

Reading 4.1

Merriam, S. B., Caffarella, R. S. & Baumgartner, L. M. (2007). *Learning in Adulthood: A comprehensive guide* (3rd ed.). San Francisco, United States of America: John Wiley & Sons, Inc. pp. 189-216.

CHAPTER EIGHT

EMBODIED, SPIRITUAL, AND NARRATIVE LEARNING

The whole person is made up of mind, body, and spirit. Rarely, however, are the body and spirit taken into account when we talk about learning. Our Western heritage has defined learning as a mental process that takes place in the mind—never mind that we cannot locate the “mind.” The brain, which we can locate, becomes the place of learning, severed from something as concrete as the body and as ephemeral as the spirit. This focus on the mind is partly due to Western science’s investigation of learning as a mechanistic process—one designed to produce responses to stimuli, or to process information, or more recently, to construct knowledge largely through reflection on experience (see Chapter Eleven for a review of these traditional learning theories).

This emphasis on the mind goes back even before twentieth-century learning theory to Descartes, a seventeenth-century French philosopher who declared that “I [that is, my mind, by which I am what I am] is entirely and truly distinct from my body” and that “body, figure, extension, motion, and place are merely fictions of my mind” (Descartes, 1637/1960, pp. 165, 118, cited in Michelson, 1998, p. 218). This separation of the mind and body was reinforced by eighteenth-century Enlightenment philosophers who believed that knowledge could be obtained through reason alone; other sources of knowledge at that time, such as faith, tradition, and authority, were rejected by many.

As a result of Cartesian and Enlightenment thinking, learning has come to be equated with mental processes, with knowing through thinking or cognition. Not until the last few decades of the twentieth century has the role of the body and the spirit in

inevitability of death. The dilemma is that, on the one hand, “we are animals with a deeply rooted instinct for self-preservation; on the other, we are intelligent beings with sophisticated cognitive abilities that are immensely adaptive but also render us aware of the inevitability of our own death” (p. 201). To deal with this dilemma, we engage in cognitive distancing, “strip[ping] the body of its creatureliness” and replacing it with cultural symbols and standards of beauty, sex, and so on. They conclude that “our flight from our physical nature causes us to lose a bit of what it means to be human” (p. 215).

Fleeing from the “creatureliness” of the body extends to ignoring, covering up, or satirizing our physical characteristics, bodily functions, and sexuality. But we live in our bodies, and we learn about ourselves, about who we are, through what our bodies can and cannot do and how we experience sexuality and other bodily functions. Chapman (2002) for example, analyzes the interrelationship of power and her identity through examination of bodily functions. In attending an English boarding school, eating constructed her identity: “We ate at school, every day, the food of Empire . . . seated in the dining room under the gaze of John Smith, our famous ‘old boy,’ sternly subduing the female colonial body of waif-like Pocahontas. We learned/ate to be future wives of the Empire. In food and eating, we position bodies in relation to others in terms of class and ethnicity, as well as morally, as in good food and bad food” (pp. 75–76).

Popular culture reflects a growing interest in reconnecting the mind and body. Both *Time* (January 17, 2005) and *Newsweek* (September 27, 2004) devoted entire issues to this topic. As the lead story in the *Newsweek* issue titled “The New Science of Mind & Body” states:

So why is *Newsweek* devoting this Health for Life report to the mind-body connection? Because the relationship between emotion and health is turning out to be more interesting, and more important, than most of us could have imagined. Viewed through the lens of 21st-century science, anxiety, alienation and hopelessness are not just feelings. Neither are love, serenity and optimism. All are physiological states that affect our health just as clearly as obesity or physical fitness. And the brain, as the source of such states, offers a potential gateway to countless other tissues and organs—from the heart and blood vessels to the gut and the immune system. The challenge is to map the pathways linking mental states to medical ones, and learn how to travel them at will. [Benson, Corliss, & Cowley, 2004, p. 46]

teacher who understood “the power of embodied action even at the level of ritual, [when] she provided white lab coats for us to wear, which we kept in the cloak room. She explained that when we put on these coats we would *become* scientists” (p. 238).

