



# The power of words: Choosing truth over meaning for personal growth and progress

By Julie Parker

**I** have a friend who recently shared her frustration when someone routinely turned up late to meetings. My friend stated, “This means that this person doesn’t respect me”.

I immediately thought of something I hear Charles say: “Be precise with your words, because their meaning has an impact”.

The words we use to describe an event are not always accurate. In fact, they usually aren’t. The “knowledge” we formulate in our minds from an event is typically the MEANING we have elected to create from it. As such, this interpretation is highly subjective, assumptive and biased.

Here are some examples...

**Situation:** A mother doesn’t pick her child up from school at the correct time.

**Child’s meaning:** “Mum doesn’t care about me”.

**Truth:** “Mum did not arrive on time and I do not have enough information to determine the cause”.

**Situation:** A friend cancels plans at the last minute.

**Created meaning:** “My friend doesn’t value our friendship”.

**Truth:** “My friend cancelled our plans abruptly, but I don’t know the exact reason behind it”.

**Situation:** A co-worker misses a deadline.

**Created meaning:** “My co-worker is irresponsible and unreliable”.

**Truth:** “My co-worker did not meet the deadline and I am unsure about the reasons for the failure.”

When we create for ourselves a meaning over truth, our thoughts, feelings, responses and beliefs are generated from that created meaning. The danger is, we start managing our personal lives,

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LIFE. This is how you learnt  
to walk and run. This is how  
you master your life...”**

relationships and experiences based on the created meaning or stories that we tell ourselves, not the truth, not the reality.

There are a range of created stories that we tell ourselves that can actually sabotage our lives and our careers in very big ways. For example...

“When I get more money/opportunity/health, then my life will be great.”

“I would achieve more/do more/have goals, but I don’t have the time to take action.”

“This aspect of my life is not working for me, but I am unable to change because of the size of my mortgage.”

If we have the ability to be “precise with our words”, why do we create fake stories or meaning instead?

Sometimes, it’s to feel better about our failings. For example, “I didn’t place well in the race because others had a greater advantage over me” or “I am overweight because of my slow metabolism”.

Another reason we create stories over truth is cognitive dissonance. That is, the way I am behaving is incongruent with the identity I have of myself, so I am going to make up a story because the truth doesn’t match my identity.

But, I suggest that the biggest reason why we believe our created stories over the truth is to avoid taking responsibility in our lives.

We dislike feelings of discomfort, disempowering thoughts, ramifications of our behaviours and poor results that we have caused so we create more tolerable meanings.

Even though it feels way more comfortable to avoid taking responsibility, there is one hell of a drawback: you lose control over your own life.

When you create and believe your stories, you are telling yourself that you are at the mercy of all the things around you: people, events and bad luck. You are telling yourself that you are a victim.

Thus, you cannot have control if you have already given it away through your created meaning and stories.

So, what can be done to immediately take responsibility in your life?

### Understand your strength

**W**e often defer responsibility because we fear we cannot cope with our own failures and mistakes. Remind yourself that this is just not true.

Mistakes and failure are how we learn and grow. Flip the meaning you attach to your “failings” and embrace your growth journey. You are getting better and stronger all the time. You get stronger every time you fall and get back up. This is LIFE. This is how you learnt to walk and run. This is how you master your life.

### Be mindful and contemplative

**T**ake the time to truthfully and accurately contemplate your thoughts, actions and results. If the results are undesirable, identify what you could have done if you had your time over to achieve a more positive outcome. This awareness will serve your future in a powerful way. Journaling can be a great method for accurate and effective contemplation.

### Practice makes better

**N**o one learns to ride a unicycle on their first try. It takes practice and lots of it. And life is more complicated than learning to ride a unicycle, so give yourself many opportunities to practice and get better at the game of life.

### Stop saying “because”

**T**he moment we say “because”, we’re providing an excuse or reason why we are not fully responsible for an outcome. “I am late because of the traffic.” “I forgot our anniversary because I’ve been so busy with work”.

Remove the word “because” and take full responsibility: “I apologise that I am late”.

### Embrace your humanness

**T**o err is human. To forgive, divine. Forgive yourself every time you fail or make a mistake. Mistakes are how you learn and grow. You cannot get better

without making mistakes. A negative response to mistakes usually comes from a conscious or even subconscious belief. Start repeating a mantra to yourself when you would normally feel regretful or ashamed of your mistake, such as “despite not being perfect, I still completely love and accept myself”.

Embrace your humanness and the need for mistakes on the journey of growth and progress.

By being precise with our words, embracing our mistakes, practising self-awareness and taking full responsibility for our actions, we can regain control over our lives and embrace the real challenges of our journey of personal growth.

### About the author

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