Jonathan Adler
I really think the insight that we are not only the main character in our life stories, but also the narrator, is a really potentially powerful intervention in and of itself. Just the mindset shift to think about yourself as not only the person who's doing your life, but also the person who reflects on your life, makes meaning of your life, and that the meaning that you make about your life has a powerful impact on your psychological well-being. I think that in and of itself is a foundational insight and guidance that I would suggest to anyone.

LuAnn Heinen
That's Dr. Jonathan Adler, professor of psychology, whose work centers on narrative identity, the science of people's stories about their lives. It turns out that the way we tell our own story influences our mental health and psychological well-being. Jonathan's work as a scholar, teacher, and playwright sheds light on how we benefit from reflecting on our story, editing it as life evolves and sharing it with others.

I'm LuAnn Heinen, and this is the Business Group on Health podcast, conversations with experts on the most relevant health and well-being issues facing employers. Today, we discuss why narrative matters and how we can use it to cope with life's significant challenges.

Dr. Jonathan Adler, welcome to the Business Group on Health podcast.

Jonathan Adler
Oh, I'm so delighted to be here. Thank you for having me.

LuAnn Heinen
You've said that the most important question we all must answer in life is, who am I? And your career to date has helped many people understand how to answer that question, in other words, how to make meaning from stories. So can we start by having you tell us, what is narrative identity?

Jonathan Adler
Narrative identity is essentially the story that we tell about our lives. It weaves together the past as we reconstruct it, the present as we interpret it, and the future as we imagine it. And these stories provide our lives with a sense of unity. They make us feel like we are the same person across time and across situation and also with a sense of purpose. They tell us why we do the things that we do.

LuAnn Heinen
Where does the idea of narrative identity originate? I mean, where does it come from?

Jonathan Adler
The field of narrative identity research within psychology has been around since the 80s, but there are multiple converging perspectives from across the sciences and social sciences suggesting that the stories that we tell about our lives really matter. Let me give you a few examples. First, I always like to start with sort of the grand sweep of evolutionary theory, as big as it gets. There are scholars working within evolutionary biology, evolutionary psychology, that suggest that narrative is the human adaptation. This is the tool that we use for navigating our complex social niche. The eminent evolutionary biologist Stephen Jay Gould actually defines humans as primates who tell stories. From the grand sweep of evolution, we get this idea that stories are an efficient and effective tool for navigating our configuration as a species and it turns out that the brain is wired for stories. From cognitive perspectives, we think about one of the most basic psychological processes as the translation of what we call sensation into perception. So sensation are the sounds that I'm making right now with my voice hitting your inner ear and then perception is what your brain does with that information. Even at that most basic perceptual level, we are smoothing out our experiences and making meaning of them. Also, if you put all this theory and science aside and you just watch humans doing their thing, it turns out that we're always telling stories. There are studies where they ask people, you know, what's the most important thing that happened to you today? Not like the grand highs and lows of your life, but what happened to you today and have you told anyone about it? It turns out that like 90% of the most important things that happened today have been told to someone else as a story by the end of the day. It's just the thing that we do as humans. Then finally, the last thing I want to add is that the field of research on narrative identity has a really strong ethical foundation to it. A lot of

social science is very top down where experts come up with ideas and then they bring people into the lab and try to test those ideas. Narrative identity is very bottom up. We really regard people as the experts on their own experiences. So the research participant experience is one of sharing your story, which is something that most people like to do. Then our job after the fact is try to make sense of it. I think from evolutionary, cognitive, sort of pragmatic everyday, and then also ethical perspectives, those all really converge to suggest that narrative identity matters.

LuAnn Heinen
It doesn't sound like fact checking comes into this. This is really about, you said, the human experience and perception.

Jonathan Adler
Which is not to say that we're uninterested in facts, but truth is complicated when it comes to narrative. As I said, the definition of identity suggests that it's a reconstruction. If you want to know what really happened, asking someone to tell you a story about it is not the best way to get at that. We've learned this in the field of eyewitness testimony research in the legal system. Eyewitness testimony is very persuasive, but it's not always very reliable. We are always making sense of our lives. We're always interpreting it through our current psychological lenses. When someone says something that's patently false, that bothers people. Narrative identity is not a fabrication. I like to say it's based on a true story, but stories themselves are not true or untrue. Stories are ways of weaving together our experiences to provide us with a sense of meaning.

