

Session 33: When life has affected my identity

CHARLIE MITCHELL



Today we are exploring

- ✓Stories we tell ourselves
- ✓How stories can limit our experiences
- ✓Narrative approach to coaching
- ✓Internal family systems – parts theory
- ✓How to rewrite our parenting story
- ✓Impact this has on the stories in our family

How has life affected your identity?

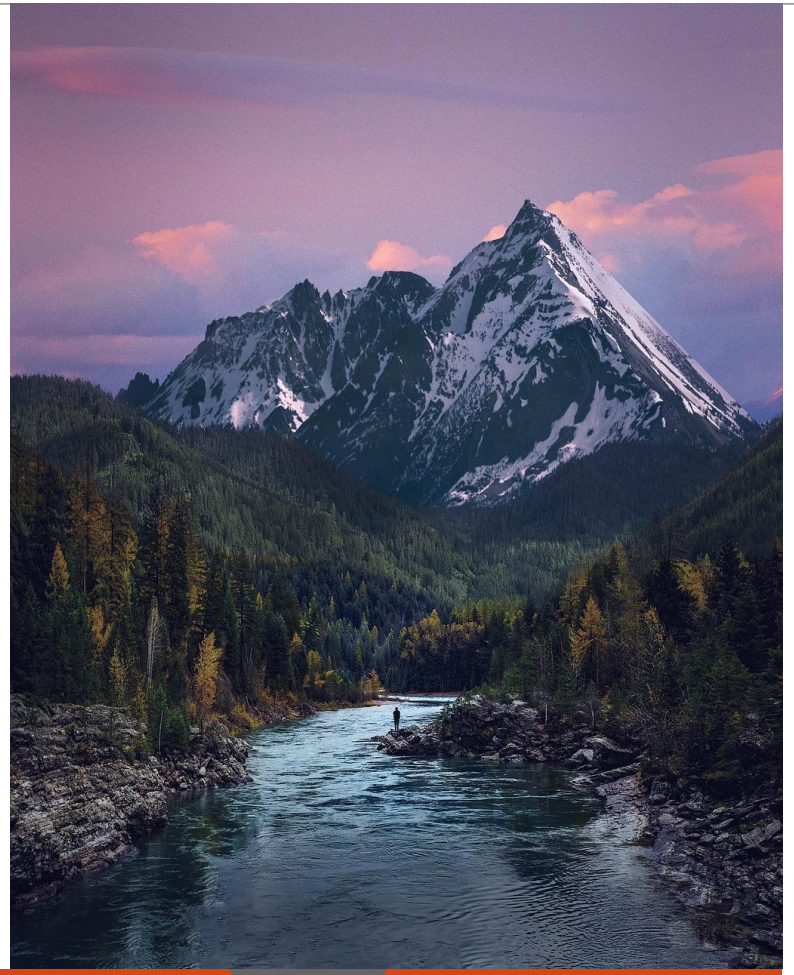
- ✓ Finish these sentences: A situation that has affected how I see myself is… The story I tell myself about this situation is…
- ✓ How do you feel when you are connected with the positive parts of your identity?
- ✓ How does it feel in your body when you are connected with those positive parts?
- ✓ What helps you to connect with those positive parts?
- ✓ How does your level of connection with these positive parts impact what you want to do, be or have?
- ✓ What helps you to explore how someone else feels about themselves?
- ✓ How do you know when you are no longer fully connected with the positive parts of your identity? What does that feel like?
- ✓ What else do you notice?
- ✓ What do you want in place to work with identity in your coaching practice?
- ✓ Explore the different resources relating to identity in the course materials for ideas

What is identity?

- ✓ How we see ourselves and how we choose to express ourselves as a result (where we have a choice)
- ✓ Ethnicity, religion, culture, nationality
- ✓ Age, gender, sexuality
- ✓ Social status, class, politics
- ✓ Family, friends, community
- ✓ Hobbies, personality
- ✓ Ability, disability, illness, sensory experiences, mental health
- ✓ Trauma, adverse childhood experiences, life events
- ✓ Look out for anything that starts with 'I am…' or 'my…'

How we see our identity

- ✓ We often see our identity as fixed – that it is ‘how we are / who we are’ and it is unchangeable like a mountain
- ✓ The truth is that we – just like the mountain - are always changing
- ✓ Mountains are affected by:
  - ✓ Rain, water, rivers, ice, snow
  - ✓ Heat, sun, lava
  - ✓ Wind,changes in the earth
  - ✓ Look different over time
- ✓ Same is true for us
- ✓ Some things we can’t control, and some things we can



Stories we tell ourselves

- ✓ I can’t do that because I’m not that kind of person
- ✓ I’m not creative
- ✓ I’m no good at….
- ✓ My anxiety means I can only do…
- ✓ My mental health is so bad that I can only…
- ✓ Our family doesn’t do that…
- ✓ In my religion / community / group of friends / college, we do this all the time
- ✓ People like me don’t get those opportunities
- ✓ People who have had my experiences are left with…
- ✓ Anything that relates to how I see myself and my world

