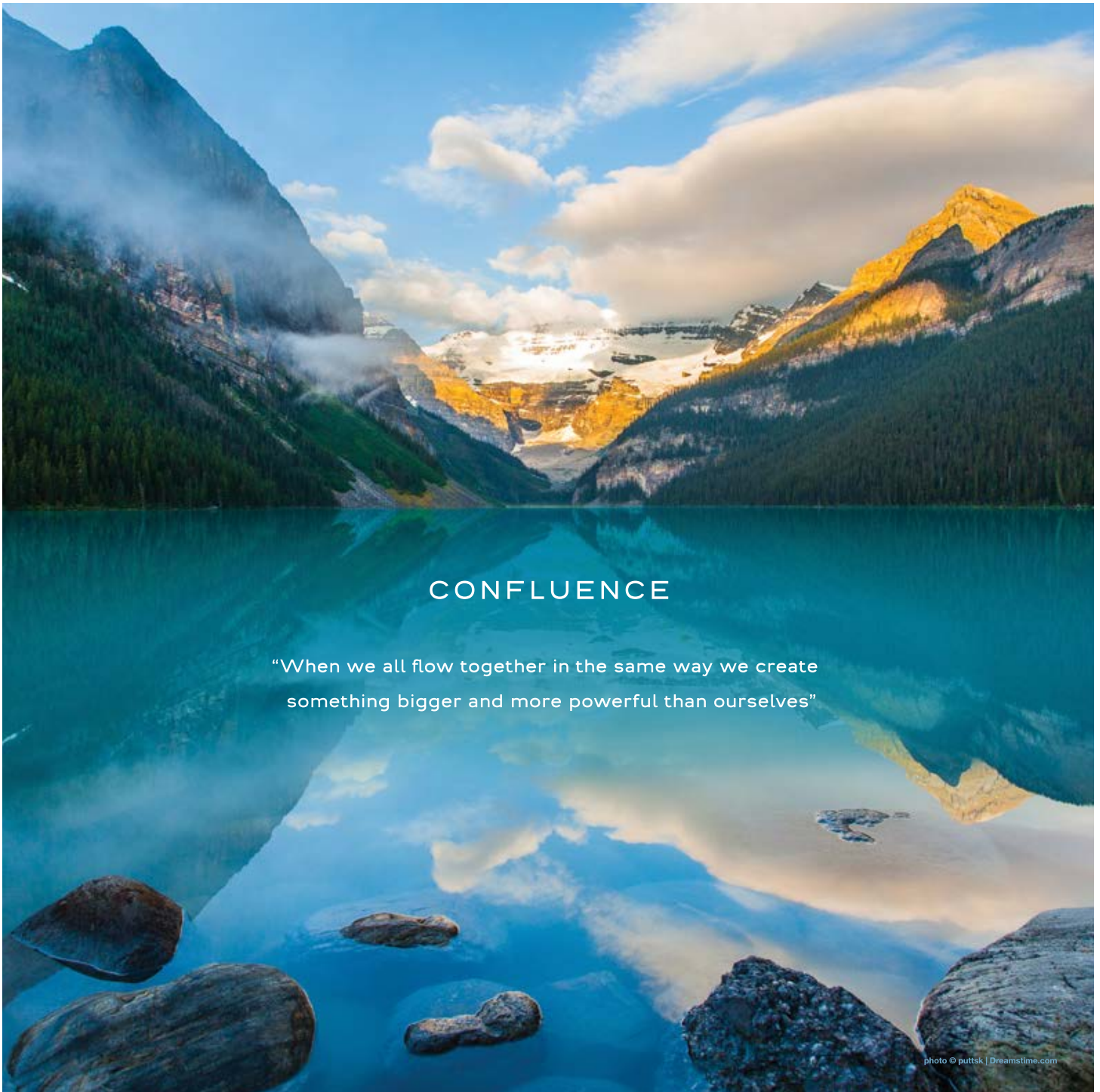




# International Kinesiology Conference 2015 | BANFF



## CONFLUENCE

“When we all flow together in the same way we create something bigger and more powerful than ourselves”



## Cindy Goldade, M.Ed

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## Pass It On to the Next Generation: Tell a Kinesiology Story

How might we draw people into the ever-expanding field of kinesiology? Repeat what works! Every culture throughout history has used stories to keep their traditions alive and pass on knowledge. Growing up in a large extended family, every holiday was spent around the kitchen counter telling stories. One person would start, "Remember when...?" Someone else would often jump in to share perspective, which didn't always match the original teller's viewpoint. Frequently, nonverbal reenactment accompanied the words. There was laughter and occasionally tears—sometimes there was laughter until the tears were rolling down our faces. As you get to know me through my story, also notice some of the ways storytelling can create curiosity about our field.

