

Session Guide: Microstorying and Italian Pragmatism in Conflict De-escalation

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About my Background

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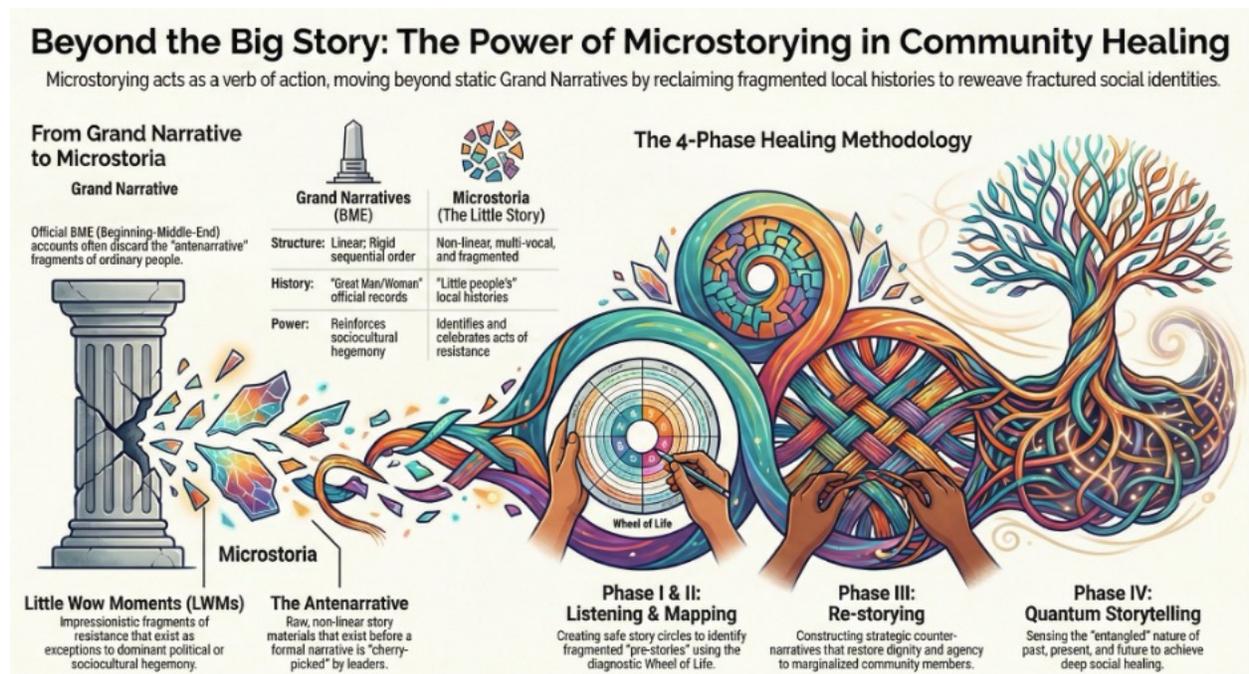
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1. Strategic Foundations: From Grand Narratives to Microstoria

In the high-stakes arena of organizational transformation, "Grand Narratives" are not merely neutral accounts; they are strategic instruments of power used by leadership to mask systemic dysfunctions and silence "antenarrative inconveniences." These polished, linear reports—anchored in the Aristotelian Beginning-Middle-End (BME) structure—cherry-pick successes while editing out the messy, fragmented realities of the workforce. To dismantle this hegemony, the practitioner must pivot to **Microstoria**. By shifting from the "Great Man/Woman" accounts of CEOs and generals to the "little stories" of everyday life, we uncover the hidden power relations and the locality of resistance that macro-accounts intentionally suppress.





How can Storying Spiral be an Open Heart by ditching the war stories, blame games, and the individualist interests and needs?

