



Trying Our Luck – Preparing for a Career and Navigating Through Life with Folk Tales

Guide for the use of the folk tale cards

Aminbeg

Bashkir folktale

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The tale – Aminbeg

A long time ago, and a long way away, there once lived an old couple who had a son called Aminbeg. Aminbeg's parents wanted him to become a merchant who bought and sold things at the market, but the boy was much more interested in science and the arts, and he hated the idea. All the same, when he turned sixteen, his parents gave him a hundred gold coins and sent him on a long journey, saying, "You must visit faraway cities, our son, and learn everything a good merchant should know!"

Aminbeg set off. He walked until he reached a big city and he spent the night at an inn. Lying in his bed, he wondered what exactly he should learn, but before he could make up his mind, he fell fast asleep.

When the boy woke up the next morning, he heard someone shouting under his window. "On the edge of the city lives a one-hundred-year-old man. If you want to learn how to write, go to see him and he'll teach you!"

Aminbeg was very excited. He immediately got out of bed and went to the old man's house. When he opened the door, the man smiled. "I will teach you to write in one year! All it will cost you is a hundred gold coins."

And that's just what happened. A year later, Aminbeg was able to write so beautifully that everyone was amazed. But not only did he write beautifully, he was also so skilful that he only had to see someone's handwriting once and he could imitate it perfectly. He said goodbye to the old man, packed his bag, and went back home to his parents.

When they found out that their son hadn't done what they asked, Aminbeg's parents were very upset. Once more, they gave him a hundred gold coins, saying, "Now this time, you really must learn to be a merchant!"

So Aminbeg set off a second time. In the evening, he reached another big city and he went to an inn. Just like the last time, he fell asleep wondering what to do with his life.

The next morning, when Aminbeg looked out of the window, he heard someone shouting. "In the middle of the city lives a man with a red beard. If you want to learn how to play chess, go to see him and he'll teach you!"

"That's it!" Aminbeg thought to himself, and he hurried to visit the man with the red beard. They agreed that for a hundred gold coins, the man would teach the boy how to play chess in the space of a year.

And that's just what happened. A year later, he was so good at the game that he could beat the most famous chess players in the land. He said goodbye to the man with the red beard, packed his bag, and went back home to his parents.



Just like before, his parents were very disappointed. “We earned that money with our hard work and you’ve just wasted it!” In the end, though, they calmed down and gave him yet another hundred gold coins, saying, “This time you absolutely have to learn to be a merchant!”

Just like on his previous trips, on the first evening of his new journey, Aminbeg arrived at a big city, and again he slept at an inn. The next morning, when he stepped out into the street, he saw a man who was calling out in a loud voice. “In the market square lives a musician. If you want to learn how to play the violin, go to see him and he’ll teach you!”

Feeling incredibly excited, Aminbeg immediately went to see the musician. “Let me be your pupil and I’ll give you a hundred gold coins!” After a year, he could play the violin so beautifully that even his teacher was amazed.

Once again, Aminbeg went back home. But when he told them what he had learned, his parents were more furious with him than ever. They felt so ashamed at having such a good-for-nothing son that they couldn’t bear to face their neighbours and they decided to move to a different village.

The family quickly packed up their belongings and set off on their journey. They hadn’t been travelling long when they became hungry, but when they searched for a few coins, they found that they had no more money left. Aminbeg’s parents shouted at their son angrily. “You’re the cause of all our problems. We had to leave our village and now we can’t even afford a loaf of bread – and it’s all because of you!” Just then, a caravan of camels passed by. Without thinking twice, the boy’s parents sold him to the caravan master.

Aminbeg travelled on with the caravan, and they soon came to a desert where everything was as dry as a bone. The men became very thirsty, but after a long search, they finally found an old well. The camel drivers tied a bucket to a long rope and then lowered it into the well, but when they pulled it back up, the bucket didn’t have a single drop of water in it.

“Alright, boy, you try,” said the caravan master to Aminbeg. “Maybe you’ll have better luck!”

And with that, they put the bucket in Aminbeg’s hand, tied a rope around his waist, and lowered him down. When he had reached the bottom of the well, the boy looked around, but instead of water, all he could see was a large stone. When he looked closer, he noticed that a faint light was glowing beneath it. Aminbeg lifted the stone – and he was instantly blinded by a dazzling flash. He had uncovered a deep hole, which was filled to the brim with gold. Without thinking twice, he filled the bucket and shouted for it to be pulled up. The camel drivers were delighted and they lowered the bucket once more. When the last grain of gold was gone, Aminbeg tied the rope around his waist again. “Help me get back out!” he called – but when he was only halfway up the well, the men started talking among themselves.



