

Michael:

Welcome to episode four of Monday state of mind.

Michael:

My name is Michael Arnold. I'm the director of alumni and recovery support services for the Harmony Foundation. All right, let's take a hot second, maybe even a minute and just choose to get present with me again for another amazing episode with another incredible guest as we continue. And this will actually be our final episode on talking about the stories we tell ourselves. I want to start off by saying if this is your first episode of Monday state of mind, I highly recommend heading back to episode one for a five minute episode so that you know exactly what this podcast is all about. We actually had a request that's right. We had a request to talk even more about this really important subject on the stories we tell ourselves my guest today. I mean, when I think about this guest, you guys like he's amazing. He is actually my polar opposite. This man is calm, cool, usually collected most of the time, and this guy offers a great perspective and I'm so excited to have this guy, my good friend, Brian Tierney on the podcast to talk even more about the stories we tell ourselves, and to be able to provide you guys with some tools to apply in your daily life, to be able to watch out for these bad boys. So, Brian, can you go ahead and say, Hey to everybody?

Brian:

Hey everybody. Thanks for the intro, Michael definitely am very grateful and happy to be here and be a part of this and everything that you're doing with this, with this podcast. So thank you for the invite. Happy to share the experience I have and kind of when we're evaluating the story. So in the internal narratives that we have with, with ourselves.

Michael:

Awesome. Thanks, Brian. And Brian, could you also for our audience so they can get to know you just a little bit better, you know, tell them a little bit about who you are, what you do for work where you live, maybe even throw out there like what your favorite food is too.

Brian:

So my social security number is... That is a lot of info you want me putting out there? I I will, I'll say I, you know, I'm a person in recovery, you know, I've been in recovery for a number of years now, and I've been working in the addiction treatment space for most of that time as well. And during my time working in that space, I've you know, I've worked kind of from the ground up as a, you know, a tech essentially got a counseling certification, did some of that moved into alumni services. Michael and I, we got to work together. That was awesome. I loved working with you at the harmony foundation focusing on kind of aftercare support, developing some virtual platforms for people to just engage with with a community in as many ways as possible. And currently I'm working with red rock recovery center in Lakewood. I live in Denver, I love Denver. And what I'm doing for red rock now is just doing some outreach for their, for their program and getting engaged with the community. So I'm really happy to be here, engaging with the community as much as possible.

Michael:

Awesome. Thank you for that, Brian. So Brian, you know, we're gonna cut to the chase now, we're going to, we're going to get into the goods, like the meat and potatoes of why you're here with all of us. So as you know, we've been talking a lot about the stories we tell ourselves, Brian. And so I want to ask you from your perspective, before we get into the guests requests, how did you actually become aware of what you were telling yourself and how did you actually realize that you had control over the stories you told yourself?

Brian:

I think a good place to start with that question is just a part of my journey in recovery. And it took for me, I come from, you know, a 12 step foundation, although I do definitely support all pathways through recovery. I probably will tie it into that experience because that's, that's what my experiences and it did take a sufficient amount of pain essentially for me to want to start looking at these things. And it was, I think in the beginning, a glimpse into mindfulness practice that really helped me start evaluating my perceptions on things. And for that, it simply looked like the phrase of like, I am not my thoughts. I observed my thoughts and that was bad to simple little phrase was it was enough to crack a door to let some kind of sunlight into there. So that that's, that's definitely where it started with being able to evaluate kind of these different narratives that I had going in my head about my perception of who I was and my perception of how I interacted with the world around me and coming to the point where I was able to kind of realize that this is something that I'm creating and feeding into.

Brian:

And I do have the ability to take a different perspective on things and not always the easiest thing to do, but that it is possible to, to create a new story for ourselves.

Michael:

Brian, I love that. You said "I am not my thoughts. I observe my thoughts." That is powerful.

Brian:

Yeah. Oh yeah. Someone much wiser than me stated that I don't know who they were, but it stuck with me, so share it around.