Crowdes (2000) noticed the irony of critical social analysis courses taught at her university in which students became quite sophisticated in analyzing issues of power and social inequity but were “detached from their bodies and agency in matters of conflict resolution and change” (p. 25). She redesigned the course and called it “Power, Conflict, and Change in Social Interaction: What’s a Body to Do?” Incorporated into the course are embodied exercises to convey what is really meant by these terms and how the body can be employed, along with the intellect, to negotiate change. In one exercise called *bowing*, partners in dyads are assigned roles, with one being superior and all-powerful to whom the other must bow. The roles are reversed in the second step. After each phase students are asked to reflect on how they *felt* in either role. The third step was for each partner to bow to the other in a mutually loving and respectful way. The three phases of the exercise allow students to experience the multifaceted nature of power and power relations. It is in the experience that power relations become *meaningful*.

It is, of course, easier to see how embodied learning takes place in a physical activity such as basketball or dance. But even in the realm of dance, “dance educators often seem embarrassed to speak too much about the body, thinking that to note the physical labor of dance demeans it in the eyes of intellectuals, and to call attention to the sensory, bodily pleasure of dancing makes us seem mere hedonists” (Stinson, 1995, p. 46). Stinson goes on to say that for her to really know something involves “thought as something that occurs throughout my body, not just above my neck” (p. 46). Dance choreography is that effort to convey lived experience through artistic form.

In the same way, conducting research is an embodied process beginning with a *passionate* connection to the topic one is going to research. Data gathering, Stinson (1995) points out, is very embodied, whether interviewing or observing. Sorting through the data gathered is also an embodied activity “in [an] effort to find the form and content of the work” being constructed (p. 49). So too, insights with regard to important theoretical considerations and

adult's emotional, imaginative connection with the self and with the broader social world" (p. 64). Actually, science has known for some time that nerve endings extend throughout the body through which we receive impulses from outside the body (see Chapter Fifteen). Further, "emotions are enmeshed in neural networks involving reason. . . . Emotions increase the strength of memories and help to recall the context of an experience, rendering it meaningful" (Hill, 2001, p. 76). Mulvihill (2003, p. 322) is even more explicit about the neurological dimension of learning:

There is no such thing as a behaviour or thought, which is not impacted in some way by emotions. There are no neurotransmitters for "objectivity"; rather even the simplest responses to information signals are linked with possibly several "emotional neurotransmitters" (Haberlandt, 1998). Because the neurotransmitters, which carry messages of emotion, are integrally linked with the information, during both the initial processing and the linking with information from the different senses, it becomes clear that there is no thought, memory, or knowledge which is "objective," or "detached" from the personal experience of knowing.

In making the case for including dance and the arts in education, Ross (2000) underscores the interconnectedness of emotions with somatic knowing: "The arts are firmly rooted in these exchanges between the psyche (mind) and soma (body), and the senses and emotions are the conduits of these experiences" (p. 31). Emotions are embodied and thus are an integral component of this type of learning.

The fourth component of Amann's somatic learning model is *spiritual*. The spiritual aspect of somatic learning is meaning-making through music, art, imagery, symbols, and rituals and overlaps or intersects with the other three dimensions (see Chapter Nine). Interestingly, Yoshida presents his example of somatic knowing in writing the Japanese word for river as relating to his "spiritual" roots: "As soon as the characters unfold their life, they unfold the soul, not only in me, but also in all the souls of the people who lived and wrote this character throughout Japanese history" (2005, p. 133). Götz (2001) links the embodied with the spiritual in a number of ways, citing, for example, numerous athletes who through intense physical activity have experienced spiritual moments.

had to do with a Muslim woman who at first wore the headscarf but later in the course came covered in a full veil and gloves. The teacher could not understand the change, which was explained by student as, “Well, I’m closer now to my religion. I’m more . . . I’m a better person now because I do this” (p. 42). The authors point out that while the teacher saw the body as a cultural representation, “the learner presents a very different version of culture, one that is lived, where knowledge, beliefs, and experiences are located in the body, where the body is the medium for having a world” (p. 42). In the second example from the ESL classroom, learners were preparing for a two-week work experience placement. The teacher’s version of the “good worker” was one who stays in his or her place, acts politely, and does not challenge the boss. The students, several of whom had many years of work experience in their home countries, continually questioned and resisted the teacher’s construction of them as docile workers. These learners were “‘active bodies’ constructing and reconstructing their sense of self and occasionally resisting others’ construction of them” (p. 43).

