

The Story Of Your Past



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The Story Of Your Past

Hi there. Welcome to the *Design Your Dream Life* podcast. My name is Natalie Bacon, and I'm an advanced certified mindfulness life coach as well as a wife and mom. If you're here to do the inner work and grow, I can help. Let's get started.

What's happening, my friends? Can you believe that it is December? I love this time of year, thinking about the past and the future and doing some reflection. That is why I am bringing you this podcast, the story of your past. I also happen to be recording this on the third anniversary of my dad's passing.

So I have the past and my relationship with my dad on my mind. So I also thought it was perfect. We have a very complicated relationship, or at least I should say we had one. I have a much better, healthier, cleaner, more abundant relationship with him because of the work that I have done.

But as you will soon find out this work doesn't just apply to those bigger relationships or your childhood or seasons. It can apply to last month or yesterday or a year ago. The past is anything that happened in the past. It is a minute ago to the day you were born. So oftentimes, we don't really think about that when we're talking about a challenge. We think that we're talking about something in the present, but really the thing already happened. The facts already happened in the past. What exists now is the story that we tell about the past.

So did you know that you have a story about your past? That the past doesn't exist anymore. All you have is the present moment. What you do have though is thoughts in the present about the past. So the past is over. It's only tellable through a present story.

Which is amazing for you and for all of us because it means that you can retell the story of your past in a way that really serves you and benefits you and really makes you what I like to call like the leading lady of your life, to reference to *The Holiday*. Do you remember that part? So good, where he calls her the best friend instead of being the leading lady.

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That's what we want to do in the way that we think about ourselves, we think about our relationships, we think about the past, it's in a way that makes us the leading lady of our lives. Makes us the hero in a way that our lives are always happening for us. Before you can really get to the future focused work, you want to take a look at your relationship with your past.

Now, if you're wondering if you are past focused at all, because I don't know about you, but normally I don't go around saying oh my gosh, I'm so past focused. Yet, I find myself falling into this trap. So the way that you can know if you are past focus is to notice and just start to watch how often you refer to something in the past.

This is the default because it's easier. So it's easier for your brain to go to the past instead of going to the future because the future hasn't happened yet. That also exists in your mind. Your brain has to come up with scenarios, stories. It has to use its imagination, that prefrontal cortex, to come up with the future that you want to create. It's not impossible. I do it often. This is what I teach how to do. But it is something that is somewhat of a skill.

So I just like to point out that even if you don't necessarily think that you are past focus, just live in the awareness, at least for this week, that you might be and just pay attention to what you're talking about. Is it something that happened in the past? What is your relationship to it?

This is actually the work that we're going to be doing inside Grow You in December. The topic of the month is unwinding past stories. So if you've never given Grow You a try, this is the perfect month to do it. It can really set you up on a solid foundation for creating the next year, which can be the best year of your life if you want it to be. But you have to clean up your past first. So that's what we're going to be doing in Grow You. This podcast will also help as well get started with that.

So the first thing you want to do is just to notice. Are you always telling a story of the past in a way that doesn't serve you? In a way that creates current pain. So the pain that you feel today is caused from your current

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story, the mindset, the thoughts that create the current feelings. It's not created from the past.

So instead of saying, I have feelings from the past, or I have old feelings, or my feelings are from the past, which is a thought error, as I like to say. It's just not true. It's actually you thinking present thoughts and telling a present story about something that happened in the past. So you're actually recreating the feelings, which, again, I think is the most empowering thing to know because it gives you power to tell the story however you want.

Notice too if you always identify as a former. This is why you don't often hear me talk about being a lawyer. It's not that I have anything to hide. I loved that experience, and that it's part of my life and my education and the networking and connections that I made and really the way that I learned how to think. I think that was so valuable.

But I just don't talk about it that often because it's not where I'm going. It's kind of like a waste of my mental energy, my mental space. I want to be creating my future and really enjoying my present. That's where I want to spend most of my time.

So if you always identify as a former fill in the blank, do you ever watch reality TV, and they have the people in their roles on the shows. They always say like former athlete, former golf pro, former fill in the blank. I'm like okay. It's not that it's not cool. I mean it's cool to talk about your past in a really amazing way that sets you up for success, but I want to know where you're going.

This is actually something that people struggle with, I think, when they are professional athletes going into that next season. They so identified as that former golfer, and they have to reinvent themselves. The same is true when people retire. I used to be a financial planner as well.

I remember people, not everyone, but some people struggling to transition into retirement. It was because they didn't know how to create a new identity because they really just couldn't see themselves out of that former

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fill in the blank. So if you identify a lot as a former fill in the blank, just notice it. That's step one is noticing the way that you think and talk about yourself and your past.

Another place that this comes up outside of careers and roles and kind of challenges that have happened is with the personality. If you identify as someone who has always been stubborn, or you've always been quick to anger, or you've always struggled with staying present, or you've always been highly sensitive or an empath, or you've always been really type A. This is identifying in the present with your past personality.

