



# STORIES TRAINERS TELL

## The Wake-up Call

### Contributor

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### Type and Purpose(s)

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Imbroglio; evaluate and evoke

### Background

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This situation brings to light what can happen when highly sensitive information is told in a public setting. The key point however, is broader and addresses learning valuable lessons in life.

### Presentation Tips

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The story can either be narrated or told. If you elect to tell it, replace parts in the story such as “they apologized profusely” with the words these nurses may have actually used in the situation. To enhance reactions to the story, have listeners put themselves in Cary’s shoes.

### Set-up

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**Option 1**—We all have situations in life where we’ve learned a valuable lesson in the moment.

**Option 2**—At sometime in our lives I suspect we have all found ourselves in situations like this one.

## The Wake-up Call

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Exhausted and concerned, Cary arrived at the hospital to visit her father after he had had a day of urology tests. Her father had been ill this time around for six weeks. Three days earlier he had been moved to the intensive care unit.

On the elevator ride to her father's room, Cary overheard two nurses talking about that "new case" in ICU. She was taken aback-they were so descriptive in their comments. She thought to herself, "That's my father they're talking about. How dare they be so inconsiderate!" The nurses continued their chat saying, "The doc is going to have to break some tough news to the family."






Cary's heart almost stopped. "Tough news," she cried to herself. "What does that mean?" At that point, Cary broke into the nurses' conversation and demanded to know what was going on with her father. "I think you are talking about my father, Mr. Thompson. What do you know about him?" she cried in an anguished tone.

The nurses were shocked into guilt-stricken silence and rushed to comfort Cary. They apologized profusely and escorted her to her father's urologist so they could talk. As they left Cary in the capable hands of her father's physician, one of the nurses commented, "I know we've always been told not to discuss patients in public areas, but I think I've just "learned my lesson" for all time. I never want to go through that again-or put a patient's family member through it either!"




We all receive wake-up calls in life. It doesn't really impact our lives until we follow through. Where have you learned a valuable lesson?

## Debrief Questions

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-  How do you think the nurses felt when Cary confronted them in the elevator?
-  What did the nurses learn from this experience?
-  When have you been in a situation similar to the one the nurses found themselves in with Cary? What was that like for you? What did you do?
-  When have you been embarrassed when confronted by some action you took? How did you recover from it?
-  What implications does this story have for your organization? Your department?

### Key: Three Levels of Debrief Questions

-  **The Story:** What the story means—its moral or main lesson. What the story characters have experienced.
-  **The Learner:** How the participant feels about the story and how it personally applies to the individual.
-  **The Organization or World:** How the story applies to the participant's work group, department, business unit, division, organization, industry, or to society-at-large.

## Key Point Options

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1. When we are busy, stressed, and/or distracted, we tend to go on “automatic pilot.” When this happens we are often not aware of the behaviors we are engaging in or the decisions we are making in the moment.
2. Recovering appropriately from an embarrassing or difficult situation can help to maintain trust in the relationship.
3. There are universal truths and universal lessons in life. These types of lessons often occur when we least expect it.

## Follow-up Activities

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**Step 1**—Small-Group Activity: Have each person talk about a situation in which they learned an important lesson or a key lesson was reinforced. Note the lesson as well as the themes that run through all the situations. Record these items on easel paper.

**Step 2**—Large-Group Discussion: Have the small groups report on their discussions. Ask the entire group: Is it possible to teach people these important lessons without them having to go through similar types of situations? If so, how would you go about doing this as a leader? When these types of situations happen to others how can they be helped to recover them and themselves?

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