"If we pull him up," they said, "he'll claim all of the treasure for himself." So they cut the rope and the poor boy fell back down to the bottom of the well. For a while, he just lay in a daze, and then he began wondering how he could escape from his underground prison. As he began to grope in the dark, his hand bumped against a heavy iron plate. He lifted it and saw a twisting tunnel. Aminbeg bravely set off down the tunnel and before long he reached an enormous cave. At the back of the cave, he spotted a figure who looked sad and sick and tired – it was the Spirit of the Wells.

The boy approached and bowed respectfully. The Spirit growled angrily, but Aminbeg wasn't the least bit afraid. Just then, he spotted a violin in the corner and asked if he could take a look at it. The next moment, he began to play the instrument, and the music he made was so beautiful that the Spirit of the Wells was cured of his illness in the blink of an eye.

"How did you get here?" asked the Spirit, who was feeling much friendlier now. And Aminbeg told him all about how the greedy camel drivers had treated him.

"You don't know how much you have helped me," said the Spirit. "But now let me help you!" And with that, he put the boy on his back, and a second later they were standing by the top of the well. Then the Spirit gave Aminbeg a donkey and sent him on his way.

Aminbeg soon caught up with the camels. When the caravan master looked behind him, he couldn't believe his eyes – he thought the boy was dead! Very quickly, the man wrote a letter and handed it to Aminbeg, saying, "Ride to the city as fast you can and deliver this to my wife!"

Aminbeg set off at once, but he felt very suspicious, so as soon as he had left the caravan behind, he opened the letter. And this is what it said: "Kill the boy who gives you this and bury his body so that no one will ever find it!"

Without hesitation, Aminbeg tore the letter up and wrote another in its place, closely imitating the handwriting of the caravan master: "Welcome the boy who gives you this. Take him into our house. Give him food and drink. Treat him well until I return!"

Some time later, Aminbeg arrived at the caravan master's house and he handed the letter to the man's wife. When the woman read her husband's words, she smiled and led the boy inside. She fed him, gave him water, and made sure he was very comfortable. When it was late, Aminbeg went to bed, but before he did so, he looked out of the window. He saw that all of the houses in the city were in darkness – except for the biggest one of all, where the windows were brightly lit up.

"Why is someone burning candles at this time of night?" he asked the woman. "Who lives in that house?"



"That's no house," she replied, "it's a palace. The Lord of the City lives there. He loves chess and I bet he's still playing now. He's almost unbeatable, but they say that he'll give all his power and wealth to whoever defeats him in a game."

As soon as the sun had come up, Aminbeg went to the palace. "How can I help you, my friend?" asked the Lord.

"I've heard that you're very good at chess and that no one can beat you," replied Aminbeg. "I've come to try my luck!"

"Very well," smiled the man. "If you win, my power and wealth are yours. But if I win, your head is mine."

"It's a deal!" said Aminbeg bravely.

And with that, they sat down at the chessboard to play. Aminbeg won three games in a row. He was just about to set up the board for a fourth game when the Lord stopped him. "I'm old. I'm tired of governing this city. I've been looking for the right person to take over from me. And I do believe I have just found him."

So it was that Aminbeg became the new Lord of the City and received all the old man's wealth.

In the meantime, the caravan arrived and the caravan master hurried home. "Well, my wife, did you do what I told you to in my letter?"

"I did!" replied the woman. "I welcomed the boy. I fed him, and treated him like he was our own son!"

"Oh, you fool!" shouted the caravan master. "That's not what I wrote at all. Fetch me that letter, and I'll read it to you if you're so brainless!"

The woman handed her husband the letter, but when he read it, he could hardly believe his eyes. This is what it said: "Welcome the boy who gives you this. Take him into our house. Give him food and drink. Treat him well until I return!"

The caravan master was so angry, he didn't know which way to turn. "Where is the little devil?" he screamed.

"In the palace," said his wife. "He's the new Lord of the City."

Not long after that, Aminbeg's parents arrived in the city. They were now sorry that they had wanted to make their son a merchant, but when they saw him standing on the balcony of the beautiful palace, they were overjoyed. He had grown up to be not just a man, but a lord. With his thirst for science and the arts, he had realized his dreams!



