friends, classmates and, of course Dewi my beloved horse, for always being there for me.

5. I am thankful for Dr. Chupati, who believed in me, even when I did not believe in myself and for never giving up on me, even when I had myself and for his taking care of me.

I love you all. I would not be here where I am now if not for you. “Diolch yn fawr iawn ac dw’yn caru ch’in gyd.” Thank you so much and I love you all.

NK’s curative story for Jonah

Jonah had just turned 10 years old when he was admitted to Beaver Run. When I wrote the curative story he had turned 14 years old, now he is almost 15. He was in a wheelchair since early age, now he does not need it anymore. Jonah was diagnosed with IVH (bleeding in the brain due to premature labor). He is on medication for seizures, ADHD, and behavior. He had a lot and still has self-injury behaviors. Jonah loves social settings. He enjoys watching and reading Thomas and SpongeBob which he watches a lot when he is at home. The biggest struggle for Jonah has is being away from his mother which is due to him being residential in the school. His temper tantrums mostly start with him expressing that he misses his mother. Goal addressed in the curative story: To build a healthier relationship to his mother.

In a village deep in Africa, there lived a young boy called Tselane. Tselane lived with his mother and sister. His father worked far away. Tselane's village was on an open field that was not far from a jungle where a lot of wild animals of all sorts lived. Tselane's favorite activity was

to push his cart and go to the nearby forest to collect the fallen tree branches for fire making. Early in the morning, Tselane and his sister would go and find sticks and firewood and would enjoy watching animals that are looking for food and drink in the morning. Tselane and his sister would copy the sounds of the animals. Tselane's favorite sound was the roaring of the lion which he heard once when he went with his father in the deeper forest. Tselane roared so loud, "ROAR," and scared all the animals they saw. "I am as strong as the lion." Tselane would say. The other thing that Tselane loved was to sing. He would sing and dance for his mother and sister. He sang songs about the animals and bravery. He made his family happy with his singing and dancing.

Tselane grew into a fine strong boy. One day, the time came when Tselane had to prepare to go away from home and learn how to become a big boy and eventually, a young man. Tselane had to go to a school far away – away from his mother and sister. When the day for the travel came, Tselane cried a lot for fear of missing his sister and his mother. He feared he would miss his village and all the wild animals around it. Tselane's mother and sister brought him to the train station and, for the first time, Tselane saw a train. He had never seen something so big in his life. Tselane went on the train with his small luggage. His mother and sister waved goodbye, to Tselane. With the goodbyes, all of them were crying.

On the journey, which was long, Tselane saw animals running alongside the train as if they were saying goodbye to him. He even saw few lions. This all made Tselane sadder. He cried even more. Tselane listened to the sound of the train. He liked the sound. It somehow soothed him. The train sound was like a 'tshuku-tschuku' song in Tselani's ears. Tselane grew to like the journey and wished it did not end. He looked out the window and made

animal sounds and his favorite sound, the 'ROAR'.

After a long ride, Tselane arrived at his destination. His teacher was waiting to receive him. They went on a wagon dragged by a horse. Tselane enjoyed the ride to his new school. The ride to the school was a short one. This made Tselane feel that he is connected to his Mother and sister through the train track that the train traveled on. When they got to the school, Tselane met many other children of his age. Tselane's teacher asked a boy called Ncedo to show Tselane around the school. Ncedo was a very shy but willing boy. Tselane and Ncedo got along well. Soon Tselane learned that Ncedo was scared of the dark. This is why Ncedo was sometimes not happy during the evenings.

One day, when Tselane's class was going for a walk in the nearby forest, both Tselane and Ncedo got lost because of how much they were wandering around. It was late afternoon. They went in circles in the forest and eventually realized they could not find their way out. Soon it got dark and Ncedo started crying. At first Tselane did not know how to help Ncedo until he remembered how he overcame his fear of the jungle back at home. Tselane taught Ncedo how to make animal sounds and roar like a lion.

They sat down and practiced together. It was the first time that Ncedo had fun in the dark. He felt his fear of the darkness leaving him.

