



Storytelling: A Catalyst for Parents and Children to Connect
by Dr. Arlene Kaiser

I recently attended the National Storytellers Network (NSN) conference. Although I have used stories in my teaching and speaking for decades, this was my first conference presented by NSN.

Storytelling is gaining recognition as a viable means or art form in education, business, and entertainment. Stories are frequently used to motivate, explain, inspire, entertain, and teach values morals and spiritual truths.

A story needs two things: a storyteller and an audience. Both are involved in the process. The storyteller crafts the story while the audience responds to the message and creates personal meaning from the words and gestures shared.

It is beneficial to let the audience create the meaning and not be directed by the storyteller as to the important points of the story. Here is an example of a story from the past.

My dad sold newspapers as a young boy. He was street smart and had regular customers in the business district of his hometown. On occasion, the movie theatre manager invited him to view a movie free of charge. Dad really enjoyed the movies and it was a respite from his chores, school, and newspaper job. One afternoon, his buddies coaxed him to open the back door to the theatre so they could see the free movie, as well. Without thinking through the consequences he opened the door for seven of his friends. Peer pressure can be a powerful thing.

You guessed it! The manager saw them enter with my dad holding the door. Dad was immediately banished from the theatre and he never got to see a free movie again. But the worst part, according to Dad, was his regret of breaking the trust of the theatre manager. Now this event never happened to me, but the impact of hearing it left a lifetime impression on me.

Your students' parents and grandparents have powerful stories that may be lost forever if they are not shared. Sometimes an official assignment from the teacher can be the catalyst that gives them "permission" to share their story.

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