



<https://modernphotosolutions.com/5WaysOfChange>

Hey everyone, welcome to modern photo solutions. I'm Steph Clay, and I'm excited to be here with you today. It is a new year. Happy New Year. I hope everyone had a wonderful holiday season. This is the time of year when we're all setting goals and resolutions. I'm not typically a big goal setter or resolution setter. I try to take evaluation of my life all throughout the year and make changes as I got, and set goals as I go, but I did at the end of 2016 decide that I was going to do my page a day of documenting my life again, and I started that Thanksgiving Day because that's what I do. I do it all throughout the year.

I don't wait for the beginning of the year to start something new if I decide I want to do it. I've been doing that, and it's working out great. I'm really enjoying being back at that again. That is something that I did in 2015. I started it, actually, in December of 2014, and did it for over a year, and then took a little bit of a break. I have severely missed it and I'm really excited to be back at it again, because of all of the changes that it created in me doing that project. I can't wait to share some more of them with you at the end of this show.

This week I'm going to be talking about five ways to change your life and your family by telling your story. I'm excited to share all of this information with you. I've been trying bits and pieces of it over social media, but we're going to dig in deep in this podcast episode.

The first thing that I want to talk about is some research that's been done. You may have heard about the Happiness Project by Gretchen Ruben. She discovered that recalling happy times from the past increases happiness now. She actually suggests in her YouTube videos on her YouTube channel, taking some photos and putting together a photo book is a really great way to revisit those happy times and have them increase your happiness right now. I love that suggestion, and that is, of course, something that I've found in my own life as I've worked through different projects.



<https://modernphotosolutions.com/5WaysOfChange>

I believe that it's probably the main reason that I love documenting my Disney vacations is because Disney is such a happy thing for me. I love, love Disney. If you're not a Disney fan, it's only because you haven't been to Disney with me. I promise I have taken many anti-Disney people and turned them into converts, which I'm very proud of, and they become Disney crazed just like me, and it's really fun for me to see. If you're not a Disney fan, that's the reason why. You just haven't done it right yet. All you need to do is do it the right way and then you'll be a Disney fan. When I'm at Disney I am like a child, and it is so fun.

Taking those photos from those vacations and being able to revisit them as I work with them and create with them, and then to be able to pull that photo book out and look at it at anytime brings me true happiness. It really does. I feel increased happiness when I look through those. Really any vacation for me, documenting it and looking through the books once they're printed really does increase my happiness. Vacations are some of my most happy times and my most connected times with my family, too. That's probably why those for sure are things that I always try to document. I'm not as good about other events. Holidays I'm not as good about, other things like that I'm not always as good about, but vacations for sure I'm really good about. I think that's why. I think it's because they do increase my happiness.

We're on to number two now. Paul Zack has found that hearing a story, and I've talked about this before on the podcast, hearing a story and narrative with a beginning, middle, and an end cause our brains to release cortisol and oxytocin. These chemicals trigger the uniquely human abilities to connect, empathize, and make meaning. We all have a desire to tell our story. It's in our DNA. And we have a desire to hear other people's stories, too. That is in our DNA as well. It is what helps us connect with other people. To find those common grounds, those common things, the threads that can bind us together. It is in our DNA. I know that I have learned so much from people that have been willing to share their story with me, and I have grown so much from these people and I'm so grateful for it.



<https://modernphotosolutions.com/5WaysOfChange>

This doesn't mean that we go and share our most heartfelt and hardest stories that we've been through with everybody. One of the things that I really appreciate that Brene Brown teaches is that not everybody deserves to see our stretchmarks. We have stretchmark friends that they're going to see our stretchmarks and they're still going to stick around. They're not going to run away from us. We don't share everything with everybody. That's not what sharing our story is about. I am a firm believer that I'm okay sharing scars, but I'm not okay sharing open wounds. I don't think that just anybody wants to see my open wounds either.

I am okay sharing what I've learned after I've been through a really hard thing and sharing how I've grown, but I don't necessarily want everyone to see the blood and the guts when I'm going through it. I think that's okay, too. I really think that's a healthy approach for life. People in my life that I've been close enough to that have shared those stories with me, that I am a stretchmark friend for, and the people that are a stretchmark friend for me, that I've been able to share these stories with, there is a real connection, and we desire that as human beings.