They still had to find their way out of the forest. While sitting and thinking, Tselane remembered the train rail that connects him to his mother and sister. He started making a train sound, "Tshuku tshuku tshuku...". He explained to Ncedo that they could find their way to the train station by listening to the sound of the train and from there, find their way back to the school. Rightly so, they soon heard the sound of the train. It was the last train ride that day. They

followed the sound until they got to the train station. From the station, they knew how to get back to the school.

Everyone was so happy to see them. Ncedo told all his classmates how Tselane found the way back to the school. Everyone wanted to talk to Tselane and to learn how to make the animal sounds.

From that day on, Ncedo was not scared of the darkness and Tselane, on the other hand, was happy to be at school. Tselane and Ncedo had become good

friends. Whenever Tselane missed his mother and Sister he went for a walk and knew that they also saw the same sky and, when he would hear the train, he knew that he was connected by the long railway. Now Tselane was proud to be the strong young boy that his mother would be proud to have. He Knew that he had a lot to learn but he was very happy with what he learnt so far. Tselane had learned the great joy of helping others which in turn made him happy.

NG's curative story to Leo

Leo is 15 years old. He was 13 when the curative story was written. Leo has a strong memory of the daily details and routine and in a way is not able to forget. He has the tendency to say “no” for everything, almost as a compulsive habit. Leo can be very “dramatic” at times and get angry and physically aggressive. He has a great sense of justice and a genuine wish to help and contribute to his community. Leo is non-verbal. His receptive communication is more developed than the expressive.

Goal addressed in the curative story: To say ‘yes’ to who he is and to his destiny.

The Golden Key

Once upon a time, in a far land there lived a king. The king had three sons who dearly loved their father and wished to become the rulers of their land after him. The three sons were very different from each other. Each one of them received a different gift from the heavens. The first son was tall and strong and could protect his father from every enemy. The second son was very smart and could help his father to solve all problems. The third son was very kind and loved to help all the people around him.

One day, the king turned very sick and could no longer rule his land. The three sons gathered around their father's bed asking "Father, who is going to be the next ruler of our land? Who is going to be the king?"

"What will you do for my kingdom after I die?" Asked the king. "I will train all the people to be warriors." Said the first. "When I'll be the king, my people will be the strongest of all and no other country will win any war against us."

"When I'll be the king", Said the second son, "I will train the people to be the most sophisticated and smartest of all. We will have the most brilliant ideas and strategies that no other country will dream of. We will win all the wars."

"If I will be the king I will make sure that the people in our country are happy." Said the third son. "I will help them and teach them to help each other so there will be no illness and poverty."

"Happy?" Asked the two older sons. "That must be a joke! This will not help to protect our kingdom! We are in danger of wars and might lose all we have! And you want the people to be happy? You do not deserve to be the king!"

The youngest son looked sadly in his father's eyes. He knew that he is not meant to be the king. He wasn't strong or smart enough to rule the country and win the wars. At that moment he felt he not longer belonged to the royal family. "If I have nothing to offer to our kingdom", he said, "I Don't belong in the palace any more. I am sorry I have failed you father". He went to his father's bed, kissed him for the last time and left the palace.

The king died soon after and the second son was chosen to lead the kingdom to victory. The youngest son, was no longer part of the family. He lived in a small village where no one knew he was the old king's son. Since he didn't want anyone to discover his secret, he didn't speak with anyone and didn't have any friends. Months passed, and the king's son grew very lonely and sad. He didn't feel that the village was his home but also knew he could never come back to the palace. He thought of his beloved father and brothers and their disappointment in him since he could not lead the people to victory.

One day, as he was alone in his small house, he heard a knock on his door. The young son had never invited anyone to his house nor had any unexpected visitors. Therefore, he thought it was his imagination or perhaps a bird or the wind. But then the knock repeated itself for the second time. The young man slowly reached the door and opened a small crack. It was a young woman. In her hands she had a small box. "I am traveling from village to village, trying to sell my mother's old treasures. She is very sick and we need the money to buy her new remedies. Would you be interested in anything?" The young man looked in the box from the distance. "I don't think I need anything from you, young lady. I have all I need" Said the young son. The woman looked at him and said: "I have something for you!" With her hand she reached into the box and got out an old rusty key, attached to an old rusty chain. She wrapped the chain with the key

around the son's neck. "This is my gift to you." She said with a smile and left. The young son looked at the woman for a few moments. When she disappeared into the distance he entered, once more, his house.