Now, labels can be helpful to the extent that they help us better understand who we are and who we've been, but they're limiting insofar as we make them mean we can't overcome them or be different. So I'm not saying that labels aren't helpful at all, but I am saying that you can use labels against yourself.

So let me give you an example. I would probably identify as highly sensitive, but you will never hear me going around talking about being highly sensitive because I don't think that thinking about myself as highly sensitive helps me. That's always the lens through which I decide whether to use a label for myself. Is this helpful for me to think I'm highly sensitive? Not really.

Now, that's very different than let's say if I'm trying to understand something that RJ is going through, and he's really struggling. I want to think of him maybe as a deeply feeling kid. If that helps me better understand him and have compassion for him and learn different parenting strategies, that label can be very helpful for me as his mom.

But I want you to see the difference there. There's a difference in using a label to better understand something and try new strategies and decide who you want to be. That's very different because that's empowering. What I see and what we're talking about in this podcast is the opposite where we use our labels against ourselves.

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That might not be even something that is just a label like stubborn, or I'm quick to anger, or I struggle in the present. It might be something that you genuinely believe is a fact, and we might say as a fact and yet, you're using it to limit yourself.

So for example, let's say you have a diagnosis. We could all say that's a fact. Are you using that to limit yourself? You just want to notice. I've coached clients with ADHD. Again, helpful. Of course, you want to get the treatment that is going to really help you be your best self. Nothing against that, of course.

What I'm saying, though, is are you using that to limit yourself? Are you saying oh, well I've always struggled with that in the past, and therefore I can't change. I can speak personally to doing this work on my past personality as it relates to being really type A and rigid and inflexible and really go, go, go all of the time, and really in that harder energy.

For me, I thought that was just the way I was. I genuinely thought this is just who I am. It really wasn't until I got pregnant. I took my mindfulness training, and I just started practicing these tools and became a mom. Just noticed, because I had been on this journey for so long and applying these tools in my life that they were working.

While I still have that part of me that's ambitious, and I want to keep that part of me, I also now have this part of me that loves the present, that indulges and romanticizes my current life. That sort of goes against who I was in the past.

Like if you would have told me in the past that I would be able to relax and stay calm and enjoy the present and just kind of indulge in my life and hang out, take a break, work part time hours, maybe 20 hours a week, I would have thought that you were crazy. I would have thought there was no way. So I want you to see that the stronger grip you have on to your personality, the stronger you are gripping to the past.

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Now, the part where I'm ambitious, I want to grip on to that because I want that to come with me in the future. So it's not that bringing the past with you into the future is bad. It's just that you want to see it's optional. So you want to bring the parts with you that you really like about yourself and then know that there are other parts about you that you can change.

Let me give you an example that isn't personality related, but is physical appearance related. So I have always had blond hair. I identified so much as someone with blonde hair, even though I colored it, like highlighted it, to make it blonder. I really couldn't see myself as someone who didn't have blonde hair. Post pandemic when I wasn't able to get my hair colored the way that I always had, I really started to let it go into its natural color. It's still light-ish, like a darker blonde or a really light brown.

It's so interesting because in the last couple of years that it spend this color, I've reinvented my identity and actually see how I'm not “just a blonde”. That was just part of my past identity. I can bring it into the future if I want. I can color my hair again, totally. The key though is seeing that I am not blonde. I have a hair, and it can be whatever color I want. The way that I can choose to be connected to whatever color hair I want is based on how I think. It's not based on the hair color.

So even if you have been trying to lose weight for years. If you continue to tell that story of the past in a way that doesn't serve you, in a way that is defeating, that is what you will create more of. That's what I want you to see. That any story that you have about your past is an optional story.

This is true even if the thoughts feel really true to you, and they most likely will. They're still optional stories. So the question is, what do you want to think now about the past? The question also is this story helping you now? I think is this story helpful is a much better question than is this story true. Because lots of things are true. Multiple things can be true. We could tell three different stories about the same facts, and we could argue that they're all true. Which one is more helpful for you in the life that you want to live, in the future that you want to create?

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So ask yourself who are you? What kind of woman or mom are you? Most of us will go to thoughts from the past. I just want to question that. What if you could define yourself from your future and seeing that it's really just a mental skill that is available to you. You can define yourself from your future, but again, it's like learning to ride a bike or doing 100 pushups. You have to train yourself to do it. But the result, the benefits of doing it is that you create the life you want.

The reason that it's important to do this past work first is because otherwise, you'll get into perfectionism where you're running from the past. I can always tell the measure of someone's growth based on their relationship with their past self. So just think about that. Do you love your past self? Are you so grateful to her, even for the mistakes that she made?

Like, for me, I am so grateful that I loved my dad the way that I loved him. I am so grateful that I quit drinking. I am so grateful that I decided to stop dating those guys who didn't serve me. I am so grateful that I decided to own my student loan debt, start what was then a blog, turn it into an online business that now supports me and my family, and become a mindfulness and life coach. Not let my limiting beliefs about being bad with dating or not thinking that I was able to get married or have kids, or thinking that I was somehow always going to be in student loan debt.

