A silhouette of a person with long hair, wearing a t-shirt and pants, is captured mid-jump over a chain. The person's arms are raised high, and their legs are bent. The chain is attached to a post on the left and extends across the frame. The background is a vibrant sunset sky with orange, yellow, and blue hues, and several birds are flying in the distance. The foreground shows tall grass.

Carl Greer PhD, PsyD

8 Steps to Change Your Life by Creating a New Story

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Most of us don't take enough time to reflect on our internalized beliefs about what we can expect out of life—beliefs that make up our story—and consciously create a new, more satisfying one. Instead, we get busy, distract ourselves in a variety of ways, deny reality, or continue suffering. We too easily convince ourselves that we have no control over what happens to us.

When our lives remain unexamined, we can become rigid and inflexible. When external crises arise, and they always do, we may break or collapse because we're not ready for change. We don't have the inner resiliency to bend with, readjust to, or absorb new situations. We don't know how to change our story to accommodate these new circumstances. But . . .

What if you were to write a new story for yourself and bring it to life? How much more joy would you experience?

Here are eight steps to change your life story by creating a new story.

Step 1: Identify your current story.

You have a story, or internalized belief, about what has happened to you up to this point in your life and what you can expect to experience in the future. You might say it's a positive story, but is it? The story you tell yourself and others might be very different from the story you actually believe. To become more aware of your story, start by writing a brief biography of yourself. Be as truthful as possible. You don't have to show your writing to anyone.

What is your story? Write it here.

[illegible]

[illegible]



When you're finished writing your story, ask yourself, is this the real story? Think about some of the things you didn't write about—particularly any events that make you uncomfortable. What are their themes? Often, they're painful ones, such as powerlessness, constriction, betrayal, and neglect.

Themes I overlooked in writing my story.

Now think of a title for your current story. Maybe it's a song or movie title or a saying. Some of the stories people hold onto can be summed up as:

It's too late.

I'm always the bridesmaid, never the bride.

People like me can only go so far in life.

If I just do what everyone else does, I'll be happy and successful.

Only the good die young.

Don't get too prideful and take risks that could lead to failure.

In a nutshell, what is your story?

Step 2: Decide whether you would like to change your story.

Is your story truly satisfying? Yes No (circle one)

Does it give you a sense of purpose and fulfillment? Yes No (circle one)

Does it make you excited about the possibilities tomorrow may bring? Yes No
(circle one)

Is it enlivening or deadening? *Enlivening* *Deadening* (circle one)

Even if you like your story so far, you can make it even better.

There may be elements of your old story you want to keep, but often, people's stories are too extreme. Only the good die young? A better story would be "Often, the good die young, but if I lead a good life, I can live to a ripe old age." It's too late? "It's too late for me to do some of the things I wanted to do, in the way I wanted to do them, but I can still do them in some form and to some degree. I'm not going to let obstacles stand in my way anymore" is a better, more empowering story that you might want to write and adopt.

Are you resistant to changing your story because you fear you can't make it any better? Read on, because I have some practical strategies for overcoming your resistance.



Step 3: Begin thinking about what you'd like your new story to be.

To write a new story for yourself, you will probably want to identify any parts of your old story that you'd like to change. However, do you know what you most want to experience?

Ask yourself, "If I were to have no obstacles whatsoever, what would I like my story to be?"

And ask yourself, "What are the most important things for me to experience between now and the end of my life?"

Step 4: Consult your wise inner self to learn what you need to do to write a better story and bring it to life.

Your unconscious has wisdom that's hidden from your conscious awareness.

You might think of your unconscious as being a wise inner self you can consult for guidance on what you most want and what you need to do to experience a life that's meaningful and satisfying for you.

Sit in a comfortable spot where you'll have no interruptions, Set the intention to gain wisdom and even momentum for change from resources inside you taking the form of a wise inner self. Close your eyes, breathe naturally, and simply observe the sounds and sensations you're experiencing without labeling them or creating thoughts about them. Continue until you feel very relaxed.

Then, allow your wise inner self to appear. You might see an image before you or sense that your wise inner self—your unconscious—has opened a door to communicate with you.

Ask your wise inner self, "What can you tell me about writing a better story and living a better life?"

Wait for the answer. You may have to be very patient. Whatever thoughts come to mind, whatever images or sounds or words appear in your awareness, simply notice them. You can analyze them later, after you have finished this exercise.

If nothing comes to you, ask the question again—perhaps a few times. Then, write down whatever experiences you had and whatever information you gained.

Next, ask your wise inner self, “What do I need to let go of to write a better story and live a better life?”