The following day, on his way to the market, the young son saw a crowd of people gathering on the main path. He approached quietly to see what had happened. In the middle of the path there lay a big tree trunk. "We are in despair!" Said one of the villagers, "The tree fell in the storm last night and now it's blocking our way. We are not able to leave the village and sell our wares. If we are not able to move it soon we won't get to the market today and won't have food for our families". All the men in the village gathered to lift the tree but the tree was so heavy and big that any effort was to no avail. The tree didn't move. "Will you help us, young man?" they asked.

"I wish I could help you", said the young son, "But I am not strong at all.

Suddenly, the young man felt that something strange was happening to him. He felt a growing warmth around his chest. Since he didn't recognize this feeling, he reached in his hand and touched his chest. It was the old rusty key. The key got warmer and warmer until the young son's chest was burning hot as if the sun rays reached him from the sky.

He looked at the people and walked towards the tree trunk. He stood in front of the tree and without a doubt held the trunk with his arms. He held the tree tight with his hands. The trunk was heavy and rough but in one trail he lifted the tree up from the ground. He walked with the tree trunk a few steps and put it down on the side of the path. The villagers looked at him in astonishment, cheered and clapped their hands. "Who are you young man?" They asked. "I am a villager, like you", Said the young son. And as the crowd was busy with the special event, he

quickly disappeared and walked away. On his way back to his house, he thought of what had happened that day. He touched the old rusty key. It wasn't warm any more and as he touched it the key started to crumble in his hands. He quickly moved away his hand from the key and it stopped crumbling.

The next morning, the young son was again on his way to the market. As he arrived to the bridge he saw a large gathering of people. He approached to see what had happened "The bridge is completely broken" Said one of the villagers. "And we must cross the river today in order to get to the market. If we can't sell our wares today we won't have enough food for the rest of the week! Will you help us, young man?"

"I wish I could help you", said the young son, "But I don't know how to fix a bridge".

Suddenly, the young son felt the growing warmth around his chest. He knew this time it was the old rusty key. The warmth grew stronger and stronger and filled his whole body with sun rays and light. "Please go and get long branches!" Said the young son without a doubt. The people were in such despair and since no one had any other idea they all went and collected branches.

As they brought the branches to the young son he started to weave them lengthwise and crosswise. He wove each branch until they were all strongly bound to each other. The young son laid the branches on the broken bridge and was the first one to walk on it. The branches stayed strong and each person crossed the river without any fear. The people cheered and clapped their hands. "Who are you, young man?", they asked. "I am a villager, like you" He said. And as the villagers crossed the bridge, the young son disappeared in the distance. As he was walking back to his house, the young son thought of what had happened at the river bank. He touched the old rusty key and this time the key crumbled like sand between his fingers until it was completely

gone. The young son knew it was a magical key and that through the magic he could lift the tree and fix the bridge. Now that the key was gone he was sad. He knew he would not be able to help the other villagers any more. He went back to his quiet house feeling sad and lonely.

On the following morning, on his way to the market, the young son saw a crowd of people gathering. The crowd was so full he could barely reach to the center and see what had happened. When he reached to the front he saw that the path was full of sheep. Hundreds and hundreds of them, grazing and blocking the way to the market. “Last night, during the big storm, the gate got broken” Said one of the villagers. “the sheep got out of the field and now they won’t move back. We are trying for hours to get them all back to the field but they won’t listen to us. Will you help us, young man?”

“I wish I could help you”, Said the young son, “But why would they listen to me? I am not a shepherd.”