Like those were all available stories to me that I let go of, and I recreated. Now I have a happy marriage with a son who we adore. I'm a mindfulness life coach. I love my work. I love my clients. I'm obsessed with teaching all y'all this work. That didn't just happen. Truly, I'm most proud of the work that I've done in changing that identity because I really thought that I was just "type A" and that's who I was. It's not true.

Even if I want to keep the part of me that's still ambitious and likes to get things done, I have such more internal balance because I did the work of deciding to live into my future on purpose. Not because there was something wrong with who I was in the past, but because that's the next level of growth that I wanted for myself.

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I am so grateful to my past self for making decisions that were against the grain. I mean I quit practicing law. I decided to quit my job as a wealth manager. I decided to build a business. I had student loan debt. I paid that off. I'm so grateful to her.

It's not just achievement oriented. It's all of the things. It's all of the challenges, the internal challenges. The going through my pregnancy, holy moly. I was so sick. Oh my gosh, so sick. I had a really rough pregnancy. I'm so grateful for that because now I have a beautiful son.

So what is your relationship like with your past? You can do this work on interpreting your family of origin story. You can do this work on maybe your dating history. You can do this work on the first few years of your marriage. You can do this work on family photos.

For example, let's say that last month, you had family photos, and your daughter had a frowned face in all of the photos. So that is something that happened in the past. It happened last month. What is your story about it today? This is a good exercise for everyone to do who's listening. Take an example like that from last month where it's a fact. We could prove it. We could look at the photos. She's frowning in all the photos. Tell like one, two, or three stories about that photo.

You can tell the story that she knows better. She was being rude and disrespectful. She ruined the family photos. That's one story. Check in with yourself and how that would make you feel if you told that story. You would feel very disempowered. You would feel sort of like the victim of your daughter, like she did this to you. In that line of thinking, it's thinking that kids are supposed to perform in a certain way to fulfill our happiness. You just want to notice it. The picture is what it is. So what's the story around the picture?

Now what else might you tell that feels true to you that is more helpful? Because your brain is smart. It might not be available to you to think the story that these were your most favorite photos. Like if you try to think that

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and it doesn't land then just come up with a different one. There are so many stories that you could tell.

The one that I am thinking of right now would be something like oh my goodness, that silly, confident, little child. They are just independent and learning to assert themselves and be an individual. Oh my goodness, what a treat. I can't wait to see who they become. You know what? Now we have this photo that is certainly going to be a good story down the road.

It's interesting. As I'm telling you this story, I'm thinking of two things. There is a photo, some of you probably saw it on Instagram. By the way, if you're not over on Instagram, I'm over @nataliebaconcoaching.

I shared a photo of me when I was, gosh, I don't even know eight years old or something, and I am frowning. There's like 15 people in the photo or so, and everyone's smiling. I've just had enough, and I'm frowning. I love that photo. I love looking back on that. It just is so endearing to me. I'm also thinking about a client who I coached recently inside Grow You who had a similar situation happen with her daughter.

So I share that because I want you to know that there are many different ways of telling the story of the past and finding the story that serves you best and helps you show up as the person you want to show up as might take a little bit of your time. It might take some journaling, but it is so worth it.

Start with something that happened last month or in this last year, take a look at it, tell the story in a couple of different ways. One way that's very disempowering and another way that is very empowering. You also might write a letter to your past self. Pick any age. What do you want to tell her? What I love about this practice is that so often we tell our past selves to relax. It's going to be fine. Everything's going to work out better than you've even imagined. Right?

If I was talking to my past self, I would say, oh my goodness. You have no idea what's ahead of you. You're going to pay off those student loans.

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You're going to marry an amazing man. You're going to have puppies and babies, and it's going to be better than you've ever imagined. There will be palm trees and sunshine out your window. Relax. There's nothing to worry about. That's what I would tell her.

I find that fascinating because then the question becomes okay what advice does my future self have for me now, and it's probably similar, which tells us that the worries that we have are not useful or helpful. So it can kind of be a little trippy, especially if you've never done this work before.

So I want to introduce it to you here and invite you to get started with it. Get started retelling past stories in a way that serve you. That can be related to challenges. It can also be related to your personality. Even if it's as simple as yeah in the past, I've been quick to anger. Now I'm working on becoming more calm. That has a very different energy then yeah, I've always been quick to anger. That creates stuck energy from the past.

If you think though, the other thought where you say in the past, I've been quick to anger, but I'm working on becoming more calm, that has momentum into the future who you want to be. So it's not that you negate the truth of your past, but you just tell it in an empowering way. So it might be you know what? I have tried for years to lose weight, and I'm learning and growing. I know that this is possible for me in the future. So you tell the story honestly, but in a story that really makes you that leading lady that is going to create the life that she wants.

That's the work my friend. Let's do it. Let's rewrite the story of our past. Let's unwind those past stories. I would love to see you in Grow You as we do this work all month in December. Take care.

If you loved this podcast I invite you to check out Grow You my mindfulness community for moms where we do the inner work together. Head on over to nataliebacon.com/coaching to learn more.