Once again, wait for the answer in whatever form it appears.

We tend to have difficulty letting go of beliefs, habits, and relationships that are no longer working for us because we fear the unknown or because we don’t want to disappoint anyone who cares about us. We can have many different fears about change, but to change, we have to let go of something. Wait with an open mind and heart to receive the answer to your question, “What do I need to let go of to write a better story and live a better life?”

What you will let go of will make room energetically for something new to come in—a new view of yourself and the opportunities that might become available to you, a new set of beliefs, new habits, or something else.

Ask your wise inner self, “What do I need to bring in to write a better story and live a better life?”

Let your wise inner self answer in its own time. Be patient. Even if what comes to you is a brief image or a few words, pay attention to them.

If you want more clarity about the answers you received, you can ask questions of your wise inner self now or later, in another session in which you set an intention to learn from your unconscious. It can be helpful for your dialogue to imagine yourself inhabiting this wise inner you, feeling confident and loving toward the you who is asking questions. Answer your questions as your wise inner self. Then, return to identifying with the you who is sitting with your eyes closed. Ask another question. Then inhabit your wise inner self again to answer. Continue for as long as you need to.

This dialoguing technique might be challenging at first, but try it out a few times. It can yield important insights. What's more, the exchange that it tells you to make—the giving up of something and bringing in of something else—can shift your energy. You might find that your old story that wasn't working for you doesn't have the power over you that it once did. You might feel yourself finally becoming free of old emotional patterns or habits of mind that have kept you stuck in a story and a life that are unfulfilling.

End your session when you are finished with your dialogue, having received answers to at least the first three suggested questions—*what can you tell me*, *what do I need to let go of*, and *what do I need to bring in*. Thank your wise inner self for its guidance. By doing this, you honor the part of you that has some fear about self-honesty. You honor the wisdom you've gained as a result of all that you have experienced and learned before today.



Step 5: Write a better story.

Drawing upon what you learned from your dialogue, your process of writing your story and coming up with a title for it, and your thoughts about what you would like to experience before you leave this earth, write a new story. It might start with just a sentence or two. Try to avoid words like “should,” “ought to,” “must,” “always,” and “never.” You want your story to be somewhat flexible so that you can remain open to different ways it might unfold.

Write a sentence or two initially. Then, expand on describing what you would like to experience.

[illegible]

Step 6: Begin to bring your new story to life by making changes around the margins.

Small changes can lead to big transformations. Don't let yourself be overwhelmed by the amount of change you might think you must make to see the results you want.

You can change your story and change your life by starting small.

As soon as you can after doing the dialogue with your wise inner self, come up with at least three simple goals that you know will help you make your new story come true. Start small. Don't aim to "lose weight" or "become more comfortable being alone," even if you'd like that outcome eventually. Be specific as you set an achievable goal: "I will only eat dessert once a week instead of almost every day" and "I will go to a movie matinee or a restaurant by myself" are goals you're more likely to reach because they're small and specific. Later, you can expand on your small goals. Dessert might only be once a month, and you might find yourself booking a vacation you'll be taking on your own.

Write down at least three goals.

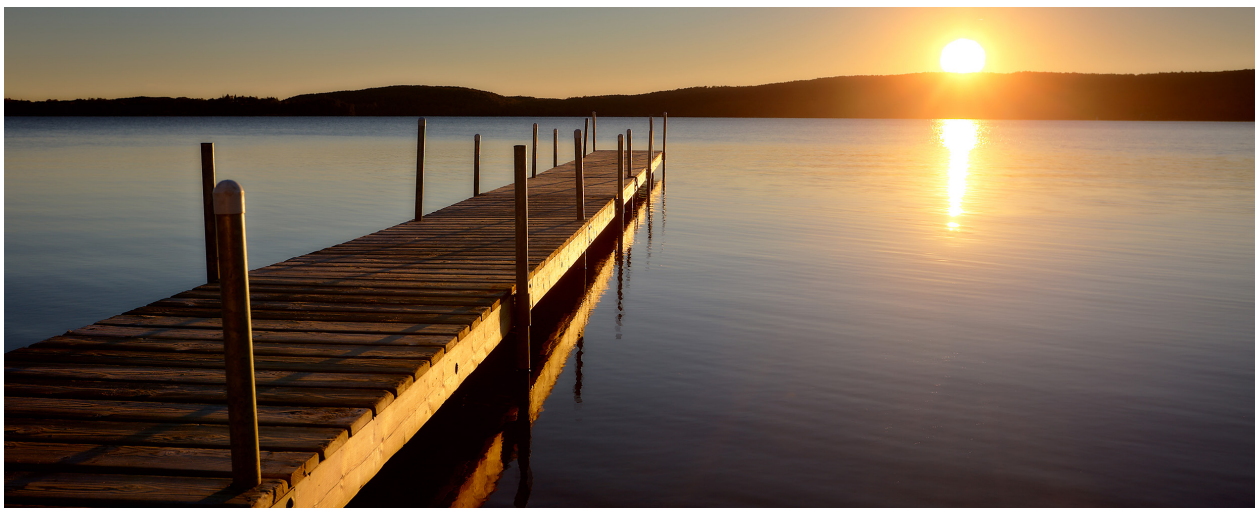
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Step 7: Fuel your new story by working with your wise inner self.

