

V. LIFE-DEFINING STORIES

Though many stories contribute to who we are, a few large-scale, overarching life narratives often control the way we see the world and ourselves in it. If these are essentially healthy, our lives have great potential for meaning and satisfaction. If not, we are likely to be perpetually dissatisfied. Identifying these life-defining stories can be a first step either to affirming or to changing them.

1. Can you identify some of the large-scale, defining stories in your life? (Think of some of the preceding categories: family, education, religion, politics, popular culture, and so on.)
2. What qualities do you want the story of your life to have? What qualities does it currently have?
3. Is your present story truthful, freeing, gracious, and hopeful, as explored in Chapter 6?
4. Do you detect a plot to your life? Describe it. What are some of the key events (large or small)?
5. Is the plot of your life to this point one that makes likely the future you desire?
6. How would you like your story to end? What would you like to be said of your life by those who live after you? What can you do to make that more likely?
7. How would you describe yourself as a character in your own story? What choices have you made in the past that have contributed to your story being what it now is? What choices can you make to have it be what you want it to be in the future?
8. Who are other important characters in your story? What role do they play? Have they enhanced or diminished your story?
9. In whose story have you been an important character? Have you enhanced or diminished their story? What actions can you take to make their story even better?
10. Who else knows your story?
11. What healthy and healing stories are available to you that you might want to make part of your own?

The Healing Power of Stories
 by Daniel Taylor
 Doubleday 1996