Michael:

I love it. And so I also just want to touch on what you said, because again, when we, this podcast is, is designed around, you know, getting uncomfortable, getting vulnerable, choosing to grow, choosing to be aware. And you mentioned in the beginning, you know, that it took, it took some pain, it took, you know, a certain amount of pain for you to choose, to make the choice to change. Can you look back on that pain of being like, you know, I needed that, you know, and it was it, even though it was uncomfortable that pain, would you say that that sometimes as part of growth?

Brian:

Yeah, I think I mean from most philosophies, whether, I mean, even in the big book of alcoholics anonymous and talk about most other spiritual philosophies, they do talk about pain as being almost necessary for, for spiritual growth or any kind of growth where you kind of, if you're in a zone of comfort, you're not really going to evaluate things because they're going well. Like why I don't fix, you know, something that's not broken. Whereas if something is going awry or causing you a significant amount of pain you know, that then kind of necessitates us taking a closer look at, okay, what's going on

here and how can I live a better life? And that it feeds into the nefarious kind of nature of addiction, because we can be aware that this thing is causing us so much pain and causing so much pain to all of our loved ones around us, but we continue to kind of engage in that behavior.

Brian:

So yeah, oftentimes it is a sufficient amount of pain that kind of will help create that a desire to want to embrace a new design for, for living. And you know, that threshold is different for everybody. I had a relatively high bottom line say, you know, I still had a house uh... I was renting. I was renting a house and had a partner and had a job and was driving a car and, you know, all of these things. So, but the pain I was feeling internally was, was enough to kind of really motivate me to, to want to embrace something else and let go of some other things in the process. Cause oftentimes when it comes to changing the narrative that we have internally, it's more of a letting go process than it is creating something new process in my experience. And then when we are able to let those things go, new things, new things grow in their place. So yeah. Hope that answers the question. If you get any,

Michael:

I love it. No, I love hearing how, like your, your backstory, your back dialogue. And I know that a lot of our listeners listening can really relate. I know that I've been relating to basically everything you've said. And so with that said, I really want you now to be able, to dive into a request from one of our listeners about the stories we tell ourselves. So this is, this is the request, Brian, you know, I'm putting you on, you know, I'm putting the spotlight on you because like, I just know you can deliver, are you ready for this? I hope so. So this was the request from the listener. I would love to hear more on the stories we tell ourselves in my personal experience, I was so unaware of the stories I told myself for a long time. I was on autopilot because my nervous system was so used to this narrative. Could you, by chance talk more about being able to learn how to gain awareness around how to access these stories that are not serving us.

Brian:

That is a wonderful question and request and how to, how to gain awareness is, is key and fresh in recovery especially within the 12 step world. I mean, that's what inventory is there for, is what it's designed for. We're trying to create a conscious practice or an intentional practice where we're cultivating self-awareness around our behaviors, around our thoughts, around our fears and things of that nature, so that we can change those things. We can identify them before they happen and, and respond differently. When I think about what kind of practices we can create to help us grow our awareness around ourselves, there's, there's a million different ways to do it. That really is. It's just, it's, it's kinda like that. If you're in the 12 step world, you're here, that's like, there's no wrong way to do the steps or the only wrong way to do the steps is to not do them.

Brian:

And that can be a similar way with mindfulness practice or creating awareness around your stories and your internal narratives. The there's there's really, truly no wrong way to do it. You really just want to find the way that best fits you. And just that you are taking time to take a step back from what maybe some of your perceptions are in. You're allowing yourself the space to evaluate those perceptions. A tangible, simple practice that actually Michael and I, me and you used to do all the time. When our, when we were doing our groups at Harmony was we would go through the practice of just kind of asking yourselves how this story still serves you, right? So we talk about, you know, what do I gain from this?

What does this cost me? You know, those kind of questions can be really effective for kind of evaluating am I at with this story?