As Lord of the City, Aminbeg built many schools. All of the citizens became educated and cultured. And Aminbeg's fame spread all over the world.

(Source: Ildikó Boldizsár: Mesék a felnőtté válásról [Stories About Growing Up]. Retold by Paul Crowson.)



Guide to the tale

When we become adults, we all start out like Aminbeg. We have ambitions, the expectations of our parents and those around us, and a certain amount of resources. The big question for all of us is what to do with all this.

Where should we begin? Should we learn something that may give us the chance of a well-paid job? Should we listen to our parents and the others who are close to us and choose accordingly? Or should we do something that we consider important? What kind of knowledge and skills do we need to get ahead?

In the end, Aminbeg chooses to listen to his heart – although the tale does not tell us how he feels about this. The boy's parents try to make a merchant out of him three times, but on each occasion he prefers to seize the opportunities that come his way and do what interests him. If we take a look at what he is learning, we might imagine a sort of bachelor's degree in the humanities, which equips him with seemingly mismatched skills and abilities.

We mustn't be too quick to judge his parents either. They presumably want the best for their son and repeatedly provide the resources to start him off in the 'right direction'. No matter how supportive they may be, however, parents can never set the right direction for their children. One of the most important steps in becoming independent and growing up is to start to go our own way, even if it leads us far from parental expectations.

In spite of this, at the beginning of the story Aminbeg is not truly aware of what his own way actually is. He doesn't really know what he wants and simply goes wherever an opportunity presents itself. He doesn't really think about how he will actually use what he has learned. To genuinely be in control of his life, he needs more than that, and our tale relates how he finally gains this 'more'.

Time after time, Aminbeg returns home, expecting – and getting – help from his parents, until they have finally had enough. We are perhaps reminded of someone who finds it hard to fully grow up, graduating from one university after another and being supported by their parents into their thirties. This is not an ideal solution for starting adult life and so radical action is needed: Aminbeg is sold to the caravan master.

Before we become too shocked by the cruelty of this image, which seems to be that of a child being sold into slavery, let us pause for a moment to consider the symbolism and situation of the tale itself. In the Middle Ages, a very common way of educating a child was to offer – or even sell – them as an apprentice. The child had the chance to learn a trade and eventually earn their way out of their position. The tale informs us that Aminbeg's situation is not truly slavery, because otherwise the caravan master would not have been worried about the boy claiming the gold he had found.



What might the caravan itself represent? What is the step Aminbeg has to take here? Depending on where we are in life, the caravan we join may be many things. A caravan is a journey towards a goal and a means of survival in the desert. Aminbeg needs just that, a direction where he can put what he has learned to good use. A caravan can be a kind of workplace, where people work together for survival (payment) in the interests of someone else's goals. But what happens if we 'strike gold' while we are part of the caravan?

Aminbeg is young and naive, so he trusts his companions unquestioningly and shares his gold with them. His 'reward' for this is to have the rope cut and find himself all alone at the bottom of the well.

The caravan master may be an external adversary, but – since everything in a folk tale is actually played out within us – it is worth examining what internal obstacles he may represent.

Naivety, overconfidence, and a lack of critical thinking are big problems. Most of us go through the disappointment of being deceived, taken advantage of, or simply treated as invisible. It is our gold that people want, not us.

This is the turning point in the story. Aminbeg is very 'down' – both physically and psychologically. But does he have the resources to get back on his feet? A shift in consciousness is needed, and Aminbeg does indeed adjust his mindset: he begins to grope around and eventually finds the way out.

The boy's path leads him to the Spirit of the Wells, who is slumped in a cave, depressed and in a dark place himself. Aminbeg could opt to simply join the Spirit and endure its (his own?) unfriendly attitude, but instead he looks around and finally puts what he has learned to good use.

The violin is a symbol of music, and music is a symbol of the arts and of creativity. Creativity can be a good way to get out of the 'hole' in which we find ourselves. It is certainly the right choice for Aminbeg: not only does the Spirit free him from his trap, but also provides him with a donkey. (Who or what does the Spirit represent in our lives? What internal and external resources can free us from the hole we find ourselves in?)

Still in the middle of the desert, Aminbeg rejoins the caravan, but now he is no longer naive and he confidently thwarts the caravan master's next scheme, this time by using another of the things he has learned: literacy. What does literacy represent here? Perhaps it is obtaining information, the skill of critical thinking, and the ability to use that information in order to make decisions.