I believe that telling our stories through photos and words, having that desire, I think most people have that desire, too, because the photos do bring back memories and they are a huge part of our story. That's why you're here, which is really exciting to me.

Okay, the third thing. The more children know about their family's history, the stronger their sense of control over their lives, the higher their self-esteem, and the more successfully they believe their family functioned. This is all found in an article in The New York Times that I will link to on the site, but it's research that's been done, and it is fascinating research. These psychologists decided to see ... One psychologist was finding that in her research as she worked with kids that had learning disabilities, the ones that seemed to be resilient and deal with this challenge the best were the ones that seemed to know a lot about their family



<https://modernphotosolutions.com/5WaysOfChange>

history and their family stories. Not just the facts of when people were born, but the real stories in their family.

They did some research to find out if this really was a true thing, and asked questions and compared. One of the things that they did was they went through and asked 20 questions, and they are called the Do You Know Questions, the Do You Know Scale. They asked these kids these questions, and these are questions the only way they would know the answers to these questions is if somebody passed it on to them in a story form. It wasn't something that they could have experienced firsthand at all. Some examples of the questions are: Do you know where your grandparents grew up? Do you know where your mom and dad went to high school? Do you know where your parents met? Do you know an illness or something really terrible that happened in your family? Do you know the story of your birth? Those are some examples of the questions that they asked, and the Do You Know Scale turned out to be the best single predictor of children's emotional health and happiness. Isn't that really amazing and interesting?

They said that there seems to be three types of narratives that families will tell. Here's some examples of those narratives. The first narrative is what they call the ascending narrative. Their example is, "Son, we came to this country. We had nothing. Our family worked and were successful." That's the ascending family narrative. The second common narrative is the descending family narrative. And it's, "Sweetheart, we used to have it all and then we lost everything." That's the family narrative. Our family used to have it all and then we lost everything.

The third, the most helpful narrative, is the one that's called the oscillating family narrative, and it goes something like this, and this is from that article. "Dear, let me tell you, we've had ups and downs in our family. We've built a family business. Your grandfather was the pillar of the community. Your mother was on the Board at the hospital. But we also had setbacks. You had an uncle that was once arrested. We had a house burn down. Your father lost a job. No matter what happened, we always



<https://modernphotosolutions.com/5WaysOfChange>

stuck together as a family." It's also including those hard challenges. Sometimes as we're telling our story and documenting them through photos and words, we skip over those. Those are really, really important that we include these things.

One of the keys that they said is that each family will have different stories and different key moments and memories that are shared. It's not just the content of what is known that's the critical factor, but the process by which these things came to be known. It's through connecting. It's through telling stories. It's through sitting down and having conversations. One of the things that I love about the documenting that I do and the storytelling that I do is that my kids will sit down and look through them, and it inspires questions in them. It triggers questions in their mind that they want to ask, and they will ask me as they're going through these books, and I will tell them more stories based on their questions. That's connection. That's conversation. And that's a big part of what this study is saying. That it's not just knowing the facts.

I will link to the questions as well, the 20 questions that they asked. And they state, it's not just knowing the answers to these 20 questions. You could write all of these answers down and have the kids memorize it, but what's more important is the connection that happens from the kids learning it. Sitting down and having a conversation and passing these stories on is what's the most important thing, the kids being able to ask questions and having a conversation about it.

The fourth research-driven fact about telling our story that will change your life and your family, is that telling and listening to person narratives increases physical and mental health. This is also an article in The New York Times that I'll link to on this site.

I have always said that documenting my story and telling my story through photo and words is the best therapy and the cheapest therapy that I've ever had, and I believe that more and more every day, and I see that more and more in my own life



<https://modernphotosolutions.com/5WaysOfChange>

every single day. The growth and discovery that comes from me taking time to tell my story and look through my photos and put them together is invaluable. I couldn't get it any other way than by looking through my photos and realizing, you know what? I didn't spend very much time with this kid this week. I didn't do enough of this this week. I really need to work on this this week. It's not beating myself up. It's just a matter of inventory and improvement, and trying to be a better person. I don't feel bad. I don't feel guilty. I just realize that this is what I need to work on. Where if I wasn't doing that inventory and looking at it that way, I wouldn't even notice. It's something that would not occur to me. It would not be brought to my consciousness, and I wouldn't be able to improve on it either.