Brockman’s (2001) somatic epistemology for education is the final conception of somatic knowing. In today’s world of diversity, postmodernism, and multicultural education, he asks the important question of how we are to assess and deal with cultural “evils.” All cultures perpetuate certain beliefs, values, customs, practices, and ideologies that are oppressive and even physically abusive (sanctioned violence against women, for example). Yet cultural relativism mitigates against our making a moral judgment of these behaviors. As an example, he asks what a U.S. schoolteacher should do if the teacher observes a Turkish boy beating his sister who has flirted with boys at school. “In Turkish culture, a strong value is placed on a girl’s honor, so her brother is merely putting into effect the norms of their culture” (p. 328). Relying on cultural-linguistic knowledge does not provide a satisfactory basis for dealing with this moral dilemma.

What is needed, Brockman (2001) maintains, is an epistemology based on somatic knowing. Knowing through the body is more fundamental than what we know through culture. “In short, neither culture nor language are the *source* of somatic knowledge. Somatic knowledge is received from *within* the human being; cultural knowledge is received from *without* the human being” (p. 331). With regard to the Turkish schoolgirl, while she may

For the author, this was a spiritual learning experience in that the “flow” or “life force” that she felt in that mountain retreat enabled her to make meaning of her own aging. Like somatic-embodied knowing, spiritual knowing or learning is also about meaning-making, though perhaps more difficult to accommodate than embodied learning, which does have a tie to physical sensations. While most would acknowledge that human beings are spiritual beings as well as corporal and thinking beings, our image of the adult learner has been bereft of anything remotely “spiritual.” Rather, the learner is “merely an animal to be socialized, a computer to be programmed, a unit of production to be harnessed and utilized, a consumer to be won” (Sloan, 2005, p. 27). Further, the sense of wonder and awe characteristic of a spiritual stance has been “trivialized” in “the contemporary market-driven world” to the point that “we have ended up attempting to reinvent it in Disneyland or through virtual reality (Mander, 1991)” (O’Sullivan, 2005, p. 70).

These gloomy images of learners in a virtual world are being countered by an outburst of writing and discussion on the place of spirituality in our lives generally, and in adult and higher education and human resource development specifically. Popular culture vehicles of movies, books, television shows, and magazine articles are reflecting this interest, perhaps, as some writers have speculated, because of the aging baby boom generation. Developmental psychologists dating back to Carl Jung have asserted that as adults move into midlife and beyond, there is an inward turning to contemplate the meaning of life and spiritual aspects of oneself. Indeed, in a longitudinal study of spiritual development in adulthood, “all participants, irrespective of gender and cohort, increased significantly in spirituality between late middle (mid-50s/early 60s) and older adulthood” (Wink & Dillon, 2002, p. 79).

Interest in the topic is manifest in bookstore titles, continuing education courses, and solidly conservative agencies such as the National Institutes of Health and the American Medical Association, both of which are investigating how spiritual practices such as meditation, yoga, and prayer can affect physical health. Spirituality has become a popular topic in even as unlikely a site as America’s profit-driven corporate world. Dozens of articles and books

setting. These assumptions are helpful in grasping what this dimension in learning is all about:

1. Spirituality and religion are not the same. . . .
2. Spirituality is about an awareness and honoring of wholeness and the interconnectedness of all things. . . .
3. Spirituality is fundamentally about meaning-making.
4. Spirituality is always present (though often unacknowledged) in the learning environment.
5. Spiritual development constitutes moving toward greater authenticity or to a more authentic self.
6. Spirituality is about how people construct knowledge through largely unconscious and symbolic processes, often made more concrete in art forms such as music, art, image, symbol, and ritual which are manifested culturally.
7. Spiritual experiences most often happen by surprise. [pp. 28–29]

Unlike most who write about spirituality from the individual's perspective, Tisdell embeds spirituality and learning in a cultural context. That is, one's spirituality is informed by and manifested in culturally defined experiences, symbols, myths, and rituals. While significant spiritual experiences are found in all cultures, "the meaning of those experiences is not only valued differently by different cultural communities, it is also manifested and given further expression symbolically differently in different cultures—in art, music, or ritual" (p. 86).

Tisdell's participants were also selected for their social justice orientation to practice. English (2005a) identifies this form of spirituality as "secular" or "public" in nature versus spirituality as purely private and individual in nature. English makes the case that this public form of spirituality goes hand in hand with adult education's social change agenda and that "accepting a strong twofold purpose—spirituality and social change—will move adult educators closer to reconciling the personal and collective divide in our field" (p. 1187).

