



Untold Story Counseling Services

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Understanding Narrative Therapy

Narrative Therapy

"You are not your problem. You are the author of a story that is still being written."

What Is Narrative Therapy?

Narrative Therapy is an evidence-based, collaborative approach to psychotherapy that helps people examine the stories they tell about themselves and their lives. These stories are shaped by our experiences, relationships, culture, and the messages we receive from others.

Sometimes painful experiences can become the dominant story we carry, leading us to see ourselves through the lens of trauma, failure, rejection, or shame. Narrative Therapy helps separate you from the problem so you can begin to recognize your strengths, values, and resilience.

Rather than asking, "What is wrong with you?" Narrative Therapy asks, "What has happened to you, and what story has grown from those experiences?"

The goal is not to erase your past but to help you develop a more balanced, compassionate, and empowering understanding of yourself.

What Can Narrative Therapy Help With?

Narrative Therapy can be helpful for many concerns, including:

- Trauma and PTSD
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Grief and loss
- Low self-esteem
- Identity exploration
- Life transitions
- Relationship difficulties
- Childhood adversity
- Chronic illness
- Family conflict
- Shame and self-criticism
- Racial, cultural, or identity-related experiences
- Recovery after abusive or controlling relationships

Your therapist will work with you to determine whether Narrative Therapy is an appropriate approach for your treatment goals.

How Does Narrative Therapy Work?

Narrative Therapy is based on the idea that people are separate from their problems.

Instead of defining yourself by a diagnosis, painful experience, or difficult season of life, therapy helps you explore how those experiences have influenced your story without allowing them to define who you are.

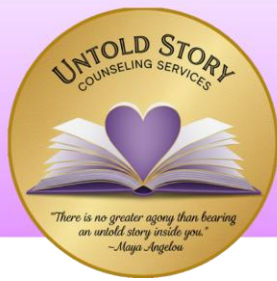
Together, you and your therapist may:

- Explore the stories you have learned about yourself
- Identify beliefs that no longer serve you
- Recognize times you have demonstrated strength, courage, or resilience
- Discover overlooked moments that challenge negative beliefs
- Develop a richer, more complete story that reflects your values and abilities

The goal is to help you see yourself as more than your struggles.

What Happens During Narrative Therapy?

Narrative Therapy is collaborative, reflective, and conversational.



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Sessions may include:

- Exploring important life experiences
- Discussing how those experiences have shaped your beliefs
- Identifying messages received from family, culture, or society
- Examining how problems have influenced your life
- Highlighting your strengths, values, and hopes
- Rewriting limiting narratives into more balanced and empowering ones

Your therapist is not the author of your story. Instead, they serve as a compassionate guide who helps you discover the story that best reflects who you truly are.

Common Narrative Therapy Practices

Depending on your goals, your therapist may incorporate activities such as:

- Externalizing the problem ("The anxiety is influencing me" rather than "I am anxious.")
- Identifying personal strengths
- Creating alternative life stories
- Exploring significant life events
- Values clarification
- Recognizing "unique outcomes," or moments when the problem did not have control
- Letter writing
- Journaling
- Examining family and cultural narratives

These practices help you build a fuller understanding of yourself and your experiences.

What Might I Experience?

As therapy progresses, you may notice:

- ✓ Greater self-compassion
- ✓ Increased confidence
- ✓ A stronger sense of identity
- ✓ Reduced shame
- ✓ More hope for the future
- ✓ Greater awareness of your strengths
- ✓ Increased ability to recognize unhelpful beliefs

Many people find they begin speaking to themselves with greater kindness and viewing difficult experiences as chapters in their story rather than the entire story itself.

Common Misconceptions

"Narrative Therapy is just talking about my past."

No.

While past experiences are important, the focus is on understanding how those experiences continue to influence your life today and how you want your story to move forward.

"Changing my story means pretending difficult things never happened."

No.

Narrative Therapy does not ignore pain or minimize trauma.

Instead, it helps you recognize that painful experiences are part of your story, but they do not define your identity or determine your future.

"My therapist will tell me who I am."

No.

Narrative Therapy is collaborative.



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Your therapist helps ask questions, notice patterns, and explore possibilities, but you remain the expert on your own life and experiences.

Is Narrative Therapy Right for Everyone?

Narrative Therapy can be especially helpful for individuals who feel defined by painful experiences, self-critical beliefs, or life circumstances.

It is often integrated with other evidence-based approaches, including:

- Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR)
- Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)
- Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT)
- Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT)
- Mindfulness-based approaches

Your therapist may combine these approaches to best support your unique goals and needs.

How You Can Prepare

To get the most from Narrative Therapy:

- Be open to exploring your life experiences with curiosity and compassion.
- Notice the stories you tell yourself throughout the week.
- Reflect on moments when you felt strong, capable, or connected.
- Consider the people, experiences, and values that have shaped who you are.
- Remember that healing often involves discovering strengths that have been present all along.

There is no "perfect" story to tell. Therapy is about creating space to understand yourself more fully.

The Goal of Narrative Therapy

The goal of Narrative Therapy is not to change who you are.

Instead, it helps you develop a more complete, compassionate, and empowering understanding of yourself by recognizing that your life is made up of many stories, not just the painful ones.

Over time, many people experience greater confidence, reduced shame, stronger self-worth, healthier relationships, and a renewed sense of hope as they begin living from a story that reflects their resilience, values, and strengths rather than their struggles alone.

Questions?

If you have questions about Narrative Therapy or whether it may be appropriate for you, please bring them to your next session. Your therapist is happy to explain the process, answer your questions, and work with you to determine the treatment approach that best supports your goals.

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Helping you become the main character in your story, not the experiences that have shaped it