



## It's Story-Time

- Namrataa Arora Singh

"There is no agony like bearing an untold story inside of you." – Maya Angelou

The latest focus of research that is affecting many organizations today is related to developing story-telling capability in leaders to enhance their effectiveness. Being able to tell a story is an art and also a skill, which, often, is a key success ingredient for people in many professions. If you follow a story telling ritual at home, the good news is that your child may already have a head start in this area.

Many parents make stories a bedtime ritual with their children while some designate some time during the day. Some parents get the child to choose her favorite story and it might mean repeating the same story for many days till the child chooses another one. Some parents look for a new story to tell. Some rely on just audio story telling while some engage the child in visuals as well.

Stories are a great tool for facilitating the development of a child. Stories are not only able to get a child to listen and comprehend but also encourage thinking. Children are able to memorize key aspects of the story and ask questions.

Some simple steps that parents and child caregivers can take to make story telling a joyful event and to maximize the learning for a child are:

- Get access to a story repository. Sign up for a conventional library, which can provide children's books, or get access to online stories (in text format). While you can make a child listen to pre-recorded audios, listening to a story in your voice is likely to be better appreciated. Don't shy away from making up your own story sometimes too. It is a great way for you to get a message through.
- Designate a specific time during the day as 'Story Time'. This is uninterrupted time with no eating, no phone calls, no television or other interruptions.
- Allow the child to have a say in which and what kind of story he / she would like to listen to. Everyone loves choices. Children do too.
- Talk slowly and clearly. Children need to follow the words, need time for comprehension and to visualize.
- Encourage imagination. Paint the scene by using more words than might be written. Point to the pictures to enable visualization. Use facial expressions to bring out emotions.
- Make it participative. Do not hush the child when he / she laughs about something or asks a question. Encourage observation and curiosity. Ask questions about new words or what just happened. It is important to ensure that the child was able to comprehend the story and it is interesting to note what the child registered from the story.
- Have fun. Story time is not a serious time. While the message might be serious from your perspective, making it a fun experience for the child will drive the message home much faster.

Story telling is a wonderful way to get a child to pick up a language. One of the experiments we have recently started at home is to get my daughter to tell us a story every day, at bedtime. I am amazed by her imagination and how she is able to string together various events during the day, and bring out aspects she wants to communicate in the form of a story. It is a great way to encourage her to develop fluency in English too.

It's Story Time!



## Talk to Me

- Namrataa Arora Singh

With the rise in episodes of children being kidnapped, sexually abused, taking to drugs, turning anorexic etc., parents find themselves at a loss as to ways to address the situation. Before we find ourselves amidst such undesirable circumstances, it might be worth thinking about what we can do to pre-empt the situation now.

So, what do we do? In most of these situations, the answer is really simple, as it is in any relationship in the world – build a culture of communication. Yes, communication is a culture that one can nurture within a house. There are a few elements that go into building this as a culture.

The first, of course, is a no-brainer – **being present**. Are you already thinking about how hectic your work is at office and at home and how you would love to but are not able to be present for your child? Well, think again. Being present is about being able to demonstrate your intention to be there. Try making time during meals or at bedtime or in the morning. Many times, presence needs to be scheduled. Schedule it on your calendar if that is what it takes. Do you call from work or when you are traveling and make it a point to talk to your child, irrespective of your child's age? Afraid they might miss you more? Don't be. Take the risk. Your being there means more to them than your not being there for sure. At least once a day, for just a few minutes, are you able to be present for your child? If not, perhaps it might be worth a think as to what gets in the way?

The second part of building a culture of communication is to **talk**. Yes, sure, talk about yourself. Talk about your day. How was it? What did you do? What did you learn? Did something funny happen? Did you miss your child at work? Are you planning a vacation? When you talk, you are opening the door to sharing. If you expect your child to report everything that happens every day without setting the precedent by sharing some bits of your day with your child, think again. So, yes, start talking yourself first.

The third element of a culture of communication as we all know is, **listening**. It is, however, not as simple as it sounds. You might be responding in monosyllables or say 'hmm' while you are busy with your laptop or phone or newspaper and you might like to believe that you are listening. Well, not quite. Listening, many times, is also about listening to what your child is not saying. It might start with your observing their body language, drooping face or an upcoming tantrum and might mean that you need to sit down and ask your child a question. 'What happened'?

Speak words and you will get words. Ask questions and you will get answers. Keep waiting for a child to initiate a conversation and opportunities for communication will fly by, and walls will be built, which may only grow higher as time passes by. Be purposeful about building a culture of communication at home. Just start talking!