



Swimming Eagle

M O V I N G
STORIES

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Moving Stories is my fun. For work, I am a clinical psychologist and Registered Play Therapy Supervisor and Continuing Education Provider. I work at Pleasant Point Reservation and in Private Practice in rural coastal Maine. Mostly I do individual and family therapy with children, psychological assessments, training, and consultation to area schools and Head Start. I am also a mom to Siobhan and Roy and wife to Brian. The children who brighten my life both at home and at work are the inspiration behind the *Moving Stories Method*. I hope you will let me know what you learn using the method and I hope that you will consider contributing your own *Moving Stories* to the E-library.

NOTES FROM THE AUTHOR

How to Use This E-Book

The *Moving Stories Method* is evolving and so the readily adaptable format of the e-book suits it well. It seems with each telling I learn more about the process of creating, presenting, evaluating and now teaching *Moving Stories*.

This E-book is designed to be placed in a 1 1/2" 3 ring binder. As you find/write/purchase stories, you can add them to the binder—making your own *Moving Stories Library*. To go along with your binder, the method involves making companion kits for each story. I think you will find that casting the characters for the stories and then creating “homes” for them is nearly as fun as writing and presenting the stories. For the sandtray/sandplay therapist, the cast of characters are probably already on your shelves. Once the kits are made, they are kept in what I’ve come to call “The Wonder Room” — a special kind of play room with a three dimensional therapeutic library.

Case Examples

As you read through this E-book, you will find case examples. In order to protect the anonymity of clients in this small rural community, the examples are well-disguised and represent a synthesis of experiences using the method and telling the stories with clients, families, groups and classrooms.

Swimming Eagle

I am like Eagle., I don't want help, but I need it. (Child Client)

I am like the woman, nothing I do seems to help. (Parent)

PERSONAL STRENGTH

Persistence, Resilience, Strength, Relaxation, Letting Go, Trusting

CASE EXAMPLE

This example represents synthesized and disguised case material to ensure anonymity. Henry, a 13 year-old-boy was told “The Eagle” in the context of a family session with his foster parents. Henry had a history of multiple home placements, anxiety and trauma. His foster parents felt they had done so much to help Henry, but that he was unappreciative of all that they had done. They were frustrated that Henry lied to them, was not doing well in school, refused to do chores and that he was “talking back”. Henry affirmed that he lied, did not care about chores and school—suggesting this was not going to change. The session was at a stand still, with anger and resistance on all sides. To shift the energy of the session into a more proactive mode, they were invited to hear a story based upon a true story about an eagle that had been on the front page of the local newspaper. The story captured both the feeling of frustration and worry felt by the parents—in not being able to figure out a way to help, and provided Henry with a different perspective on his behavior. Unexpectedly, the solution was relaxation—not compliance. The story shifted the family to a more compassionate and problem-solving perspective. During the reflection time of the story, Henry reflected I am like the eagle while his foster parents seemed to have a deeper understanding of Henry’s needs which were based in anxiety. The direction of the session shifted to ways to help Henry feel safe in their home.

BACKGROUND

The “Swimming Eagle” is based upon a true story that was front page news in the Quoddy Tides—an Eagle was found swimming in the tidal waters of the Passamaquoddy Bay far off shore. His wings were too wet for him to lift out of the water, and with the tide going out it was clear that the eagle would not be able to swim the long distance to shore. With good intentions, he was thrown a life ring and then a stick. The eagle did not use these aids. Finally, a white hood was used to calm him down and he was brought into the safety of the boat and finally to shore. Apparently eagles sometimes swim their catch to shore, particularly if the fish is too big for them to fly with. Once they have a hold of a fish, they are unable to release it until in the safety of their nest. The story seemed an apt metaphor for both the “helper” and the one being “helped” or in this case refusing help. It wasn’t until the “helper” understood the needs of the eagle that the eagle was able to accept help. This is a good story to encourage understanding of the deeper needs of a person—often it is anxiety that underlies the “survival behavior”. It might also be an appropriate story for those struggling with addiction or unable to “let go” of a situation that is dangerous for them.

