

Mapping Team Goals

Team of Life Collective Narrative Practice

A methodology for the rich description of goals in work with children and families

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This document is intended as a 'how-to' guide for using elements of Team of Life Collective Narrative Practice to enable vulnerable children, young people and their families to richly describe shared goals and achievements. Team-sheets and Goal Maps use sporting metaphors within therapeutic conversations, providing a scaffold for practitioners to chronicle the skills, knowledge and unique outcomes that might otherwise go unnoticed in the everyday lives of children and their families.

What is the Team of Life?

The Team of Life is a narrative methodology which uses sporting metaphors to encourage young people to recognise the skills, strengths and resilience of their life teams (see Denborough, 2008; www.dulwichcentre.com.au/team-of-life).

It is a playful approach which engages young people through the language of sport rather than the language of problems; enabling them to reflect upon previous accomplishments and recognise how they overcame obstacles with the help of those around them.

- ⦿ developing awareness of their support network by establishing their own 'team of life' from amongst family, friends and significant relationships
- ⦿ drawing how they worked together with their team to achieve a goal using 'goal maps'
- ⦿ telling stories of achievement, hope and survival during challenging times
- ⦿ a strength-based approach that does not require young people to directly discuss problems or trauma

Narrative therapy is an approach to counselling and community work that aims to address the meaning people give to their experiences by emphasising the stories of people's lives. (White, 1988; White & Epston, 1990). It is based upon the assumption that humans are 'interpreting beings', making sense of their experience by linking the events of their daily lives together across time, the 'narrative' being understood as like a thread weaving the events together to form a story (see www.dulwichcentre.com.au). Narrative therapists view people as the experts in their own lives and position problems as separate from people. The approach has brought a wide-range of new ways to respond to people and the problems they are facing, for example;

- ⦿ externalising the problem (White, 1988/9)
- ⦿ the use of therapeutic letters, certificates and documents (White and Epston, 1990)
- ⦿ re-authoring conversations (White & Epston, 1990; Epston, 1992; White, 1995a)
- ⦿ saying hullo again conversations which are a particular response to grief (White, 1988)
- ⦿ narrative responses to trauma and traumatic memory (White, 2004; Denborough, 2006)

The Team of Life has been used within diverse contexts internationally, for example with former child soldiers and young people from refugee backgrounds (Denborough, 2008; 2012) as well as young people in Australian schools (Milan Colic, personal communication, 2013).

The approach is now being used within UK schools and has been developed into a new Team of Life resilience programme and downloadable practitioner resource (Eames & Denborough, 2015; Eames, Shippen & Sharp, 2016).



Collective Narrative Practice

Collective narrative practices are narrative therapy approaches that have been developed in partnership with practitioners from all over the world who have often been working in contexts of profound hardship and suffering (for example in Rwanda, Aboriginal Australia, Palestine, Uganda and Zimbabwe).

These methodologies are easy to engage with and provide a springboard for the creative and playful use of metaphor, building upon the everyday, ordinary rituals and pleasures of community life. Young people's appreciation of nature, sports, music etc can be the starting point for conversations which can take place not just with therapists working in clinical settings but beyond within children's schools and communities.

The Team of Life uses metaphors from sport. However, it is important to draw upon the young person's interest and knowledge. Some young people may prefer to focus on metaphors from football, while others may feel more of a connection with basketball, netball or other sports. Alternatively, if sport is not of interest, other metaphors can be used.

For example, the Tree of Life narrative approach (Ncube, 2006; <http://dulwichcentre.com.au/the-tree-of-life/>), uses metaphors from the natural world to assist vulnerable children to 'tell their stories in ways that make them stronger' (Wingard & Lester, 2000).

