

THE RIGHT STORY

Everyday we tell ourselves stories,
is it time we changed the plot?

I am in the process of finishing the next edit for my new book about my mum's cancer journey. When the editor sent me her thoughts, she suggested that I add some experiences of other people who have had cancer. I decided to call Ali, a good friend of mine who has overcome breast cancer. As we chatted I asked Ali about how she negotiated the mental minefields and the physical & emotional challenges associated with the disease. Her answer intrigued me...

When Ali was diagnosed in 2003 she had a tumor just under 10cm in diameter. If you weren't 100% sure, this is a big tumor and based on the current statistics it told a sad story about Ali's chances of survival beyond 5 years. Initially she was devastated by this news but then decided to ignore it because, by her own admission, she was never any good at maths!! Ali realised that whatever story she told herself and believed would be the one that played out in her life. So, she simply decided to tell and sell herself a different story.



Changing the story

The story that was originally told to Ali and the one she initially believed was that she had been diagnosed with a life threatening disease that would very likely take her life within the next 5 years and there wasn't much she could do about it. She rejected that story and came up with a new one that narrated and illustrated a long life of happiness, vitality and good health. Once she had come up with the story all that was left to do was to sell it to herself...



Being a graphic artist Ali is a very visual person and so she created images of herself surviving and thriving on posters and billboards in her own head. She admitted that some days it was a really hard sell, particularly when she looked in the mirror and saw a bald head and a pale and puffy face that resembled 'death warmed up!' But Ali's brain and body believed what she told, and sold,

them. Her survival story helped buy herself a happy, healthy and healed life – just as she saw it!

What are the stories we are telling ourselves?

I thought this was a fabulous and creative way to take charge of our thinking and control the direction that our life takes. I know for some people it might sound like a weird and fluffy strategy that could have no scientific explanation or basis. Even I would have been skeptical that this could possibly work several years ago, but I have just seen too many living examples of the power of controlling our thoughts – I am now a true believer. If you are one of those people who has trouble believing this type of approach I would just get you to ask yourself one simple question; *is what you are currently doing and the way you are currently thinking giving you everything you want in your life?*

If the answer to that question is 'no' then I would just ask that you stop and listen to the stories you are telling yourself in certain areas of your life. Are you telling yourself the story that it is too hard to be successful in business due to the global financial crisis? Is your story suggesting that you will never be able to get that promotion at work because the boss doesn't like you? Have you convinced yourself that you can never lose the weight you desire because you have tried and failed so many times before? Have you listened to the story that someone else has told you about your own ability to achieve something that you really want? It is time to change your story...

Your new story...



This is actually a pretty simple process, but it will take a small investment of time, imagination and possibility. Firstly choose an area of your life that you are not happy with and think about the story you are currently telling yourself in that area. Next, write out a story of how you want it to be – as detailed and descriptive as possible. **For example;** *I have the commitment and determination to lose weight and fit into my favorite outfit. I love getting out in the fresh air and walking for my health and I do it everyday. I love eating healthy, fresh and*

natural foods which I eat consistently and have developed some fabulous habits that I enjoy and that give me the energy and results that I have always wanted and I know I will maintain it forever. I am so happy.

Now it's time to sell, sell, sell

Writing and reading our new story is the easy bit. It is more challenging to sell it because the stories we tell ourselves are always filtered by our experiences. Just like Ali had to really work hard to sell herself on her new story when she looked in the mirror, we have to work hard to buy into our new stories. This comes through deliberate repetition of reading & visualising our new story through imaginary billboards and posters. When we imagine the feelings associated with living our story we will move toward it's realisation. If we read it everyday, visualise it everyday and get excited about it everyday, eventually we will believe it and it will manifest itself in our life - just like it did for Ali.