

Should I stay or should I go?

Skip Walter
September 8, 2013

“Kingfish, where’d you get your good judgment?”
‘And Kingfish says, ‘From my experience.’
“And where’d you get your experience from?”
“And Kingfish says, ‘From bad judgment.’”

Dreaming

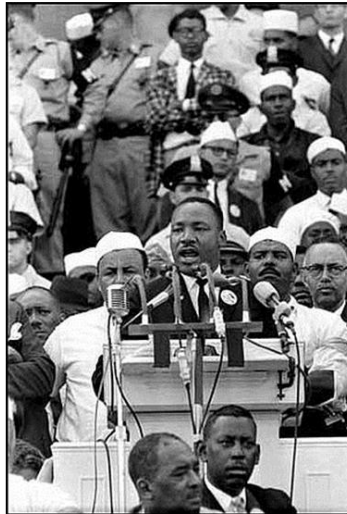
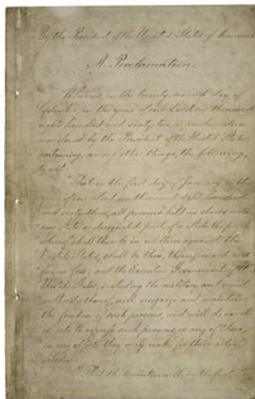
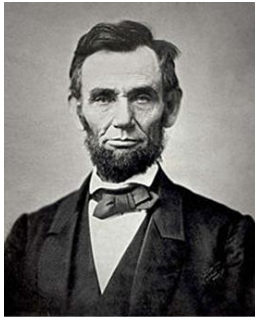
The following notes are suggestions for beginning personal reflections that I use before I make any life changes. I used this technique to do career development counseling when I was at Digital Equipment Corporation and Attenex Corporation. Most of these materials are drawn from other sources. My contribution is synthesizing these meditations from my mentors and invisible university.

The general notion is that each of the reflection sections is organized as something to read as a vehicle for creating a meditative state. Use the meditation time for each reflection to open yourself to the imagery of the past, present and future. After 5-10 minutes of reflection come slowly back to consciousness to then record the images of the meditations. The recording should be done both as text and as images.



Before working through this document, start with listening to (and reading) [Martin Luther King’s “I have a Dream” speech](#). This work is all about getting in touch with your dream and then aligning yourself with your dream.

The following is the text of Martin Luther King’s “I have a dream” speech with images of what the text points to:



I am happy to join with you today in what will go down in history as the greatest demonstration for freedom in the history of our nation.

Five score years ago, [a great American](#), in whose symbolic shadow we stand today, signed the [Emancipation Proclamation](#). This momentous decree came as a great beacon light of hope to millions of Negro slaves who had been seared in the flames of withering injustice. It came as a joyous daybreak to end the long night of their captivity.

But one hundred years later, the Negro still is not free. One hundred years later, the life of the Negro is still sadly crippled by the manacles of segregation and the chains of discrimination. One hundred years later, the Negro lives on a lonely island of poverty in the midst of a vast ocean of material prosperity. One hundred years later, the Negro is still languished in the corners of American society and finds himself an exile in his own land. And so we've come here today to dramatize a shameful condition.

In a sense we've come to our nation's capital to cash a check. When the architects of our republic wrote the magnificent words of the Constitution and the [Declaration of Independence](#), they were signing a promissory note to which every American was to fall heir. This note was a promise that all men, yes, black men as well as white men, would be guaranteed the "unalienable Rights" of "Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness." It is obvious today that America has defaulted on this promissory note, insofar as her citizens of color are concerned. Instead of honoring this sacred obligation, America has given the Negro people a bad check, a check which has come back marked "insufficient funds."

But we refuse to believe that the bank of justice is bankrupt. We refuse to believe that there are insufficient funds in the great vaults of opportunity of

this nation. And so, we've come to cash this check, a check that will give us upon demand the riches of freedom and the security of justice.