At that moment, the young son felt the same strange feeling around his chest. It was the warmth he had experienced before but this time the key was no longer there. He touched his chest and felt the warmth growing and growing. It was stronger than all times before and this time his whole body was filled with warmth and light. Without a doubt, the young son whistled so loudly that everyone stopped. The people stopped talking and no one moved. They all looked at him with great curiosity. The young son started walking towards the field. He walked slowly with great confidence and with his head up right. As he was standing in the middle of the field, a sheep came to him and grazed around his feet. A moment later another sheep came and grazed right next to him. The moment after the third one came and the fourth and fifth. Slowly, more and more sheep joined the young son in the field. From twenty it grew to fifty, to a hundred, to

three hundred to five hundred sheep. The young son was standing in the middle of the field as all the sheep were circling him, grazing in peace. The young man crossed the field towards the path, locked the broken gate and got back on the path. The crowd was speechless. No one had ever seen such a sight before. They all looked at the young man without saying a word. “Who are you?” Asked one of the villagers, breaking the silence. “I am a villager like you”, said the young son. “That is not the truth!” a voice shouted from the distance. At that moment, everyone turned their eyes towards that voice. It was the young woman who gave the king’s son the old rusty key. “He is the king’s son! He is our true king!” The crowd was astonished. “Is that true?” Asked the people. “My father was the great king” said the young son. “But I am not a king. I have failed my father and brothers and don’t belong to the royal family any longer.” At that moment, the entire crowd bowed to the young son. Even the children and the elders, all kneeled in front of him. “Hooray to our new king! Hooray to our true king!” they cried.

That night there was a big celebration in the village. Everyone brought their best meals and they all had a great feast with music and dancing. They danced all night and as the sun started rising they all walked together to the king’s palace. The young son walked at the front with the entire village accompanying him with great respect. “That is our true king!” Said the villagers as they reached the gate of the palace. “Only a true king has the strength, the wisdom and the kindness as the young king’s son!” The second son who was the chosen king didn’t understand what was happening outside his palace. He demanded the villagers to leave but they refused. Suddenly, a great crowd of people started walking towards the palace. There were thousands and thousands of people from the neighboring villages who had heard about the events and wanted the truth to come to light. More and more people came and all stood behind the young king’s son and cried

for justice. The second son, who saw the event, opened the gate and the young son entered the palace. “They want you to be their king” Said the second son to his brother. “You are a true king!”. The youngest son received the crown from his brother and became the new king of his father’s land. The people in the land were merry and happy and never knew any wars until this day.

NJ’s curative story to Peter

Peter had a typical development until he was 5. He told his mother that he did not want to grow up that is when he started to regress. Peter was firstly diagnosed as autistic, but was later on diagnosed as having Landau Kleffner syndrome. This syndrome is similar to autism, but it usually appears later than autism, usually between three and seven years old. Now, as a 16 year old young man, he is still very much like a child. he is soft, gentle, and enjoy others to serve him instead of doing the work himself. Though Peter can speak, his speech is very limited. His expressive and receptive language is very poor. Peter really enjoys music, he sings quite well. Goal addressed in the curative story: To have interest in the world, to want to do work and take hold of his own life.

Tony’s secret spot

Right next to the sea, there is a small town. People living in that town are so lucky, for they have the most beautiful coast in the county. There are cliffs and reefs on the north side, beaches with soft and smooth sand on the south, and clear ocean water all along the coast. People in the town enjoy swimming, fishing, surfing, and sailing; all these water activities. Moreover, there are

many nice species of fishes in the area. You can easily see some swimming around at the shallow places when there is good sunlight.

Tony is one of such lucky boys living in this town. Among all the children in the town, he is fond of the coast the most. As early as kindergarten age, he went to the coast by himself all the time.

For he would rather go and talk with the fishes than to draw pictures in the kindergarten.

Tony has a secret spot at the coast that only he knows. It is right at the corner of the bay, behind some big rocks, under a cliff that sticks out over the water. It is hidden behind the thick plants which grow in that area. It is not very big, but big enough for Tony to play around. He likes to sit in the water and put his head under the water, to see the fishes swim around through his goggles.

And his favorite game is to catch fish with his hands. These small and colorful slippery fish are very quick and smart. It is very difficult to catch them. Tony only had a few successful catches, but he always put the fish back in the water immediately, for they are his dear friends.

Now Tony is a third grade student in the town school. He doesn't like school at all. All the writing and reading are too boring, and sports are too tiring. Math is fine, since he prefers counting to other work. The only thing he likes is music. He has learned a lot of songs in music class. And he likes to sing them to the fishes. But starting from third grade, everyone is required to learn how to play flute. That is not great for Tony, for he doesn't like practice and work. To be able to play songs with the flute, means a lot of practice and work. So, like other classes, when there is practicing the flute, Tony will skip the class and run to his secret spot to get some peace. Tony's Mom doesn't know what to do. She loves Tony so much that she doesn't want to push him to do what he doesn't like. But Tony escapes to his secret spot more and more often, for there is more and more work to do in his life as he grows up.