Brian:

And is it, is it still serving me or is this something I can let go of? Meditative practices are really helpful just to kind of put some space and distance in between the racing mind and getting caught up with our own perception for us, you know, addicts and alcoholics, and most people in general, we're pretty selfish and self centered individuals. Our brains are kind of hard wired to do that kind of stuff. So we wanna, we're hard wired for self interest and survival and all that kind of stuff. And for people who are addicts and alcoholics we take that a little bit further. So seeing beyond our perception can be difficult for us sometimes. So we need to practice a little harder at cultivating them, meditative or self reflective practice, whatever that looks like for you, where it's simply kind of asking yourself the question in the morning, when you get up, you know, what story am I telling myself? What does this story serve me? What does it cost me? That's a really easy and effective way to kind of quickly assess where you're at with different narratives that you have going on.

Michael:

Thank you for that. And I'm sure that our listener who requested that is going to be super grateful that you took the time to explain that something else that I would love to have you hit on too. Brian is just even on the day to day stories, right? Because I can even say you guys I'll, I'll like, I'll be honest with you. I would create stories that Brian didn't like me because we are very different people. I would tell myself, right. I would tell myself, and I said, these are, and it would derail me. I created a narrative because Brian is so different than me. And because he wouldn't talk to me or he just gave me a look, I would think I pissed him off that, you know, he didn't like me. And that, that hurt our relationship because it was all in my head.

Michael:

Right, Brian, it was not something that you actually thought, well, maybe you did now, but it was not. But you guys, like, I really think this is a super important to, you know, to be able to hit on too, because a lot of us, even in the heat of the moment with just somebody, with somebody external reaction, we create something instantly and it can totally take us off course for the rest of the day. And so with that being said, Brian, you know, what would you say to somebody that when that happens, like instantly, what would be something you would say to them so that they can actually get back on track and not let in assumption AKA a story? Like when I would be like, Brian, doesn't like me, he gave me a look, Oh my goodness. Like, what would you say to that? People can really be aware of that so that they don't continue to do stuff like that

Brian:

Right on. That's a great question. And also, yeah, obviously the, the law, we got a lot of love between us and yeah, the stories we can, we tell ourselves can definitely disconnect us from people. And oftentimes we hear that we, we use the term, like that's my disease, you know, trying to kind of cut me off from people. And that's, that's kind of what it does for us, alcoholics and addicts and just people in general too, that, you know, we, we, those, those kinds of stories seek to isolate us from community and communities where we're healed. So we want to be really cautious of those things. And kind of what happens when we get derailed is, I mean, the biggest thing for me that has been in my, my experience

through my process of recovery is not, you know, trying to have a nonjudgmental nature towards being a human being.

Brian:

Because when we're working a program of recovery or we're just trying to grow spiritually, or just enlarge who we are as individuals we're not trying to like get rid of the human experience. Like we're just trying to learn a different tool kit for how to respond to the human experience. And part of that experience is, you know, messing stuff up and being afraid and you'll have one of these fears and that's, you know, an anxiety and being sad. Sometimes it's also a joy in love and all these, you know, it's huge and complex and it's some of those things at the same time. So what, I always try to remind myself when I get derailed or, you know, I don't even like using that word. I'll just say like, when I, you know, implement and I do a human thing, it's just, this is okay.

Brian:

Like, this is okay. And this is part of the experience that I'm having. And I want to strive towards, you know, practicing these new principles in my life. So I'm just gonna, you know, try better next time. I'm just gonna keep striving towards that. And for me that, you know, again, speaking in my experience, definitely having a 12 step foundation even with mindfulness practices and even some Buddhist philosophies and things like the eightfold path and things like that, it's just spiritual principles that we're trying to apply. You know, if that doesn't jive with you, that's okay too. But I would say that either way, we're striving towards to live a more kind of virtuous life. And that's okay when we kind of, you know, inevitably do something very human that we don't place a lot of judgment on it. And that helps with our thoughts too, when we have those racing thoughts, when we have these negative stories that we're not like placing all this, I'm thinking like this again, it's just the weight of it brings me down, even just thinking and saying it.