### **Why is storytelling an effective and a powerful tool for kinesiologists?**

Stories create a kinesthetic experience in our bodies. As we sympathize or empathize with the storyteller, a physiological response may occur. Has your heart ever pounded during a scary story or your breath been swept away? When others share their experiences, your body may remember its own personal past experience. Some refer to this as cellular memory. Bruce H. Lipton, PhD, cell biologist and bestselling author of *The Biology of Belief*, uses the term, "Epigenetics." In 1999, Paul Pearsall wrote *The Hearts Code* and first revealed evidence about memory in the heart. Stories engage the brain through *listening, visualizing, and feeling.*

Auditory processing happens during story telling. Alex Doman, founder of Advanced Brain Technologies and gifted storyteller/lecturer, has greatly expanded my knowledge base regarding the auditory system's components. Choosing to focus on a voice and listen is a physical skill. Do I want to attend/focus? Can I filter out unnecessary sound, which includes external environmental noise as well as internal self-talk? Does the story have a sense of order that helps me follow along? Consider when someone reads aloud. How does attention shift with a flat-line monologue reading versus a dynamic, intonation-filled reading? Who do you most enjoy listening to and why? One of my favorite aspects of teaching semester long night classes is when adult learners vibrantly tell how they're using the Brain Gym activities. Whether it's using Brain Gym to assist a child to fall asleep easier or showing one's grown child an activity to support a softball game, the teller's words and actions breathe life into the story and invite everyone in class to celebrate the breadth of possibility with this work!

For those who have developed the skill of visualization, high-quality stories contain enough detail to create a picture in one's mind. During a Brain Gym® 101 class as we were learning *Think of an X*, someone once blurted out, "Is this some get rich quick scheme?" Luckily, my own filters were working that day and I was able to be curious instead of insulted. This mature adult was not able to visualize in her head; therefore, *Think of an X* was impossible, at that time. That student went on to become a

Brain Gym Instructor, completed her PhD, and learned to *Think of an X!* Oral stories may not be as meaningful for those who can't track an internal visual picture. In Waldorf early childhood education, the instructors intentionally tell stories, sans pictures. Telling builds imagination and visualization skills as well as supports auditory comprehension. It is important to note that:

1. Visualization is a skill to be taught; it is not innate
2. What one visualizes will most likely differ from what another visualizes as this skill is built on prior knowledge!

Besides sensorial engagement, storytelling also engages the emotional brain as a heart connection is built. My fellow Brain Gym faculty member, Carla Hannaford, is a biologist and educator; she discusses heart coherence in her books and workshops. As a wife and mother of three, coherence, or lack of, is easily evident in our family. When the cluttered kitchen counter becomes too much for me, I become incoherent or as my hubby says, "a raging lunatic." Oldest son usually mirrors both my spoken language as well as my body language. Middle child disappears when mom is in this state. The youngest, who is ten, buries herself deeper in projects to avoid the incoherence. Emotional experience is unique to each person. One of my favorite ways to teach this concept is using the four universal emotions. Placing representations of these emotions on the floor, I then distribute tokens and state various words, such as family, sports, test, friends, or deer. Each participant tosses a token on the emotion that was first triggered before analysis/thinking. We end by discussing any surprises between our thoughts and our emotions. Dr. John Ratey speaks of the low road through the emotional center. Even though I don't want to be over-run by my emotion, I do believe that stories are most effective when they trigger the emotions. As a Montessori educator, it fascinated me to learn how Dr. Maria Montessori utilized story telling. Since I now teach the Literacy Foundations graduate level course for 3-6 year olds, I am an avid advocate for abundant oral language prior to and continuing on after writing and reading commences. Dr. Maria Montessori taught "The Five Great Lessons" in story format to engage the six to twelve year olds because she knew story was more memorable and made a deeper impression than fact.