In one of the few other empirical studies of spirituality, Courtenay and Milton's (2004) sample of adult educators and learners identified three components of spirituality: a sense of connectedness, a search for meaning, and an awareness of a transcendent force or energy beyond the self. And in an interesting angle on

goes on to say that we do not find grace; rather, “*to be found by grace*—we must live not only in the immediate moment but let go of ego involvement in that moment, for grace comes in by the back door. . . . While the attention is elsewhere, grace is at work in the unconscious” (p. 16).

This notion of grace as serendipitous is echoed in Dirkx’s (2001b) understanding of the soul being accessed through images. “Emotionally charged images,” he writes, “are not under the willful control of the ego.” Rather, they tend to appear spontaneously during the learning process. “They arrive as they so choose, as acts of grace” (p. 69). Drawing from Jungian psychology, these images reflect archetypes from the collective unconscious. “From an archetypal perspective, to teach in adult or higher education settings is to participate in a timeless story or myth” (Dirkx, Pratt, & Taylor, 2002, p. 95). Such conscious participation “can help us connect in a more profound manner with the animating forces of our lives” (p. 95).

In relating grace to pedagogy, Graves (1997) delineates several characteristics of grace. First, it is *transforming*, as in the preceding story of the teacher. Second, it is *healing*, stress and anger, grief, the most impoverished, can find healing in moments of grace. Third, grace *transcends the ego*. “Grace provides the perspective to see ourselves in the larger context, not just as students and teachers but as individuals connected with each other and with the world beyond ourselves” (p. 18). *Opening the possible* is the fourth characteristic. “Grace cuts through the boundaries of culture, language, race, social class, economic level, age, handicaps, intelligence level, geography, and birth. Grace interrupts the expected and creates its own channel” (p. 19). *Pointing toward what is right* is the fifth characteristic. The moral and ethical tone of grace echoes others’ writings. English, Fenwick, and Parsons (2003, p. 3) for example, write that “the most straightforward way to promote a spiritual dimension in teaching and learning is to make a deliberate attempt to think and act ethically,” simply because “ethical choices implicitly include a basic recognition of the person as spiritual” (p. 4). Grace is also about *enhancing creativity*, Graves’s sixth characteristic. Finally, grace is *surprising*, it—“shows up in unexpected places, in coincidences that prove to be extraordinary, and in synchronistic events” (p. 19). It might be recalled that surprise is one of Tisdell’s (2003) seven assumptions.

accountable “to make the best plans possible,” but at the same time we must “be ready to abandon them” (Graves, 1997, p. 20). As Graves observes, “If grace ever comes into pedagogy, it will be there not because it was planned but because the conditions were right and because some sensitive soul had the wisdom not to thwart it” (p. 20). The spontaneous and fluid nature of spirituality requires space where it can happen. An overly programmed, information dissemination–driven classroom leaves no space for significant, indeed, spiritual, learning to occur.

A number of writers underscore the importance of allowing for dialogue. English (2000) defines dialogue as “the interpersonal connections and interchanges among people that encourage and promote their spiritual development. . . . Dialogue . . . recognize[s] the other as an extension of one’s self” (p. 34). It is also through dialogue that a sense of community can be effected. It might be recalled that “connection” is one of the components of spirituality. A community of learning is people-centered, and through dialogue, discussion, and sharing, learners have the opportunity to connect with others, with their inner, spiritual selves, and perhaps with a force or energy beyond the self. This is not to ignore the difficulties in creating community in the classroom, especially in one that is culturally diverse (Hart & Holton, 1993; Tisdell, 2003).

Mentoring is an activity that can promote spiritual development. Daloz’s (1999) concept of the mentor as a guide to the holistic development of the mentee speaks of the process as a journey. The relationship is also reciprocal and nurturing of both the mentor and mentee. English, Fenwick, and Parsons (2003) position mentoring and coaching in adult education and human resource development settings. They are careful to point out that this activity “is not about increasing the bottom line. It is about relationship, support, and increasing the human spirit” (p. 93). That is not to say that the power dynamics of such a relationship be ignored; rather, it is a stance or reverence in which “the spirituality of the relationship is the reciprocity that constitutes the relationship” (p. 95).