The following table provides a rigorous differentiation between traditional narrative employment and the subversive liberatory potential of Microstoria:

Comparison of Narrative Frameworks

Feature	Macro/Grand Narratives (BME)	Microstoria (The Little Story)
Structure	Linear; Aristotelian hierarchy (Plot over Character)	Non-linear, multi-vocal, and fragmented
Linearity	Rigid sequential order (Beginning, Middle, End)	Non-linear, fragmented, and impressionistic
History	"Great Man/Woman" accounts; official records	"Little people's" histories; local knowledge
Focus	Generals, CEOs, and institutional figures	The marginalized and those excluded from power
Power Dynamics	Reinforces sociocultural and political hegemony	Identifies and celebrates "little acts of resistance"
Data Selection	Strategic "cherry-picking" to fit a plot	Recovery of "antenarrative inconveniences" and discards
Temporality	Chronological and sequential	Quantum multi-temporality (past, present, future)
Result	Emplotment that edits out contradictory data	Raw, inclusive of "discards" and lived experiences

Crucial to this shift is the recovery of **Little Wow Moments (LWMs)**. These are nonlinear, impressionistic fragments of experience—the "exceptions" that leadership leaves on the cutting room floor. LWMs represent localized acts of resistance against sociocultural, political, and racial hegemony. By celebrating these fragments, we disrupt the status quo and move from viewing story as a static noun to **Microstorying** as a "verb of action." This prepares the practitioner for the logistical rigors and forensic precision required by Italian Pragmatism.

2. The Logic of Discovery: Italian Pragmatism and Peircean Abduction

To provide a rigorous framework for organizational inquiry, we look to the triadic logic of Charles Sanders Peirce. This logic provides a "detective-like" method for uncovering underlying truths by moving beyond the simple observation of cases (induction) or the formulation of general theory (deduction).

The Evidential Paradigm and Peircean Abduction

At the heart of Microstoria is **Peircean Abduction**, which stands between induction and deduction. It creates an "evidential paradigm" where the researcher acts as a sleuth, reading scattered signs and "clues" to propose plausible conjectures. This method values the "fruitfulness" of a hunch, allowing the practitioner to reconstruct forgotten worlds from marginal fragments and "antenarrative inconveniences" without the illusion of complete certainty.

The Four Pillars of Italian Microstoria

The following historians institutionalized the theory-method complex that informs our practice:

- **Carlo Ginzburg:** Developed the "evidential paradigm." He views the researcher as a detective using "clues" from anomalous individuals (e.g., visionary peasants) to rethink cultural and epistemic structures.
- **Giovanni Levi:** Focuses on the "heuristic" function. He utilizes detailed household accounts and local contracts to demonstrate the failure of macro-systems and to correct larger social-scientific models.
- **Carlo Poni:** Emphasizes a non-elitist, practice-oriented perspective. He traces ordinary producers and artisans through material traces like wage lists and production records to recover hidden economic actors.
- **Edoardo Grendi:** Highlights the subversive potential of microstoria. He analyzes "exceptional normal" situations to reveal how local descriptions can destabilize accepted accounts of social order.

While their methodologies differ—ranging from Ginzburg's archival forensics to Levi's social analysis—they share a pragmatic orientation that treats historical knowledge as a practical operation. These "little stories" provide the abductive clues necessary to perform organizational forensics in our active breakout sessions.

3. Breakout Session I: Deep Inquiry into Microstoria (10 - 15 Minutes)

Theoretical understanding is insufficient; practitioners must confront the *violence* of the editing process through embodied practice. This session requires participants to move from passive observation to active "storying."