#### **How is storytelling different from fact-telling?**

Kinesiology is about physical movement; however, it can be easy to become quite head-y about it. As kinesiology enthusiasts, we want to tell what we know.

However, telling doesn't always engage the listener. It assumes the listener is ready for the information and has some level of prior knowledge on which to build. What is our end goal? Is it to impart information to whomever, whenever? Or is it to spark curiosity and motivate someone to ask questions and want to learn more? When we view others as empty vessels to be filled with data, we may resort to telling too much as we strive to fill them up. After consuming a large meal, do you prefer action/movement or vegetating? Do we want those in our classes to leave class ready to practice their new learning or to simply lounge about in a state of satisfied stupor?

"Humans simply aren't moved to action by 'data dumps,' dense PowerPoint slides, or spreadsheets packed with figures. People are moved by emotion. The best way to emotionally connect other people to our agenda begins with "Once upon a time..."

- Jonathan Gottschall

It is very tempting within any self-help field, such as kinesiology, to slip into judgment and diagnosis. "I know what you need!" When I find my mind traveling down this slippery road, I pause and reflect on how I can relate heartfully with the other person. I share stories about myself, rather than calling someone else out. When the telling is timely and relevant, the recipient may feel safe enough to be vulnerable and willing to explore what we are offering. In my experience, people brush me off when I talk with my head instead of my heart. As someone who loves her left, linear, logical, language-oriented hemisphere, this can be a challenge.

"Today everyone, whether they know it or not, is in the emotional transportation business. More and more, success is won by creating compelling stories that have the power to move people to action. Simply put, if you can't tell it, you can't sell it."

- Peter Guber

Pointing out others' issues based on our perception is not likely to draw someone in to our work—to sell our program per se. Rather, we want to *tell it in order to sell it*. When I draw attention to a challenge, which implies something is broken and therefore a "fix" is required, others often get defensive and reject help. However, if I share a story of when I've been in a similar situation and seen help from a tool, they are more likely to open up and accept a suggestion.

"Stories are powerful because they transport us into other people's worlds but, in doing that, they change

the way our brains work and potentially change our brain chemistry—and that's what it means to be a social creature.”

- Paul J. Zak

Telling effective stories requires balance. How many details? When to bring in a story? Which story is appropriate in which situation? For example, in searching for a hospital story, it might not be appropriate to share a childbirth experience with a teenage boy who is there for a broken collarbone. Storytelling is a dance between the giver and receiver. It is necessary for the giver to be accessing sensorial cues as much as it is for the receiver. Notice attentiveness versus distractedness and adjust accordingly.

Humans appreciate structure. They like a story that has a beginning, middle and an end. What is the point of the story? Often there is a conflict or a climax within the story. It is important for the story to have rhythm.... don't rush but don't drag it out. Balance. Ebb and flow. This creates breathability for the teller and the listener. Be conversational in tone and pace.

“Storytelling reveals meaning without committing the error of defining it.”

- Hannah Arendt

Speak within one's area of expertise. Clarify one's realm of knowledge and use references when stepping outside your area of proficiency. Name drop. Quote. Cite. Speak confidently from both expertise and experience. We do not have to define every facet of what we know. Jerome Berryman, a Montessori educator, speaks of “I wonder...” Contrary to our technologically driven black or white society, I have learned to “embrace the blur” as Paul Dennison says and be ok with the gray that lives between black and white. As lifelong learners, we are always in the state of becoming and perfecting, so it is ok to reveal meaning without over-defining concepts!

When I tell my story, it opens the door for others to peek into their own story in a non-threatening, non-judgmental way. “A picture is worth a thousand words.” Build a picture through story and then brace the walls with facts and details.

Oral tradition is timeless. All cultures have utilized oral tradition throughout history. Find the hook that grabs the learner. Fuel the flame by sparking curiosity through anecdotes.

Pass it on! What's your story?