Work With the Energy, Not the Story

Every argument you are still having has two authors, and neither one of them is telling the truth.

Something happened to you. Someone said the thing, or failed to say it. Someone took the credit, or the parking space, or the years. And ever since, you have been carrying a small, complete account of it — who did what, in what order, and what it meant. The account is coherent. It has a beginning and an end. It holds up under questioning, because you have questioned it yourself many times, usually at three in the morning.

Here is the part we skip. That account is a construct. It was assembled by exactly one person, and that person was standing in one place, with one nervous system, with one lifetime of prior evidence behind their eyes. The other person in the story has their own construct, assembled just as carefully, just as coherent, just as defensible at three in the morning. So does the third person who watched it happen. Everyone involved is walking around with a finished document, and every document names a different villain.

I am not saying nothing happened. Things happen. People do real harm and it lands in real bodies. I am also not saying your version is wrong and theirs is right — that is just swapping one construct for another and calling it humility. What I am saying is narrower and more useful than either of those: the story is not the thing that has you. The energy underneath it is the thing that has you.

> *When we believe our own story, that's where we get stuck.*
> TIM DAVIS

Watch what happens when you tell the story again. Notice that you are not really telling it in order to find out what is true. You already know what you think is true. You are telling it because it does something in your chest. There is a charge in there, and running the story is how you touch the charge without having to feel it directly. That is the whole mechanism. The narration is a handle on a hot thing.

And the story is a terrible place to work, because it is the one part of this you cannot resolve. You cannot win it. The other person is not available to sign your version. Even if they apologized tomorrow in the exact words you have scripted for them, you would find the relief lasted about a day, and then the charge would come back looking for a new file to live in. That is your evidence that the file was never the problem.

The energy is a different matter entirely. The energy is yours. It is in your body right now, in the neck or the hips or the low back or the throat, and it does not require anyone else's cooperation to be met. You do not need a confession. You do not need the group to agree with you. You need to get quiet enough to feel the thing that is actually there — usually not anger, when you get down under it, but something older and softer that the anger was hired to cover.

This is the moment where people ask me what to do about it, and the answer disappoints them. You do not do anything about it. You be with it. You let the awareness rest on it without narrating, without explaining to the imaginary jury, without deciding what it means about you. When you stop feeding the story, the energy comes up on its own, because it has been trying to come up the whole time and the story was what kept pressing it back down.

Notice, too, what gets returned to you when you stop working in the story. Genius, honestly. The situations that felt like a locked room turn out to have four or five sane responses in them that you could not see before, because judgment is a narrow instrument and it was the only tool you had out. People become available again. The right sentence arrives. Not because you solved anything, but because you stopped spending your whole capacity defending a document.

So the next time you catch yourself rehearsing — and you will catch yourself today, most likely in the car — try this. Do not argue with the story. Do not try to be fair to the other person's version either; that is still the same room. Just move your attention down about a foot, into the body, and ask the only question that has ever moved anything: what is actually here, and can I let it be here without doing anything about it?

Then go on with your day. Mow the lawn. Answer the email. The energy will keep coming up in its own time, and each time it does, a little more of the pressure holding your version in place drains away. One day you will tell the story again and notice, halfway through, that it has gone flat. Nothing in it is untrue. It has just stopped being load-bearing.

That is what release looks like. Not a new and better story about what happened. No story required at all.

THE PRACTICE

You do not have to decide who was right. You have to feel what is still moving in you when you think about it.