We have also come to this hallowed spot to remind America of the fierce urgency of Now. This is no time to engage in the luxury of cooling off or to take the tranquilizing drug of gradualism. Now is the time to make real the promises of democracy. Now is the time to rise from the dark and desolate valley of segregation to the sunlit path of racial justice. Now is the time to lift our nation from the quicksands of racial injustice to the solid rock of brotherhood. Now is the time to make justice a reality for all of God's children.

It would be fatal for the nation to overlook the urgency of the moment. This sweltering summer of the Negro's legitimate discontent will not pass until there is an invigorating autumn of freedom and equality. Nineteen sixty-three is not an end, but a beginning. And those who hope that the Negro needed to blow off steam and will now be content will have a rude awakening if the nation returns to business as usual. And there will be neither rest nor tranquility in America until the Negro is granted his citizenship rights. The whirlwinds of revolt will continue to shake the foundations of our nation until the bright day of justice emerges.

But there is something that I must say to my people, who stand on the warm threshold which leads into the palace of justice: In the process of gaining our rightful place, we must not be guilty of wrongful deeds. Let us not seek to satisfy our thirst for freedom by drinking from the cup of bitterness and hatred. We must forever conduct our struggle on the high plane of dignity and discipline. We must not allow our creative protest to degenerate into physical violence. Again and again, we must rise to the majestic heights of meeting physical force with soul force.

The marvelous new militancy which has engulfed the Negro community must not lead us to a distrust of all white people, for many of our white brothers, as evidenced by their presence here today, have come to realize that their destiny is tied up with our destiny. And they have come to realize that their freedom is inextricably bound to our freedom.

We cannot walk alone.

And as we walk, we must make the pledge that we shall always march ahead.

We cannot turn back.

There are those who are asking the devotees of civil rights, "When will you be satisfied?" We can never be satisfied as long as the Negro is the victim of the unspeakable horrors of police brutality. We can never be satisfied as long as our bodies, heavy with the fatigue of travel, cannot gain lodging in the motels of the highways and the hotels of the cities. We cannot be satisfied as long as the negro's basic mobility is from a smaller ghetto to a larger one. We can never be satisfied as long as our children are stripped of their self-hood and robbed of their dignity by signs stating: "For Whites Only." We cannot be satisfied as long as a Negro in Mississippi cannot vote and a Negro in New York believes he has nothing for which to vote. No, no, we are not satisfied,

and we will not be satisfied until "justice rolls down like waters, and righteousness like a mighty stream."¹

I am not unmindful that some of you have come here out of great trials and tribulations. Some of you have come fresh from narrow jail cells. And some of you have come from areas where your quest -- quest for freedom left you battered by the storms of persecution and staggered by the winds of police brutality. You have been the veterans of creative suffering. Continue to work with the faith that unearned suffering is redemptive. Go back to Mississippi, go back to Alabama, go back to South Carolina, go back to Georgia, go back to Louisiana, go back to the slums and ghettos of our northern cities, knowing that somehow this situation can and will be changed.

Let us not wallow in the valley of despair, I say to you today, my friends.

And so even though we face the difficulties of today and tomorrow, I still have a dream. It is a dream deeply rooted in the American dream.

I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal."

I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia, the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood.

I have a dream that one day even the state of Mississippi, a state sweltering with the heat of injustice, sweltering with the heat of oppression, will be transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice.

I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.

I have a *dream* today!

I have a dream that one day, down in Alabama, with its vicious racists, with its governor having his lips dripping with the words of "interposition" and "nullification" -- one day right there in Alabama little black boys and black girls will be able to join hands with little white boys and white girls as sisters and brothers.

I have a *dream* today!

I have a dream that one day every valley shall be exalted, and every hill and mountain shall be made low, the rough places will be made plain, and the crooked places will be made straight; "and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed and all flesh shall see it together."²

This is our hope, and this is the faith that I go back to the South with.

With this faith, we will be able to hew out of the mountain of despair a stone of hope. With this faith, we will be able to transform the jangling discords of our nation into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood. With this faith, we will be able to work together, to pray together, to struggle together, to go to jail

together, to stand up for freedom together, knowing that we will be free one day.