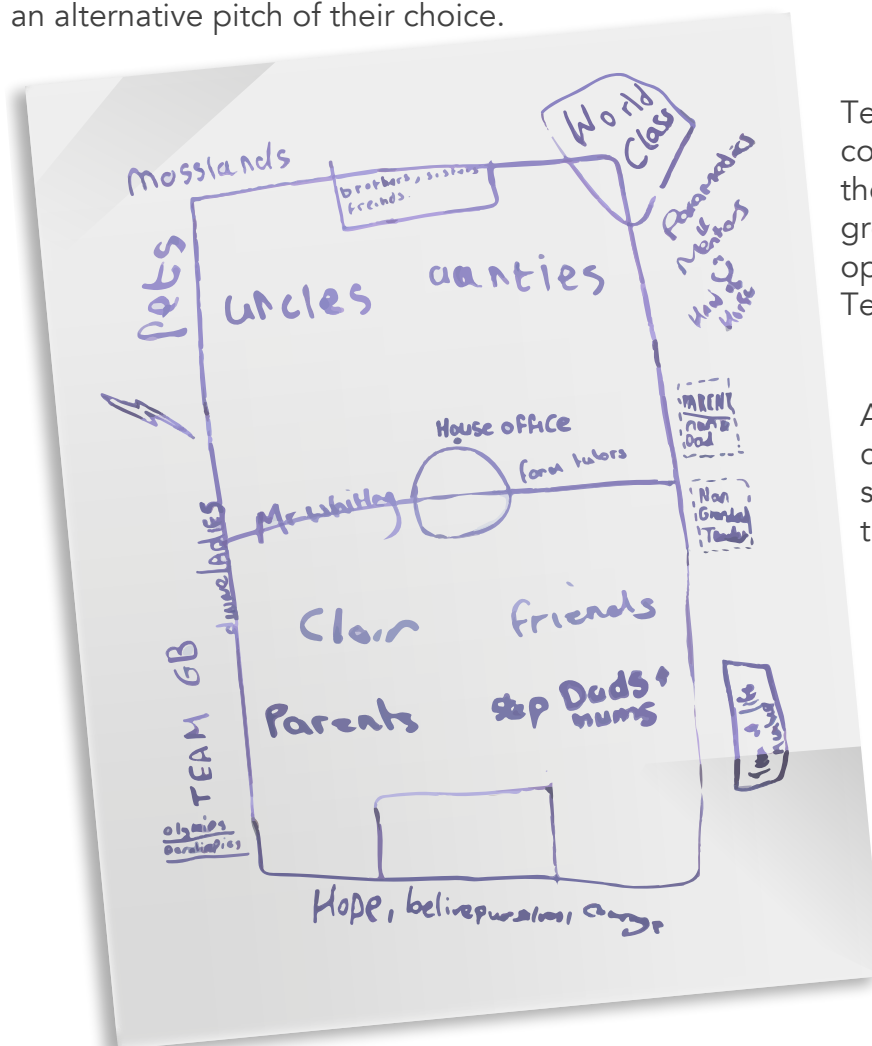
Other metaphors that have been used include the Kite of Life (Denborough, 2010) and the Recipes of Life (Wood, 2012). Practitioners are encouraged to elicit metaphors from the words that young people use in their conversations that build directly upon their connections and interests.

Examples of practice from the Tree of Life



Team-sheets

The narrative process in the Team of Life invites young people to think about who is in their 'team of life', by creating 'team-sheets' representing significant people in their lives. Discussions about team work in sport can be a starting point for rich conversations beginning by asking the child to draw a sports pitch. This can be a football pitch as in the example below, or, if the child has another favourite sport, encourage them to draw an alternative pitch of their choice.



Team-sheets can be a collective document describing the shared team-sheet of a group as in the example opposite by 'The World Class Team'.

An individual child or family can also draw their own team-sheet describing who is in their personal team.

Remember that this is a playful task so it doesn't have to be an accurate drawing.

While the team-sheet is being created it is possible to ask questions that invite the child, family or group to develop the story of their team. The aim is to build upon the sense of having a shared identity with other important people in their life. This helps to create a bond and a sense of connection between the members of the team, encourages the young people to value the support they receive and recognise those who are or who have been most influential in their lives.

You can use some of the questions overleaf to scaffold your conversation. You may need to adapt the roles used if your conversation is about a sport other than football; you can ask the child to name the different roles in their favourite sport first before inviting them to populate the team-sheet. It is important to emphasise that they can include anyone who is significant in their life in their team including people who are no longer in their lives due to experience of loss.

Scaffolding questions for Team-sheets

Who are the people who play an important role in your life? These may be people in your life now or people you have known in the past. They can be people who are alive or they may have passed away. They may be close to you or perhaps people you admire from afar.

