

... eventually, under great duress, she died.

The End

... eventually, wearing a great dress, she dined
and lived happily ever after.

The End *✍*



Illustration by Dave Swang for The Partner Channel

CHANGE YOUR Story

✍ Diane Gasal

**"I AM AN OLD MAN AND HAVE KNOWN A GREAT MANY TROUBLES,
BUT MOST OF THEM NEVER HAPPENED." —MARK TWAIN**

Isn't that the truth! We spend so much of our lives worrying about things that never actually happened.

If you want to lower your stress and find more peace, there are two things you can do:

- » Change your circumstances
- » Change your relationship with the circumstances

While both are helpful, I put a lot more weight on the latter. I think most of us automatically dive into trying to change circumstances, and we don't realize

how important pausing to change our view of the situation can be.

There are many ways to change your relationship with circumstances. Here's one of my absolute favorites: "Change your story."

I love the concept of changing your story because you can use it right now. You don't have to wait for your circumstances to change before you can feel better about them. It can change your mindset and change your results. It's also an all-purpose tool for any occasion. You can use it at work, in your personal life, anywhere, anytime.

Here's the deal. In life there are facts, and then there are your "stories" about the facts. Our stress comes from our stories, not the facts. The tricky part is to notice

the difference between the two. Once you start noticing the difference, you are free to choose a different story.

Let's step into this concept for a moment. Is there anything right now causing you anxiety or stress? Perhaps you are worried about a deadline. Maybe you are concerned about what someone said or didn't say. As you imagine the situation, try to untangle the facts from your thoughts about the facts (your story). I encourage you to be diligent about the true facts versus what you may be assuming is true.

Here's an example. Marie does a demo for a prospect, and the meeting goes well. The client says they are interested in buying, and they will call her later this week to set a time to begin the work. Yeah! But then each day ticks by, and the client doesn't call. Marie leaves a few voicemails, and the prospect doesn't call back. She starts to review the meeting in her mind. She remembers and regrets a few things she said. She also remembers some body language from the client that she didn't know how to read. Why isn't he calling? Her mind says, "Maybe I talked too much during the demo and didn't listen well...that's happened to me before, people have told me I talk too much...why can't I learn to just be quiet and listen..."

What is the fact here? The fact is that the client hasn't called. That's it. That's the only fact. Everything else is Marie's story. And her story has escalated into anxiety over things that may or may not be true. Perhaps that anxiety is lowering her confidence, which in turn impacts her behavior. After all, it's hard for her to pick up the phone and talk to more prospects when she's feeling down about her own abilities. Or she may decide to keep calling this prospect and her voicemails start to have a tone of worry or apology or maybe a tiny bit of desperation. Yuck! All because of a story!

So, notice what is happening and consider a new story that could serve her better. I'm not suggesting Marie go into denial or choose some pie in the sky story. I'd just invite her to consider some other possibilities. I like the way author Victoria Castle puts it in "The Trance of Scarcity": "Is this story useful? Given what I care about, what I want to contribute, and what matters to me, is the story I'm telling myself a useful one?"

With that in mind, Marie might choose to say to herself, "All I know for sure is that the prospect hasn't called me back. Any thoughts I have as to why he hasn't called me back are just guesses. What is important to me is providing great customer service and

helping my clients feel heard. With that in mind, I think I'll send him a note thanking him and recapping what I heard as his top issues and how we can help."

That's just one possible story re-write. Can you see how it can give her a whole different outlook and result?

I want to pause for a second to emphasize that I'm not suggesting you aim for denial. I see nothing wrong with evaluating things such as the quality of your work and taking steps to perform better. However, sometimes we take it too far, and the thoughts (stories) are no longer productive. Instead they are making things more stressful than they need to be. Or they make you angry about something that you can't control, or is not worth the effort to change, but the story keeps spinning in your mind. When that happens, choose a more productive story.

I am amazed how fast and frequent the stories can show up in one day. Here are some examples (see insert). Feel free to come up with your own possible alternate stories.

As a life coach, I get to hear the stories many people believe but perhaps don't say out loud. Here are some common examples:

- » I am not good enough
- » I have to do it myself
- » I should be different than I am
- » They don't respect me
- » They are walking all over me
- » They are better than me

Are these stories really true? And even if you believe they are true, are there other stories you could consider that might also be true and serve you better?

I hope the next time you feel anxious or stressed, you can pause and ask yourself, "What are the facts, and what is just my story? What might be a more helpful story?"

If you have any thoughts on this article or experiences you'd like to share, I'd love to hear them. Feel free to contact me at Diane@dianegasal.com. That's my story, and I'm stickin' to it! 🌀

fact The coffee pot is empty in the break room.

story People here are so lazy. Why don't they start a new pot when they take the last of the coffee?

alternate story Maybe the person who took the last cup is from out of town and doesn't know how to use this machine.

another alternate story Oh good; now I know the coffee will be fresh, plus I can choose to make it as strong as I'd like.

fact You just asked your audience a question, and no one is answering.

story This presentation isn't going very well. Everyone has checked out, and no one cares about what I'm saying.

alternate story Maybe they are deeply interested and just need more time to think of a response.

another alternate story Maybe the audience is not confident of their English. (This story actually happened. We gave a presentation in Thailand, and no one said a word. We thought we bombed. Then, we ended up getting the best results of any country. Later we learned that the audience members understood English but didn't feel comfortable speaking it out loud.)