In addition to examining one’s own stance, creating space, and mentoring, one can foster spirituality through the use of creative and imaginative activities such as visualization, storytelling, and the use of literature, poetry, art, and music. These activities can assist us in looking for “connections in unlikely places,

meaning-making, it is an appropriate topic to consider because most significant adult learning is about meaning-making. Whatever label one prefers, spirituality and the creative and imaginative techniques for eliciting its presence have a role to play in a more complete understanding of adult learning. However, what exactly that role is is open to question. While we have definitions of spirituality and conditions that might elicit it in an instructional setting, what we do not yet have is an understanding of or theoretical models of *spiritual learning* as we do, for example, with self-directed learning or transformational learning. Courtenay (personal communication, June 13, 2005) speculates that if we assume spiritual learning is about meaning-making, then:

What does that mean? Am I able to make meaning better because I use spirituality in some way? Yes, OK, then in what way? Notice I didn't ask "use spiritual learning" in some way, because I don't know what spiritual learning means, nor have I seen an acceptable definition in the literature. Staying with meaning-making further, would it be easier to explain the link between spirituality and meaning-making if we provided the opportunity for instructors and learners to ask and discuss the fundamental questions that all of us have about the meaning of life? Why are we here? What are we to do while we are here? Is this all there is and what are the implications of my answer to this question? What do I value and why? What is non-negotiable in my life and why? . . . Further issues—when meaning making is facilitated by spirituality, how is it manifested? How might it occur in an adult education classroom?

These and other questions will, we hope, shape future research and theory building in this area.

NARRATIVE LEARNING

At the close of 2004, while people were vacationing in Thailand, fishing in a coastal village of India, or just relaxing in that lull between Christmas and New Year's, an earthquake-caused tidal wave of death and destruction engulfed southeast Asia. What was impossible to grasp was made human through the *stories* of individuals—stories of how they faced then ran from the tsunami, of a village leveled, of family members being separated, some never

whose crimes . . . [are] only suggested or whispered?" (p. 26 of ms.). Individual narratives are how we story our own lives.

Finally, "just as cultures, families and individuals have narratives, so do organizations, and organizational narratives express and create the lore of the organization as in cultures and families" (Rossiter & Clark, in press, p. 30 of ms.). In adult education, these narratives can be examined, reflected upon, challenged, and even revised. Interestingly, the field of adult education itself is involved in constructing a narrative of its identity: "Are we heroes engaged in the emancipation of the oppressed? . . . Are we tour guides in the business of actualizing the human potential of people who have leisure time? Are we entrepreneurs who sell job training in a competitive marketplace? Are we all of those characters?" (p. 33 of ms.).

LEARNING THROUGH NARRATIVE

The use of narratives is common in numerous disciplines, such as psychology and literature, and fields of practice, like medicine, law, social work, and more recently, education (Hopkins, 1994). Although it has only been since the 1990s that narrative learning has received some attention in adult education, the field's historical recognition of the importance of experience in learning, as well as learning as a meaning-making activity, have made for the ready acceptance of narrative as learning. Speaking of journals, a form of narrative, Kerka (2002, p. 1) writes that "a journal is a crucible for processing the raw material of experience in order to integrate it with existing knowledge and create new meaning."

Narratives can take a number of forms, each useful as a vehicle for learning. Rossiter (2005) and Rossiter and Clark (in press) identify three ways in which stories appear in practice: "storying" the curriculum, storytelling, and autobiography. In the first, the curriculum or the text of a course is treated as a story and students interact with these texts to come to some understanding or interpretation of the subject matter. For example, in a graduate research seminar on the development of the knowledge base of adult education, Merriam made use of research journals dating back to the 1930s, periodic reviews of research, and historical literature on the founding of professional associations and graduate programs in adult education. These materials were read and examined with the goal of telling a story (not necessarily *the* story) about

way it deepens and expands our capacity for taking the perspective of another. In short, life story sharing reduces resistance to new or different points of view and serves to broaden the perspectives of all participants” (Rossiter & Clark, in press, p. 107 of ms.).

The third form of narrative, autobiographies, are by the self and about the self and can include journaling, dream logs, therapy, blogs, and what Dominice (2000) calls “educational biography.” Human beings have kept records of their lives for centuries. Some of these self-authored stories have become famous, such as St. Augustine’s *Confessions*, or *The Diary of Anne Frank*. Others, though not by famous people, have proved enormously helpful to historians who want to tell the story of some past time or event. Slave narratives, immigrant journals, and memoirs of prisoners in Nazi concentration camps are examples of such historical narratives. Blogs are the most recent form. A blog is a Web site where “you write stuff on an ongoing basis.” A blog takes any number of forms; it can be “a personal diary. A daily pulpit. A collaborative space. A political soapbox. A breaking-news outlet. A collection of links. Your own private thoughts” (<http://www.blogger.com/start>).

