

**Why Am I Stuck in My Story: The Conflict Won't End**

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# Why Am I Stuck in My Story: The Conflict Won't End

by Brenda Kelleher-Flight

## Introduction

All people create a story. Sometimes the premise on which the story is based is quite true. Other times the assumption on which the story is based is partially or totally flawed. How do we know when the story is accurate or flawed?

That is a difficult question to answer but one that needs to be investigated. This article is designed to provide guidance for persons who are tired of their life circumstances and want something to change.

There is good news and bad news when it comes to change. The bad news is that we cannot force or require other people to change even if we believe we are right. The good news is that if we change, circumstances around us will also change. Therefore, it is critical to examine your story and decide what you would like to change.

## What Needs to Change

What is your story? Think about it or write it out in detail, then make two columns on a sheet of paper. On the top of each sheet write one question, then in one column write the answer to your question, and in the second column write the question 'why.' Keep giving responses and answering why until you run out of ideas. The sheet would look like this

The Question:	
My Responses	Why I made that response

Now you are ready to answer the following questions

1. Who would I like to change?
2. Does he, she or they cause me to act a certain way? If so, why am I willing to give control over my reactions to him, her or them?
3. What would that person need to change to make me happy?
4. Why would that change make me happy?
5. Would I really be happier if this change occurred?
6. How soon would these changes need to occur for me to feel real progress is being made?
7. Why can't I live with things the way they are now?
8. What would I like to change (e.g. my residence, job, financial situation)
9. What would I have to give up in order to make that change?
10. What would be the short- and long-term drawbacks of making a specific change?
11. Why does my happiness depend on these changes?

Now you know your story and you will identify strong feelings you are not willing to release at this time.

The next step is to consider your options to resolve the situation.

## Things I Can Do

The majority of the time there are options we can choose to change our situation. If you re-read what you wrote when you told your story as instructed above, you know there are things you can do. Now list what you think your options are at this time (think of every possible scenario; do not screen your thinking) and write a 1, 2 or 3 after each option.

1. Means I can definitely take this action now
2. Means I need more information and I will get this data to see if it is a viable option at this time.
3. Means I definitely would not do this at this time.

When you write a 3 after an option, ask yourself if the option is unrealistic or if you are resisting it for a particular reason.

## What Does Resisting an Option Mean

We resist viable options for a variety of reasons. Examples include

- When we fear making a change
- When we do not want to disappoint another person
- When we fear being alone
- When we need to control others in order to find happiness
- When we really do not want to stop complaining
- When the only role we know is one of victim
- When we are addicted to the pain-relief cycle
- When we think we are obligated to be the caregiver or peacemaker
- When our happiness is based on others' opinions of us
- When we have low self-esteem

- When we find ourselves constantly in situations where we are blaming others for what is 'wrong' in our lives and are unable to accept responsibility for those circumstances
- When we think someone is taking something away that is rightfully ours
- When we believe others are responsible for our safety, security and happiness
- When we identify with our roles and haven't taken the time to answer the question "who am I"

These questions can be easy or difficult to answer. No matter which way you look at it, you do know the answers to each one. The key to your answers is feeling confident in who you are.

## **Who Am I?**

Now answer the question, "Who am I?" First, you may offer the standard answers such as

- I am a daughter or son
- I am a wife or husband
- I am a partner
- I am a caregiver
- I am a coach
- I am a (insert profession)

These answers are roles you play but they do not describe your essence. Now write who you are if all this is taken away. Who are you at your core?

You may write statements such as those listed below.

- I really lose track of time when I am reading biographies.
- I love to entertain others.
- I am happiest when I am learning new things.
- I need time alone each day.

- I could sit by the pond with my fishing pole all day and never get bored.

Remember who you are is not a stagnant thing. You change and grow as the months and years go by. What made you happy before may not make you happy now.

## **The Past, The Present, and The Future**

Unfortunately, many of people hold on to ideas which are not true. They remember houses as being bigger than they actually are in reality, people as being meaner or kinder than they were, or situations as being a certain way when in reality they only knew part of the story.

Have you ever been with a group and reminisced about a particular situation, only to realize you have a totally different version from the others? Does that surprise you? This happens often when situations occurred before your brain was fully developed and you could not problem solve as accurately as you do as an adult.

Also, you may find that you are beginning to question 'truths' you learned as a child. You

- will not go blind if you do not eat your carrots
- do not have to follow in your mother's or father's footsteps and work in the same profession
- do not have to practice the same religion as your parents
- can choose your own lifestyle and do not have to follow the traditions of your caregivers
- are not identical to Uncle X or Aunt Y, you have your own personality, or
- really do not like or dislike the people your parents liked or disliked when you were growing up.

This does not mean your caregivers did a poor job. They did the best they could given the stories they were playing out in their heads. These stories were based on their life circumstances and may or may not be relevant to you.

Now is the time to question your own beliefs and decide which to keep and which to discard because they have outlived their usefulness. It is also time to decide which beliefs are assisting you to grow and maintain happiness and which are causing you to stay in circumstances which are no longer appropriate for you. It is only when you are true to yourself that you can change. It is only when you change that conflict will end.

Listen to yourself and no one else.

## **Listening to Myself**

It is essential to really listen to ourselves because what we think we should believe is not what we really believe or value. You will note this if you agree to something and think it is a good idea only to note that you become unsettled or irritated later on. What is happening in such a situation is that what you think you should believe and what you really believe are clashing.

When such a clash occurs your brain is saying one thing and your heart or subconscious mind are saying another. Listen to your feelings and note the thoughts or beliefs behind them. Do not ignore them. Sit with your true feelings and let them express themselves. Do not try to drown them out or bury them. If you do they will only come back stronger the next time you meet a similar situation.

Consider what you are expected to do, say or believe and compare it with what you truly want to do, say or believe. Always be true to yourself and do not bring harm to another person. You may find that when you are true to yourself, certain people will move out of your life and others who are more compatible to you will appear. Also, some people will try and force you to remain as you are. They will not want you to grow. They do this by

- force
- ridicule
- using humor to embarrass you
- acting as if you are hurting them emotionally if you change, and/or



- telling you that you are expected to behave a certain way in order to make them happy.

## **Ending the Conflict**

Now that you know yourself and what you really need to be happy, you are ready to take action. All actions should be in harmony with your true self and should not use verbal or physical force toward another person.

When you are unable to make the necessary changes independently, seek out a conflict resolution specialist to assist you to learn the skills you need. If this does not work and you need to settle a conflict with another person, hire a mediator.

You deserve the best and should only settle for the best circumstances you can create.