One day, Tony's teacher Michael announced some news: their school joined a musical competition with the reward of building a music hall. Each school will have one candidate to play a song with an instrument. But the candidate would not be selected by the teachers, but be drawn out from a lottery. So, every student has the possibility to be picked. All the students were very excited, even Tony, for he likes music and songs. With the music hall, he could enjoy many musical performances.

One week later, the drawing result came out. To everyone's surprise, it was Tony who was picked! How come? All the students were very disappointed, for everyone knew that Tony did not practice his flute at all. But Tony was the one who felt most miserable. He never expect that he would be responsible for the building of the music hall. When he heard the news, he ran fast to his secret spot, and cried for a long time. He wanted to stay at his place forever. But as the sun set in the west and the day was getting darker, his tummy started to make sounds. Poor Tony he was hungry. He misses the pizza his Mom makes, so he went back home eventually, back to that world full of hard work.

Michael appeared at Tony's home that evening. He offered to teach Tony how to play the flute, but only if he wants to. Michael left the house with a deep look, full of trust, right into Tony's heart, and a warm smile, full of love and care. Tony did not sleep well that night.

The next morning, Tony went directly to his spot and talked with his fish friends. He did not know what to do; to learn and practice the flute, or just to give up hope for the music hall. In the end, he chose to let the fishes tell him. He said to himself, if I can catch a fish before lunch time, I will practice the flute and join the competition. So he sat down in the water, put his goggles on, and started catching. To his surprise, the first try went like a miracle, he got a small red fish in

his hands. Tony could not believe his eyes. He stared at that fish, and a smile appeared on his face.

Tony quickly ran to school and told Michael that he wanted to join the competition. Michael was very happy and gave Tony his first lesson in the afternoon. Next, come the practice time.

C,D,E,F,G,A,B,C, again and again. This is so boring. But Tony for the first time in his life, did not run away to his secret spot, but kept practicing. His Mom was so happy to see that, she cooked a delicious supper for Tony.

Tony practiced everyday for a long time. After he was good at the basic tones, Michael started to teach him to play songs. That was much harder than the basic practice. Tony practiced the song for half a day, but still couldn't get it right.

"I'm not going to do it anymore. I can never learn it and it is boring!" He threw the flute on the floor and ran to his secret spot.

After a long time, when Tony found back his peace, as well as his appetite, he went back home. Michael was already there waiting for him. Tony did not want to look into Michael's eyes, for he felt ashamed. But Michael took him in the car and drove to his favorite restaurant. Knowing Tony was very hungry, Michael ordered two cheese burgers for him, that's his favorite.

After the meal, Michael told Tony that he would like to take him to a special place. Tony likes special places, and he wondered if this place would be a place like his secret spot. So, they went back to the car and drove along the river for a long time. Finally, Michael stopped. Tony did not find anything special at that place. While Michael led him to the side of the river. Then, he saw there were so many salmon swimming upstream in the river. There were many steps in the river that they have to jump over it. They tried and tried, so many times, and there were already so

many who died on the way. But they never stopped trying. They swayed gently before the step for a while, as if they were gathering the energy and preparing themselves. Then, suddenly, they used all their forces to jump over the step. The succeeded ones kept going upward to face the next step. The failed ones kept trying until they can jump over.

Tony was amazed by these salmon. He looked at them full of respect and admiration. Then, he heard a firm voice in his heart: I will try again!

Tony started to practice the flute again. As time passes, he is getting skillful and can play by heart any song he would like to play. The competition is approaching. Tony chose a song about the salmon. It is beautiful but difficult to play. Tony practiced everyday when he had time.

Before the competition, Tony went to his secret spot to see his friends. He had not been there for a long time, since he started the intense practice after he came back from the river trip. This spot now looked a bit small, but still soothing for him to be there. He spent a good time there, and went back with a light heart.

With perfect performance, Tony won the prize of the competition! The whole school was thrilled. Everyone came to thank Tony for his great contribution. But Tony knew that the credit belonged to Michael and the salmon too.

