

Ep #1: Living a Storied Life

Full Episode Transcript



With Your Host

Aaron J. Jacobs

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You're listening to the *Storied Life Coaching* podcast with Aaron J. Jacobs episode number uno, one! Let's do this!

In this episode, we're diving into default versus intentional stories and how knowing the difference between the two will help you to create a better life. Forward! What if you could write your own life story? How would you spend your time? What would your career or business look like? What kind of parent or partner would you be?

Welcome to Storied Life Coaching, the only podcast that will show you how to stop living life by default, and teach you how to build a thriving business that fuels an amazing life on your terms. I'm Aaron J. Jacobs, and as a master coach and CEO of OMH Creative and Storied Coaching, I've had the privilege and opportunity to learn what it takes first hand to rewrite your own life story. It's never too late for a rewrite.

Hello my friends, welcome to podcast episode number one. Or, as it's labeled currently in my file directly as 001 because there's going to be hundreds of these. This is the first one. So many stories and hero's journeys start with the first step, just deciding to do something, and that's what's happening right now, today. So, today I am answering the question of what makes a storied life and how I have found that once you can answer this question, it is the remedy for languishing.

Some of you may be familiar with this term; Adam Grant wrote a wonderful article on it. If you haven't already read it from The New York Times, I highly suggest that you do. But, it's this feeling of aimlessness of not thriving of being stuck once you learn how to identify and then move from what I call a default story to an intentional story how that is the magic formula for getting yourself out of that muck, out of that languishing.

All kinds of possibilities can open up for you once you learn how to do this, and I'm going to show you exactly how. So, what does it mean to live a storied life? That is the question that we're answering today. So, I'm going to start with what it is not. It is not living by default, so many of us do this. I'll

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give you an example of a client that I had. In fact, it was my very first client that will illustrate this.

Sometimes when we're living our stories on default, even though we're the heroes of our own stories, we may be in a place right now, especially with what's happened to us in the last several years with the pandemic. We look around, and we go, is this the role I want to be in and the story I want to be in right now? Do I want to continue my commute into this job? That is okay, but it's not what I imagined I'd be doing and how I'd be serving people. It isn't feeling like I'm fulfilling my purpose.

So, if you're living your life by default, you might be having some of those thoughts. Questioning am I really helping anyone right now? Is my job other than bringing in money at the moment, is it fulfilling me? Do I have enough time with my family? These are all things that might indicate that you're living a default story. A story that has happened to you, and you might even feel like you were forced into.

Stories, in general, are how our brains make sense of the world and our role within it. And if we're the hero of our own stories, then we need to take control of that story. Otherwise, that story will happen to us instead of for us. So, I'm going to illustrate this by telling you a little bit about the first client that I ever had.

I remember he was telling me that there was a moment when he realized that he probably had clinical depression. It was a funny story that he said. I was sitting in the doctor's office on the crinkly paper on that bed, chair thing that they put you in, in those small rooms, and he was really nervous because the doctor was going to come in and he was going to admit to the first person out loud that he was profoundly sad, and he didn't know why. He was in his early 20s, and things had been going great up to that point.

He had gotten married only like six months before, and up to that point, things had been going fine. Then, all of a sudden, one day at work, he had an anxiety attack. What he later learned was an anxiety attack, where he

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felt closed in and couldn't breathe, and was stressed out. His hands started clenching, and then depressive issues started to pop up as well.

So, he's in this doctor's office, telling the doctor through tears that I don't understand why I'm sad, but I feel sad, and I'm worried about things all the time. And the doctor apparently was nodding and said, do you mind if I bring in one of my student colleagues? And my client said I guess, yeah, that's fine. He brought him in and very matter-of-factly and clinically said, so this is a classic example of clinical depression. And what we're going to do is put him on SSRIs. Serotonin uptake inhibitors that will help him, and we're going to give him some Effexor and send him out the door.