Coach

*Who would play the role of coach? Who do you learn most from?
Who in your team helps you plan and prepare for life's challenges?
Who gives you feedback, so you can build on your strengths?*

Goal keeper

*Who would you say are the goal keepers in your lives?
Who are the ones who guards your goals and 'keeps' what is precious to you safe?
Who are the ones who are always on your side?
Who can you return to when things get tough?*

Defenders

*Who would you count as your defenders?
Who helps protect what is important to you?
Who helps you tackle problems?*

Strikers

*Who would you say are your best strikers?
Who helps score goals for your team?
Who helps take your team forward?
Who helps you cut across obstacles, to open up new opportunities?*

Team players

*Who are the team players in your lives?
Who are the other people on your side?
Who are the team mates you enjoy spending time with?
Who will step in when they are needed?*

Medic

*Who would play the role of medic in your lives?
Who makes you feel better when you are hurt?
Who would rush to your aid? Who helps you stay healthy?*

Supporters

*Who are your best supporters? Who are the one's cheering your team on?
Who are the one's that believe in you and your team?
Who are the ones that help you celebrate?*

Others

Is there anyone else you would like to include on your team?

As they identify team roles ask:

*Why did you give this person this role on your team?
How do they 'coach' you in life/help you score your goals/defend you etc?
Can you tell a story of a time when they helped you in this way?*

Developing the team story

Once the team-sheet has been populated, the process builds upon the identity of the team, by choosing additional features that they would like to include on their team-sheet.

Every team has their own identity, through the use of team songs or chants, clothes and logos. This creates a sense of recognition, belonging, team spirit and a united front. This further supports the sense of a collective effort and shared experience.

Every group or team also has rules, some written and some unwritten, which convey preferences for working together; a code of ethics and conduct for players, employees and fans, that allow everyone to feel safe, work together, perform at their best and enjoy the game. These recognise that every person in the team has an impact on the rest of the team.

Team Features - scaffolding questions

What would be your team logo?

Do you have team colours?

Who would be your team mascot?

Where is your home-ground as a team?

What would be your team song?

Do you have a team motto?

Do you have a shared code of ethics for being together?

What do you stand for as a team?

What would your team name be?

Thinking about the team's home-ground facilitates a discussion about where people feel most at home. It's important to emphasise that this can be more than one place. It may even be in more than one country. It may be somewhere they go regularly, or somewhere that they only visit in their memories or dreams now.

Inviting the child or team to think about what they stand for encourages them to think about their values and to sign up to a set of shared hopes and goals as a team.

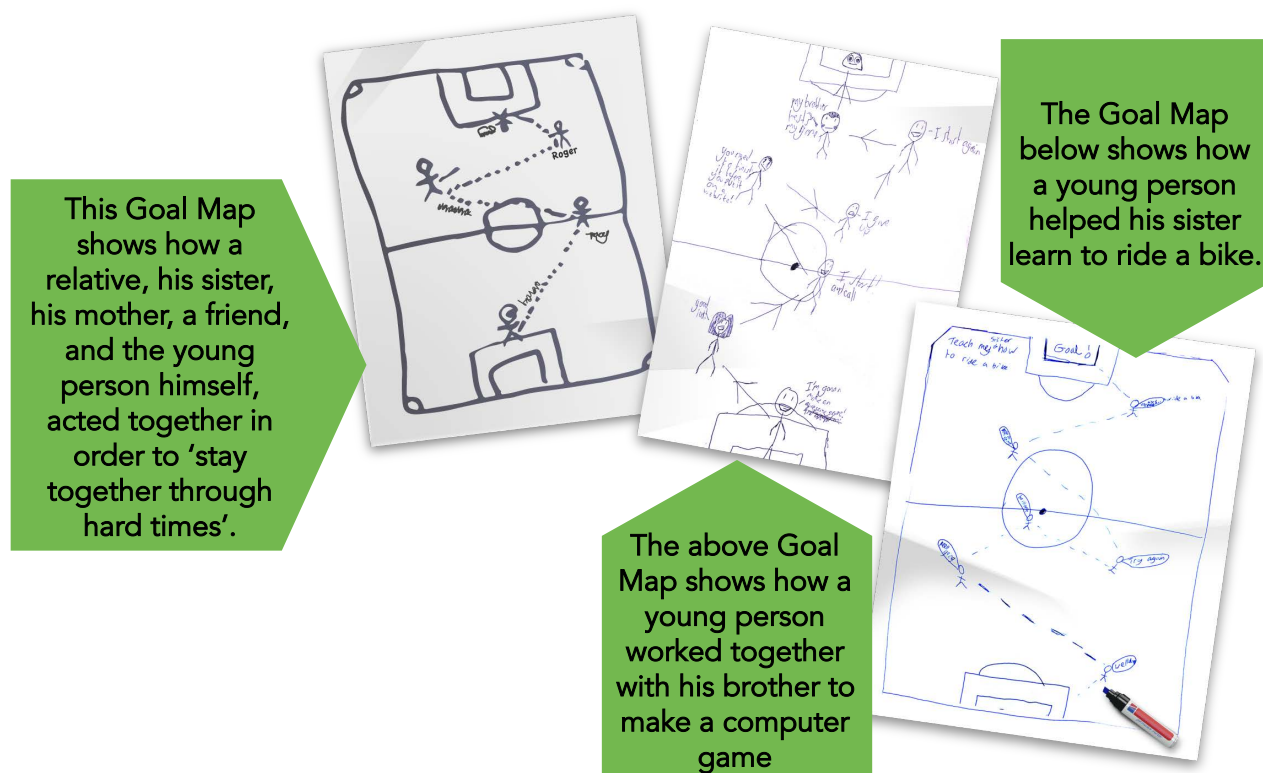
Many teams seem to link their values to their name, for example one team called 'The 7 Up team' said they wanted to move up in their lives, while another team 'REAL Royalty' said they stood for Respect, Effort, Action and Loyalty.

