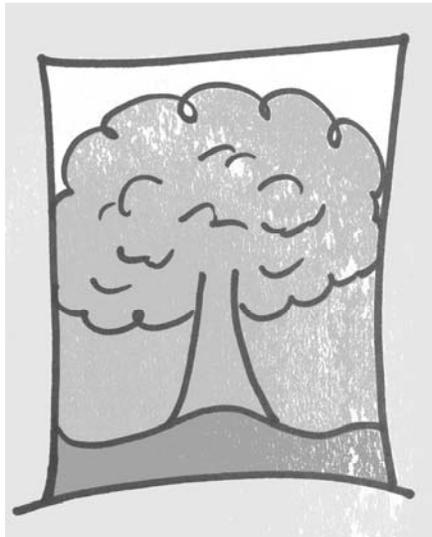


STEP FOUR



YOUR STORY PERSONALITY

THE TREE IN THE GARDEN

4

YOUR STORY PERSONALITY

So here you are. You are you. You had a loving family. You did not have a loving family. You moved here or there or never moved at all. You were born in this one era that affected you this way. You had limited or unlimited circumstances. All of this made you You.

But the truth is that you are existing here, in the now, in this present moment. And here, now, none of that matters. It doesn't exist in now. It exists in the past. It exists in the blocks that formed you. These past blocks formed your means of survival. They helped you live. You developed coping mechanisms to help you learn to live in this world, the world that was presented to you where, when, and to whom you were born into. It helped form who you are today. But who you are today just is. You are not, as they say, "Living in the past." You live here, now!

And in the here and now everything just is. Colors are colors. Lights are bright. Dark is dim. Wind blows. Rain falls. All just is.

When stripped bare, reality just is. There is nothing but cause and effect, motion and stillness, birth and death. It is a revolving door of possibilities in each and every moment of the day.

The way you interpret the world around you, the things that happen to, by, or in your world, is your story. You create, you live, and you tell your own story. Who you were before, who you are to become, and how you feel about now, is your story.

Your parents gave you a story when you were born. Society gave you a story. Religion gave you a story. Your friends, bosses, neighbors, and life gave you a story. They all gave you stories about your gender, your worth, your identity, and your purpose in this life.

But you make up your own story. Your story is yours to own. And you can choose your story!

THE TREE IN THE GARDEN

There is a Zen saying that talks of the *Tree in the Garden*. The tree in the garden is just there. It has no name, no color, no shape, and no identity until we give it one. We name it. We claim it. We give it personality, love, and attention. We then say, “This is the tree Johnny first climbed when he was three years old,” or “This is the tree that looks so beautiful in fall. Remember when that tree was just a sapling?” It becomes a part of our story. We give it a story. Before us it was just a Tree in the Garden.

We do that with everything in life. Every moment, interaction, thought process, intake of information, entertainment, we take in and interpret. Even our eyes do not see what is really there! They twist and turn to make sense of color and shapes and the nuances of life. But we see this life we see and we think it is the only one. It is not.

Most people believe the story they see is the only one. They believe everyone sees or needs to see life the way they see it. They can get Stuck in Story, unable to find any way out. You do not need to be one of those people. You can find a way out. You can change your story.

In fact, the easiest way to change your life is to change your story. Your Story Personality can create or change your life in an instant. You can do this for the better or worse. It is your super power magic wand! It doesn't matter if the story you give it is even true. You can fake it until you make it! “Dress for the life you want,” they say. That is a part of creating your own story.

Giving yourself a new story you automatically change your reality. You get to choose which to believe and which to discard. This is a part of the growing up process: learning the difference between what is your story and what is your parents or societies stories' for you. You may like the one given to you. You may not. They are just blocks to be looked at, observed, and busted or remodeled. Or even stay the same! It isn't about starting from scratch, it is about owning your own story.

It seems so easy. Just change your story! Viola! Life's good, right? Nope. It is rough to change your story. It takes work to bust those blocks. It takes massive courage and inner strength. It takes a world of motivation to even want to go there. You must disappoint people, lots of people, often, in order to live the story you want. You must face great fears that have been planted within you. You must fight against fear of bodily harm, or actual bodily harm. You must be willing to face all that in order to create your own story.

WE ARE NOT ALONE.

The ones who have heavily invested in their story for you will resist. They will argue with you. They will try to bring you back around to what they want you to be in this life. It is much more difficult to deny your mother her story about who you are than it is a total stranger. It is easier to tell the world at large to go stuff it than to look your father in his adoring, hopeful eyes and tell him you are not going to be, do, or act how he wants you to.

Others are heavily invested in who you are because you are a part of their story too! To change your story means asking others to change theirs as well. Identity is a big part of what makes up our stories and how we communicate ourselves to the world.

“My daughter is a lawyer.” is a part of a mother’s story. Just to be a mother is story! Jobs are story. Gender is story. Location is story. Even hair color is story! (Blondes have more fun anyone?) All of this is not only part of our identity but of those around us as well. To change ours means they have to change too.

To change the words you use to describe yourself to others is simple. The ripples it puts out into the world and your life are giant. You might lose friends. You might lose loved ones. You will lose your definition of self others have given you, that has defined you up until now, that you have held onto for most of your life. It’s a big change!

But, you gain you! By changing your story you gain a new sense of self. You gain new possibility. You gain strength and joy and expression and freedom and new friends and new places and a new life that is more empowering than anything that came before.

And when you change your story, other people will do it with you. Other people look at you different, react to you differently, talk to you differently, and respect you differently. It may take some time, but many will.

