



Coaching Exercise

Creating Your Power Stories

Recalling You at Your Best – and harnessing this through your stories



We all tell Stories - but are we using the right ones about ourselves?

We all have stories of when we have been at our best and at our worst. You would think we'd be keen to tell the good ones, but often that's not the case. We tend towards telling the ones where we came off badly and turn it into self-depreciating humour.

That might sound like harmless fun, we should all be able to laugh at ourselves, but the problem is this isn't harmless. The more times we tell a story, the more ingrained it becomes in our memory and our consciousness. If it's a story about ourselves, it can become attached to the way we view ourselves, including our unique sense of value, our potential and our performance. So, if we're constantly telling negative stories about ourselves out of misguided humour, this can result in a lowering of our self esteem and belief in what we're capable of.

This applies even if we're not saying the words out loud. If we're recalling negative stories and bad experiences in our heads this will have an impact and this isn't just a psychological effect. It's widely accepted that there is a very strong connection between our minds and our bodies, simply put, the power of our mind rules our body. What we believe we are capable of, IS the absolute limit on our potential. This is the reason professional athletes constantly rehearse success and winning, in their minds before any major tournament. To make it happen physically, they need to have rehearsed that success many times inside their head and they often do this by reliving their real past successes to bolster their belief in their own capability and improve their performance on the day.

We can use this technique ourselves to bolster our own self confidence and live into our potential. This is where your Power Stories come in. By creating your own portfolio of Power Stories you can tune into your positive potential rather than talk yourself down. Recalling your Power Stories before a high stakes meeting is a potent way of 'priming' yourself for success. Recalling moments when we have truly performed at our best is very powerful as it helps our brain to recognise what we've already achieved and to step into the version of ourselves from that positive moment.

By recalling the detail of the specific occasion when you've performed at your personal best, you're reinforcing what you're capable of and playing a positive and not a negative narrative in your head.

Here's how to get started with your Power Stories.

Open a Google doc (or write in on paper if you prefer old school :-)) and start to detail your best professional and personal moments. Moments when you felt challenged, stretched and uncomfortable but where you delivered in the moment despite this challenge. These are the times when you represented the best version of yourself, one that you feel love and respect for, one that you're proud of.

If you're struggling to think of those moments, go to your trusted allies who have known you for a while and ask them for their suggestions of when you've been at your best. Look at your past performance reviews for ideas on the challenges you've overcome that will give you reminders of moments when you stepped into your real potential.

If you're working on your Personal Brand and Reputation (ask me if you'd like my Personal Branding exercise) think about the 3 adjectives that you've selected as the ones you want to be described as. Think about your Power Stories in the context of these adjectives and try to pick one story that best depicts each of your 3 adjectives.

If you're preparing for a particular 'high stakes' meeting, think of Power Stories relevant to your challenge. If it's a negotiation, think about a time when you succeeded in securing a great deal, if it's a presentation, go back to that time you felt confident talking to a group of people about something you care about (don't limit yourself to mirroring the exact situation). Making the Power Story specific to the issue you're facing today is a potent reminder for your brain of how you have performed well previously in *this type* of situation and this adds instant boost to your self belief – because you know you've done this successfully before.

When you're writing up your Power Story really get into the detail. Write down where you were, what you were wearing, who else was there, what actually happened (take time to write it down blow by blow), detail the moments when you really shone, most importantly recall *how you felt*.

The purpose of this exercise is to capture and recognise these moments, these achievements, but it's also so you can imprint these experiences in your thinking going forward. You'll be able to draw on these moments in the future when you are in doubt and under duress. This is a very useful and practical way of being at your best, by channeling the memory of a time when you know you were at your best.

Once you have this written down in full, take another go at recapturing the Power Story but this time, only use bullet points and not a full description. Use key words that mean something to you in recalling the full colour of that event and how you performed at your best.

Then the trick is to put this power story on replay in your head. Keep repeating it ahead of your high stakes meeting, or the event that you are preparing for. Keep telling yourself this story, until it's second nature to you to bring it back in all the detail.

Wallow in how you felt. Give this memory a name. Practice recalling it.

Once you have this nailed, it's on instant recall to turbo charge your energy and give you a boost of self belief, whenever you need it.

The first time you do this exercise take 30 mins and just write what comes to mind. Don't overthink, censor or critique. But do take the time to review these stories regularly and to fill in the gaps and the details to make every one of your Power Stories as impactful as they can be.

I hope you find this exercise useful, if you have any questions I'd love to hear from you at elise.finn@nkuzichange.com