Now in more favourable circumstances (as a guest in the caravan master's own home, no less), it is time for Aminbeg to take control over his life, and he does so using his talent for chess. Knowing how to play chess – having the ability to think things through, to make sense



of systems, to think strategically, and to anticipate what lies ahead – is an important tool in reaching his ultimate goal.

At the end of the tale, Aminbeg's trauma caused by the caravan master has faded into the background, and the long-awaited parental recognition and blessing is finally his.



Working with the tale on our own

Working through a story on our own is an exciting experience, but it is not at all straightforward. In folk tales, order is restored by the end; the heroes go on a journey, and through that they develop.

This is our task too – to interpret the turns and ‘codes’ of the folk tale for our own lives, to find the steps that will help us to become better masters and mistresses of our own lives.

When we begin to work through ‘Aminbeg’, we should first listen to or read the story and then sit back and let the mood of the tale wash over us. Even with our eyes closed, we can find a taste, a smell, or an image from the story. What would we take from the story if we could? Where in the story are we, and what role are we playing?

Then we should take a pencil and write down our answers to the questions (on the cards or in the text here). We should focus on the questions that speak to us the most. Not all questions may be relevant to us, but those that are, are worth thinking about at length, or even talking about with others – parents, friends, peers, or even helpers.

In what way does this happen? Probably some character, place, or object captures our imagination. The elements in a folk tale do not necessarily mean the same thing to everyone, and in fact, when we work on the story on our own, we interpret the situations, characters, etc. that appear in it completely for ourselves.

Let us first look at the characters in the story.

If we are young people just starting out in life, like Aminbeg, it is the boy with whom we will most likely identify. After all, he is the hero of the tale. But if we are dealing with the tale as a coach because we want to use it with our clients later on, for example, we might also see ourselves in some kind of helping role – either as Aminbeg’s various teachers, the Spirit of the Wells, or even the Lord of the City. Indeed, we may also be looking at the story from the perspective of a parent who has expectations but experiences disappointment.

Each character has their own strengths, their own role, and their own message. The characters’ cards carry these messages.

a) The Parents’ card refers to family background, and it is worth reflecting on what we bring from our own family, or as parents – if we find ourselves in that role in the story – what legacy we are passing on, and what overt and unstated expectations we have received and are passing on to our offspring.

b) From his teachers, Aminbeg learns specific knowledge, and he even surpasses them in certain aspects. If we are teachers ourselves, how do we relate to it when a pupil surpasses his mentor? As young people, what drives us to surpass the knowledge of our teachers and



predecessors? What does 'surpassing something' actually mean? Do we want to reach or exceed some professional or other goal? On the other hand, who are those from whom we ourselves have learned a lot? Which of their characteristics make us want to identify with them? Which of these do we have in ourselves?

c) The Spirit of the Wells dwells in the depths and is, in today's language, somewhat burnt out, broken, and directionless. But he has a violin, which Aminbeg uses to heal him, and then it is the Spirit who brings the boy out of the depths and provides him with a source of strength. What does the Spirit of the Wells know? What are the abilities and resources which we can mobilize within ourselves to help us get out of difficult situations?

d) The caravan master is the chief antagonist in the story. He is the one who exploits Aminbeg's naivety and who wants to destroy him. When we focus on this character, we are searching for the inner obstacle that pushes (and holds) us down, that prevents us from asserting ourselves, that stops us formulating and achieving our goals. It may be a lack of confidence; it may be procrastination. The caravan master is also the one who writes the letter that determines (or at least intends to determine) Aminbeg's fate – that is, his childhood socialization. When working with the caravan master, we have to identify the internal factors, the inherited and received patterns, and the elements of our own behaviour that prevent us from achieving our goals.