Brian:

So being able to just kind of accept myself and accept those different parts of myself and accept that these inconvenient, I guess it could be considered kind of pathways can happen, but they are a part of the experience. And usually like help me grow even more. So I know Michael and I, we've done these trainings with recovery, for recovery coaches, a bunch. And where you talk about when, like it's not so much the people that when you have these kinds of biases where you have these like perfect view of yourself, it's not like those are the people that kind of scare us the most, that don't acknowledge those things, because then they're unaware that they're making, having faults or whatever it is. But we want to be aware of these things that are happening that maybe uncomfortable because that's where we're going to grow. And if we don't look at him, if we don't have that awareness, then we're going to be where we are. We may just stay there. And that may not be the worst thing in the world, but you know, if you're trying to grow and you're trying to strive to be and reach your fullest potential, we have to look at those things and the way to do that without burdening ourselves with so much guilt and shame is to do it from a nonjudgmental perspective.

Michael:

Oh, I love it. And I love that you mentioned the word, you know, if you want to grow, because it's all about growth and getting uncomfortable so that we can get better and be a better person or the person that we desire to be. Shall I say? So Brian, just let me ask you one last question too, on this podcast, you know, now like being able to look back at where you were before recovery, or even before you chose to

become aware of your thoughts and aware of the stories you tell yourself, what is life like for you now being in awareness and choosing actively choosing to monitor these so that you can be that, that person that you want to be as opposed to where you were before. What is life like for you?

Brian:

Yeah. Great question. The answer I'm about to give, if I was a newcomer hearing myself talk right now, I would be so upset. So pissed off, like people just talk about how happy they are and their recovery. I was so miserable and beginning still like the first three to six months I was. So, I mean, I was just robbed at every coping mechanisms I had and was just being flooded with all these emotions. So like, yeah, I wasn't in the best know. And then I'd hear these people like laughing in meetings or talking about how great their life is now. So with that little disclaimer, I will jump into it because it's true in my life is, is, is, is great. I have a life beyond my wildest dreams today. And in more internally than externally, I mean, external, he's doing okay too.

Brian:

I'm not gonna deny that. But also more importantly internally, the way that I can communicate with myself, the stories I tell myself today, the narratives that I have going today, you know, support me. They raised me out if they don't, they don't bring me down. And when things do kind of come in where that try to cut me off from the people around me, which is usually the way that that stuff can manifest is you know, I have a toolkit because I'm constantly engaging in a practice of self-awareness. I'd like, there's a metaphor that like, you know, your emotions or the world or whatever, it's kind of like rain and having conscious awareness is like, like having a roof over your head. And if you don't cultivate a practice, then you don't have the roof. And then when it rains, it everything's just going to come and flood you.

Brian:

And you're just going to be carried away with whatever the world's thrown at you, whatever your brains throwing at, you just get swept away with it. But if you can cultivate this practice or, you know, doing your inventories regularly for your 12 step individual, or seeing a therapist where you're, you know, processing these things, whatever it is for you, if, as long as you're doing those things, you're kind of building that roof. And that roof then kind of protects you from the floods of emotions and allows you to kind of take a step back and even like, sit on the porch and just kind of watch it happen and be like, Oh, this is, you know, the rain is beautiful or whatever, rather than it like sweet, you know, flooding your entire house. So that's kinda what it feels like today when I have difficult emotions, which I do all the time.

Brian:

I, I can, I can observe them. I can be with them. I can allow them to do what they need to do. And I can, I don't have to deny being angry or sad. I can sit there with this process and be with it. And that is, you know, such a gift because before I got into recovery or even the beginning stages of my recovery, I couldn't sit with myself for like two minutes in quiet, like quiet. And I was like, I can do, I do like 20 minute meditations, like nothing now. And like, I know people struggle with that, but that's a practice that was cultivated over time, you know started with one minute, it started in a mood to two minutes, then three, then five and 10 and 15, you know, a couple years later, like a 20 minute meditation. Like, that's just what, you know, what happens now.