LuAnn Heinen
Which is why two people who have been in the same room at the same time and might have had the same experience have very different recollections.

Jonathan Adler
Exactly.

LuAnn Heinen
Doesn't that happen with your spouse sometimes?

Jonathan Adler
Oh, absolutely.

LuAnn Heinen
Why does the way we tell our own story matter in terms of the impact on our well-being and mental health trajectory?

Jonathan Adler
That's really been the thread that's woven together my research career is looking at the relationship between narrative identity and our psychological well-being. At this point, there's quite an accumulation of evidence to suggest that different ways of telling our story better and worse support our psychological well-being. There's a ton of research literature demonstrating correlations here, that the way you tell your story relates to different configurations of well-being and there's some longitudinal research where we actually show changes in people's stories coming before changes in their well-being. As I said before, we have a real sort of foundational ethic in conducting this research. We believe that narrative identity really matters. And so we actually almost never do experimental research where we bring people into lab and randomize them and get some people to tell certain kinds of stories and other people to tell other kinds of stories. That's not an appropriate thing to do with someone's identity. But this notion of temporal precedence, meaning something happens before something else, that's the closest we can get in the real world to suggesting that there might be a causal relationship there.

LuAnn Heinen
That's because you are able to show that people's stories as they changed, maybe they were in therapy or for some reason they reinterpreted their life story, and then their well-being improved. Is that right?

Jonathan Adler
Yes, I think the study you're talking about was actually my dissertation study and it was a study of psychotherapy. I was really interested in psychotherapy itself because I'm a clinical psychologist, but I'm also interested in psychotherapy as a condensed experience where people are trying to change. In that study, what we did was we worked with a major outpatient psychotherapy clinic. It was all adults and all in individual psychotherapy, but for a huge range of challenges from marital challenges or work challenges up to really significant depression, anxiety, substance abuse, etc. Before they started therapy, we got their stories and we used standardized measures to measure their well-being and then in between each session of therapy for months, we got their stories and measured their well-being. We used a technique called multi-level modeling, which essentially is a mathematical way of looking at the trajectory of different variables over time. What we were able to demonstrate was indeed that changes in the story came before changes in well-being and not vice versa. We titled that paper *Living Into the Story* because it was as though people were revising their stories, putting out a new version of them, and then a week or two later, their mental health would catch up with it.

LuAnn Heinen
What were the kinds of differences in the stories that you observed?

Jonathan Adler
In narrative identity research, what we find over and over is that the themes that people use in telling their story are actually the key variable that strongly predict our well-being. So it's not so much the content, content matters, of course, but what seems to really matter are the way we tell the stories about that content. In that particular study, the main theme we were looking at was the theme of agency. So agency is sort of at one end, are you in the driver's seat of your life, are you able to proactively respond when things happen versus being batted around by the whims of external forces? In that study, we found that agency increased over the course of psychotherapy and that changes in agency came before changes in well-being. But there are lots of other studies that have looked at lots of other themes. I think one pair of themes that's often quite resonant for people is a pair of themes that we call redemption sequences and contamination sequences. Redemption sequences are just stories where bad turns good and contamination stories are stories where good turns bad. Now, it's really important to remember these are stories. All lives have good and bad, just like no one is completely in the driver's seat of their life, right? These are themes in people's stories. When it comes to redemption and contamination, the way we carve up our life, the way we parse the chapter breaks, the way we draw connections between experiences, that can cast the same sequence of events with a different theme, either a redemptive theme or a contaminative theme. Many, many studies have demonstrated that redemption is quite good for our well-being and contamination is quite bad.

LuAnn Heinen
Is it ideal that we start thinking about our story when we're young? So, as a parent, is this something that you would facilitate with your own children?

Jonathan Adler
That's a fantastic question. I actually think ideal is kind of irrelevant because this is the human adaptation. It's something that we just naturally do all the time. So, indeed, doing a full integrative life story is a fairly sophisticated cognitive task, and it's not something that really emerges until adolescence. But there's lots of stuff that happens developmentally that prepares us to be the narrator of our lives and that stuff, as you suggested, happens in childhood. So, there are these key developmental milestones, right? Like the first one is the acquisition of language, right? We're born without words, let alone stories. So, once we learn words, then we acquire what developmental psychologists call theory of mind, which is the idea that other people have different internal experiences than we do. That's important because stories need to have more than one character in them. Indeed, parents and caregivers are the key teachers to children about how to tell stories about their lives. So, we are doing this implicitly all the time. We're scaffolding young children's ability to recall their own experiences. And in doing so, we're helping them figure out what are the events in my life that are supposed to show up in my stories and we're also implicitly giving them thematic options. If we as a parent are redeeming negative experiences, then kids implicitly learn, oh, one way of telling stories about bad things is that they have good endings. Then, of course, the scaffolding of our self-narration extends beyond the family to other caregivers and then ultimately to peers.

