

A photograph of a man and a woman sitting at a table in a cafe, smiling at each other. The man is on the left, wearing a dark jacket, and the woman is on the right, wearing a light blue sweater and a patterned scarf. They are both holding coffee cups. In the center of the table is a glass vase with dried flowers. The background shows a bright, airy cafe interior with a white railing and a large window. The entire image has a teal color overlay.

WORKING WITH  
CONFLICT STORIES  
WORKBOOK



# A NOTE FROM YOUR TRAINER

WELCOME!

Conflict stories are my passion!

I have always been obsessed with stories, and am an avid reader of pretty much everything. I also come from a long family history of storytellers!

It wasn't until I started my PhD that I realised the strong connection between conflict and the stories we tell ourselves, and others, about it. Since then, I have listened to, recorded and collected hundreds of conflict stories. These stories are all different, but in some ways they are all the same.

There are two typical "types" or "genres" of conflict stories - one that is told by people who are not managing their conflict well; and another that is told by people who have learnt and grown through their conflict experiences.

In this course, you will discover the power of story in conflict. You will start to recognise patterns in the conflict stories of those around you, and you will probably even notice some in your own conflict stories!

The best thing about stories, is that we can edit them. We can turn those dysfunctional stories into constructive ones - and changing your story can change your life!

Let's get started and write some exciting new chapters together!

Dr Samantha Hardy  
Lead Trainer at CCIAcademy.com

# COURSE OVERVIEW

- PROLOGUE
- MODULE 1 - HUMANS AND STORIES
- MODULE 2 - ANGELA'S CONFLICT STORY
- MODULE 3 - CONFLICT STORIES AND GENRE
- MODULE 4 - MELODRAMA
- MODULE 5 - MELODRAMATIC CONFLICT NARRATIVE
- MODULE 6 - TRAGEDY (WITH A TWIST!)
- MODULE 7 - RE-WRITING THE STORY
- MODULE 8 - REAL CONFLICT COACHING
- EPILOGUE

# HUMANS AND STORIES

## SECTION INTRODUCTION

Creating and telling stories is a natural part of being human.

Jonathan Gottshall, author of *The Storytelling Animal: How stories make us human*, suggests that our addiction to stories is the defining attribute that makes us successful as a species.

Sharing stories is a way for people to form community and cultural bonds.

Stories also provide a way for us to practice social skills and rehearse our responses to real life challenges.

However, our tendency to default to certain kinds of stories can also create problems, particularly in situations of conflict, as we will soon discover.



# WORKSHEET 1

## YOUR STORIES

**Question 1:** What are some communities in your life in which you typically share stories?

**Question 2:** What are some of your well-told stories? (e.g. the time I got lost)



# WORKSHEET 1

## YOUR STORIES

**Question 3:** What did you see when you watched the Heider Simmel clip?

**Question 4:** Can you think of an example of a personal 'conspiracy theory' story that you have told yourself in the past?

# NOTES

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

# Extra Resources



## THE STORYTELLING ANIMAL: HOW STORIES MAKE US HUMAN

By Jonathon Gottshall

<http://jonathangottschall.com>



## THE STORYTELLING ANIMAL - TED TALK

By Jonathon Gottshall

<https://youtu.be/Vhd0XdLpY>



## LETTING STORIES BREATHE

By Arthur Frank

<https://press.uchicago.edu/ucp/books/book/chicago/L/bo9471242.html>



## MAKING STORIES: LAW, LITERATURE, LIFE

By Jerome Bruner

<https://www.hup.harvard.edu/catalog.php?isbn=9780674010994>



## HOW CHANGING YOUR STORY CAN CHANGE YOUR LIFE - TED TALK

By Lori Gottlieb

[https://www.ted.com/talks/lori\\_gottlieb\\_how\\_changing\\_your\\_story\\_can\\_change\\_your\\_life](https://www.ted.com/talks/lori_gottlieb_how_changing_your_story_can_change_your_life)



# ANGELA'S CONFLICT STORY

## SECTION INTRODUCTION

In this module, we will meet Angela.

Angela is a recent university graduate who ends up in conflict with a woman she works with.

We will hear Angela's story (directly from her!) and then we will examine it to see how the structure of her story may limit her understanding and choices in the situation.

# ANGELA'S STORY

I have a really bad conflict going on in my life at the moment and I don't know how to deal with it.

It's at my workplace. I have this colleague who has been in this job for twenty-five years, and she knows like in and out of the organization by her finger tips and she's really good at what she does and in other circumstances I would have got along with her perfectly well, but because I'm a newcomer in this role, I just have trouble dealing with her way of thinking.

She sees me as a threat, which is really discomfoting because I don't want to be a threat to anyone, but she believes in experience and that's why she's been in this job for 25 years, and I am straight out of university, I've got two degrees in my hand, and she does not respect that at all because she thinks that experience weighs more than education.

And every day is a constant battle, because I have to prove to her that I'm good in what I'm doing and what I'm going to do, but it's never enough for her, and if I go to her for help, especially regarding my work, she just looks at me and she says, 'Don't they teach this at uni?' or, if I do something well, which I think is good, she just says, 'Oh, is this all they taught you at uni?'

And everything has the word "university" in it, or my degrees in it, and it clearly shows that she sees me as a threat and it clearly shows that she's threatened by what I have, but at the same time she's trying to make me feel inferior to her, and I don't know how to deal with it because I'm not here to please everyone, but at the same time I can't...

Waking up in the morning and going to work is a nightmare right now for me because I don't know how to deal with it.

*continued...*

# ANGELA'S STORY (CONT.)

It's not a happy situation for me, and I think she's enjoying it, because every time she says these things to me she says it with a smirk.

She's the one who did my induction process and she had to show me to my desk where I'll be seated for the rest of the time period of my employment, and the first question she asked me was "is this fine for you or do you want my desk and chair instead? Do you want my office instead?"

And I just looked at her and... how do you react to something like that? You think about all these nice smart answers to give back but you don't because at that moment you're in a horrible situation with this person.

And I just stood there looking at her, tongue-tied, didn't know what to say, and I just told her "it's fine thank you". I mean I would have given it back to her but at that moment I was just tongue-tied.

So it's a nightmare, I just don't know what to do. I wish I can get a solution to this, because the only solution I can think of is quit the job, and don't do something which is not making you happy any more, but do I really have to quit this job for someone who is not worth my time?

Or, how do I go ahead with this, because there's absolutely no way I can talk to her about it because she's just going to be like, you know, she's going to ask me "what, didn't they teach you at uni how to deal with all these things?"

I don't know, I'm just helpless here.



# WORKSHEET 2

## ANGELA'S STORY

**Question 1:** Who are the characters in Angela's story and what does Angela say or imply about each of them?

**Question 2:** What are the main events in the story?



# WORKSHEET 2

## ANGELA'S STORY

**Question 3:** What does Angela think are the two most likely / possible endings to the story?

**Question 4:** Ideally, what does Angela most wish could happen to resolve the story?



# WORKSHEET 2

## ANGELA'S STORY

**Question 5:** What kinds of language does Angela use when telling the story? Are there certain kinds of words she uses more than once, or seems to emphasize in the telling of the story?

**Other reflections on Angela's story...**