Now, Tony does not go to his secret spot so often anymore, for he has so much to do in the music hall. He is now the lead flute player of the school orchestra. Going to different performances and rehearsals every week. He also started to study reading and writing diligently, for he wants to read many books about fish and sea animals, and to write a book about his friends from his secret spot.

When Tony is busy with his new life, his fish friends are happily swimming in his secret spot. And once in a while, you can see a small red fish jump out of the water, sparkling against the sun, like a smile above the blue sea.

AM's curative story to Marco

Marco is a 14 years old boy , going to 8th grade next year. He was 13 when I wrote the story for him. He was always anxious and alert. He is always very aware of what was happening around him.. He was adopted in Russia when he was two years old. Marco is verbal , but has difficulties with receptive language.

Goal addressed in the curative story: To grow up and have sense of responsibility; to become a teenager that wants to work, to help others, and to become part of the world; to know what love is.

Basa, the boy who works.

In South Africa, most people live on small farms in the countryside. They grow their own food, and rear animals for milk and meat. Sometimes they use fur from their animals to make clothes and blankets. There are no large supermarkets in the countryside. Only small stores called tuck shops selling essentials such as matches, needles and kerosene oil for lamps can be found here and there and sometimes people have to walk long distances to find one.

There was once a boy who grew up on such a farm in South Africa. Basa was his name. He enjoyed working on the farm and dreamed of becoming a farmer one day. From the way he looked, one wouldn't have thought him strong. He did not have big muscular hands like his father. He was tall and lanky. He wore a pair of tattered overalls with as many patches as a soccer ball, and a huge pair of rubber boots, three sizes bigger than his feet, which made him look like a clown.

However, despite his slender built, Basa was very strong. Whatever he lacked in structure, he had in will and determination. He always carried with him a huge tools box which contained all different kinds of tools. Spanners, hammers, screws and screwdrivers were all to be found there. He would follow his father around all day and, sometimes he would be found bogged down in the mud helping fix a broken fence. These were the best moments of his childhood.

Basa was known for his curiosity. He always sought to know more about the world around him. He would ask why his teacher Mrs. Melo had told him the earth was round when it appeared flat everywhere he goes. "Who would live on the earth's edges?" He would ask. "Won't they fall off?" "Where does the sun go after sunset?" In South Africa however, it is considered wise for a young person to ask the adults about anything they might want to know. They say, a child that does not cry will suffer from hunger on its mothers back. Yes, people in Africa carry their children on their backs! They don't use pushchairs or perambulators. That said, the adults, because they would have had all kinds of experiences growing up, or perhaps they themselves asked the same questions when they were still young, will always know the answers. It is therefore important for young people to take their advice.

One day, as he was helping his father plough the corn field, he asked him “ Papa why do we work?” His father paused, took out a grey handkerchief from his pocket and wiped the sweat dripping off his face and said “ You see, work is what we do when we want to get things done”. “ It has to be meaningful..and we do it for ourselves and others”. He continued, “ Most of the tasks we do do-not only benefit us but those around us as well”. “You and I are working in the fields right now but we are not going to eat all the corn all by ourselves” “Your mother, your uncles and their families will also do”. In the same way, your mother is preparing a warm meal for us to eat after work today. We are all working for our own benefit but most importantly, for the benefit of others. No human being is capable of doing everything by themselves”, he reminded him “ But since we are all good at different things, we can all count on each other to get things done”.

In his household, Basa was the only child. Nevertheless, he had so many cousins. In Africa, there is no word for cousin. People call their cousins brothers and sisters. Therefore, although he was the only child in his household, he had so many brothers and sisters around him growing up. As a result of his hard work and honesty, they all came to love him dearly. On the farm, Basa planted a few apple trees which he took care of with all his heart. The trees bore large fleshy apples which everyone liked to munch on. Each time he visited his family and friends, he would bring them a bag of apples. He was a lovely chap indeed.

