

## THE SPEAKING TREE A SHOT OF HOPE

# You Can Change The Outcome Of Your Narrative

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Everyone has a Story, made up of several chosen stories, that we repeatedly tell ourselves about ourselves, and tell others too; it hinges on how we want to be seen. This narrative plays a role not only in shaping our own self-concept, but also in how we approach situations, relationships and decision-making.

One's composite personal story contains events or aspects of our history which may be factual, but the way we select some and leave others out, subjectively interpret them and thread them into our main personal narrative reshapes and alters the bare facts.

How we feel about our lives right now is a matter of the stories that we tell ourselves repeatedly. What are these stories? How do you make sense of who you are? Does your composite personal story paint you primarily as victor or victim, popular or lonely, successful or unsuccessful?

Realise that none of these on their own can be wholly true. Yet for many, these one-sided stories repeated over time can become so distorted and damaging that they hamper any ability to live balanced, happy lives.

Rebecca Solnit writes: "We think we tell stories, but stories often tell us; tell us to love or hate, to see or be seen. Often, too often, stories saddle us, ride us, whip us onward, tell us what to do, and we do it without questioning."

The key to personal transformation is story transformation. And the main reason we cling to this story-made-of-stories, or Focus Story, is because it may give us a sense of security, stability or importance, that we badly need; may make it easier to forgive ourselves, or keep away bad memories.

All this suggests we should not rush into this, but first seek to understand the reasons and benefits of slowly and compassionately redefining the narrative.

This in no way is about 'making up' a whole new story. That could create another set of problems for you. It could keep you stagnant, fearful or

dissatisfied. The fact that you do want change is reason enough to begin re-storying – thus restoring – your life.

So, to begin re-storying, thus restoring your life, ‘reshape’ your narrative. First, stop blaming yourself – or in many cases blaming circumstances or others. Take time to truly figure out who you fully are, your gifts and failings. What attitudes and behaviours need to change? How do you want to be in the future? What baby-steps can you initiate for these changes to take hold?

As with the earlier story, you’ll begin to believe more in this alternative story the more you begin to actually live it. Pay attention to moments of change and growth, however small, and appreciate yourself for them.

An important part of this process is to acknowledge that you do have the capacity to be resilient and rise above tough times or a difficult past – by taking small, sustained steps towards positive change. When you forget you have this power, you tend to feel stuck or helpless; reminding yourself frequently that you have the power to change the path and outcome of your narrative, you feel and become hopeful and strong.

