

The Stories We Tell

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Most of us enjoy a good story whether it is in a book or movie. When our children were young, we would read several stories before bedtime. After our oldest daughter was tucked in, she would usually stay awake longer and tell herself stories until she fell asleep. Children are wonderfully creative at thinking up stories in which they are heroic and triumphant.

However, when difficulties arise we can lose the ability to tell ourselves a good story with a positive ending. For example, when a child is bullied, their story can sound something like: "No one likes me, I am no good, no one wants to be my friend, and I will be alone." Stories like this are based on fear, self doubt, and insecurity. The child does not need to tell himself this story too many times before he will actually believe and internalize it. If we know that the child is telling himself a negative story, we can help him to rewrite it with a positive ending.

Storytelling is not just for children. Adults tell themselves stories just as often as children. In fact, we tell ourselves so many stories throughout the day about our relationships with family and friends, finances, career, health, and future that we may not even recognize that it is a story.

When we create these stories, it often goes through our own editing process. This editing process is definitely not an exact science because it is based on our assumptions, anxieties, and interpretations of past experiences. On a positive note, when we are aware that we are creating stories and not everything that we think and believe is necessarily true, we can change the ending. We can give ourselves grace and space to have a positive ending or more strength to deal with a negative ending.

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