Facilitator Prompts

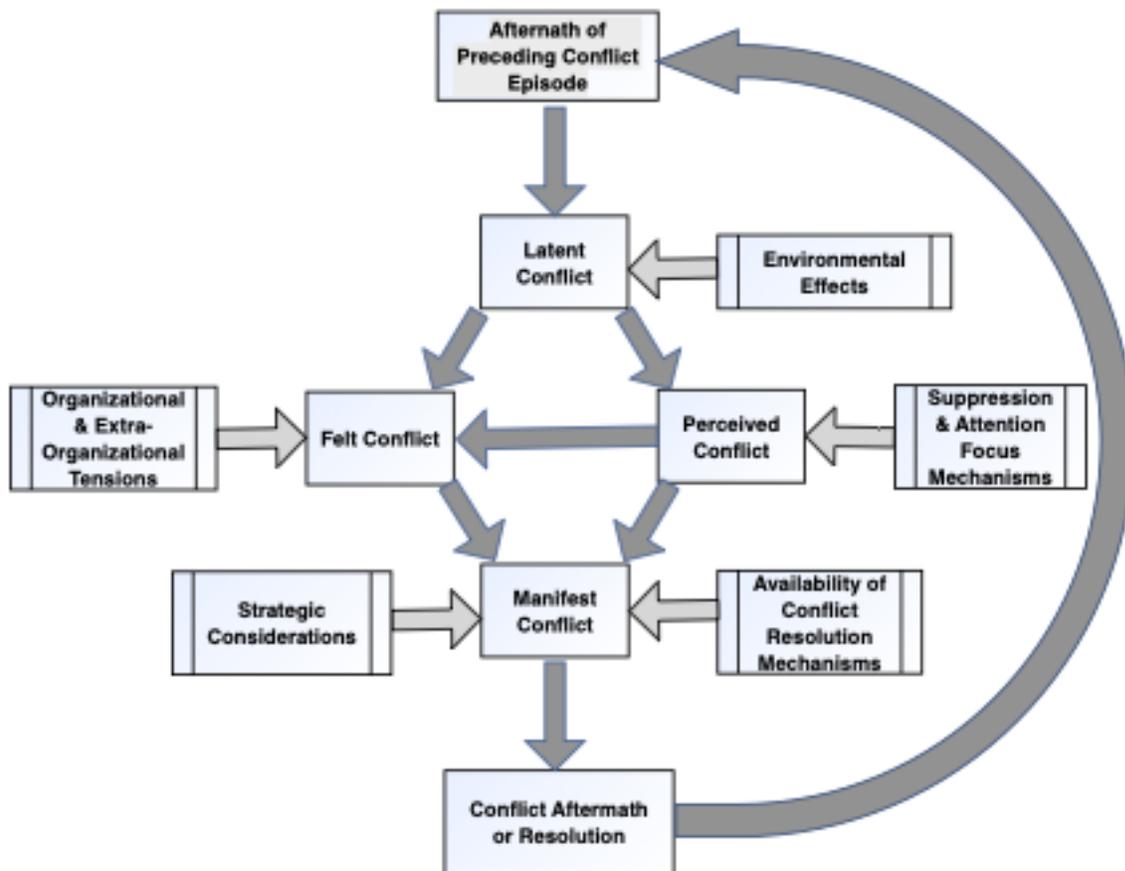
Participants are commanded to identify the "antenarrative inconveniences" within their own organizations that are typically discarded by leadership:

1. **Expose the Violence of the Editing Room Floor:** Think of a major corporate restructuring or change. What specific fragments of fear, doubt, or lived reality were intentionally suppressed to create a "clean" official narrative?
2. **Locate the LWMs of Resistance:** Describe a "Little Wow Moment" where a small group subtly resisted a dominant "corporate narrative" or "tyrannic" mandate. How did this fragment challenge the official hierarchy?
3. **Confront the Hegemony:** How do these discarded fragments reveal the systemic dysfunctions that the "Grand Narrative" is attempting to mask?

The objective is to transition from individual reflection to the retheorization of organizational conflict as a spiraling, non-linear phenomenon.

4. Rethorizing Conflict: Updating Pondy's Episodic Model through Microstorying

To effectively de-escalate tension, we must move beyond static views of disagreement. By updating Louis Ralph Pondy's (1967) episodic conflict model into a "Storying Spiral," we account for the "spiraling" nature of modern organizational tension.



The Five Stages of Interception

- **Latent Conflict (The "Beneath"):** Conditions like power imbalances and unspoken rules.
 - *Enthinking (Internal):* Recognizing the fertile ground where seeds of future episodes are planted.

