

How to Rewrite Your Life Story

By: Geoffrey Geddes

Delayed Onset Living

How to Rewrite Your Life Story

Are You a Hero or a Villian?

Each of us creates an identity – a “self” – by mentally composing a life story based on memories, perceptions, and an imagined future. I crafted this template to help you rewrite your internal saga and shift your narrative themes from lack and disappointment to sufficiency and gratitude. So grab some coffee or tea, take a few deep breaths, and really dig into this process. And remember, you needn't share this rewrite with anyone if you don't want to. So be as honest as you can.

Step One: Your Current Back Story

The first step in rewriting your life story is to recount your autobiography – *your back story* – as you currently remember it. In the lines below, briefly describe your past, including where you were born and how and with whom you grew up.

How to Rewrite Your Life Story

Step Two: Mining the Narrative Muck

Now, describe ***two experiences that you believe negatively impacted your life***. For instance, was your family homeless? Were you bullied? Did your parents divorce? Do you have a disability with which you had to cope? For each experience, briefly describe (1) why you believe the experience happened and (2) what you believe about the world as a result.

Experience #1:

Why it Happened:

Resulting Belief:

Experience #2:

Why it Happened:

Resulting Belief:

How to Rewrite Your Life Story

Step Three: Your "Now" Story - Flaws and All

Describe your *current life*, including who you are now and how you differ from your younger self.

Now, describe two current *character flaws* that you believe prevent you from being happy. For example, are you too shy, too scared, too lazy? Are you a quitter – the kind of person who never follows through? Are you addicted to a harmful substance or a destructive behavior?

Character Flaw #1:

Character Flaw #2:

How to Rewrite Your Life Story

Step Four: Your Future Story

Describe your *ideal future* – how you would like your life to look in 10 or even 20 years. Include a discussion of the goals you would like to achieve and the type of person you would like to be.

Now, describe your doubts – the fears you have, no matter how buried they might be – about not being able to attain your future goals or become the future self you envision. Describe how you fear your life will look if you are not able to meet those goals.

How to Rewrite Your Life Story

Step Five: Your Revised Back Story

It's time to begin rewriting your story. For each of the two negative past experiences you listed in Step One, write down a **benefit** that you received or an **empowering lesson** that you learned from each. For instance, let's say that one of your negative experiences involved being bullied in school. What benefit or empowering lesson might you have taken from that experience? Did the experience toughen you? Did it teach you that life involves struggle and what doesn't kill you makes you stronger and wiser? Be creative and think positively. If it helps, imagine that you are advising a friend as to how they might reframe their experiences.

Experience #1:

Experience #2:

How to Rewrite Your Life Story

Step Six: Your Revised Now

For each of the two current character flaws you described in Step Two, **re-characterize each “flaw” as a habit and commit to changing it.** For instance, if one of your character flaws is that you identify yourself as “too shy” due to being bullied as a kid, rephrase the flaw by writing something like, “I’ve developed the habit of avoiding risks when I feel challenged; I can and will change that habit and learn to relish risks and appreciate challenges.”

Character Flaw #1:

Character Flaw #2:

How to Rewrite Your Life Story

Step Seven: Your Revised Future

Step Seven is crucial to a successful narrative rewrite. Most of us are conditioned to continually strive for improvement. We learn to value ambition and to eschew complacency. Never be satisfied; always be reaching; accumulate; elevate; win! That sort of conditioning can be thought of as **“deficiency thinking”** and creates a perpetual state of discontentment and a constant yearning to achieve a future self that we imagine will somehow be better than our present self. Is it any wonder that so many of us live our days in a distracted state of dissatisfaction?

Step Seven offers you a chance to take a break from that existential unhappiness – to set aside your goals and dreams of a different, better future and pause in gratitude for the opportunity to have experienced all that you have lived through. If you view your goals as remedies for feelings of insufficiency – if your dreams are no more than hopes of finally feeling like you have or are “enough” – then any appreciation of future achievements will be short lived and quickly replaced by more pining.

The remedy for all of your “future” thinking, including dreams, goals, and fears, is the same: you simply **rewrite those dreams, goals, and fears as desired states of mind**. For instance, if one of your goals is to “get rich,” consider why you want to become wealthy. Do you believe that monetary wealth will provide you with a feeling of abundance or perhaps rid you of the stress of financial scarcity? If so, rewrite your goal to read something like, “I will learn ways to feel less anxiety over my finances and more gratitude for all the things I have and will ever have.”

First, rewrite your dreams, goals, and fears from Step Four as ***desired states of mind***:

How to Rewrite Your Life Story

Finally, rewrite your description of the type of person you would like to be in 10 (or 20) years. Hint: striving to be something else, even a healthier, happier version of you, can't help but create chronic deficiency thinking. Try a version of "I am exactly the person I should be in this moment and I will continue to welcome life's challenges and projects with energy, enthusiasm, creativity, and gratitude."

By now, I hope you have realized that all of our thoughts about who we are, what we've done, where we've been, and where we're headed - ***all of it is fiction***. We author our life stories as we live through the moments of those lives, and our stories have very little to do with our actual experiences.

The good news, of course, is that if all of it is fiction, then all of it is susceptible to revision. ***Losses can be revised as grateful encounters, accidents can be reframed as lessons, and missed opportunities can be rewritten as fortuitous detours.***

For additional thoughts about rewriting our life story, please take a look at my article, "[Rewriting Your Life Story](#)" on my website [Delayed Onset Living](#).

Here's to your joyful journey and happy ending!