An early approach to one form of autobiographical methods—journaling—began in the well-known intensive workshops of the 1970s by Progoff (1975). In these workshops, which are still held today, journaling is used to foster the participant’s potential for growth and development. Indeed, research suggests there are a number of benefits in writing to the self and about the self. Brady and Sky (2003) studied fifteen older learners who kept a journal currently and had done so for at least three years. Interestingly, participants kept journals not as a lifelong activity but rather as a sporadic activity, which would be reignited by some critical life event, such as illness, death, family problems, and so on. These participants spoke of three benefits to journal writing. First, they described it as a means of coping with their day-to-day lives, including with decisions, with relationship issues, and “as an antidote to failing memory” (p. 159). A second benefit the researchers termed “the joy of discovery,” meaning that journals were “a sort of milestone for measuring one’s own progress in the journey of human development” (p. 159). Finally, journaling allowed for the nurturing of one’s voice and spirit; that is, journaling confirmed that they had “something meaningful to say” (p. 160), and it allowed for

Connections and reflection are two aspects of learning that are also present in the construction of autobiographical stories and educational biographies. Autobiographical writing requires a bit more distance from the self than does journal writing. “Because autobiography involves not only recounting memories and expressions but also finding their larger meaning, and to the extent that the activity expands the individual’s knowledge of self and the world, it constitutes learning” (Karpiak, 2000, p. 34). It is in autobiography that we can identify “patterns and meaning in our life, perhaps even building a theory of our life, or of life in general. Having stepped back and reflected, we know something now that we did not know before” (p. 34). Karpiak (2000) maintains that autobiographies are a particularly potent instructional activity, especially for courses in adult learning and adult development. As one student she interviewed said, “Autobiography helps an individual find how the course material fits into their life, as opposed to having the instructor do it for you” (p. 41). Another student said that in writing her autobiography, the concept of lifelong learning, which had previously been just a “buzz word,” now had meaning. She could “see that in one’s life each moment is a learning experience. . . . That actual living was learning” (p. 42).

Focusing on one’s educational history or how one has come to know what one knows is what Dominice (2000) calls *educational biography*. He has developed this technique into a two-semester student experience of oral and written narratives involving individual and collaborative learning. Through these biographies students see how family, schooling, and the sociocultural environment have helped them construct their identities as adult learners. “Looking at the past, checking roots, and giving names to experiential learning help adults clarify the future they want to build” (Dominice, 2000, p. 143).

NARRATIVE LEARNING, ADULT DEVELOPMENT, AND TRANSFORMATIONAL LEARNING

As is evident in the techniques already reviewed, narrative learning has very strong links to both adult development and transformational learning. As a means of understanding adult development, a narrative framework sees the life course as an unfolding story,

In Mezirow's framework, transformational learning results in a "more inclusive, discriminating, permeable, and integrative perspective," one that better accommodates the meaning one makes of one's experience (1990b, p. 14). Restorying one's life is quite similar: "Specifically, it is the question as to how I can compose a story *big* enough, with a horizon *broad* enough, to account for as much as possible of my actual life and render it available to me as a coherent, re-membered whole" (Glover, cited in Randall, 1996, p. 240).

But adult development and transformational learning also involve embodied and spiritual learning. How we story our lives includes not just cognitive but emotional, bodily, and spiritual dimensions. In a study of a culturally diverse sample of midlife men and their transformative spiritual development, Davis (2004) found that the men "cited their experiences of spirit as a time of challenge and opportunity to express emotion, connect with people, relinquish control, and move beyond the rational" (p. 122).

Life transitions and crises that trigger development, whether social, psychological, or spiritual, are often highly charged, physical, and sometimes spiritual (see Chapter Twelve). The birth of a child, a major health problem, the loss of a job, and so on are experiences that are holistic in nature. In a discussion of the role of somatic learning in transformational learning, Amann (2003) explores how kinesthetic, sensory, affective, and spiritual aspects "centraliz[e] the body so that it is integral to the learning experience. Combined with opportunities for reflection, somatic learning contributes a new perspective to the scope of transformative learning" (p. 31). Brooks and Clark (2001) point out that narratives of transformative learning are compelling *because of* their affective, somatic, and spiritual dimensions.

To summarize this section on narrative learning, it is clear that adult educators have a means of facilitating learning that all adults can relate to—stories that surround us, that define us, that we can construct, analyze, reflect upon, and learn from. Stories can be used to understand content, ourselves, and the world in which we live. Narratives are also windows into development and transformational learning. They enable us to make sense of our experience, which is what adult learning is all about.