

How to Change Your Story, Your Presence, Your Future

By Amy Castoro and Roselyn Kay

What “story” does your presence tell about you? What is *presence* and what does it have to do with *story*?

We live our lives by the stories we tell—to others and to ourselves. Our stories reflect the history of our experience—what we think, feel, believe, and remember. And our presence broadcasts key elements of our ongoing story.

What story are you broadcasting, perhaps unconsciously, in your daily life? Is it a story of self-doubt, pessimism, worry? Or is it a story of confidence, optimism, clear thinking, and proactive problem-solving?

The *mind* leads the *body*. Your body is extremely responsive to the messages it receives from your mind. That is the body’s job. It is a gifted “actor” dramatizing your story for all to see. If your mind is conveying negative messages, your body will reflect that, but that isn’t the end of the story. As your body responds to negative thoughts by shrinking, sagging, tensing up, it reinforces the negative thoughts in a feedback loop that can keep you entangled for a long time.

You may wonder, then, if it’s possible to change and strengthen your physical presence without resolving those inner conflicts behind your negative thinking. The answer is *yes!* What is required of you is shifting your focus and changing your story—because to a large degree, we *choose* what we focus on and we *choose* the story we tell. We *choose* the shape of our presence. Sometimes therapists will say to their clients: “*Act as if...*” Or “*Fake it till you make it.*” It isn’t that they want their clients to be false or to ignore symptoms of mental distress. Rather, they know that the client may feel substantial relief immediately simply by focusing on changing his or her “story,” which in turn will change the person’s physical presence, awareness, and posture, introducing and reinforcing positive messages into an otherwise negative feedback loop.

Often the ability to ask questions of ourselves and see a solution requires us to concentrate on getting our minds and bodies “centered,” or balanced, so we can think clearly. An easy and effective way to balance ourselves is to bring our attention out of our heads, and out of our old or current story, and direct the mind instead into our bodies, particularly low in the center of the abdomen. With training and practice, we learn to “sink” our mind into the lower abdomen, feel our feet on the floor, straighten our back, release tension from our muscles, and imagine our breath flowing deep into our bodies and into our arms and legs. This process of correcting our posture and relaxing away tension slows things down and enables us to take the action we want.

Through a kind of mental and physical training, then, we reshape our presence by continually introducing a significant positive element into the feedback loop between mind and body. We change our story. We change our presence. We change how we think and feel about ourselves in the present moment. We change how others respond to us.

Have we resolved all of our problems or issues? No. Have we improved our odds for success? Yes!

Amy Castoro is the founder and owner of The Irimi Group where she counsels and advises individuals and companies on how to communicate and coordinate effectively, build trust with others, and manage mood in uncertain times. Visit her website for an upcoming workshop offered in partnership with Roz Kay in Princeton. www.irimigroup.com.

Roselyn Kay offers more than 25 years of executive coaching experience. Her client list includes NASA, Fannie Mae, and the Federal Reserve Board to name a few. She is a Certified Coach and incorporates Appreciative Inquiry in her work with leaders, teams, and organizations. Roz received her Masters in Organization Development and a certificate of coaching from Georgetown University, where she is a member of the faculty. She is based in Washington DC and can be reached at rkay@innovationpartners.com