LuAnn Heinen
I would think just being a really attentive, not distractive listener. When you're not distracted, you get more information. You get more details that might help your child over time.

Jonathan Adler
Yes, that's exactly right. In fact, there is research explicitly looking at that question and it does show that engaged, attentive listeners do exactly as you guessed, elicit more details, more richly elaborated stories from storytellers. And indeed, there are these wonderful longitudinal studies looking from early childhood up into people's 20s and they look at the kinds of co-narrators that parents are. Indeed, they find that parents who are attentive, elaborative listeners, their children go on to be more sophisticated self-narrators once they have the cognitive ability to do that.

LuAnn Heinen
Then the real self-narrative, it seems like, would really take off in adolescence and young adulthood. At that point, also, we're influenced by master narratives, right? The family master narrative or the national master narrative. How does that play out?

Jonathan Adler
We think of master narratives in the field as the sort of invisible but ubiquitous stories in our culture that have some power over our lives. There's no developmental moment when we are immune from master narratives. But indeed, in adolescence, when our attention is very much focused on social dynamics, we become especially susceptible to the power of master narratives. Master narratives exist at all sort of levels of culture. So, from the broad national narratives down to the powerful, but often invisible narratives within individual families or school systems, those narratives fundamentally shape our personal narratives. The story about our individual lives is always in dynamic dialogue with the stories that are available to us in our culture.

LuAnn Heinen
One of the things that I think that you've written a little bit about is when something difficult happens in your life, life's challenges, and in any kind of life-altering situation, your narrative is in question. Now, is the cancer narrative a master narrative? This idea that you see it in obituaries, you see it when people talk about cancer, they're fighting cancer.

Jonathan Adler
Yes, I think that's a great example. I work really closely with a non-profit organization in Cambridge, Massachusetts, called Health Story Collaborative, where we use the science of narrative identity to design programs to help medical patients and increasingly medical providers. In one of our programs called the Healing Story Sessions, we work directly with medical patients and providers to help them tell their stories. So, I've worked with a lot of folks who are facing cancer. For some of them, the master narrative of being a cancer patient is empowering, right? I think that master narrative is cancer in a certain way is a gift, and it shows you how strong you are, and it shows you how much people love you. For some people, that's really empowering to latch onto that and say, like, this is a terrible thing, but it's showing me just how strong I really am. It's showing me just how much people love me. But I have also worked with cancer patients who say, I am experiencing this double whammy. Not only do I have this terrible illness, but I'm also not telling a story about that illness that other people want to hear. I don't think my cancer is a gift. My cancer just sucks. And we don't have a sort of culturally sanctioned option for telling that story. Indeed, I think it's an example of how redemption, which scholars have suggested is an American master narrative, that Americans love redemption stories, and there are a lot of good parts of redemption stories, and redemption stories do great things for us, but it can also really pin us in. Not all negative experiences are there to be a gift, to offer us a lesson, to make us better. Some negative things are just terrible and we have to make space for those kinds of stories, too.

LuAnn Heinen
Yes, exactly. I listened to a TED Talk by a Nigerian author. I might butcher her name, but it's Chimamanda Adichie.

Jonathan Adler
Yes, The Danger of a Single Story.

LuAnn Heinen
You know it, yes.

Jonathan Adler
Yes, I do.

LuAnn Heinen
The books she read as a child were all by white authors, and they reinforced stereotypes, that they are in some situations distinctly not helpful.

Jonathan Adler
Exactly. In many ways, I think that her notion of the single story is quite aligned with the idea of master narratives, that there are these narrow templates for how we're supposed to narrate our lives and they're often invisible to us, but also ubiquitous, right? They're everywhere, but we don't see them. They're sort of the water that we swim in, the air that we breathe. When those master narratives work for you, they can be great, and when those master narratives don't work for you, they can be really challenging.

