

Happinez 2-2018

***You can embrace your lot and love it if you assume there's a lesson in there***

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Storytelling

Turn your lot into a plot

*Try looking at your life as if it were a story. A story you yourself can help write. That will make you the co-creator of your lot, because you can always find new primal characters inside yourself and give your life story a new plot twist.*

text Lisette Thoof

When Mieke Bouma was a child, she couldn't wait to go to bed at night. Lying in the dark she made up long stories about herself. "I looked at my life as if I'd already lived it, as if I were sitting on a cloud telling the story: this is what happened, some things were fun, others were awful. They were always lives with lots of drama, conflict, disease and accidents... I kept making up new lives."

As an adult, and a mother of two herself, she became seriously ill. The thought that helped her through it was: Why did I write this into my script? She also found the answer: 'To discover how much inner power I really have.'

Mieke went to drama school, studied theatre science and became a scenario writer. She taught classes, she established the Storytelling Academy, and today she's a story coach. She also wrote an inspiring book in which she says: "The best thing we can do is regard life as a joyous tumble, a game we volunteered for, a story we lovingly co-create."

The orphan and the wet nurse

It's a trend these days: coaching and therapy in which stories play a big part. "If you can see your life as a story, you feel more like its creator," Mieke explains. "You can always tap a different potential, a different archetype, a primal character that is part of your personality. And if you get stuck with one of them - every archetype has its pitfalls - you find another character and see if you can use their energy."

She describes these archetypes at length in her book. Take the Unspoilt Child that stimulates our ability to dream, hope and desire, despite everything. The pitfall here is that the Unspoilt Child tends to hang around in paradise and avoid all conflict. Then there's the Orphan, the child that never got enough love and can teach you to wait patiently in your loneliness until you find the love and acknowledgement you so yearn for. But the Orphan has a pitfall too: pleaser behaviour, do whatever others want just so you'll be noticed.

There's also the Wet Nurse: she knows all about caring and empathy, but tends to cross her own boundaries and be self-effacing. There are many others: the Warrior, the Seeker, the Artist, the Joker, the King, the Magician, all with their personal good and bad sides.

Wanting and needing

"A process of awareness often begins when you feel you're getting stuck in your life," says Mieke. "For example when you're unhappy in your relationship or at work. I myself founded a school for scenario writers, and I was really fired up about it at first. But after two years I realised that all I did was pay bills and write policy documents. My creative side was

suffocated and I became depressed. It took me a while, but then I knew I had to awaken the Adventurer in me. I quit my job and started my own business. Then my life began to flow again.”

Seeing your life as a scenario means you take a helicopter view of it, as if it's a story you wrote yourself. No matter how hard things get, you can embrace your lot and love it if you assume there's a lesson in there. In most good stories the main characters don't always get what they want, but they get what they need to become whole. According to Mieke that's an important distinction.

So the question is always: what do you need to become a whole person? Maybe you think you want to be rich, but what you really need is to be loved. Or you believe you're looking for security, but what you actually need is to learn to feel. This makes it easier to accept what happens when the going gets tough. “When you're really down and out, you usually don't understand what's happening,” says Mieke. “But the time will come that you get back up, and then you can start to figure out what it all means and why you're living this particular story.”

### Wish list

Memories can take on a whole new meaning when you see them in the context of your life story. Can you name an important scene from your childhood? Can you name another, and another? This is how you discover a theme in your life, a guiding principle. Desires always play an essential part here: if you don't remember your desires, you forget who you are.

“Desires are often suppressed,” Mieke explains. “The Orphan, for instance, gives up on them, assuming they won't be fulfilled anyway. But that doesn't mean they're gone.

They're still there, buried deep down. During my trainings we often do this assignment: Make a list of your desires, go all out and write down at least fifty: have an affair, write poetry, travel the world, find warmth, love, a house with a pool, total relaxation.

It's not that you need all these things, but it's a way to discover how you prefer to live.

Maybe you neglected your inner Artist and it's time to invite her. Or maybe your King will come knocking soon.”