We can also study the various locations in the tale. In which setting can we find ourselves? Each scene presents its own tasks, which we have to perform in order to arrive at the next way station.

a) The first location is the parents' house. We return to this place several times, but the ultimate goal is to break away from it and become independent. From this place we get resources, but we may also be subject to excessive expectations and pressure, and it is thus frequently a source of tension. We must ask ourselves whether or not we really want to meet these expectations. Are we willing to trade the security provided by our childhood home for insecurity in the interests of becoming self-reliant?

b) The second (recurring) location is the city, the arena of learning. Here Aminbeg does 'nothing more' than learn. What are the sites of our own learning? What are we learning? From where and from whom? Are we learning what is expected of us or what we actually want to? Can we see meaning in our learning? Are we able to make use of all the knowledge we accumulate? Many questions about learning arise here.

c) The focal point of the next scene is the caravan. The caravan can represent many things that we do because we have to. We can also experience school or a workplace as a 'caravan'. Have we ever felt like we 'sold out' for security and survival? What can be learned from such



a situation? Why might staying with the caravan be worth it? What might be the value of returning to it? Why do some people choose to stay permanently?

d) We go to the bottom of the well several times in our lives. In folk tales, such underground places represent not only an emotional low point, but also learning about ourselves and our own inner depths. If we are in the well, how did we come to be there? Who or what cut the rope? What is up to us? What can we change? What can we do when we are at the bottom of the well? How can we get out? When we are down in the well, it is worth putting together our own 'antidepressant therapy', and then if we do hit the bottom, we will have something to turn to.

e) Alongside the caravan and rewriting our own destiny, we all carry a 'book of destiny' – our personal socialization that guides us somewhere and destines us for something. It is made up of the expectations of our parents (perhaps never spoken but only implied), the influence of our peers and environment, and the values, traditions and behaviours we have brought with us. To go our own way, we must be able to 'read' and understand the messages in our book of destiny – and then rewrite them. What is it that determines the way we act? Which of these things do we want to keep and which would we gladly discard?

f) The caravan master's house – or rather his wife's house – is an important location. Here Aminbeg rests and gathers his strength for his last great challenge. Where can we rest and gather our strength? What relaxes us? What makes us feel safe? How can we give ourselves the care that Aminbeg received from the caravan master's wife?

g) The final location in the tale is the Lord of the City's palace. This is the goal of the folk tale journey, in fact, it is the goal of us all: to become the lord of our own life. It is worth thinking about what this palace looks like. What is the life we want to live? Where are we going? What steps do we need to take to get there? What are we prepared to risk? (Aminbeg is apparently risking his head, but in reality, he can rely on his knowledge and skills.)

Objects that feature in a folk tale can also be important. These objects represent resources that can help us to solve the problems we encounter in the tale. The following are possible interpretations, but it is possible that in a given situation, each object may have a completely different meaning for each of us.

a) In 'Aminbeg', the first objects that appear are the parents' gold coins. What 'gold coins' have we received from our own our parents? It is worth thinking about all the positive things – and not just material things – that come from our parents and our parents' house. It could be a love of reading, companionship, relationships, and a thousand other things. We should think about it.

b) The next objects are parchment and a quill – the tools of literacy. When Aminbeg begins to use this knowledge, it actually turns out to be a symbol of him abandoning his naivety and



starting to inform himself and think critically. What do we ourselves do with the basic skills of reading and writing? Do we use our literacy to become sufficiently well informed? So that not only can literacy not be used against us, but that it can actually be beneficial to us? What skills and knowledge do we need to acquire in order to be able to do this?

c) Next comes the chess set. It is a symbol of strategic thinking. To win at chess, we need to see the bigger picture. We must understand what is happening, why it is happening, and what influences what in the game. How much do we have a picture of how the world around us works? To what extent can we recognize its inherent system?

d) The last object is the violin. To play it is the final skill that Aminbeg learns, even though he has wanted to do so from the beginning, since the tale's introduction tells us that he is keen on the arts. And interestingly enough, when he is in trouble it is this skill that he needs to use first. The violin may symbolize the arts and creativity. How do we relate to these things? What do we enjoy creating? Where does our creativity come from? What gives us the inspiration and strength to rise back up when we have reached the lowest point?

When we work by ourselves with the tale, we can start from several directions, and there is no single, linear approach. Although the locations and the tasks that appear in the story are presented in a deliberate order, we can work on the other themes in roughly any sequence.

Reaching the conclusion of a folk tale doesn't always happen that quickly. Sometimes it takes years before we are truly able to take control of our lives. Here and now, our task is to formulate the best steps to reach our goal, and to check from time to time that we are going in the right direction, perhaps travelling together with the caravan or even on the back of our spirit-given donkey.



Working with the tale as a coach

When we want to work with the story as a coach, the first step is to work with the story ourselves – that is, to think through the steps detailed in the previous section.

