



# Mastering Your Story and Changing Your Script

By Dr. Michael O'Brien and Dr. Neil Stroul

## Life As A Story

As we live our life, our brain creates a memory of all the things that happen. That makes perfect sense. What does not make perfect sense is that the story is not always correct. That is, when something happens our brain makes up a story to explain what happened or compares (and records) it to a previous event. Most of us are not even aware that it happens. Recent breakthroughs in Neurobiology have proven how this works.

Even more interesting to consider is that the stories our brain creates are not always true. In fact, during our early developmental years, many of the meanings attached to events are not true. Think about the things that happen in the life of a small child where there is no way they can create a story to explain what happens in a complex adult world. And so, there you are with a story about your life deeply wired into your neural biology that is part true and part false.

## Your Story Is Your Script

Much like a script in a movie or play, ones story determines how we think and respond to life. In fact, what we now know about neural biology says that we don't have much choice in the matter. Something happens, our brain is triggered and we respond. It's as simple as that. And most of the time that is good. However, it also makes perfectly good sense that if what is in those neural pathways is *wrong* (a wrong interpretation treated as the truth), it can cause us to respond incorrectly.

Our approach to coaching has us work with people in a way that the story of their life is continuously examined in relationship to what is happening in the moment. In doing so, people can choose differently and in fact can rewrite their internal experiences (story). Examining and rewriting our story gives us *freedom from* the parts of the story that are simply wrong or not too useful today and it gives us *freedom to* do those things that are right for today.

This is not therapy. The coach's role is not to fix or cure anyone. Ours is a powerful methodology that allows people to choose, once they can see the choices.

## We Are Not Our Story

We believe that people are not their story. Rather, their story has been layered in over many years during a time when a person is learning to adapt and cope with a world they don't understand and at times seems dangerous and threatening. In other words, our story has us. Who we are really, our gifts, our essence are underneath and cannot get out.

When asked, most of us would say we are not operating at our full potential. We know why. Our story for the most part gets in the way. Our approach to coaching allows people to realize their full potential through a new awareness.

### **A New Mastery**

The coach helps the person transform himself or herself by transforming his/her inner story (creating new neural pathways). Paying attention to our internal experience, cultivating a mindfulness and introducing new perspectives and possibilities transforms us from living at the affect of our life story to using it in a new and powerful way. The person is then able to achieve a balance between need, opportunity, and capacity to make decisions about what actions need to be undertaken and what capabilities need to be acquired. The person can then take full responsibility for pursuing their developmental goals.

### **Executive Teams**

One can only imagine the chaos (if not downright comedy) of actors in a movie using scripts from different screen plays. It would become obvious very quickly to the audience that something was seriously wrong. However, powerful executives showing up in meetings with their own life story and behaving as if everyone else has the same script is considered normal. Everyone complains about the dysfunction, but few know how to deal with it. The coach is in the unique position to be the observer (in the audience) that can make a lasting difference.

Through individual coaching and team observations, the coach works with team members on how to work together, so that each member can bring their story to team meetings in a way that reduces confusion, appreciates other's strengths and helps move the organization forward.

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