So the first question is: What is your story?

The easiest way to change our lives is not to change our jobs or our hair color. It is to change how we talk about those jobs or hair color. It is how we describe who we are and how we feel and who we are in the world. It is the words we use and the stories we tell that create our lives.

Your story is not just who, what, when, where, and how you live your life, your story is how you think, feel, and react to your life. It is a big part of your personality and creates the most possibilities in your life. It is your Story Personality!

WHAT IS YOUR STORY PERSONALITY?

What is the story you use most often? What are the words you use to describe your life and the events that have happened in your life? Most people think a Story Personality is built in stone. It is unchangeable and permanent. It is not. Your Story Personality is just that: a story!

The words we use create the life we live. Some people love the victim. They always have a reason why it won’t work. You can give them a million possibilities laid out in perfect order and a how to list and they will come up with a million reasons why they can’t do it. This is a coping technique to gain sympathy and avoid any action which can cause pain. It often happens when others had control over our lives in childhood. The victim is a way to gain back control in a seemingly non-confrontational way. In truth it is very aggressive. It’s a back door way to control. This coping mechanism is one that people with less power have cultivated very well, including women and children. Most society groups have a power structure and historically (and currently at this printing) do not allow women or children to be up front in asking for what they need, so people learned to use the victim to get their needs met. (Watch children, they learn this very well early on to get out of school or chores!) It works surprisingly well. So well it is hard to change. Those who are in your face, however, get more of the attention.

Aggressive Story Personalities get the attention. They question, pull, or confront constantly. Nothing in the world is good enough and no one will ever meet their standards. There is always something wrong and they walk around like they are looking for a fight with a chip on their shoulder. Often they are looking for a fight! As long as they are looking

outward for problems they don't have to face the ones inside, which hurt worse. (Notice many of these are to avoid facing ourselves, our fears, and feeling hurt? Mental note.)

There are the uptight anxious ones who have overriding fear as their story. There are the positive peppy ones, who use shallow "It's all ok." denial as a story to stop from feeling pain or facing difficulties. There are the passive aggressive ones who use sarcasm and snide remarks and the rolling of eyes to gain back control. They often say, "Everyone is idiots. Why do I bother?"

There are the hopeful optimists who always see the bright side, no matter the pain facing them. There are the ones who make it work. No matter what they push through, stubborn and relentless. Even if it isn't the smartest way to go, they will keep going until they break through or break down.

There are the analyzers who have to dissect the world to make it tolerable. There are the jokesters, the performers, the lovers, and the liars. There are the guilty ones who shame and hate themselves so much no one else can ever hurt them. There are bosses and the followers, the rescuers and the rescuees. There are the shy ones and the loud ones, the kiss ups and the put downs, the perfectionists, the drama queens and baby kings.

All of these are simply stories. They are the ways in which we interpret the world and describe it to others. None of them are right or wrong. They all have cause and effects. They all have pluses and minuses. They all affect others and the world in different ways. Every Story Personality we create in the blocks we built in our Tiny Little Houses is just how we learned to cope being human in this great big world. But they are still just words, just images, just stories.

THE STORY OF OUR LIVES

We often have many stories, depending on situations and the people we are dealing with at any given time. The one we use the most is the story of our life. Every memory, every event, every relationship is slanted to that one perspective. It is often the one that worked for us best. This story would get us the most love, the most attention, the most joy, the most money, and the most avoidance of pain. This one we learned well.

We use our Story Personality to get what we want in life. We use it to gain self-esteem, to gain identity, to gain other people's love and respect. We can even use it to suck energy from people! It is the way we interpret and walk through the world.

The cool thing is we can change our story at any given time. Life is just The Tree in the Garden. It just is. We just are. We can take back control of our lives simply by changing the words we use to tell the story events of our lives and ourselves and others in it.

What is your main Story Personality? It's simple to find out.

Think of a past event or a memory. Tell the story to yourself or someone else. (Good to take notes if you really want to observe.) What words do you use to tell the story, yourself? Is it a drama, action, or comedy? Are you the hero or villain? Do you blame, shame, accuse? Do you say, "I can do it." or "There's no way."

What technique are you using? What story are you telling? The world just is. You just are. There is a Tree in the Garden. The door slammed on your foot. The bills have to be paid. Your friend said something weird to you. You got a new job. You feel in love. You fell out of love. Something happened. There was a story. How do you tell it? How do you feel about it? Does it feel good, or bad? Is it how you want to be? Do you like your Story Personality?

If you don't like your story, change it! Try it. Change your story. What would you change? Who would you be? What words could you use to tell this story differently with a new Story Personality? If you are feeling weak, what would it be like to be a hero in this story? If you are feeling afraid, what words would you use to feel courage? If you say "I am not enough." What if you were?

What actions we take to get our needs met stems from the words we use. If we could be what we wanted to be, what words would we use? What would you call yourself? Why?

Shut out the words and the stories others have told you or that you have learned to use. Just imagine what it would be like to be the hero of your own story, the confident one in a time of fear, the provider to your needy self. Look to the words to help. They can and will change your life.

Happiness, satisfaction, possibilities, and opportunities do not start with doing. They start with telling, telling stories. Just like we did under the stars around the campfire all those many years ago, we tell stories. It is who we are as social creatures in a social world.

Through words and story we can find new possibilities to see life, ourselves, and others in a whole new way. It isn't easy, but it is possible. Sometimes you need a stranger to help you see what could be. New ideas are waiting. Are you ready to rewrite your story? Then let's go! A Tiny Town awaits.