Goal Maps

Goal Maps are a fun and engaging way to recognise achievements and acknowledge how others helped make it happen. The achievements of young people are often not recognised by themselves or others, so initially children may struggle to identify personal milestones. Small day-to-day achievements form the building blocks of personal, social and emotional development, but the significance of such achievements is frequently underestimated. Even larger achievements in life are often dismissed and not acknowledged.

When young people's goals are celebrated, rarely are they spoken about as collective achievements and the contributions of friends and family members to that particular achievement may pass by unnoticed. These are missed opportunities. One of the pleasures of team sports is that, whichever team-mate scores the goal, everyone celebrates. Achieving goals in life is often a team effort and inviting young people to consider a goal that their team has scored, rather than a more individually focused achievement, acknowledges this. Thinking of goals as a 'team goal' can also take the pressure off the individual, making it easier for them to identify a past achievement.

Using the metaphor of scoring goals in sport provides an engaging way for participants to develop a richer understanding of the story surrounding their team's goal, the 'passes' along the way and the team-mates who stepped up to help.



Goal maps initially focus on past goals or achievements rather than future based goals. Thinking about goals can be anxiety provoking for some young people, particularly those who have repeatedly perceived themselves as failing or whose experience of positive feedback has been limited. Future goals may feel unobtainable and young people may 'switch off' to protect themselves from the possibility of failure. Focusing on a past goal rather than a future goal can be a safer way of recognising achievement. It can also help to build a heritage of achievement, building confidence in working towards new goals and resilience in the face of problems. Beginning with exploring how teams work together to score goals and tackle problems acknowledges the challenges people face in life and the importance of asking for help.

Scaffolding Questions for Goal Maps

- Begin with a discussion about goals in sport**
What helps teams score goals in sport?
Do they do it alone or does it require a team effort?
How do they respond when they don't score or they have a bad game?
- Invite the child to draw the outline of a sports pitch and write the goal at the top near the goal net. It may help if you draw a goal map of your own first so they get the idea**
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We can show how your team worked together to score a goal using a 'goal map'
- As they draw the goal map invite them to include more detail**
Who from your team helped you with this goal?
Why was this goal important to you and your team?
Who did you 'pass the ball to' next?
Did you and your team face any obstacles on the way to achieving this goal?
What tackling skills did you need to score this goal?
What tactics did you and your team use to help?
How did you celebrate with your team when you scored the goal?
How would you like to celebrate?
- For future goals simply change the tense of the questions, e.g.**
How can your team help you score this goal?
What obstacles might you face?
What tackling skills might you use?
How will you celebrate when you score the goal?

Once the goal map has been drawn you can invite children to share the story of their Goal Map with family members is a great way of bringing the achievement to life. Goals can even be re-enacted in a full action replay, demonstrating favourite ways of celebrating when the goal is scored!

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