- *Antenarrating (External)*: Exposing the latent "rules of the game" before they sprout into overt tension.
- **Perceived Conflict**: Awareness of incompatible goals through different lenses.
 - *Enthinking*: Reflecting on how one's own "skewed lens" filters the situation.
 - *Antenarrating*: Identifying competing story fragments before they harden into a dominant, destructive plot.
- **Felt Conflict (The "Being")**: Emotions move from the head to the heart (fear, defensiveness).
 - *Enthinking*: Preventing emotions from "colonizing" the mind and body.
 - *Antenarrating*: Validating heart-centered lived microstories to prevent them from becoming weaponized "war stories."
- **Manifest Conflict (The "Between")**: Arguments, withdrawal, or sabotage.
 - *Enthinking*: Critically evaluating the strategic impact of one's observable behavior.
 - *Antenarrating*: Deploying "together-listening" events to intercept behavior before it becomes unmanageable systemic violence.
- **Conflict Aftermath (The "Becoming")**: Outcomes feed back into the system.
 - *Enthinking*: Preventing the loop back to latent resentment and "deficit identities."
 - *Antenarrating*: Executing "together-action" and "re-storying" to ensure the aftermath builds dignity rather than future conflict.

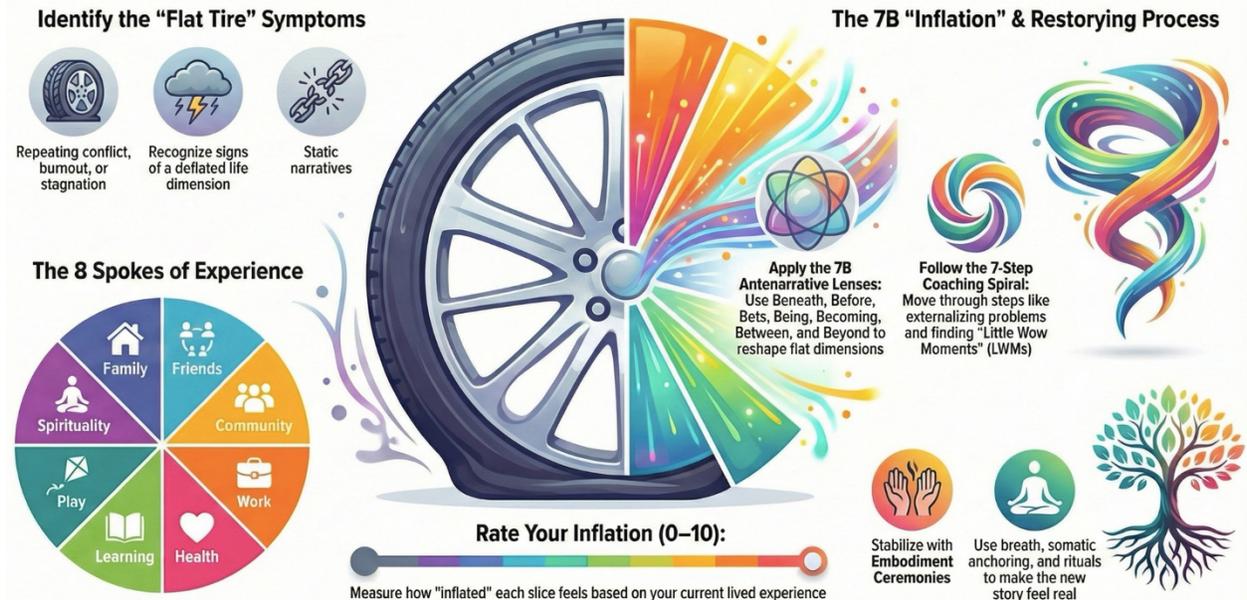
Dynamic Storying vs. Static Narrative

Traditional "Static Narrative" relies on cherry-picking episodes for skewed biographical accounts (e.g., the "heroic CEO"). In contrast, **Dynamic Storying** is an active process of creating meaning from fragmented, discarded stories. By linking "Enthinking" (critical internal reflection) to external intervention teams, we break the destructive loop where today's resentment becomes tomorrow's latent condition.

