**CHARACTER ARC PROGRESSION EXAMPLE:**

**Marlin (*Finding Nemo*)**

When it comes to poignant character elements, none are quite as formative as the wounding event. It generates crippling fears, changes the way the character views himself and the world, and spawns unhealthy coping mechanisms that do more harm than good—all of which results in someone who is stuck in dysfunction, with contentment and fulfillment perpetually beyond their grasp. This is where your story, and the character's arc, begins.

But what, you might ask, does the wound have to do with character arc? How does it all fit together? Allow us
to introduce the Character Arc Progression tool—a streamlined flowchart that uses the wound and its aftereffects to help you figure out what basic need your character is missing because of the wounding event, the story goal they'll pursue in order to fill that lack, likely sources of conflict to impede their progress, and much more. Using the questions below, start anywhere on the flowchart and fill in the missing pieces as you discover them. If you get stuck, The Emotional Wound Thesaurus Tutorial can help you see how the different elements work together, and the thesaurus itself is a good brainstorming tool for coming up with possible wounding events. For an example of how this tool can be used, see the sample below. You can also click here for your own blank template.

| OUTER MOTIVATION | To find his son and return him to safety |
| INNER MOTIVATION | When his wife and other children were killed, Marlin's safety and security vanished. All his decisions and actions are now driven by the desire to keep Nemo safe so Marlin won'thave to bear that pain again. |
| OUTER CONFLICT | An entire ocean lying between him and Nemo, marine dangers (sharks, jellyfish, fishing boats), problems inadvertently caused by Dory's forgetfulness |
| INNER CONFLICT | The belief that only he can keep his son safe; believing that the world is a deadly place where bad things will always happen; a need to control; isolationist tendencies; trust issues |
| THE LIE | *I failed to save my wife and children; therefore, to prove my worth as a father, I must go to any and all lengths to protect Nemo.* |
| WOUND | The violent death of his wife and children |
| FEAR | *If I'm not vigilant—if I don't completely shelter my son and control his life—something bad will happen to him.* |
| RESOLUTION | Through a series of lessons, Marlin will learn that it's impossible (and unhealthy) to hide Nemo away from the world and control all aspects of his life in an effort to keep him safe. An encounter with a sea turtle teaches him that he must trust Nemo and give him space if he wants to have a good relationship with his son... |