And it was so clinically, and so like, this is your story. This is who you are. You are a person that deals with depression, have an anxiety disorder, and here are your pills and out the door. He realized that once that story had happened to him, that's just who he was. He had been defined by a specific story. He started taking his medication, gained a lot of weight, ended up also drinking a lot more alcohol than he should have, more than likely, among other various compounds and fun things.

He felt like he was not in the story that he was supposed to be. That he had been cast in a role that he never would have found himself in and never wanted to be, he was a performer with advanced degrees from a renowned program overseas in the UK. At one point, he had been cast in something that he was very excited about. There was a stage play that would tour all around the country, and he got kicked out at the last moment because of the fact that there were some union difficulties with him being an American than being over in the UK.

So, he ended up having the contract rescinded after he thought that he had made it. That he had this contract that like, he had an agent, all of these things were going really well for him. Then, for it to be pulled all out from under him, he ended up getting sent home because he didn't have a work visa anymore. He ended up living in his in-laws' basement and selling insurance door to door. I am not making this up.

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Actually selling insurance door to door. Like, the definition of a lot of people's stories, I've now hit bottom. I'm depressed. I'm drinking too much. I've gained a bunch of weight. I'm probably a horrible partner. I have failed at my life's ambition like things were looking pretty bleak. Saw himself as a story of failure for other people. A cautionary tale. Ended up getting a little bit of help from a friend who was also in the tech industry in the Seattle area and said, you know what? I think you, as a performer with a background in the arts, I think you would make a great project manager. You would be really good at talking to clients.

So, he ended up taking a job in the tech industry and doing pretty well as a consultant working his way through different things and working with companies like Microsoft, T-Mobile, all kinds of things like that. Then, got to the point where he realized that the story that he was telling himself over and over again, that the story he was in right now was because he was a failure.

Because he didn't succeed at the thing that he thought was his story, to begin with, that he would always be a failure, now, through working on himself, getting therapy, working with a coach, he ended up finding a path where he was able to rewrite his story, or he was able to take the things from his past and start his own business.

From starting his own business, gaining confidence, and going like maybe that wasn't my story? And I can stop telling myself the story that the rest of my life is happening to me right now because of the fact that I failed at the thing I was supposed to be doing. As if that was destiny and destiny didn't work out, and so, now whatever I do other than that is always going to be the failure story.

What if we rewrote that story, and he was the hero of his story instead? That all of those things were obviously meant to happen to him and was perfect because it led him to the point where he became an entrepreneur and started a successful business that did over seven figures and was able to support and tell a story and weave a story for his family that he never

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even thought was going to be possible even when he was in his original story.

So, I tell you this story to tell you the fact that we start off with what we think our story's going to be when we're kids, and maybe even through high school and college, we get to the point where we feel like, okay. I know exactly who I'm supposed to be right now, and this is the only story I'm supposed to pursue, but we have points, inflection points, watershed moments during our lives when we have the chance to rewrite our story.

To change what we thought our story was going to be and we cast ourselves in a new hero role. Where all those things that happened to us before, if we were in default mode, actually can propel us and be the fuel for writing our new story where the possibilities and the life that we can lead are absolutely limitless if we take control of our own story of our own thoughts and our own brain.

So, some of you may already realize the person I'm talking about, my first client, was me. My first client was that depressed 20-year-old that was just six months into his marriage and thought my life was over at this point. And through learning about coaching, learning about how to train my brain so that I could be in control of my thoughts, and I could rewrite my story and take the things that I was innately good at. I had so many possibilities of different stories and different journeys that I could go on. If I just took the reins of the story.

If I took my pen, if you will, and decided to just start a new story and cast myself as the hero. In fact, a large part of what we do as an organization is helping people with their hero stories in different areas. So, we helped some of the biggest brands in the world, like Microsoft, SAP, AT&T, T-Mobile, all kinds of businesses; we help them tell engaging, funny stories through video. Through animated explainer videos through real-life videos, we help them engage with their audience and sell more things.

Several years ago, we found out that there was a thirst for them learning how to do it on their own. For not just, hey, here's a video that does it for

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you, but how do we, these companies, how would they teach their people, their salespeople, their presales people, their customer success teams, their marketing teams? How could they learn how to start telling more engaging business stories so that they can sell more things? And we help them with that, and it's been wildly successful.