5. Intervention Methodology: The Four-Phase Framework for Divided Communities

When entering "Tamara-land"—the spatialized field where fragmented stories unfold across various rooms and times—intervention teams must move with precision to prevent "us vs. them" polarizations from hardening into systemic conflict escalation in families, organizations, and or communities thereby affecting Wheel of Life and Well-Being.

Breathing Life into Your Wheel: The 7B Restorying Process



The Four-Phase Methodology

1. **Phase I: Story-listening:** Facilitators establish safe "Story Circles" where polyphonic voices are heard. Priority is given to "little stories" of survival, ensuring they are not colonized by grand political or corporate stances.
2. **Phase II: Antenarrative Mapping:** Utilizing the **Wheel of Life**—a diagnostic tool for the "raw materials of reality" encompassing the **Beneath** (latent), **Between** (manifest), and **Becoming** (aftermath/future) realms—the team identifies hidden tensions and LWMs of resistance.
3. **Phase III: Re-storying and Coherence-Building:** Participants are guided to construct "counter-narratives" as strategic defenses against "tyrannic capitalism" and "fascist ideologies," building a collective narrative ecology that respects individual fragments.
4. **Phase IV: Quantum Storytelling:** This phase acknowledges "multi-temporality"—the entanglement of past, present, and future. Deep healing occurs when a resident senses how their **ancestors' survival (past)** and their **children's hopes (future)** are actively shaping their **current resistance (present)**.

Ethical Foundations

This framework is anchored in **Tetranormalization** (balancing ethics, ecology, economy, and social justice) and **Agential Realism**. These concepts ensure that intervention is an ethical practice that restores dignity and agency to those dehumanized by master narratives. We now transition to a simulation to apply these phases.

6. Breakout Session II: Applied Microstorying Intervention (15 Minutes)

Simulating intervention strategies is the only way to prepare for the high-stakes reality of systemic conflict. In this session, we practice using the diagnostic tools of the Microstorian in a state of "Tamara-land" (where you cannot be in every room at once, and stories are always partial).

Simulation Exercise

Scenario: A community is torn by immigration raids or massive corporate restructuring that threatens local livelihoods.

- **Apply the Wheel of Life:** Identify the "raw materials of reality." What are the fragmented antenarratives existing in the "Beneath" (latent fears) and the "Between" (manifest arguments between activists and business owners)?
 - **Deploy the Mirror Effect:** Study the microstoria history of the opposing storyworlds. How does the "mirror" of past community conflicts reflect onto the current situation?
 - **Spot the LWMs and Multi-temporality:** Identify three "Little Wow Moments" of resistance where community members support one another. How do ancestral survival stories and future hopes for the children entangle in these moments?
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7. Plenary & Takeaways: Towards a Shared Narrative Ecology

The strategic goal of this work is to achieve a **Quantum Storyworld**—a state where the walls built by "us vs. them" narratives crumble, replaced by a shared narrative of belonging. In this space, the community recognizes that they are part of an interconnected ecology of storyworlds where everyone's wellbeing is tied to the whole.

Closing Synthesis Questions

- How does focusing on "little stories" fundamentally change the way we view an "opponent" in a conflict?
- In what ways can "Antenarrative Mapping" via the Wheel of Life prevent the "cherry-picking" of data in your own organizational reporting?
- How does the concept of "multi-temporality" change your responsibility toward the future of your organization or community?

Summary: The Open Heart Practice

The **Storying Spiral** is an "Open Heart" practice. By ditching the "war stories," "blame games," and narrow individualist interests, we move toward a grassroots narrative ecology. This methodology replaces the destructive spirals of the past with a living, evolving process of "enthinkment" and "microstorying"—transforming divided spaces into communities of dignity, justice, and shared healing.

The Path Forward

To transform the living 'storying' spiral of conflict into pathways of healing, we must embrace the revolutionary "missing loop" of genuine transformation—stepping outside conventional thinking through enThinkment with courage, compassion, and an Open Heart ♥

In short, **Microstoria and Microstorying** represent Boje's vision for peacebuilding through *microstorying-work in communities to heal conflict* <https://storying.site> —an ethics-led, participatory storytelling process that rewires collective consciousness from division toward coherence and healing.

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