

What Stories Do You Tell Yourself?

by Edna McKelvey

Do you know who you are? I mean really? Do you really know?

Not what you own. Not where you live. Not what you do. Not where you go. Just you. Who Are YOU?

You ARE all of the aspects of your life. What you do, have, believe, think, feel, who you spend time with, are all parts of you. However the question I pose in this article is how much time are you spending unconsciously on maintaining the stories that seem to be important in your life without thinking, I mean really thinking consciously, about what may be of true importance in your life in the long term.

When I started to write this article, I thought to do it about the benefit of Working in Groups. Group Learning, Group Workshops, Group Therapy, whatever type of group. The benefits of groupwork are that we learn faster about ourselves and the way we relate to others when working with groups of people in a facilitated manner. Our learning started with groups of people in our family systems and it continued in our community and in school, university and in the workplace.

The stories we learned about ourselves, about others close to us, within these systems, whether community, school or workplace were all anchored into our thinking within a group environment. In effect they are the script of our life.

In our formative years we are focused on others. We are focused on Mum, Dad, our teachers, the minister, our coach, BIG people - and their behaviours and beliefs or values helped to set up our own belief systems.

Often we continue to drive through life with a kit bag of beliefs that may now be taking us way along the wrong road. An analogy may be that you grew up learning that to drive from Sydney to Brisbane you had to drive up the coast road, Highway 1. There was no other way to do it. That was it.

However as times changed, other routes became available, your life experiences, what you could drive in, your own desires all evolved. In essence, more choices emerged about how to get to your destination possibly easier and quicker, more than likely differently. Yet if you believe there is no point in looking at alternatives, that Hwy 1 is the only way to get to Brisbane, then you would never think to explore the alternatives. That is not just you. Anyone who has a fixed belief system about anything does the same.

Our beliefs are our road map to our life. Whatever you believe you get – and the unconscious motivators are usually stronger than the conscious ones. So much of what we do is anchored in the unconscious, and was learnt very early in our life development and not looked at again. What served us well once may no longer be useful.

Take a moment and think about the patterns of your life to date? Do any of the following questions resonate for you?

- How come I am always the one working late when everyone else has gone home?
- Why is it that I seem to be the one in the spotlight when things go wrong around here?
- I always seem to be the one who is expected to fix things
- If I didn't take control of things nothing would get done
- I'm always the one blamed for the problems in my relationship/work/friendships
- I never feel like I'm included, I always feel like I'm outside of the group I'm with
- I do feel lonely and I know that if I keep busy I won't, so I get busy
- There's no point in thinking what I really want it's impossible anyway

I'll leave you with a recent story I hear about a young couple who got married. A couple of years later the husband said to his wife *"Why do you chop the lamb leg bone off when you do a lamb roast?"*. The wife replied *"Well that's how you roast a leg of lamb, that bit of the bone at the end comes off."* Husband replies *"Well, not in my family, we cook the whole leg. I love that end of the bone, it was my favourite bit of the roast as a kid."*

So the wife puzzled over this and some weeks later when at her Mum's she asked *"Mum, why do we take that bit of the leg of the lamb off and not cook it"*. Mum replied, *"Well that's how you cook a leg of lamb"*. The wife replies *"Not in your son in law's family, they cook it and that was his favourite piece to chew on when growing up."* Hmmmm, so next time at Grandma's they asked why the leg of lamb was done that way. *"That's easy"* stated Grandma *"we had to cut that off as we didn't have a roasting pan big enough to take the length of the leg"*.

And that's just about it. It was useful once, needed to be done in one family, yet not in another. What we believe has us doing what we do, behaving as we behave, feeling what we feel. In fact it keeps us getting what we've always got, even if it's no longer appropriate or useful for us now.

And the value of Group Work is in learning how to believe and behave differently, when we wish some change in our lives.

When working with others, even when we don't speak up or share or question, we see and hear others behaving in certain ways. This can resonate for us in many ways and connect us to what it is we need to look at in ourselves, to that which we deny, hide from or resist, to heal and achieve the change we desire.

We can get witnessing and validation, reality checks, feedback, experiential learning, education, peer support. We can be listened to and still accepted when working in groups and THAT is a key component to accepting that we can change our lives to bring to us more of what we want as an experience versus more of what society, or past systems dictate, that we have to have to be 'real'.

After all the only experience you really can own and make more of is right now. If you're reading this then you've just spent part of your past, reading this article. I am hopeful that it has impacted you right now in the present and that it may contribute to your thought process about how you can create the future stories you want to have in the script of your life.