If you haven't already dialogued with your wise inner self, do it now, asking what you need to do to bring your new story to life: what you need to know, what you need to give up, and what you need to bring in.

Then, continue having these kinds of dialogues. You can dialogue with your wise inner self as often as you like, but you can also dialogue with a symbol or figure that appeared to you in an earlier dialogue or a dream. It might have important insights for you and even help you make an energetic shift, letting go of the energy surrounding an old belief, habit, or emotion and bringing in new energy that can fuel your new story. You can also dialogue with emotions or emotional experiences you're having: fear, frustration, or sadness, to name a few possibilities.

I also recommend dialoguing at least once with the energy of endings, sometimes known as the death principle. We often need something to die so something new can grow, but it's in our nature to hold onto what's no longer serving us. A visit with the energy of endings to learn what insights it has, what you can release to it, and what it can give you might be very helpful for breaking through obstacles to transformation.



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Step 8: Go beyond making small changes to committing to new habits.

If you're occasionally making progress toward your goal of breaking free of an old story and starting to bring to life a new one you've consciously written, that's excellent. Now, it's time to challenge yourself further. Begin creating new habits related to your goal. Keep in mind the following tips for establishing a new habit:

- *Record your successes and failures.* Doing this makes it easier to both hold yourself accountable for any failures and be inspired by the number of successes you've had.
- *Come up with rewards for having met your goals.* Let yourself enjoy the motivation that comes from reaching your goal and also reaping the benefits of the reward you chose for yourself.
- *Connect a new habit with an old one.* If you always drive to work, let getting into your car in the morning be your cue to do a ten-minute meditation. If you always scroll on your phone when waiting in line, install an eReader app and read from a book or magazine instead. Figure out what your routine is and a place for your new habit to live.
- *Make it easy and convenient to take the new actions you've committed to.* The less effort it takes to perform a new action, the more likely you are to take it.
- *Hold yourself accountable for your failures.* Commit to analyzing what went wrong and finding a solution you can use the next time you're facing potential failure. For example... Don't let a failure cause you to give up or berate yourself. In fact, allow yourself a limited number of failures each week so that you're more motivated to try again tomorrow if you didn't meet today's goal. Make failure a trigger for revisiting your plan and revising it if necessary. Consult with your wise inner self if you're having trouble figuring out how to remain on course to your goal. You might have a hidden obstacle that your wise inner self can help you move past.

- *Make working toward your goal more enjoyable.* Make a game out of the activities you do toward reaching your goal. Socialize or listen to music you enjoy while you're carrying out the actions you've committed to. Let's say your goal is to do aerobic exercise four times a week for at least forty-five minutes a session: Choose a type of exercise that you'll enjoy. Research shows that exercise you enjoy rather than exercise you do only because you feel you have to has an added benefit of contributing to higher levels of BDNF, a biochemical your body makes that it uses to strengthen the part of your brain associated with memory and learning. Get together with friends to go on walks together so you can combine socializing with establishing a new habit for yourself.

Write down some ways you can more easily achieve the goals you identified earlier.

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To learn more about how to change your story and your life and access a variety of journaling and expanded-awareness exercises to help you, read my first book: [*Change Your Story, Change Your Life: Using Shamanic and Jungian Tools to Achieve Personal Transformation*](#). (Also available as an eBook and an audiobook.)

If the story you want to change is the story of your health, read my second book, which has journaling and expanded-awareness exercises, too: [*Change the Story of Your Health: Using Shamanic and Jungian Techniques for Healing*](#). (Also available as an eBook and an audiobook.)

If you'd like to read my story and do some self-reflection using questions on themes from my own life story that might be playing out in yours, read my memoir: [*The Necktie and the Jaguar: A Memoir to Help You Change Your Life and Find Fulfillment*](#). (Also available as an eBook.)

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