We've trained thousands of people at this point on how to do this, and they love it. But one of the things that we learned while doing this and became obvious was that these individuals at these organizations had wanted to do deeper storytelling for their own personal lives. They wanted to learn how to move from where they were in their own version of languishing.

Maybe they wanted to get a promotion, move to a different team, earn more money, do their own business, their own startup. Still, they just have never been able to find out what their story was and how to connect with it so that they could move towards that and have a life that maybe they thought was impossible?

So, we started working on what we're talking about today, which is helping individuals identify unintentional stories that they might not realize that they have, and start to untangle that ball of yarn and then reinvent themselves with something that's much more intentional and get them where they want to go.

So, default stories versus intentional stories. A default story, what's an example of how would you know that you're perhaps in a default story mode? Well, do you have some feelings like this? Do you have a lack of a sense of purpose? Do you feel like you're kind of meandering through your career? Things are just kind of happening to you? You're not very specific and targeted as far as the result that you want and the trajectory that you want, and how to get there? Is it not planned out? Do you have things that happen to you, like, a case of the Sunday evening blues, as I call them?

I used to have those all of the time when I was working as a project manager at some large companies. I would feel like kind of aimless, and when Friday came along, I was so excited because I didn't have to think

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about that stuff that I really, if I was being honest, didn't care about. So, how do you find out how to make the opposite of that? To not get a case of the Sunday blues, but that might be an example of you living in default.

It might also be another example of you living in default if you don't have a clear sense of your goals and where you want to go, and the results that you want to get? You might be living on default if family time gets crammed in wherever you're not working. As many of us are experiencing right now, we're working all of the time, especially as those barriers between work life and life shred even further.

Many of us, if you're in the technology sector and elsewhere working from home, those lines start to get blurred, don't they? You might feel that way, you might feel like finding yourself at 7 pm, the laptop is still open, and the kiddos have been around and kind of wanting your attention for a while now. They've started to get a little bit annoying, and it's because they want your attention.

There aren't clearly delineated lines. You don't have a sense of purpose of where the edges of those things exist. So, those all might be examples of living your life in a default mode if you're not pursuing your passion in what you want to do, and it's not specific, and it's not crisp. So, what is the opposite of the default story mode?

Well, that is writing your story on purpose. Living a storied life which is our big theme, comes down to writing an intentional story on purpose. It really is taking a step back and looking at am I aligned professionally and personally to a clear purpose? Do I know exactly why I'm pursuing what I'm pursuing, and why am I doing it? Get super crystal clear on your why. Is it goal-driven? Do you have specific goals for this year? For right now, we're starting in 2022; it's January.

Do you know exactly what your goal is for the year, two years from now, five years from now? Shorter-term goals that align with that. What do you want to get done this quarter? What do you want to get done this month, personally and professionally? In your ideal life, what would you want to be

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doing in order to support that? Clear result-based outcomes are what will help you with that.

You might think this is crazy. I'm not going to write down all these things that I know aren't possible right now, but you really need to get rid of the thought that things aren't possible for you just because they're not your reality right now. They can become that. It all starts with thinking that there's a possibility of a different version of your life. So many times, we have stories in default mode that have accumulated over time, and it can feel like you're stuck in the mud.

You need to be able to just like, hey, if that mud wasn't there if I could make any change I wanted to right now. What would I rather be doing professionally, or what would I rather be doing in the same organization or contributing or serving at a higher level, but if I wasn't encumbered by the stories I have right now of why I can't do that, what would I want to do? How could I serve? Are you excited for the week?

Again, the opposite of that default story is that you are excited and engaged in your work, with the people you are working with, the environment that you are in. You are very clear about why it's important. You're clear on your priorities as far as life balance as well. You've scheduled time specifically and purposefully for the things that you want and are excited about in your personal life.