And this will be the day -- this will be the day when all of God's children will be able to sing with new meaning:

My country 'tis of thee, sweet land of liberty, of thee I sing.

Land where my fathers died, land of the Pilgrim's pride,

From every mountainside, let freedom ring!

And if America is to be a great nation, this must become true.

And so let freedom ring from the prodigious hilltops of New Hampshire.

Let freedom ring from the mighty mountains of New York.

Let freedom ring from the heightening Alleghenies of Pennsylvania.

Let freedom ring from the snow-capped Rockies of Colorado.

Let freedom ring from the curvaceous slopes of California.

But not only that:

Let freedom ring from Stone Mountain of Georgia.

Let freedom ring from Lookout Mountain of Tennessee.

Let freedom ring from every hill and molehill of Mississippi.

From every mountainside, let freedom ring.

And when this happens, when we allow freedom ring, when we let it ring from every village and every hamlet, from every state and every city, we will be able to speed up that day when *all* of God's children, black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics, will be able to join hands and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual:

Free at last! Free at last!

Thank God Almighty, we are free at last!

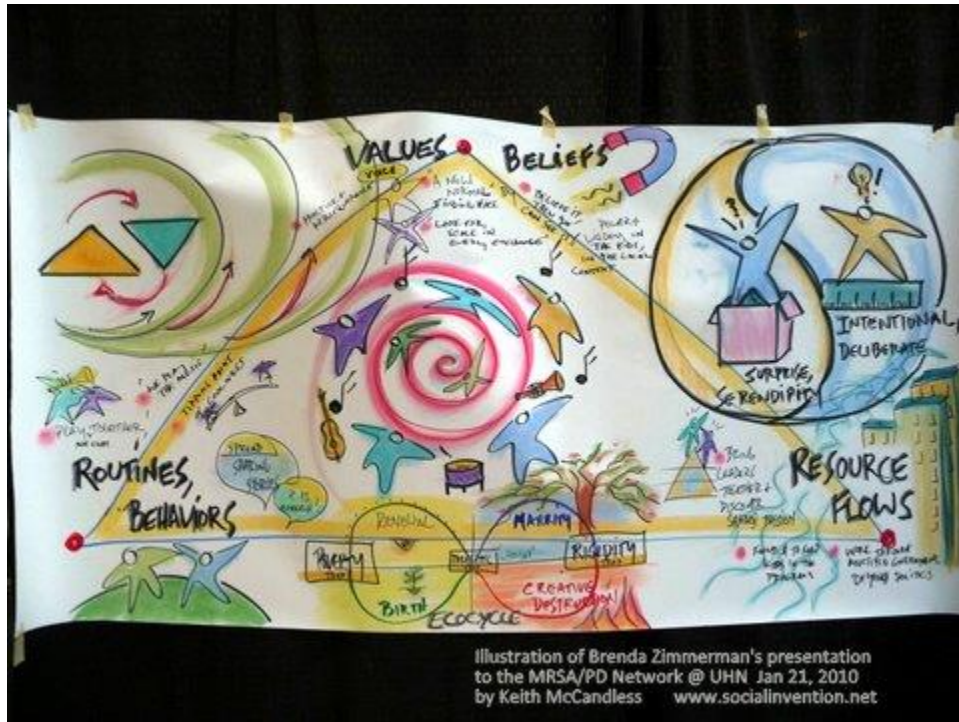
What is your dream?

Spend a few minutes to reflect on Martin Luther King's speech and then get in touch with your dream. Write the words that come to mind that express your dream. Sketch an image of the dream.

Meditations and Reflections

The following sections provide suggestions for beginning personal reflections to use before making life changes. The general notion is that each of the reflection sections is organized as something to read as a vehicle for creating a meditative state. Use the meditation time for each reflection to open yourself to the

imagery of the past, present and future. After 5-10 minutes of reflection come slowly back to consciousness and then record the images of the meditations. The recording should be done both as text and as sketched images. Many people find the playing of [Baroque Music](#) in the background helpful in achieving the appropriate meditative and reflective state.



