

## PARTICIPANT REFERENCE

# Jonathan M. Adler

*Narrative Identity · Olin College of Engineering*

*The story you tell about your life is not a record of what happened. It is the meaning you make of it — and meaning can be revised.*

— On the work of Jonathan M. Adler

## WHO IS JONATHAN ADLER

Jonathan M. Adler is Professor of Psychology at Olin College of Engineering and a leading scholar of narrative identity — the evolving, self-constructed story we tell about our lives that shapes our sense of self, our well-being, and our life outcomes.

His research focuses on how people make sense of challenging experiences, how that meaning-making influences identity development, and how personal stories can be used therapeutically and socially.

## THE CENTRAL CLAIM · NARRATIVE IDENTITY

Adler examines the dynamic interconnections between our stories and our well-being, using both qualitative and quantitative methods. He has studied identity development in people with physical disabilities, in psychotherapy clients, and in midlife adults, tracing how the themes running through a personal narrative affect mental health.

*How we frame and narrate our experiences can significantly shape our psychological resilience and our sense of who we are.*

Two narrative themes recur throughout his research:

### REDEMPTION SEQUENCES

Stories that start bad and end good. Suffering is narrated as the passage to growth, insight, or connection — a pattern associated with stronger well-being.

### CONTAMINATION SEQUENCES

Stories that start good and end bad. A positive scene is retold as spoiled by what followed — a pattern associated with poorer mental health.