They don't just happen when you have time because, as we all know, if anyone's a parent like me, if you don't make intentional time for those things, they don't happen. Then, you beat yourself up about it later. It's a whole other set of problems that we'll get into in future episodes and how to address that. But plenty of that balance for friends and family because what is the purpose of your professional life if it's not fueling your personal life, in those relationships and those bonds and the love that you want to generate for yourself and your family?

So, those are the big differences between having a default story and then having a clear, intentional story. And so, some of you might have a current

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story it's not working anymore, and that's okay. The first step is to admit that maybe my story isn't working for me anymore? Maybe for some of you, you're like, I didn't even realize I had a story, but you're going to start getting curious. Allow your brain to be curious, not judgmental because we all have stories. Some of them are true, some of them are not true, some of them are very true to us, but from an outsider's perspective, they would not be held up.

They would be pretty flimsy. People can poke holes in them very quickly. So, you might need a new story, and stories are built by being more intentional about your thoughts. It all starts with a thought. Every great story that's ever been told or lived has started with a thought that this might be possible. There might be a different way of doing this? And those thoughts build sentences. They become sentences in our minds.

When we starting streaming together sentences, they become narratives. Some of them are very small, like a scene in a movie, but you string enough of those scenes together, and all of a sudden, you've got a whole new story, but it all starts with a thought. So, really let your brain be curious this week about what stories am I telling myself and am I doing that on purpose, or is that a story that was told to me by an elementary school teacher, by a parent in the past, by someone else, an ex-girlfriend or boyfriend that may or may not be true, and I may have just accepted it as my story as fact.

You can always write a new narrative, a new story, and fuel the life that you've always wanted, but you have to start being observant, let your mind be curious, take out that piece of paper, write down some of those default stories of what you think is true about your life professionally and personally? What's possible and what's not possible? Then, look at that side of the list; some of those things might not be true. Just leave the option open that they might not be.

Then, on the other side, start writing down some short and long-term goals or what you would like that story to be? If money was no object, if friends, neighbors, spouses weren't going to judge you for the choice that you

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made, for that secret desire that you've always wanted to be a marine biologist, but right now, you're a librarian. You don't know how you could ever make that leap, or you're an executive, and you've always wanted to actually be a teacher?

What are those secret desires? What is that new story? Just allow yourself to dream and to write it down. It's not as impossible as you think. It all starts with a thought and being brave enough to think that there might be a new story that you can write for yourself. So, default versus intentional stories, anything that sticks out to you that you want to change, when comparing those two lists, start thinking that it might be a reality for you. You can start to build these stories that fuel your life.

Look for ways to see default stories. Are they making you more or less happy? You might want to reexamine. Basically, I'm saying if the script, the story of your life right now, maybe feels like a horror film, maybe it's time for some rewrites? Just be open to it. Alright, my friends, I hope you stick around for upcoming episodes.

If you've enjoyed this one, we have some really amazing things coming up, like, how to use story building blocks to rewrite your internal story script and exactly how to do that to get better results. How to get better results, and how to plan for them, or as we call them, hero call to actions, getting out of burnout, how to identify when you're in it and how to get on the path out of it because it sucks. How to stop overdrinking something I have a lot of experience within my past. Leading like a movie producer, and how to make that work for you. Goal setting, in general, thought ladders to get you there. Oh, and how to get rid of frank, aka your inner critic, frank the parrot.

I'll go more into that when that comes up. Until then, thank you so much for listening to this first episode, and I can't wait to see you next time.

To celebrate the launch of the show, I'm going to be giving away an amazing on-camera kit which includes a high-quality webcam, lighting set up, and a microphone. This is the very same kit we provide to students

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enrolled in our storied team's course that is used by our storied clients like Microsoft and SAP.

I'll be awarding three lucky listeners who follow, rate and review the show. It doesn't have to be a five-star review, although I sure hope you love the show. I just want your honest feedback so we can create an awesome show that provides tons of value. Visit storiedcoaching.com/podcastlaunch; again, that's storiedcoaching.com/podcastlaunch to learn more about the contest and how to enter. I'll be announcing the winners on the show in an upcoming episode.

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