

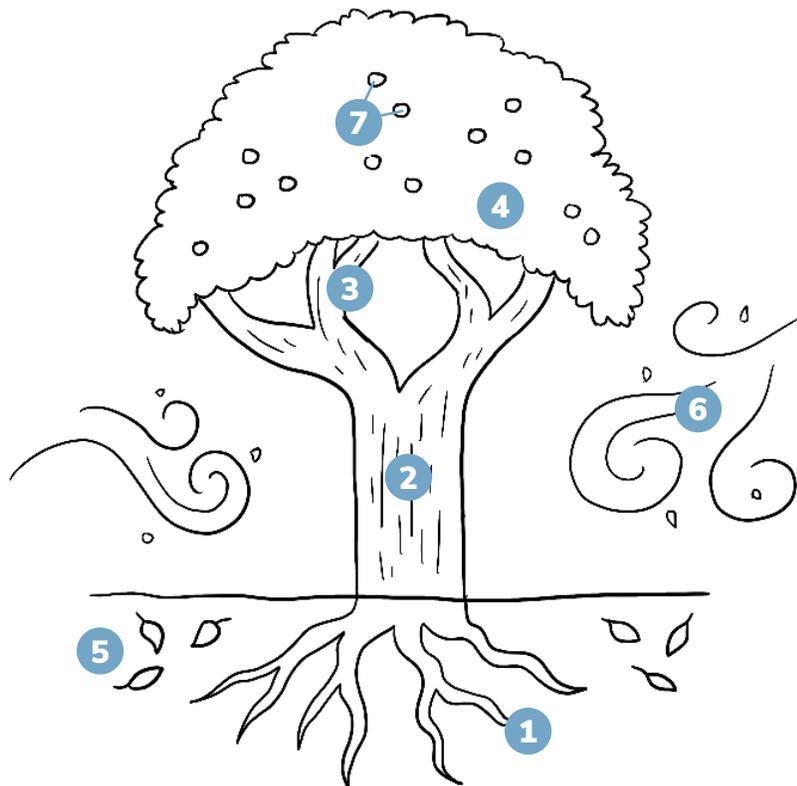
Exploring Identity Through Metaphor

Narrative therapy is interested in how stories shape identity. One useful tool that may help organize aspects of a person's narrative is the Tree of Life exercise first developed by Ncazelo Ncube and David Denborough.

The Tree of Life

Instruct the person to draw a tree, one stage at a time. At each stage, encourage the person to reflect on the list below.

- 1. Roots:** Where we are connected to the earth and our past, our ancestry, the places we come from, the people we come from, etc.
- 2. Trunk:** Our name for ourselves.
- 3. Branches:** Skills and knowledge we have learned or been taught.
- 4. Leaves:** People and animals we are connected to.
- 5. Fallen leaves:** Loved ones who have died.
- 6. Storms:** Events we are surviving or have survived.
- 7. Fruit or nuts:** Our hopes, dreams, and values for ourselves, loved ones, community, world, etc.



Encourage further conversations through reflective questions:

- Where are trees the safest? Alone or with others? (If you're in a group setting, invite everyone to collect their drawn trees into a "forest.")
- What happens to trees? (e.g., storms, forest fire, etc.)
- What are the storms in people's lives? (e.g., pain, hurt, loss, etc.)
- What do animals do when storms come? (e.g., come together, run, hide, etc.)
- What do people do when storms come? (The same...)
- When do animals know it's safe to come out? (e.g., wind, sun, new day, rain stops, no thunder, etc.)
- When do people know it's safe to come out? (e.g., yelling or fighting stops, the next morning, no drinking, feeling better inside, etc.)
- What do the animals do after the storm? (e.g., run, play, eat, live their normal life, etc.)
- What do people do after the storm? (The same...)