THE MOVING STORIES KIT

Setting Materials available in the Wonder Room

- Sandtray with natural colored sand.
- Large Pine Tree

Story Pieces in the Kit

- Boat
- Nest
- Eagle
- Big Fish
- Boat
- Person
- Life Ring Buoy
- Stick
- Hood

Gift Ideas:

- Any piece of the story that seems important to the person (e.g. life ring, hood, fish, person, eagle)

SAMPLE KIT

The objects could be kept in a decorated paper maché box, cloth bag, or basket. Labeling them will help you to identify the kits and keep track of their contents in the Wonder Room.



This paper mache box was decorated by tearing tissue paper into pieces and painting them on with liquid starch. You could also use a mixture of water and glue to paint on the tissue paper.

Making the Moving Stories Kit

Here are some ideas for making or finding characters for this story, if you don't already have them.

Life Ring Buoy



1. Get white and red sculpi and white string.
2. Loop the string through the white clay.
3. Roll out small strips of red sculpi several of them around the white ring.
4. Bake at 215° for 15 minutes.
5. Tie string around the life ring to make a rope.

White Hood: Cut the corner off of the inside pocket of an old pair of pants.

Large Trees: *You may find a good choice of trees by going to e-bay and searching for “table top trees”. Small pines work well.*

Boat: *Check out the website thetoyboat.com for small wooden boats. You might also buy the Play Mobile “pirate kit” for a plastic row boat.*

Nest: *Try factorydirectcraft.com to find inexpensive birds nests.*

Person: *You can make cut-out people from sculpi that are gender neutral so that you can make the sex of the “helper” whatever you want each time you tell the story. You might also like “Jungle Jane” for this character. She is available at: childtherapytoys.com*

Eagle and Fish: Amazon.com or thebigzoo.com are fairly dependable sources for plastic animal replicas. The Big Zoo has an eagle and a salmon that work well together—the eagle's legs fit around the salmon, nicely.

Kit Box: Paper maché boxes work well to hold the stories. The color “vanilla” 7 1/2” to 8” round and 3” high is a good size for most stories. It is nice with or without decorations and with the label on top. They can be decorated with tissue paper and starch (as the glue) or painted with acrylic paints. There are many sources for paper maché boxes—check Walmart or google “paper maché” online. Cloth bags would also work.

KIT LABELS

Cut out these labels. They can be laminated and used on the kit. The picture of the story should go on the outside of the kit, and it is useful to have a list of the story pieces attached on the inside to be sure they all make it back to the kit after telling the story and after playing with it.



Swimming Eagle

Tall Tree
Nest
Eagle
Big Fish
Boat
Person
Life Ring
Stick
Hood

THE SANDTRAY SEQUENCE



This is the beginning of the story with the eagle in his nest, spying the nest.



Here the woman spies the eagle and throws out the life ring and stick.



Here the eagle is calmed with the hood and brought back to shore.



Finally the eagle returns to his home safety.

ACTIONS

Prepare the sandtray for the story. Making an ocean on one side and putting a large pine tree on the other side and then place the nest in the tree. If you have an empty sandtray, this story could be told with one tray representing land, and the second tray could hold actual water,

Peek inside the box. Look on the outside of the box.

Peek inside the box again.

Put the fish, the boat (with all the gear) and the person in the boat into the "water" side of the tray. Sprinkle some water from the salt shaker so that it is really blue and wet.

Glance up, assess the "readiness", take a deep breath and focus on the sandtray.

Carefully take Eagle out of the nest, hold him in your hand and look at him in wonder (feel free to adapt the sex of "Eagle" to your client). Sprinkle water over the tray and shiver.

Lift Eagle into the air and move him over the area above the sandtray.

Move Eagle quickly towards the salmon and lock his legs around it (you can use clay to help make them stick if needed).

Show a struggle between the fish and the Salmon.

Show Eagle trying to lift out of the water.

NARRATIVE

⇒ I wonder what this is going to be? Maybe you can guess.

⇒ I wonder what goes in the nest? Oooh! I found it, Eagle. This must be a story about Eagle.

⇒ Oh, there is more!

⇒ The tray is ready...are you ready?

⇒ Eagle was magnificent.
Eagle was strong.
Eagle was the most powerful of all birds in the air.
And eagle was hungry on this cold and rainy day.

⇒ Eagle set out over the ocean
Flying far from shore
Looking for one last meal before the
Sun went down.