On the eve on his fourteenth birthday, Basa's father told him he would be spending the summer with his aunt and uncle in the city, in Cape Town. He was so excited. He had never been in a big city before. The city was on the other side of the country, thousands of miles away. It usually took a couple of days by bus to get there. However, his father had surprised him again. “Eh, you

see Basa it's a long drive to your aunt's", he had said clearing his throat. "Your aunt doesn't want you sitting on this long journey all alone so she got you some tickets" he said. "Tickets?" he had asked. He didn't mind being alone on the bus ride. "Tickets yes" said his father. "I guess you will be flying!". For a brief moment Basa was speechless. For him, being in the city for the first time was unbelievable, going on that long journey, on the bus and seeing all the beautiful views was just unimaginable but flying on an airplane was from out of this world.

Basa wondered what it would be like flying on an airplane. His friend Muti had been on an airplane before. He had told Basa of his experiences flying. However Muti could not be trusted. He had a habit of exaggerating things and sometimes even make up stories. He had once told Basa that when flying on an airplane you could actually stick your hand out of the window and touch the sky! Basa's father, although he had never been on an airplane told him this could not be true. When Muti heard that Basa would be flying, he was at pains trying to re-tell his stories for he knew his friend would soon find out. Basa however, would not take any of it! Muti soon realized that it was not good to exaggerate stories for when you tell untruths all the time, people will have a hard time believing you when you tell the truth, just like the boy who cried wolf.

On the night before his flight, Basa couldn't sleep. "Tomorrow, he thought for the thousandth time, "I will be flying high up in the sky". He imagined flying through the clouds, higher than the soaring eagles. He also imagined looking out of the window to see vast expanses of land and sea down below. Nothing would obstruct his view now, not even the towering mountains that always seem to touch the sky on the horizon. He would be above them all now. He felt invincible. With that thought, he closed his eyes and faded off to sleep.

Basa had to wake up early to catch the bus that would take him to the airport. The airport was in a city about 3 hours away. At the airport he was impressed by how nice everyone seemed. The hostesses were nicely dressed, in uniforms, and smiled from ear to ear. They all seemed perpetually happy. What was even more impressive is how beautiful the inside of the plane was. He had a window seat. The plane took off. At first he was scared that he held on to his seat. He imagined what would happen if anything should go wrong with the plane. After a while, he remembered his mother's words. "Don't worry about things that have not happened yet. Cross the river when you get there". He immediately knew everything would be all right and enjoyed the rest of his journey. Everything was just as he imagined. Vast expanses of green, the barren fields waiting for crops to be planted on them and rivers and lakes. It was breathtaking. He arrived safely and his uncle and aunt were at the airport to receive him.

Life in the city was different from that at the farm. While he took responsibility for plants and animals at the farm, he soon realized he had to take on a different kind of responsibility in the city. Unlike the farm where he had only one pair of overalls which he wore every day and didn't bother washing, and never made his bed, he had to do his laundry as often as he could and always make his bed in the morning. He also had to brush his teeth after every meal and comb his hair. "It is part of growing up!", his uncle would say. "You have got to take care of yourself before you can take care of others". "Soon you will be running the farm all by yourself, and to be a good farmer you have to be healthy and fit for work. Taking care of yourself keeps you healthy.

Basa's uncle worked for a construction company. He would watch him everyday coming back home after work, tired as he may be, doing chores in the household. He would split fire wood for

the fireplace, or water the plants in the garden. “ Workmen live normal lives too!” he thought to himself. At first, life at Basa's aunt and uncle was not easy. It was not what he was used to. He had to learn new things and a new way of life. Unlike at the farm where he would just take whatever was his share and eat and walk at the same time, he had to learn table manners, to sit at the table quietly and patiently, say grace and then eat. He had to learn to take his boots and coat off when he came inside the house. He also had to learn not to talk to strangers. Basa soon realized that sometimes things don't go as expected or as planned, and that's alright. One just needs to learn and adjust to new situations.

When the summer was over, Basa flew back home. His uncle and aunt saw him off. His flight home was not as eventful as the first, except for the fact that the beauty he had seen on the first flight had not changed. When he arrived home, his big family were there to receive him. He couldn't wait to tell his friend Muti about his new experiences. He would tell him of how happy the hostesses at the airport seemed, how beautiful the world looked from the sky, and how he had to conquer his fears of being away from his parents. He would also tell how he had to learnt to take care of himself as a teenager.

