Introduction of Maria McLain Cox

Welcoming the community’s blessing.

Introduction of tonight’s topic: World Wisdoms Project’s theme for this year is “Sharing Wisdom Through Music, Story, and Art.” Not only do the various Wisdom Traditions have stories that attempt to capture and pass on their wisdom, but each and every individual on the planet is a personal storyteller. Each of us lives within and out of our own personal narrative. One of the bonds that unites us all as human family is the reality that each one of us is living out our own personal narrative for better or for worse, consciously or unconsciously. Our personal stories or narratives and their meanings and beliefs in our inner world take on an iconic or summary form as a metaphor. Tonight we are going to explore the power of and the world of metaphor.

Two contrasting life metaphors: “Life is an obstacle course.” vs “Everything is always working out for me.”

Brief Exercise. You are invited enter into and take on each metaphor as if is your own life metaphor. Then write down 4-5 adjectives that describe your life lived out from that metaphor.

“Life is an obstacle course.” Adjectives:

“Everything is always working out for me.” Adjectives:

Stories that illustrate how these metaphors functionally create ones life.
How is it that metaphors have such power? An explanation of the brain’s reticular activating system (RAS) and how it functions in everyday life with some story examples.

Maria Cox shares two metaphor stories.

Exercise and Sharing

Reflection, writing, and sharing on some common metaphors that are operational in our lives. Below are some general categories just to stimulate your thinking. Choose something that is important to your personally and write or think for 5 minutes and share in groups of 3 for 5 minutes.

METAPHOR IDEAS TO STIMULATE YOUR THINKING. Life is a competition. Life is ups and downs. Life is about winning. Life is about creating win/win experiences. Metaphors of leadership. Metaphors of marriage. Metaphors of time. Metaphors of grief. Metaphors of life stages. Metaphors of parenting. Political metaphors. National metaphors. Metaphors of illness. Metaphors of personal identity (e.g. I am a winner. I am a victim.) Metaphors of scarcity or abundance.
PART II
SPIRITUAL, RELIGIOUS, MEANING, PURPOSE METAPHORS

**Introduction and Comments about language.** Conversations about the deepest streams of human experience where we encounter, experience, merge with and are transformed by That which carries our deepest meanings and purposes also encounter the limitations of human language. Not everyone experiences and names those experiences in the same way.

World Wisdoms Project wants to move toward an inclusive conversation on these important Realities. We want everyone and their deepest experiences and the language they use to represent and communicate those deep experiences to have a seat at the World Wisdoms table.

This is simply to say that in this section about spirituality, religion, ultimate meaning and ultimate purpose we want you to use whatever language is congruent with where you now are.

**Two stories about metaphors of holiness.**

**Two stories about metaphors of God.**

The many sources of our religious, spiritual, meaning metaphors: family, friends, church, religious/spiritual authorities, teachers, school, scriptures, art, personal experiences, etc.

**EXERCISE AND SHARING.** Pick a spiritual, religious, meaning metaphor that has significance for you right now – God, church, holiness, prayer, love, belief, nature, art, relationship, service etc. etc. and write for 5 minutes using the space below. You may use the following questions to stimulate your thinking. After writing for 5 minutes, you are invited to share in a group or 3 for 5 minutes.

Are my metaphors fostering spiritual, religious, meaning evolution in my life?
Do my metaphors foster more integration of these important Elements into my daily life?

Do my metaphors create greater closeness and experience with these most important Elements in my life?

Are my spiritual, religious, meaning metaphors closed or open, accompanied or solo?

PART III

CHANGING METAPHORS

Joseph Campbell, “If you want to change the world, change the metaphor.”

**Focus on what you want to experience.** Become aware that you are not happy with the way a part of your life is being experienced. Become aware of what limiting metaphor is controlling that part of your life experience. Identify the “feeling essence” of the experience you want in that part of your life.

Develop a new metaphor (may have visual, auditory, and kinesthetic elements) that captures the “feeling essence” of what you want to experience in a way that is positively compelling and motivating and therefore instructs the RAS to sort for those experiences.
Use Maria’s metaphor changes to explore this process of changing metaphors.

**Using our personal history as a source of metaphor change.** You may already have somewhere in your personal history positive experiences of what you want. If you go back and access those experiences in an associated way, you can allow the images and language of the metaphor to flow from those experiences.

**Criteria.** Do you feel excited about welcoming into your life the experience the metaphor captures?

**Two language patterns for changing metaphors.**

“Wouldn’t it be nice if….followed by the language pattern that captures the “feeling essence” of your new metaphor.

Example: “Wouldn’t it be nice if I begin to consistently notice how everything is always working out for me?”

This language pattern creates a soft, positive expectancy which gives it a lot of power.

The second language pattern is one that comes from NLP.

“How … can I experience … this is where your new metaphor would go.

Example: “How quickly and easily can I learn to consistently notice how **everything is always working out for me?**”

The power of this language pattern comes from its assumption that you will learn and it is only a matter of how quickly and easily.

Both of these language patterns begin to instruct the RAS to sort for the desired experience.

General Question and Answer and Discussion about any part of the evening.

“Metaphor is a meta-door to change the world.” Kurt Walker