Before we start working with the story as a coach, it is necessary to have a subjective interpretation of the tale, an interpretation of the story as it applies to our own personal life, because it is very important to avoid imposing our own interpretation on our clients. To do this, we need to know what our own interpretation is. On the other hand, it is also important to interpret the folk tale in relation to our own lives, so that we do not run into questions and topics that trigger an emotional reaction in us while working with the client.

At the same time, however, we also need to interpret the story objectively, and to think through the possible interpretations from the client's point of view.

Ildikó Boldizsár calls these two approaches the 'objective and subjective story matrix'. In the objective matrix, we interpret the story itself, while in the subjective matrix we examine ourselves in the light of the story.

The objective matrix of the tale 'Aminbeg' is as follows:

- a) Who is the hero of the tale? – The hero is the one who develops, in this case Aminbeg.
- b) What is the life situation? – This is a tale of starting out in life.
- c) What is the challenge of the tale? – The main challenge is whether Aminbeg is able to use his knowledge, rewrite his destiny, and become independent (and take control over his own life).
- d) Who/what are the helpers? – Aminbeg's teachers and the knowledge they give the boy; the Spirit of the Wells, with whom Aminbeg puts his knowledge into practice, causing a turning point in not only Spirit's fortunes, but Aminbeg's life as well.
- e) Who is the adversary? – Aminbeg's naivety, his lack of confidence, and his lack of direction, as well as his 'book of destiny', which has already been written.
- f) What is the solution? – Aminbeg can only get ahead by applying his skills and trusting in himself.

The subjective matrix of the tale 'Aminbeg' is as follows:

- a) Who am I in the story? – I may identify with Aminbeg as a helper, or I may identify with another character.



b) Where am I in the story? – I may have control over my life, but I may also be struggling to learn a lot of new things, and subsequently failing to apply or use them. Or maybe I am at the bottom of the well myself.

c) What is my role here?

d) What is my own internal adversary that I must overcome in order to move forward?

e) What is my inner help, my own resources for change?

f) What object would I take from the story for myself?

g) What is the very specific thing I need to do to move forward in this situation?

After a thorough reflection on the tale, we can begin to work on it with our clients. If we are working with a client in an individual process, the main question is really where to start, considering in what place and at what stage of development our client is. We might have already ascertained this during prior conversations, but we may give them the story, or they may listen to it and determine this for themselves.

Then, based on the client's interpretation and the interpretations made in previous sessions, we should go through the questions formulated in the previous sessions and on the cards during the facilitation process, which may sometimes take several sessions. Not all questions need to be worked with, some are relevant, others less so. It is possible that new questions will arise from the questions on the cards, and we will move on from there. The cards mainly feature questions, however sometimes there is a specific problem to solve.

Sometimes we may come across a topic that is no longer within the scope of the current story. We can then continue with another story and return to this one later.

The aim of the process is to formulate what the 'city' that the client wishes to become the 'lord' of actually is, and to define the steps that will lead there: what knowledge to acquire, where to get it, and how to apply it. An important task in this is to rewrite the 'messages' they are carrying – to establish what the client's pre-written destiny is and consciously put it on a different track.

In the following are suggestions on how to engage with the story with young people in groups as well.



A possible scenario for a group activity

The purpose of the folk tale work group: To explore and mobilize inner resources; to prepare clients to take control of their lives; to galvanize their creative powers.

Target age group: Young people aged 18-23 (possibly older), still only partially independent from their parents.

Duration: 60 minutes.

Number of participants: No more than 20.

Preparation of the venue:

The setting for the story group should be prepared according to the atmosphere of the tale. It is important that participants can sit in a circle – perhaps not on chairs, but on cushions. There should be a clear point of entry, which could be the door of the room, but if this is not possible, or if the room is too large, then a ‘gateway’ should be set up.

There should be sufficient but not too much lighting. If there are tables, we should place them by the wall; they can be useful for individual work later. If there are no tables, we need to bring drawing boards or folders for the participants to write or draw on.

Next to the ‘gateway’, already inside the space, we place symbol cards that the participants can choose from when they enter, before they sit down. These can be OH cards, Dixit cards, or even a personal collection of pictures or postcards – the main thing is that they depict different situations and feelings, and that there should be at least one and a half to two times more cards than participants so that everyone can choose freely.

In the centre of the circle, it is worth putting a colourful shawl, or perhaps a flower or a symbol related to the story. In the case of ‘Aminbeg’, we could choose a violin, a chessboard, or a piece of parchment with a quill – perhaps all of them together, or, if we are focusing on one particular theme or object, only the one in question.

