

Reframing Your Life Story

Create Your Own Hero's Journey

by Kim Schneiderman



Every life unfolds as a uniquely dynamic, purposeful and potentially heroic story that is open to interpretation, especially our own. We are the star and spin doctor of this work-in-progress, with the power to tell our stories as triumphs, tragedies or something in-between. Our life story is filled with suspense: Big and little decisions affect our storyline, including the relationships we choose, our goals, how we live and the ways we nourish ourself physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually.

How we tell our story matters. We are constantly sifting through competing narratives to make sense of our world for ourself and others. Whether we consider ourself a heroic figure overcoming obstacles or a tragic victim of destiny often depends on how we choose to read the text of our life and tell our story.

Creating a personal myth is a fundamental way we find meaning. We are always the protagonist, with supporting characters providing love and assistance and antagonists posing challenges that push us beyond our comfort zones. Rather than narcissism or navel-gazing, the more intimate we become with our own story, the more we realize that everyone has an equally valid and vital narrative in which they are the central character. Understanding that everyone is on their own story journey can help us establish connection and empathy.

In every myth, the protagonist has

a character arc; a particular way they mature and develop due to shifting tides in their life story. Similarly, each of us is on an ever-evolving journey of self-discovery with choices about how to respond to situations, conflicts and happenstance. By reframing our lives as personal growth adventures, we can adapt to plot twists and view

unexpected difficulties as opportunities for self-transformation. With gusto, we can reclaim and shape our personal narrative through choice and voice.

Thinking of ourself as the main character in our story can help us shift to novel perspectives on situations we repeatedly face. Instead of staying stuck in the same old storyline, try asking: If I were a character in a novel or movie...

- What would I hope the hero would do when faced with these circumstances?
- What actions or outcomes would I prefer as the observer of this story?
- What might this situation be teaching the star?
- How might the protagonist maximize this situation, perhaps becoming a more compassionate, caring, creative or stronger person?
- Why would a benevolent author place this character in a particular situation?

With imagination and well-directed self-inquiry, we can step out of our story, check out the landscape and determine whether to stay on our current path or go in a different direction. We can then transform obstacles into opportunities to break bad habits and improve character to become the real hero of our own living, evolving story.

Kim Schneiderman is a New York City psychotherapist and author of Step Out of Your Story: Writing Exercises to Reframe and Transform Your Life. Visit StepOutOfYourStory.com.