

## **Constructing and Reconstructing Narratives – A Passageway to Personal Meaning and Social Change**

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Abstract prepared for Round Table 3: What works? What types of social change efforts show promise in reducing violent conflict and humiliation while upholding the dignity of all people?  
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Narrative construction is a way that we tell stories about our experiences. Reconstructing narratives is how we re-tell our stories based upon our experiences with others. It is how we give personal meaning to our lives. When we experience emotional trauma through aspects of humiliation and dehumanization, our narratives become inarticulate stories about painful mental inescapable images. However by sharing these events we develop ways to maintain our human dignity and personal sense of self.

Sharing narratives can create a co-present experience where there is sense of belonging to ourselves and others. This may reduce the risks of misinterpretation and misunderstanding which may often times occur throughout the process. Our narratives are an integral part of our identity which can easily become displaced when we are not able to articulate our experiences separately from the experiences of others.

Our narratives may also become navigational tools which enable us to move from our past, present, and current experiences simultaneously. This round table discussion will look at how we use our narratives to give personal meaning to our lives in order to maintain human dignity and effect social change.