How stories limit our lives

- ✓ We believe we are the unchangeable mountain
- ✓ We are not going to look for ways to change that aspect of ourselves
- ✓ We accept, we put up with, we adapt other things to maintain this identity
- ✓ We don't try other things
- ✓ When opportunities present themselves, we think they are not for us
- ✓ We turn things down
- ✓ The lucky and unlucky people experiment

https://www.startupgrind.com/blog/the-science-behind-making-your-own-luc

Narrative approach to coaching

- ✓ The stories we tell ourselves play a crucial role in our lives
- ✓ One of the central premises: 'Who we are and what we do are influenced by the stories we tell ourselves'
- ✓ the ways in which we narrate those experiences have an impact on how we feel and think, how we see ourselves and on our relationships with others
- ✓ The way in which we think and talk about our experiences can either **make problems bigger or help us contemplate new possibilities**
- ✓ How we tell our 'back story' to ourselves and others is important
- ✓ What do we focus on? What language do we use? How does it feel in our body? (emotional triad)
- ✓ We can rewrite our narrative and pick out different things to focus on

https://www.bacp.co.uk/bacp-journals/coaching-today/july-2015/the-stories-we-tell/

Rewriting our parenting story

- ✓ What is our parenting story?
- ✓ How do we describe it to other people?
- ✓ How do we describe it to ourselves?
- ✓ How do we make sense of the events and circumstances that have happened?
- ✓ Are we the hero or the villain?
- ✓ Timelining can help us to identify what we currently tell ourselves
- ✓ Once we have the story then we can start to explore it from other angles, perspectives
- ✓ Is that really true? (The Work by Byron Katie)
- ✓ What else could be true?
- ✓ What were the strengths and gifts you gained from each part of the story?
- ✓ How were you also the hero?

Internal Family Systems – parts theory

- ✓ IFS: every human being as a system of protective and wounded inner parts led by a core Self
- ✓ The mind is naturally multiple and that is a good thing. Just like members of a family, inner parts are forced from their valuable states into extreme roles within us. Self is in everyone. It can't be damaged. It knows how to heal.
- ✓ IFS is frequently used as an evidence-based psychotherapy, helping people heal by accessing and healing their protective and wounded inner parts.
- ✓ It is also a way of understanding personal and intimate relationships and stepping into life with the 8 Cs: confidence, calm, compassion, courage, creativity, clarity, curiosity, and connectedness
- ✓ It is about self leadership

https://ifs-institute.com/

Starting to explore parts in coaching

- Tell me more about this part of you
- How does that part feel?
- What other parts could there be?
- What can you learn from this part?
- If this part had a voice what would it say?
- If this part had a name what would it be?
- If this part was a cartoon character what would it be?
- Possible parts: magician, king / queen, warrior, lover (Tony Robbins, Archetypes)
- Survival archetypes: child, victim, prostitute, saboteur (Caroline Myss, 70 archetypes)

Impact this has on the stories in our family

- ✓ This has the potential to completely change the dynamics in a family
- ✓ One person can hold a different narrative and it impact how everyone else sees that person, themselves, other family members, their past and their future
- ✓ It can help to change generational patterns
- ✓ It can bring new opportunities for the family to do things differently
- ✓ Family members will start to see new possibilities for themselves and each other
- ✓ Hopefulness can bring creativity, which in turn helps family members to develop new opportunities that were not there before
- ✓ We can make changes that will have a lasting impact
- ✓ Even the smallest of questions can unravel a deeply held narrative

Connection to 3 Steps Home

- ✓ There is a chapter on the stories we tell ourselves in Step 1
- ✓ There are opportunities throughout to challenge our narrative, and rewrite our story
- ✓ It helps us to change our focus towards loving words we can use with ourselves and others
- ✓ The connection with nature can help us to develop a new, healthy narrative if we have a particularly challenging narrative with our family of origin



What this means for you personally

- ✓ Reflect on your awareness of your own perception of your– what do you notice?
- ✓ Play with it a little – what if this was different?
- ✓ Use the questions at the start of this session to help you reflect
- ✓ Identify 3 ways you want to explore your identity over the next month – with awareness that you can explore other aspects another time
- ✓ Plan what you will do over the next month to bring awareness to the stories you tell yourself
- ✓ Look through the lens of how your awareness of your own connection is helping you with your parenting
- ✓ Consider how awareness of connection can help other parents

The importance in a parenting context

- ✓ Your awareness of your own identity will naturally influence your parenting, whether you focus on it or not
- ✓ You can share this awareness with coachees, both formally by showing and explaining, and informally by modelling the approaches in your sessions
- ✓ You can pick the knowledge, skill or behaviour that feels relevant in the context:
  - ✓ Introducing the coachee parent to the concept of moveable identity may help the coachee to explore the stories that are shaping their family narrative in a more open way
  - ✓ How could the coachee explore their own identity and start to notice what is already becoming fixed within their child's identity?
  - ✓ How does the child feel in their body when they identify with certain things?
  - ✓ How can the coachee check in with their child to challenge certain aspects relating to the child's identity?
  - ✓ How can the coachee negotiate with others to ensure the healthy aspects of child's identity are prioritised?