Because I focus on gratitude, I've been able to work through some really difficult, difficulty challenges and trials in my life and be able to face them, go through the, and feel better about them and be a better person because of them, because of the documenting that I've done and the focus on gratitude through my photos and my words. It really is amazing. It's something that I can't even sing praises about enough. If there are hard things going on in your life and you want a mental shift, start telling your story. If you're already telling your story, figure out a way that you can tell it more often.

Do an inventory. How often are you telling your story? Are you doing it monthly, weekly, daily, yearly? How often are you sitting down to really go through your photos and tell your story? Tell the good stuff, the hard stuff, the real stuff, the events, the birthdays, the celebrations, all of it, and figure out where you can make some changes so that you can have this experience in your own life, the improvement of physical and mental health. That's an incredible finding. It's really incredible. And who doesn't want improved personal physical and mental health? I know I do.

Okay, the last, number five on my list, is telling our story causes reflection and introspection. This is from Brene Brown's Rising Strong. If you haven't read Brene



<https://modernphotosolutions.com/5WaysOfChange>

Brown's books, I quote her a lot. I refer to her a lot. Her research is really amazing and life changing. If you haven't read any of her books, I highly recommend *Daring Greatly* and *Rising Strong*, which are two of her more recent books. That ties in to the last item as well, that personal narratives increase physical and mental health.

Telling our story causes reflection and introspection. I have seen that for sure in my own life, especially as I do my daily pages and I'm able to reflect on my day more fully and completely, and figure out maybe during that day what I should have done different. I will be honest, there have been times when I have thought to myself, "Man, I blew it today. I really did. And I regret the choices that I made today on how I spent my time." But doing that on a daily basis stops me from making the same mistakes the next day, and I'm grateful for that. I'm grateful for the ability to make the changes so quickly. I really appreciate the opportunity to reflect and have introspection and figure out maybe what I can do different with my interactions and my relationships, especially the ones that mean the most to me.

Okay, let's run through the list and recap it really quick. These are five days to change your life and your family by telling your story.

1. Recalling happy times increases happiness now.
2. Story is in our DNA and we need it to connect with other people.
3. All of that evidence about how children are more resilient and have a higher self-esteem if they know their family's story.
4. Telling and listening to personal narratives increases physical and mental health.
5. Telling our story causes reflection and introspection.



<https://modernphotosolutions.com/5WaysOfChange>

I wanted to talk just a little bit about my daily pages and how they have changed me and changed my life. It's been an incredible journey that I went on, and I started it when I was going through one of the most difficult challenges and periods of time in my life, and I decided to do this in December of 2014 because I wanted to have something to look forward to each day, and I wanted to find something that I could be grateful for each day. That's how I approached it. I just wanted to have one thing. One photo, one screenshot, one something each day that I could focus on. In a previous podcast I talked about this. I continued it for the following year and for a month or two into 2016.

The changes that I saw in my life and in my relationships were really very profound. I gained a self-confidence that I hadn't seen before, and a self-awareness of who I really am. I strengthened relationships with the people that are most important to me, and I was able to mend some relationships, repair some relationships, because I was able to see where I had made mistakes and I had wronged some people and done some things wrong and I needed to fix that and make amends for it. I became more aware of the blessings and the gifts that I had in my life, and really was able to see the hand of God in my life on a daily basis and understand what He expected of me. I was able to see how my interactions with members of my family could be strengthened and changed. I was able to see how I was spending my time and maybe what I needed to do differently, where I might be wasting time.

I also was able to see some of the hard things I was doing on a daily basis. I was really surprised to be able to look back and see that I was doing hard things every single day. I was making hard choices and I was accomplishing big things, where normally you look at your days and your weeks and you think that you're not doing that much, but when you look and examine day to day and can see, "I made this decision about spending my time here or there, and I feel like I did a really good job," it is really rewarding to be able to see those challenges overcome and those good decisions made.



