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Building My Courage Through a Narrative

A role model to me, is someone who always pushes another to grow and sets an image to live up to. Someone who has always played this role through my eyes is my mother. She is someone who looks at her life as a narrative by reflecting on her past experiences to learn and grown. My mother is a women who perfectly defines the definition of courage. In 2014, she gained courage to run the Boston Marathon.

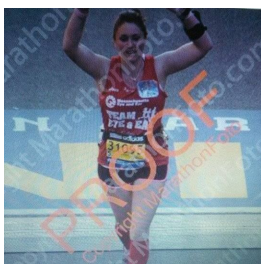


My mother and I hugging by the finish line after she completed her marathon journey



My brother Brady when he was born, receiving care in the NICU.

She built her courage from my brother's strength. My brother Brady was born premature, at only 4 months. He was born with Chronic Lung Disease, Tumor in his left leg, as well as an acute case of Autism. He was cared for at Boston Children's Hospital and Massachusetts Eye and Ear. Brady's doctors have impacted my family so greatly because of their work to save my brother's life, my mother gained the courage to not only run the Boston Marathon in honor of my brother, but



My mother crossing the Boston Marathon finish line

to raise money to donate back to the hospital to help go towards families in need for hospital payments. My mother raised over \$6,000 to give back to the families. The courage my mother has developed over her journey has helped shape her personal

narrative. Not only did my mother develop courage, but she developed a working mindset.

Storytelling can very likely help build courage in a person by developing a growth mindset, rather than a fixed mindset. Developing a growth



My mother standing in front of the Boston Marathon countdown with her race bib.

mindset can set a person up for growth in their individuality. Julie Beck, an Author of an article in the *Atlantic*, is someone who believes that storytelling can be very beneficial to finding meaning in a story and past experiences. Julie mentions in her article that she believes "life stories do not simply reflect personality. They are personality, or more accurately, they are important part of personality, along with other parts, like dispositional traits, goal, and values" (Beck). What I feel Beck means when she states this idea, is that your life experiences help shape the way you approach future life hurdles. I find Beck's statement to be true with my mom's story. My mother used her past experiences to help shape the way she tackles other life experiences, with my mother, it is courage. Although, different mindsets can also have an effect on the way that we overcome life's obstacles.

The working and fixed mind are two types of mindsets that are addressed in a TED talk. Briceno describes the working mind set to be: believing that you can change your own intelligence and outcome of a situation and the fixed mindset as: chained to our current ability. Briceno states that "when we believe we can change our own abilities, by using our growth mindset, it will allow us



[Double click to play video]
Eduardo Briceno speaking about the differences between a fixed mindset and a working mindset

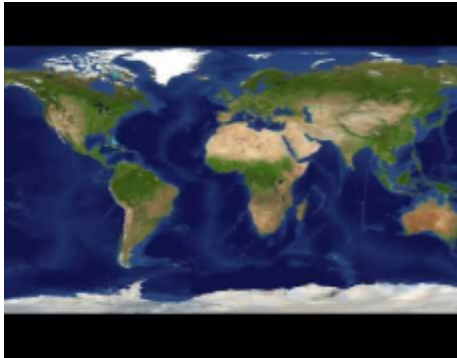
to grow to new levels." I believe that my mother was engaging in her growth mindset when training for the marathon. Before her training, her fixed mindset would have told her "you are not prepared to run 26.2 miles" but instead of allowing that obstacle to stand in the way, she turned on the switch to her growth mindset that allowed her to believe that she could train to prepare for this marathon.

She allowed her growth mindset to help her grow as a person.

Although, developing an open mindset is not the only factor that goes into growing from your past experiences. Julie Beck, the author of "Life's Stories" believes that "narratives allow us to develop autobiographical reasoning which helps us to identify lessons learned and insights gained from past life experiences" (Beck).

My mother looks at her past experiences as a life narrative because they have helped her grow as a person. When my mother tells me her story about training for the marathon, she always gives me the same encouragement and positive feedback that her coach gave her for the marathon to help me develop the same courage to study abroad.

An experience that I have always considered is **Studying abroad**. Although, I could not shake the thought of leaving my family. My mother, sharing her narrative with me, allowed me to switch my fixed mindset into a working mindset. Her story turned my "I can't leave my family" into "I need to go explore the world, different cultures and religions." As soon as I heard my mother's story about finding her courage, I wanted to go find my own. Upon arriving to UNE, I began searching for information I needed to study abroad. I found out that UNE offers a semester long study abroad program in **Tangier, Morocco**. Here I am able to stay on track with my curriculum while exploring a whole new world. Tori, a medical



[Double click to play video]

biology student here at UNE has had the opportunity to spend a semester in Morocco. Tori allowed me to interview her on her journey. She informed me on new traditions and the different culture that I would explore. The main concern I had with traveling around the world was feeling homesick. Tori insured me that the people of Morocco make you feel like you're apart of their culture. Tori states "the people of Morocco bring you in as their own and help you feel at home." Although, something Tori did to help her when she was homesick, was writing her adventures in a journal. Julie Beck addresses an idea very similar to Tori's called American optimism. Beck describes American optimism to be the idea that "things will get better" and "I can make things better" when sharing

The UNE campus in Tangier, Morocco.



your narrative. Beck's American optimism could potentially be a coping method to help me through tough times, such as missing home. Although, not everyone agrees that describing your life experiences through a narrative is a positive idea.

Have you ever twisted a story? We as humans, when telling stories, try to always put on the best faces that we can. If you are like Galen Strawson, a British analytic philosopher and literary critic, then you will agree that you are not a story. He is one who believes "there is no complete life, there are only fragments" (Strawson). What I believe Strawson means by this is that overtime when we experience events in our life, we do not always remember every detail. Strawson believes when we leave out and forget details we are then telling a false narrative. But, I believe that the details we forget from our life story can't hold to much importance if they are so easy to forget. Strawson also shares with his audience how he feels about his personal life experiences, "each moment I feel as if i've just been born." (Strawson). Strawson is saying that he starts each day over, he never looks upon his past experiences to help himself build on them. If I ran away from my fear of studying abroad and never reapproached my feelings towards it, I would have never been packing to studying abroad. I believe that we all need to look back on our past experiences to help ourselves grow as individuals from our mistakes and challenges that we may have faced.

Reflecting on her life's narratives has helped my mother build courage to tackle further hurdles in her life. But, this is not only true for her, it is also true for me. Looking at my own past, I found I was constantly held back by my fixed mindset, which was not allowing me to reflect on my past. What if we didn't have the power to look at life as a constant growth story? What would happen if we started everyday new and never thought about the decisions and actions that were made in the past? If this happened, we wouldn't have room to grow as individuals. Looking at life as a narrative helps with developing our personality, grow, and helps find meaning in life. If life wasn't looked at as a narrative, we would be stuck in the same stage of life. Stuck with the same outlook on life and living in the same personality. If there is a hurdle in life that you want to tackle, but aren't

sure on where to start, take the first step. Look at your life as a narrative to help you find your courage.

Works Cited

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