Brian:

So I would say that today, all the material things aside what is the most beneficial thing is that I can be comfortable in my own skin. And I'm not at the whim of every little emotion that I have. I'm not at the whim of whatever the world throws at me. And from a spiritual perspective, like having that connection to that you know, in 12 step world, higher power, whatever you want to call it, that's fine. You know, having a connection with that allows me to help helps me cultivate these practices so that it's whatever's going on around me. I'll be okay. It's not so much that like, everything's going to be okay, but I'll be okay, no matter what happens, because I have this connection because I cultivate these practices because I've, you know, embraced a new design for living essentially and applying that new design consistently over time has now made it kind of second nature. And that's, that's coming. Yeah. It's awesome. It's beautiful. It's a beautiful life. So I'm really happy to be here and really happy to share it with you too, Michael, as we are really good friends. So I'm happy to be on this path with you.

Michael:

Ah, I like can't stop smiling. Cause I'm like thinking to myself, Brian just takes the cake. You know, like if I thought I needed to share or create another episode on stories right now, I'm like, Nope, Brian, like, I think you totally, you know, sealed the deal with that. And there's so much, so you guys, I'm going to have to tell you whether you are driving or you're just listening to this. You're gonna have to put this episode on repeat too, because like the gold, I said, knowledge bombs last time. So this is straight gold, the gold that Brian is delivered, you're going to have to remember it. I mean,

Brian:

You're too kind. Can I share one more thing? Cause I just remembered one thing was just the importance of the stories that we're, that we're telling ourselves in narratives. And oftentimes they have this negative skew because there's so much guilt and shame that we're carrying around with us. Just from, you know, the way in which addiction, alcoholism manifests. There's like a ton of stuff that, you know, we've done usually that is tough to process and can inhibit us growing. Another way to kind of put the stories we tell ourselves in our heads, you know, often become our reality outside. So if we w really intentionally cultivate positive kind of skewing those, those stories, those narratives in a positive direction that could directly impact how we view the world around us and therefore know have real serious implications kind of on how we're living and what we're experiencing. So it is super, super important, I think, to have that positive skew with our source to be aware of them so we can change them towards a more positive outlook so that we can navigate through this shame and guilt and all that stuff in breakthrough to continue to grow. So I, I w I always mentioned that I forgot to mention it, so I just wanted to throw it in there, but yeah, I think it's super important. Yeah.

Michael:

So important, dude. Brian, thank you. If there's one thing I just want to put on repeat one more time is to tell everybody, like Brian said, you are not your thoughts. You observe your thoughts. All right. You guys Brian, could you please let our listeners know how they can, you know, get, get in contact with you after this episode and even get to know how to contact and get to know red rock recovery?

Brian:

Oh yeah. So always can reach me at my email, which is Brian that's B-R-I-A-N .T-I-E-R-N-Y@redrockrecoverycenter.com. And then I, I think that's probably the best way to reach me actually. And with Red Rock, we can always check out our website, RedRockRecoveryCenter.com. We have

Facebook, Instagram I'm always posting stuff on there. So follow it there. And if you have any questions about the services or programs we have yet feel free to reach out, or if you just want to talk about recovery or spirituality or mindfulness practices and things like that, happy to help love I live and breathe this stuff all day every day. So however I can be of service or engage in a, in a stimulating conversation and I'm happy to be there.

Michael:

Awesome. Thank you. Brian Tierney, ladies and gentlemen, Brian Tierney is in the house. He is to exit the house, leaving nothing but gold nuggets. And with that being said, you guys, again, I do want to end this episode by reminding you, if you or someone you know, is struggling with addiction. Please call the harmony foundation at (866) 686-7867. Recovery is a journey and harmony gives you the map. We'll see you next week.