LuAnn Heinen
Just to complete the life cycle, then late midlife is another time when people become more inclined, in some cases, to reflect, maybe they're at the end of their career or nearing the end of their career, thinking about legacy. That's another opportunity for, I guess, revisiting. Now, does the story need to be written down, your life story? Or is this just something that you think about in your head and share with others in various pieces and chapters?

Jonathan Adler
No, there's no need to have it be written down to constitute narrative identity. This is something we're all doing all the time. I think you're right, across the adult lifespan, there are various invitations to revisit our life story and reconsider it. I think earlier in adulthood, for most people, the transition to parenthood is often a major moment of reevaluation, revision. Who am I now that I'm in such a different role? As you suggested, midlife, when the key developmental task of midlife, the technical term is generativity, which means giving back to the next generation, which many people do through parenting, but that's not the only way to do generativity. There's also teaching, mentoring, being involved in religious communities or civic communities. Then again, in late life, there's some thought that we shift from the primary role as author to sort of an editor role, and we look back over the story we've been telling about our lives, consider it, reflect on it, think about, is that the story that we are happy with? Is that a story that we can feel proud of and feel some integrity with? Or does it need some more work?

LuAnn Heinen
It makes me think, do you have guidance for those who haven't really reflected on their personal stories or aren't really aware that they have a narrative identity? How can people start making meaning from their journey?

Jonathan Adler
I really think the insight that we are not only the main character in our life stories, but also the narrator is a really potentially powerful intervention in and of itself. Just the mindset shift to think about yourself as not only the person who's doing your life, but also the person who reflects on your life, makes meaning of your life and that the meaning that you make about your life has a powerful impact on your psychological well-being. I think that in and of itself is a foundational insight and guidance that I would suggest to anyone. Then the other piece of that is once you're in that narrator role to realize that the kinds of story that you tell really matter, that we don't have a ton of control over the things that happen to us in our life. Of course, we pursue our goals, but we don't have unrestricted agency over our lives. We have much more control over the stories that we tell about our lives and the way we shape those with a sense of agency, with a sense of redemption, trying to weed out contamination. Another theme that really matters, of course, we call communion, which is the quality of our relationships with other people. These themes and

many more really matter for people and so we can start to think about ourselves, not just as narrators, but what kind of narrators do we want to be?

LuAnn Heinen
I think that one thing that happens, I've experienced this in my family is that with my siblings, I have three sisters, I'm the oldest, we've gotten together and co-created, trying to make sense out of things that happened to us together. And we each had different pieces and different memories of things that happened in our early life, what happened with our parents' marriage. I guess that's a little bit of story making. I hadn't thought of it before.

Jonathan Adler
Yes, that's wonderful that you all have been able to do that. Indeed, our stories don't just exist in our head. While many people feel like they're the main character in their life story, you're also a character in other people's stories. So when you then put those stories together and identify the slippages, the frictions, the differences of opinion, that is story making work. That is an opportunity for collective story making, which can be extremely powerful, positive or negative, right? You all have experienced the same thing and really have different perspectives on it and really have a hard time seeing each other's perspectives on it. That can be very destructive, but realizing that single events don't only have one meaning, different characters in those stories might have different experiences of that story, that's really powerful.

LuAnn Heinen
We've been talking so much about psychological well-being. Is there any information on the benefits of storytelling on physical well-being?

Jonathan Adler
Great question. Yes and no. There is a lot of research to suggest that stories themselves are very helpful for medical patients and that hearing stories of other people facing similar medical conditions can be helpful for people's, again, psychological well-being. The one study that I've conducted, and maybe it's the only study I'm aware of that directly looked at the impact of storytelling on biological factors related to the way we handle stress. In that study, we enrolled a group of parents of children who have quite significant autism spectrum disorder, and then a comparison control group of parents with neurotypical children. So parenting itself is stressful, but parenting severely autistic children is especially stressful. In this study, we were able to follow the parents over the course of 18 months. In addition to looking at their stories, we also were able to collect some biological data on them. In particular in that study, we were interested in the sort of biomarkers of aging. So the end caps of our chromosomes are called telomeres and every time a cell divides, telomeres degrade a little bit. The degree of telomere degradation is sort of an index of biological aging, like how fast has that cell aged? How many times is it divided? What we found in that study is that parents under conditions of high stress who were telling certain kinds of stories had slower telomere degradation than parents who were telling other kinds of stories. Now, what do I mean by that? In that study, it actually wasn't redemption. We did not find differences between parents who were telling redemptive stories about their experiences versus parents who were not. What we found is that parents whose stories were marked by themes of meaning making. In other words, these stories didn't necessarily feel great, but they felt like they conferred a sense of meaningfulness, that they really understood what this experience was teaching them. Those were the stories that seemed to act as a buffer against the biological impacts of chronic stress. Again, in this study, it was not so much can I find the silver lining, is there something positive about this very chronically stressful experience? Instead it was have I done the hard work to figure out what this experience means to me? Even if it doesn't make me feel happier, it confers a sense of meaningfulness on my life. Parents who were able to tell those kinds of stories experienced less biological aging than parents telling other kinds of stories.