<https://modernphotosolutions.com/5WaysOfChange>

I gained confidence from the fact that I was doing hard things all the time, even though they aren't things that a lot of people would think were hard. They were hard to me, and I got through them. That had a huge impact on me, because the reality is, as mundane and boring as a lot of us think our lives are, we are doing hard things every day. We're making big decisions every day, whether we're deciding to call a friend or text someone, and a lot of times we don't know the impact, the long-lasting impact that the little things might have in somebody else's life. That is another thing that I learned as I saw the impact that other people were having in my life. I am so grateful, so grateful for people that continually give of their time and their talents to me and to help me grow and improve and become a better person. That is something that has come from that experience.

Brene Brown also teaches and has found in her research that everybody that she interviewed that have been through traumatic, traumatic life events, survivors of genocide and really things that I can't even imagine in my life honestly, and she said that everyone that she interviewed reported having joy, even genocide victims, survivors that reported having joy. It was because they had gratitude. They had gratitude. Their advice for us when she asked them was for us to not take the simple things for granted. To have gratitude for the times that we are able to be with family members and for the very simple things in life. Doing this daily documenting like I've done has helped me be more grateful for the very little things in life. It's changed me as a person, and it's changed me in all of the relationships that I have, and I'm so grateful for it. It was an accident. I didn't set out to have this happen. It was an accident.

I've heard from a few of you that decided that you're going to try this to and how it is changing you as well, and that is so exciting to me. It's changing how you see your life, how you see your family for the better, and it's so wonderful. I can't wait to see more of you hopefully jump on board. Is it necessary? No, it's absolutely not necessary. Do you need to do it for a long period of time? No, you do not. Even a



<https://modernphotosolutions.com/5WaysOfChange>

week, I think, could make a big difference. Documenting gratitude daily for a week could make a big difference, a month.

A year is an undertaking, but I didn't intend to do it for a year, but when I stopped doing it for a few days at the end of 2014 I really missed it, and that's why I continued it was because I could see and I could feel in my heart that it was changing me. I didn't know what it was doing, but I could feel in my heart it was changing me, and I wanted to keep doing that, and that's why I kept it up as long as I did. I have been very unsuccessful in other projects that I've tried to do, including a photo a day, but this has worked for me, and I think the biggest reason that it worked for me is because I could feel changes happening.

There will be more information on this project in my upcoming class that will be released ... I got a little tongue-tied. That will be released in a week. I think about a week is when it will be launched. I can't wait to share this class with you. It has been so much work. So much hard, hard work. It is called the Heart of Photo Fabulous. It is the heart of my system, of documenting my story. It is what has changed my heart, and that's why I've called it that. In the course I will teach you everything that you need to know about cloud backup solutions and options so that you can make the best choice for you and not have to worry about using your phone photos ever again. I go through all of the workflow strategies and time-saving tips, and give you ways to find the time to fit this into your life as it is right now, as busy as it is right now, to be able to fit telling your story into it.

The Project Life App is the workhorse of my system. My phone is the heart of my system for sure. The Project Life App is the workhorse of my system as it is right now. I teach you all of the ins and outs of the Project Life app, and working with supplies in the Project Life App, as well as being able to purchase supplies outside of the app, transfer photos and supplies to your device quickly and without cords, I hate using cords, so that you can work on past projects, older photos if you would like, but also be able to use any supplies that you want in the app.



<https://modernphotosolutions.com/5WaysOfChange>

I also have some tips for catching up and tips for working on monthly products, as well as weekly projects, and then my workflow. There are a couple of videos that go through my workflow, my complete workflow step by step. In the one that shows my whole entire workflow, I was actually able to make two pages in 12 minutes, and I did not have these pages preplanned out. All I knew was what photos I was going to use. I didn't know anything else. No other decisions had been made, and I walked through and you can hear me talking through the decisions that I'm making as I'm deciding where photos are going to go, which templates to use, which cards to use, where to put them, all of that kind of stuff.

I can't wait to share this with you. It's been so much work and so much heart and soul, and I've got people going through it that have finished it and have loved it. Some of them have been Project Life App users as long as I have, and they're all reporting that they're learning a lot, which is wonderful. Then some brand new beginners to the Project Life App as well that are going through and learning a lot, absolutely. I can't wait for you to get in here and to be able to find ways to tell your story fast and easily that will fit into your life now and will help you add more heart to your story as well.

Thank you so much for being here, for sharing some of your day with me. I really appreciate it. I will see you next time on Modern Photo Solutions.