Then with his keen eagle eyes,
he saw it....a big tasty salmon.

⇒ Going 100 miles an hour
He swooped into the water
His sharp talons capturing the fish.

⇒ The fish struggled. But eagle would not let go of something he wanted so badly.

⇒ Eagle tried to lift the Salmon out of the water, but he could not get out!

ACTIONS

NARRATIVE

Move the eagle further and further out to sea.



Eagle floated in the water as the fish struggled...
The struggle went on for a long time until Eagle was far far from his nest on the shore.

Now, simply witness Eagle's struggle without touching.



As strong as eagle was, the movement of the water was greater...Eagle swam for hours and hours using his wings like oars...He would not give up.

But still, Eagle floated further and further out to sea with the great fish in his talons. He could barely see his nest in the tree.

Put the woman and the boat with the life ring buoy, stick and hood in the water near Eagle.



But, there was a woman in a boat that did see. She saw the great struggle.

She saw right away that as great as the Eagle was the strength of the tide was greater.
She was worried, very worried, and sure she could help.

*Move the boat close to the eagle.
Throw out the life ring.*

She threw the eagle la life ring buoy. This frightened Eagle even more. He did not want help—especially this strange help he did not understand.

Throw the stick from the boat.



The woman thought some more. Maybe something natural like a stick! She found a stick in her boat and yelled "Jump on the stick, Eagle!".

But Eagle did not.

The woman was so worried she started to get angry.
"Eagle, you're drowning, I said get the stick, the buoy something!! Why don't you do what I say! I'm helping you!! "

Move the ladies arm out towards Eagle, and then pull it back.



She started to offer her arm until she remembered his talons. They could rip her arm to shreds.

Point to Eagle.



Eagle felt himself getting more and more tired. Home was farther and farther away. He could barely keep his head out of the water.

Point to the person.



The woman took a deep breath. And thought and watched. She thought some more until she thought she knew what was happening. Maybe Eagle was too scared to let go or to hear her or to accept help.

He needed to calm down. He needed to see less. She had an idea.

ACTIONS

NARRATIVE

Place the white hood on Eagle's head and release the fish.

⇒ She slowly and gently put a white hood over his great white head. This is a way to help bird's relax....and it worked.

Bring Eagle into the front of the boat. You might have a piece of clay there to make sure he stays in the boat.

⇒ Eagle relaxed just enough to release the great fish. The woman could now bring Eagle into her boat where eagle relaxed even more.

Move the boat to shore.

⇒ They floated slowly and gently ashore...the woman, the boat and exhausted Eagle.

Remove the hood from Eagle's head and place him in his nest.

⇒ As the woman removed the hood from Eagle's head, he could see that he was home and that he was safe.

He stretched his mighty wings and flew to his home, where he was safe and calm and loved,

Place your hand over the wise woman.

⇒ by a very wise and patient woman.

The following questions/suggestions are offered as ideas to think about in the use of this story. They are not going to be appropriate for all clients or groups. Consider skipping them for children who are eager to play.

POSSIBLE REFLECTIONS

- 1) I wonder what part of the story you might like to talk about?
- 2) Close your eyes. Breathe. Now listen to Eagle. What is Eagle telling you?
Are there any other parts of this story that have something to tell you?
- 3) I wonder if there is a part of the story that you liked best? Or did not like at all.
- 4) I wonder if there is a part of the story you would like to change?
- 5) I wonder where you are in the story, or what part of the story is about you?

CREATIVE EXPRESSION

Invite a response in the sand by playing with the story or using the pieces to tell their own story, or working in clay, writing, or using some other art materials. You might consider using one of the following prompts to guide their creative expression:

- 1) My Story is done, now it is your turn to tell a story.
- 2) Use the materials to show a time when it was hard for you to "let go". What made it hard?
- 3) Use the materials to show a time when someone did not accept help.
- 4) Use the materials to show relaxation.
- 5) Provide a book about relaxation.

APPLICATION

You might consider the following questions:

- 1) Ask them to close their eyes and picture what relaxation or letting go would look like in their lives and take this with them into the week.
- 2) What was the gift of this experience for you?

GIFT

Providing a symbol from the story may reinforce the healing metaphor. Having replicas of animals that take-on special meaning for an individual may also reinforce the meaning of the story.