LuAnn Heinen
Let's talk about whether large employers, many of our audience, part of a large U.S. or global company, might these employers have a master narrative at their companies that's a big piece of their culture. I'm thinking of Walmart, the Sam Walmart story, the Walt Disney origin story, the Steve Jobs Apple story.

Jonathan Adler
Right. I think those origin stories certainly loom very large, but all large organizations like universities, like cities and towns, there are stories that circulate implicitly. I would think within employers, there's a sort of intentional top-down story. This is the kind of place we are. But then, of course, there are people's lived experiences that from a bottom-up perspective also create stories about what kind of place this is. I actually think this insight about the power of narrative identity and our well-being is not just an opportunity for individuals, but it really is an opportunity for organizations and employers to think about what is the story that employees are telling about our organization. Is that the story we want? What are the experiences that are leading to that kind of story? What kinds of experiences might we insert into the employee experience that would shift that narrative? I often think about leaders as sort of narrators in chief. You just named two sort of founder stories of massive corporations that continue to resonate today. Leaders have a real opportunity to shape narratives. Leaders in all kinds of contexts are especially empowered with respect to master narratives. It's really an opportunity to think deliberately about what kinds of stories are shaping an organizational culture and how we might revise those stories.

LuAnn Heinen
Do you think there are sub-narratives within a company, sub-narratives that might address, let's say, health and well-being?

Jonathan Adler
Oh, for sure, especially large companies. Very few cultures are monolithic. Even families are not monolithic. I have no doubt that there are different sort of arbiters of different kinds of narratives within a culture. For example, narratives about health and well-being, they might originate within the sort of HR benefits folks who are primarily responsible for the ways in which the corporation is going to support employee well-being. That being said, there may also be sort of powerful employees, whether or not they are positionally powerful, they might be narratively powerful, that really have an impact on the cultural stories that get circulated within an organization about health and well-being. I think it's important that employers think deliberately and intentionally about the stories that they want circulated in their culture, figure out who are the persuasive storytellers to help shape that institutional culture, and then make space to elevate those stories to help shift the culture in healthy ways.

LuAnn Heinen
That reminds me that at Nike, they have official storytellers, or they did. It's been a few years since I visited their headquarters. They're employees who share history and lore about the company with other employees and also with visitors.

Jonathan Adler
Yes, that's fascinating. I didn't know that. That certainly seems like an intentional effort to foster a particular storied culture within the organization.

Employees are telling stories about their workplace experiences, whether or not anyone's asking about them, right? They're going home and telling their families and their friends stories. So actually realizing how important stories are to organizational culture is a real opportunity. At Olin College of Engineering, where I work, I co-run and co-direct the Story Lab, where my colleague and I have worked with organizations from colleges and universities, to the American Association for the Advancement of Science, to corporate clients, to put together formal storytelling events where we work with storytellers to shape powerful stories about their experiences, and that help us understand the way stories are working in that context. For example, at the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the president of AAAS asked us to run a story about stories of science. So we worked with everyone from a key player in science policy in the White House to college professors to lab technicians whose job was to clean and wash the beakers in a biotech company. The idea there was that everyone who has found their way to working in science was drawn to it for a reason, what are the things that unite us across quite diverse experiences? I think that's an opportunity for employers to say, we care about what kinds of stories you're telling about your experience with us and we want to make space to elevate those stories and hear them together. We at Story Lab really think about shared storytelling events as key drivers of cultural change.

LuAnn Heinen
I love that. That's true. Stories are really motivating. I'm thinking many non-profits leverage stories as well. I'm thinking it used to be called Be The Match. They've gone back to National Marrow Donor Program, life-saving bone marrow and stem cell donations.

Jonathan Adler
Oh, absolutely. Research suggests that hearing the same information in a story versus in sort of a list of facts is much more persuasive.

LuAnn Heinen
Why is listening to other people's stories so important?

