Your Ascent Protocol

From story to a more deliberate response. Ten levels. One real business situation.

1 There Are Only Stories and Facts

Everything that lands on your desk or in your life is a fact, or a story about a fact. The sales number is a fact. “This team doesn’t care” is a story. Most of the stress in running a business comes from treating the story as if it were a fact.

2 You Experience Facts, Then Tell Stories

Something happens. Then, almost instantly, you explain it to yourself. The gap between those two moments is tiny, but it is real, and it is the only place a different response can start.

3 All Emotions Are Caused by Stories

The missed deadline didn’t make you angry. The story, “he doesn’t respect my time,” did. Change the story and the feeling changes with it. Not because the facts moved, but because you did.

4 Your Natural State Is Joy Without the Story

Strip away the narration and what’s left is clear, steady, and curious. That is your default setting as a leader. The frustration, the dread before a hard conversation: those are additions, not the baseline.

5 You Control the Stories

You didn’t consciously choose your first interpretation/story. You can choose your new one. That isn’t positive thinking. It is picking an explanation that fits the facts better and serves the outcome you want.

6 Stories Are Conditioned by the 6 Human Needs

Every story is working for something: certainty, variety, significance, love/connection, growth, or contribution. “No one does it better than me” usually serves certainty or significance. Name the need and the story loses its grip.

7 Significant Emotional Events Create the Story Machine

The partner who walked out, the deal that fell through, the first person you had to let go. Those moments wrote rules you are still running today. The story machine is efficient. It is not always accurate.

8 In the Moment of Awareness, You Can Take Control

The instant you notice “I’m telling a story right now,” the autopilot disengages. You don’t have to win the argument with yourself. You only have to notice it is happening.

9 Power Comes From Outcome Awareness

Ask one question before you respond: what outcome am I serving here? Being right, or getting the result? A leader who knows the outcome chooses the response. One who doesn’t gets chosen by the story.

10 Help Others See Their Stories

Once you can see your own stories, you will start to see your team’s. Don’t correct them. Ask the question that lets them see it too. That is how the protocol becomes a culture.

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One situation. A different response. FACT → STORY → NEED → EVIDENCE

FACTS WHAT HAPPENED
Observable. Verifiable. The same for everyone.

STORIES THE MEANING WE ADD
Interpreted. Personal. Different for everyone.

The weather is real. The story is where leadership starts.

FACT What actually happened? Observable, verifiable, the same for everyone. No adjectives.

STORY What did you tell yourself about it? Write it the way it sounded in your head.

NEED Which of the six needs was that story serving? Certainty · Variety · Significance · Love/Connection · Growth · Contribution

EVIDENCE What evidence fits the facts better, and what interpretation does it point to? A better-fitting interpretation.

OUTCOME What outcome is worth serving here? An outcome worth serving.

ACTION One action you will take in the next 48 hours. One action.

Awareness is the start. Practice makes it useful.

Run one real situation through the protocol each week. The levels get shorter every time.