

# Story #11b

## *Teach Yourself*

*11. Make yourself accessible - to students - to new knowledge  
- to your genius.*

(The Teacher's Bill of Rights)

You have to transform yourself,  
take care of yourself  
and love yourself.  
And the beauty - and irony - of it all  
is that this is easier than not doing it!

I think we live in a very special moment where you and I have to start to teach ourselves. We have great friends and teachers, but we have to start taking this into our own hands. We have to start teaching our parents. Do you remember what Graham Nash said?

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...

And teach your parents well  
Their children's hell will slowly go by  
And feed them on your dreams  
The one they pick's the one you'll know by  
Don't you ever ask them, "Why?"  
If they told you, you will cry  
So just look at them and sigh  
And know they love you

Songwriters: Graham Nash  
Teach Your Children lyrics © Nash Notes

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So, the question is ... how do you teach yourself? Well, instead of talking about it, let's illustrate an actual self-teaching session. It happened to me when I was at a conference for The Collaborative for Spirituality in Education at Columbia University in NYC, NY in November of 2019. I was giving a workshop where I brought up the following question ...

If we are to take the process of learning into our own hands, isn't it time to re-write some legends?

Are we possibly in a special time that calls for greater individuality? Without being more egotistical, is there a way to handle our own destiny at a greater level? Let's look at an example of what I mean. Here is an ancient Cherokee legend. Listen to it and listen for anything you would change in it. After I read it, I will show you how I wished to re-write this legend.

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*Two Wolves*

*An old Cherokee was teaching his grandson about life.  
"A fight is going on inside me," he said to the boy.  
"It is a terrible fight and it is between two wolves.  
One is evil, the other is good.  
The same fight is going on inside you –  
and inside every other person, too."  
The grandson thought about it for a minute  
and then asked his grandfather,*

*"Which wolf will win?"  
The old Cherokee simply replied,  
"The one you feed."*

*- an Ancient Cherokee Legend*

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This is an ancient story from the Cherokee of North America that has been passed down for many generations. Clearly, it is wonderful advice about choosing good over evil. Although I have great respect for this legend, I feel that this incredibly important time we live in calls for even greater respect.

My new version of this legend is a little different. In teaching emotionally disturbed NJ high school students, then in the Chinese school system, then the NC prisons, then teaching children of incarcerated individuals my views of good and bad people changed. Something shifted. So, with this scaffolding, I give you Two Wolves II ...

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### *Two Wolves II*

*Two wolves live  
inside of me.  
One is trapped  
the other free.  
The two of them  
just want to be.*

*They fight sometimes.  
Now good, now bad.  
The trapped one wants  
what the other had.*

*I feel this fight  
when I am sad.*

*Grandpa said,  
“Watch who you feed.  
He will win.  
He’ll take the lead.”  
I hope some day  
that both are freed.*

*- John Bickart 2011, inspired by an Ancient Cherokee  
Legend*

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Should we touch ancient legends? I apologize if this offends ... but it seems that we humans stand at an important moment in our history. There is a question as to whether or not we will survive the great change that is upon us. Perhaps many of us will step up or maybe not. And if stepping up means re-writing the codes we have lived by for thousands of years – then so be it.

What old ways should we leave behind? What is the blood and guts of a new story? Perhaps one new way has something to do with inclusion ... perhaps we will find a way to include both of our previous ideas about who is good and who is evil? Can we conceive of a use of both the light and the dark ... an honoring of the light, while transforming the dark?

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## #133 *Speaking in Fables*



*There once was a magical place. If people who could speak normally went in, they were changed while they were inside, then they came out SPEAKING IN FABLES. What does that mean, you say? Well, to speak in fables one must take an ordinary situation and then see something extra. Then, one must put the extra with the ordinary to come out with something EXTRAORDINARY! That's hard to understand, so I'll give you a simple example.*

*An ordinary way to speak about a candle is to say that we see it every day and we light it in order to see better or we light it just*

*for fun. But to speak in fables, one must observe the flame so carefully that you notice that flames are hot and always go up. It is as if they are little droplets of Sun, going up to return to their home. And if you continue speaking in fables, you would follow such an extraordinary comparison with more observations. You would trace the origin of the candle all of the way back to the Sun. You would say that the flame came from burning wick and wax. The wax came from the Earth, which came from decaying plants, which grew from sunlight. And so, to speak in fables, one might end with thanks to the Sun for every flame - the small droplets of Sun on Earth.*

*Oh yes, and where is that magical place where one learns to speak in fables? It is called a school.*

### *LEARN TO SPEAK IN FABLES*

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(Bickart, 2020)



#### References

Bickart, J. (2020). *Bickart's Just-in-Time Fables (Volume 3)* (Vol. 3). Asheville, NC: Red Shirt Interactive Group.