Outside the circle, close to the group leader, we place any other desired props, including the folk tale cards, and the printed handouts for colouring and writing on.

If storytelling is done using video, the computer, projector, screen/wall surface, and speakers should also be prepared and tested so as not to hinder the process.

If the group is already in the room before we start, we should ask everyone to leave, and only lay out the symbol cards, shawl, symbols, etc. when the group is waiting outside.

Tools needed:



A shawl or piece of material for the centre of the circle, decorative items, symbol cards, drawing boards if needed, pens, coloured pencils, drawing equipment, the folk tale cards, and enough copies of the handouts for each participant.

Possibly: a computer, projector, screen/wall space, speakers.

Script:

(timings are approximate, being dependent on the size of the group)

1. Entrance

Duration: 5 minutes

We allow group members to enter, preferably one at a time, and give each of them the following task:

– What does learning mean to you? Choose a picture that expresses this and then sit down with it.

When everyone has made their choice and is seated, we can join in.

2. Getting in the mood

Duration: 10-15 minutes

We discuss the cards chosen by the participants. We shouldn't go round in a circle and not everyone necessarily has to share their card. When everyone who wishes to do so has spoken, we can discuss what 'learning' and 'development' actually mean.

During the conversation, we can ask the following questions:

Have you ever learned something that others – perhaps your parents – didn't consider to be useful? What happened? How did you feel?

3. Storytelling

Duration: about 10 minutes

When similar stories have been told and we continue with this particular tale, we should provide the following introduction:



– Once there was a boy who was in a similar situation in his life. Would you like to hear his story?

The storytelling should preferably be done by ourselves, in our own words, because in this way we can maintain contact with the participants. If we cannot tell the story personally, we can read it aloud or listen to a recording/watch a video of the tale.

If we are telling the story ourselves, before it begins, we might ask the participants to close their eyes and concentrate on their breathing. When everyone is focused, we can start.

We can also use a musical instrument (e.g. koshi chimes, a kalimba, or a sansula) to put the participants in the mood for the storytelling experience.

At the end of the story, we again ask the participants to close their eyes and, allowing enough time for their own internal imagery to be activated, we give them the following tasks:

- ❖ Pick a colour from the story!
- ❖ Pick a smell from the story!
- ❖ Pick an object from the story!
- ❖ Look around you, where are you in the story? What surrounds you, who is near you?

4. Processing

Duration: 35-40 minutes

After everyone has returned from the story, we discuss who has taken what from the story, what landscape they found themselves in. Answering is not obligatory; the participants can volunteer to speak if they wish to. Regarding the locations, we can ask the participants what the task in that particular place is.

Following this, we distribute the drawing equipment and boards, and then the handouts, giving a little time for individual work.

The first outline for colouring we give out is the violin. Playing the violin was the first of Aminbeg's skills that he actually used.

Violin Card: We discuss what the violin might represent. We then invite the participants to decorate the violin on the page for themselves and to write down the resources, activities, and pastimes that inspire and energize them.

After a short period of individual work (or while it is still in progress), we invite those participants who wish to, to share what they have written.



For individual work at home, we can give out the Self-Attunement Card.

The second skill Aminbeg used was literacy, when he rewrote the caravan master's letter.

Here we can talk about the following:

Parchment Card: What can knowing how to write – and more importantly, how to read – represent? How much do you analyse what you read and hear? Which people can be deceived or manipulated, and why? How can this be avoided?

Rewriting Our Destiny Card: Who or what writes our destiny? How can we rewrite it?

(It is best to issue this particular card/outline for individual work at home. It requires at least one or more additional sessions and special preparation by the coach.)

The third skill is chess.

Here we can discuss the following questions while working on the outline:

Chess Card: What can chess symbolize? How well do you understand processes and human dynamics?

What 'games of chess' will you have to play in the near future? Write them down above the picture of the chess piece.

What skills would you like to improve before the 'match'? Write this on the chess piece itself.

What steps must you take to be able to do this? Write this below the chess piece.

After a short period of individual work (or while it is still in progress), we invite those participants who wish to, to share what they have written.

5. Closure / Exit

When our time is up, some people will still be working. We conclude the session by asking everyone to leave the story space within a few minutes. We walk through the 'gateway' and meet whoever is ready to leave, one by one.



There, we ask the given person if they would like to show us their chess piece (it is not obligatory), and we ask about the first move they will make in order to win the next chess match in their life.