



Mom (Stella and Lucy)
Dad (Jim)
Grandma (Damon, Andre,
Davi, Ariana, Payton, and Preston)

Dr. Jenni Donohoo

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The Narrator Inside Our Heads



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The Narrator Inside Our Heads

About the train story itself:

What facts did I actually have about this man's behavior?

What stories did my narrator create to fill in the gaps?

How did those stories affect my emotional state and judgments about him?

What would have happened if you had acted on those stories?

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The Narrator Inside Our Heads

The train story demonstrates how quickly we move from observable behavior (he said no) to complex narratives about character and motivation, and how wrong those narratives can be.

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Interpersonal Mush is essentially what happens when teams let their 'narrator stories' drive their communication without separating facts from interpretations.



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The Narrator Inside Our Heads

"We are meaning-making machines. We take random events and we create stories to help us make sense of our lives."

Brené Brown

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The Narrator Inside Our Heads

Connecting to your work:

Think of a recent situation where you made assumptions about another person's behavior or motivations.

What facts did you actually have versus what stories did you create?

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The Narrator Inside Our Heads

For team dynamics:

How do teams get stuck in collective narrator stories about students, parents, or initiatives?

What's the difference between saying "This intervention isn't working because these kids don't care" versus "We've implemented this intervention for 4 weeks and haven't seen the data improvements we expected"?

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The Narrator Inside Our Heads

The Standardized Test Results

Your class's test scores came back lower than expected, and they're below the school average in two subject areas.

What is your narrator telling you about this situation?

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The Narrator Inside Our Heads

The Late Colleague

A colleague consistently arrives 5-10 minutes late to team meetings and seems unprepared when they do arrive.

What is your narrator telling you about this situation?

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The Narrator Inside Our Heads

The Resistant Student

You have a student who frequently says, "I don't get it" or "This is stupid" during lessons, often with arms crossed and head down.


What is your narrator telling you about this situation?

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The Narrator Inside Our Heads

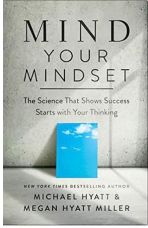
- What facts do we actually know? (Separate facts from interpretations)
- What assumptions did your Narrator add to the facts?
- How might someone else's Narrator tell a completely different story about this same situation?
- What questions could you ask to challenge your Narrator's version?
- How might your Narrator's story help or hurt your response to this situation?

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Mind Your Mindset

'Out-There' versus 'In-Here'




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Mind Your Mindset

We all have moments like that, don't we? We think we understand a problem or a circumstance, only to realize that we've got it wrong.

Listen to this... 

These kinds of narratives become especially problematic when they block our path to our goals—when they prevent us from achieving the results we want.

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Mind Your Mindset

Yes, there are problems 'out there'. But how we respond to those problems is entirely 'in here' – in our own heads.

We're distorting the facts, missing the facts, or putting the facts together in ways that don't really fit reality.

And our crummy story somehow works for us – until we realize that it doesn't work at all. Our best thinking turns out to be a dead end.

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Action Bias

Problem → Strategy

“What can I *do* about this?”

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Hugh Herr (born October 25, 1964) is an American rock climber, engineer, and biophysicist. ... Herr is doing what **doctors told him** was unthinkable: climbing again.



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Mind Your Mindset

Problem → STORY → strategy

Stories drive strategies, and strategies drive results.

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Strategies to 'Mind Your Mindset'

1. Select and read one of the passages.
2. Create a 'gist' statement.
3. What connections do you make to your own experience?

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Strategies to 'Mind Your Mindset'

1. Find others with the same passage.
2. Share your 'gist' statement and the connections you made to your own experience.
3. What are examples and non-examples?
4. What is important for others in your group to know regarding what you read?

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Strategies to 'Mind Your Mindset'

Take turns sharing the 'gist' of the strategy you selected.

How might the strategy be helpful in your joint-work in schools?

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Additional Communication Tools

Descriptive self: Share observable facts/behaviors without interpretation

Curious self: Ask genuine questions to understand others' perspectives

Appreciative self: Express genuine appreciation and positive observations

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Rewriting Your Professional Story

Identify one current professional challenge you are facing.

It could involve your PLC – a student - or a group of students.

Mindset Related Challenges –

- If you find yourself thinking “I can’t, or we don’t have”.
- You feel stuck or keep hitting the same wall.
- You notice negative self-talk or limiting language around the issue.
- You tell yourself a particular story about why it’s difficult.
- It could affect student outcomes or colleague relationships.

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Rewriting Your Professional Story

Identify one current professional challenge you are facing.

Avoid challenges that are:

- Entirely external (“The district won’t give us resources.”)
- Too private
- Too broad (“The education system is broken!”)

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Rewriting Your Professional Story

1. Identify - Recognize the Narrator

- What stories are you telling yourself about this situation?
- What are your assumptions?

Question:

- Did I really see what I thought I saw?
- What is going on right now that is interfering with my perception?
- Is there any chance that I could be mistaken?

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Rewriting Your Professional Story

2. Interrogate - Challenge the Narrator

Clarify the facts. Can we really know this based on the evidence we have?

Pay attention to your words.

Ask someone else to examine your story.

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Rewriting Your Professional Story

3. Train the Narrator

Start with possibility.

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Imagine: Train the Narrator

Limited Mindset	Possibility Mindset
There's no way around this problem.	Every problem has a workaround.
I don't have the resources.	I'll find the resources I require when I need them most.
There are too many obstacles.	There are more opportunities than obstacles.
I don't know how to go about that.	Somebody has already figured out how to do what I want to do. I just need to locate them.
That's not the way we do things here.	Strategies are meant to be serviceable, not sacred.
I failed. I'm a failure.	Failure is feedback, not a verdict.
I tried that. I'm no good at it.	You don't have to win all the time to succeed in the end.
I don't have enough time.	Constraints liberate more than they limit.

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Clear communication supports collective efficacy by helping teams address real issues rather than getting stuck in conflicting stories about what's happening.

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What is usually talked about in schools...

Retaining back a year
Suspension/Expelling students
School choice
Modifying school calendars/timetables
Initial teacher education programs
Tracking/Streaming
Reducing class size
One on one laptops
Within class grouping
Finances
Web based learning

Hattie, 2019

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What is usually talked about in schools...

Retaining back a year	-0.32
Suspension/Expelling students	-0.20
School choice	0.02
Modifying school calendars/timetables	0.09
Initial teacher education programs	0.10
Tracking/Streaming	0.12
Reducing class size	0.15
One on one laptops	0.16
Within class grouping	0.18
Finances	0.21
Web based learning	0.33

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Toward a new narrative

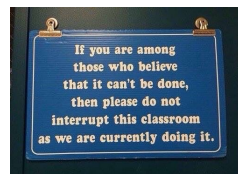
Collective teacher efficacy	1.34
Student expectations (self-reported grades)	0.96
Teachers working together as evaluators of their impact	0.90
Maximize feedback to teachers about impact	0.72
Student self-efficacy	0.71
Teacher expectations	0.43

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Vision for the Future

Shape mastery environments in which everyone in an educational setting shares the belief that individually and collectively they have the capability to impact positive change.



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