Jonathan Adler
I'm so glad you asked that, because we've been talking so much about the importance of telling our stories, but receiving other people's stories is also vital. Stories are meant to be told. They don't just exist in our head. Storytelling is the mechanism by which our stories evolve. There's a landmark paper in my field called *Selves Creating Stories Creating Selves*. The idea is we have a story in our head, but then we tell that story. The process of sharing that story with others shapes the story itself, that we get feedback on that story. As it reconsolidates as a memory in our brain, the experience of sharing that story actually changes the story itself, so we might tell it differently next time. Story sharing is important not just for the story sharer as they continue to understand the way their own story is working, but story listening is a huge way of changing the way we each think about ourselves and the way we think about the cultural context that we're in. Story sharing is the mechanism of culture change. Story sharing is the route to collective healing after challenging experiences. I think story sharing is just as vital as story making in our heads.

LuAnn Heinen
You in your life have found so many different ways of bringing forward this message. I mean, you are a researcher. You've published many, many articles. You're also an artist in the theater space, a playwright and a director. You lead workshops, as I understand it, to help people understand the power of storytelling.

Jonathan Adler
That's right. That's right. Everything I do is centered on the power of stories, but I really come at it from different perspectives. Like you said, my sort of foundation as a research scientist, I really am interested in using the tools of science to understand the way the stories that we tell about our lives influence our well-being. I'm a lifelong theater kid. I'm a theater director and a playwright. I really believe in the power of stories to change people's experiences. It is the convergence of the scientist and the artist in me that I bring to both Health Story Collaborative, the nonprofit that I work with, where it's really applied work to help medical patients and providers, and also to Story Lab, where we're working with university clients or corporate clients to help them think about culture change. I really believe in the power of stories and that we want to leverage. Stories don't just exist in a scientific form or in an artistic form. It's really important to leverage the full breadth of what stories can do.

LuAnn Heinen
I love that. Culture change. You've also been the recipient of many awards, including right now you're on a year sabbatical, I think, from Olin. Tell us what you've been doing with that recognition, that award.

Jonathan Adler
Yes, that's right. Thanks. I received a fellowship called the Cornell Scholar at Wellesley College. I've been there for the year. I'm just wrapping up now. I've been working on a book, which I'm really happy to report has been picked up by Penguin Random House's Avery Imprint. It's still probably about a year from coming out into the world because publishing is a slow process. The book is tentatively titled, *Identity Theft, Who We Are and Who We Might Become*. The book uses really extreme examples of people who just lose narrative authority over their lives. For example, someone who's put into the witness protection program and is literally told, if you tell your story, your family will die. Here's your new story. I have interviewed people who go on reality TV and get edited into villains. Then they just can't go about in the world without people thinking they're terrible people. I've interviewed people who have really sudden dramatic changes

to their bodies and have to make sense of that. I'm using these really extreme examples to help us understand the way stories work in all of our lives. Indeed, the book starts with these really extreme stories, but goes down to much more everyday stories where people have to negotiate their life story with other people. Like a 20-something who goes home for the holidays and feels stuck in a story that their parents are telling about them as that kind of kid. They feel like, you know what, I'm not that kind of kid anymore, you need to update your story. Like you've brought up a couple of times in marriages, we're always negotiating stories, in friendships, in sibling relationships. My hope is that the book will both deliver the science of narrative identity to a wide readership, but also help us think about this idea of being the main character in our own lives and the ways in which that works for us in some ways, but also doesn't work for us in other ways. That actually the stories that we tell about our lives are always this enacted interpersonal process that we share and that we play at together.

LuAnn Heinen
Who lives, who dies, who tells your story.

Jonathan Adler
Exactly. That quote from Hamilton is high up in my writing.

LuAnn Heinen
I bet. I bet. Well, I've enjoyed this so much. Thank you for being with us, Jonathan. It's great.

Jonathan Adler
Oh, it's totally been my pleasure. Thank you so much for having me.

LuAnn Heinen
I've been speaking with Professor Jonathan Adler, who reminds us that we're not only the main character in our life story, but also its narrator. As such, each of us has agency to craft a story that reconstructs our experiences with meaning and purpose. His work strongly suggests that coherent and redemptive narratives are linked to better mental health and psychological well-being.

I'm LuAnn Heinen, and this podcast is produced by Business Group on Health, with Connected Social Media. If you liked the episode, please rate us and leave a review.