



The Story of Your Life

Book reviewed by Frumi Rachel Barr

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Author bio and credits: Mandy Aftel is a psychotherapist, perfumer, and the co-author of "When talk is Not Cheap". She lives in Berkeley CA.

Noteworthy info regarding contents and chapter titles:

Each chapter has exercises to guide the reader through understanding the story of our lives.

Author's main point

We are both the heroes of our own plots and their creators. In a very real sense, we are the authors of our own lives. The way we describe our lives and understand them is ultimately and inextricably connected with the way we live them. As we begin to see the patterns around which we structure our lives, we learn to take charge, revise, refine, and even completely rewrite them. You are the narrator of your own stories, and as you change, your plot will also change. Wherever you are in your life, you can change your plot.

If you pay close attention to the stories others tell you, you will learn volumes about what they believe. The ideas in this book will offer you a way to see that people are complex heroes and villains, a way to craft subtle nuances of possibility and change rather than awaiting inevitable tragedy or happy ending that can never

really be. It offers you a way to stop letting others write the story of your life, and to forever more tell your own tales.

A few supporting ideas:

A plot is the story you impose, retrospectively, on the events of your life. Plot includes not only a chronological sequence of events, but causes and effects as well. Plot is the governing principle of development and coherence in your story.. Stories are the interlocking narratives we use to hold our lots together. Plots are not scripts. A plot is a continuously evolving narrative arising out of self-knowledge and a sense of possibility. A script is a plan we follow unthinkingly.

Our core beliefs about our selves in the world and how we think the world works permeate all our stories. These core beliefs come from our experience in our families as well as from teachers and peers.

The three major plots in our lives are love, mastery and Loss. There are many types of love, but the type that drives most of our plots is the passionate love between two adults. Romantic relationships have an inherently dramatic structure, full of mystery and risk. Marriage is a highly charged relationship because it is where, love, sex, control and money all converge. Marriage plots come dangerously close to writing themselves.

The second major plot category, mastery, centers on things rather than people. It derives from our need of being in control, or at least not out of control, of our environment. Mastery gives us a greater ability to predict outcome and therefore a greater sense of control.

The third and perhaps the most problematic plot is that of loss. Health, beauty, skill and mastery, friendship and love - all eventually leave us. Loss often brings feelings of abandonment and rejection. Since loss is inevitable in life, you must accept it and integrate it into your plot.

The four major complications, which make plots rich and interesting, are money, escape, sex, and children. These four things can complicate each of the above plots.

Reviewer's recommendation: I found this book very valuable, both in order to listen to the stories clients tell as well as to interpret the stories of my own life. The exercises were also very valuable as tools to use with clients when appropriate.



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Frumi and Deborah Gaal are co-founders of the Leaderly Learning Center, a leadership development company specializing in women. We get results because our workshops are led by women who have been CEO's, entrepreneurs and certified coaches. We walk the walk.

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