



The Stories We Tell Ourselves

A fifteen-minute pause in a noisy world – with Paul Cleworth

THE BIG IDEA

There is a voice in your head that has been running so long, and speaks with such casual authority, that most of us never stop to ask who it is or whether it is telling us the truth. It is not a reporter giving you the facts. It is a narrator — and a narrator has a version of events. This episode is about reading the story you are running, and asking whether it is still true.

“It’s not your fault.”

— **Good Will Hunting, Gus Van Sant, 1997**

Will deflects, laughs it off, gets angry. Sean says it again. And a twenty-year-old story loosens.

“I have a head for business and a bod for sin. Is there anything wrong with that?”

— **Working Girl, Mike Nichols, 1988**

Everybody in Tess’s world has quietly agreed what a girl from Staten Island is for. Nobody has to say it.

EPISODE OVERVIEW

The Hook	A therapist’s office in Boston, and four words.
The Narrator	Not a reporter. A narrator — with a version of events.
Inherited	Working Girl, and a cage with a comfortable lock.
The Space	Frankl, Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius on the same gap.
The Fast Story	Kahneman: System One deals in stories, not facts.
The Practice	Write it down. Ask where it came from. Try a different one.
Who It’s For	Anyone still running a story they wrote at eight.

WHY ‘THE STORIES’?

In investing — ‘people like us don’t take risks’ is a story, and it costs more than any fee.

In family life — money stories pass down like furniture. Rarely examined, simply assumed.

In business — the fast story about why they said no is almost never checked.

In life — the story is not the sentence. It is the most recent draft.

“Whose voice is narrating my life?”

— *and when did I last check whether it is telling me the truth?*

STOIC & OTHER WISDOM

“Men are disturbed not by things, but by the views which they take of them.”

EPICETUS · ENCHIRIDION

“Our life is what our thoughts make it.”

MARCUS AURELIUS · MEDITATIONS

“Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response.”

VIKTOR FRANKL · MAN’S SEARCH FOR MEANING

“What you see is all there is.”

DANIEL KAHNEMAN · THINKING, FAST AND SLOW

“You got a fast car. I want a ticket to anywhere.”

TRACY CHAPMAN · FAST CAR, 1988

REFERENCES THIS EPISODE

FILM

Good Will Hunting (1997) · Working Girl (1988)

MUSIC

Tracy Chapman — Fast Car (1988) · R.E.M. — Everybody Hurts (1992) · Carly Simon — Let the River Run (1988)

BOOKS & THINKERS

Man’s Search for Meaning — Viktor Frankl · Thinking, Fast and Slow — Daniel Kahneman · The Four Agreements — Don Miguel Ruiz · Mindset — Carol Dweck · Meditations — Marcus Aurelius · Enchiridion — Epictetus

THE STEADY PATH PRINCIPLE

Write it. Question it. Rewrite it.

THIS EPISODE’S REFLECTION QUESTION

“Whose voice is narrating my life — and when did I last check whether it’s telling me the truth?”

The voice has been there so long, and speaks with such easy familiarity, that it is very easy to confuse it with reality — rather than a narrative that could, in principle, be revised.

COMING UP — EPISODE 11

Practising Gratitude

“What would I see differently if I chose to look for it?”

Sit with the question before the next episode.

TAKE THIS WITH YOU The story is not the sentence. It is just the most recent version — and it can be rewritten.

Slow down. Think clearly. Keep walking your steady path.

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