The following principles are intended to help us BE:

- In Context
- In Contact
- In Command

A principle is a thought used to direct actions. The dictionary defines a principle as “a governing law of conduct by which one directs one’s life or actions.” The following principles have been found to be important in ensuring success in these meetings:

Principles:

1. **If you are *feeling uncomfortable*, this is a sign that you are about to move to a place you want to be.** The reason behind this principle is that you can rob yourself of the energy you need to make a required shift.
2. **If you are *feeling confused*, this is a sign that you are about to learn something.** The reasoning behind this is that we are taught from birth to kill the process of creation that flourishes within us.
3. **Taking stewardship for the context and the *quality of your own learning* by raising questions about anything you don’t understand.** The reasoning behind this principle is that an amazing amount of energy is wasted if you build on a foundation of misunderstanding.
4. **Self-accountability for staying in contact with the desired outcomes and the integrity of the process of an interaction before starting.** The reason behind this principle is that we want our minds to be creative toward accomplishing our purposes, not interrupted or dissipated by lack of clarity or what we are doing, or why or how we are doing it.
5. **Being responsible for being in command of your own motivation by testing for personal and organizational relevance of what we are working through.** The reasoning behind this principle is

that without maintaining a personal connection, the subjects we are working on will not be understood or adequately put into action.

The Rabbi's Gift

Before we can chart a holistic path forward for ourselves when we begin to think about life direction changes, we need to ground our reflections in extraordinary respect for ourselves. [Scott Peck](#) in [A Different Drum](#) relates a story he calls “The Rabbi’s Gift” that gets at the heart of the extraordinary respect that must be a part of all of our valued relationships, including our relationship with self.



“There is a story, perhaps a myth. Typical of mythic stories, it has many versions. Also typical, the source of the version I am about to tell is obscure. I cannot remember whether I heard or read it, or where or when. Furthermore, I do not even know the distortions I myself have made in it. All I know for certain is that this version came to me with a title. It is called “The Rabbi's Gift.”

“The story concerns a monastery that had fallen upon hard times. Once a great order, as a result of waves of anti-monastic persecution in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and the rise of secularism in the nineteenth, all its branch houses were lost and it had become decimated to the extent that there were only five monks left in the decaying mother house: the abbot and four others, all over seventy in age. Clearly it was a dying order.

“In the deep woods surrounding the monastery there was a little hut that a rabbi from a nearby town occasionally used for a hermitage. Through their many years of prayer and contemplation the old monks had become a bit psychic, so they could always sense when the rabbi was in his hermitage. “The rabbi is in the woods, the rabbi is in the woods again,” they would whisper to each other. As he agonized over the imminent death of his order, it occurred to the abbot at one such time to visit the hermitage and ask the rabbi if by some possible chance he could offer any advice that might save the monastery.

“The rabbi welcomed the abbot at his hut. But when the abbot explained the purpose of his visit, the rabbi could only commiserate with him. “I know how it is,” he exclaimed. “The spirit has gone out of the people. It is the same in my town. Almost no one comes to the synagogue anymore.” So the old abbot and the old rabbi wept together. Then they read parts of the Torah and quietly spoke of deep things. The time came when the abbot had to leave. They embraced each other. “It has been a wonderful thing that we should meet after all these years,” the abbot said, “but I have still failed in my purpose for coming here. Is there nothing you can tell me, no piece of advice you can give me that would help me save my dying order?”

“No, I am sorry,” the rabbi responded. “I have no advice to give. The only thing I can tell you is that the Messiah is one of you.”

“When the abbot returned to the monastery his fellow monks gathered around him to ask, “Well, what did the rabbi say?”

“He couldn't help,” the abbot answered. “We just wept and read the Torah together. The only thing he did say, just as I was leaving — it was something cryptic — was that the Messiah is one of us. I don't know what he meant.”



“In the days and weeks and months that followed, the old monks pondered this and wondered whether there was any possible significance to the rabbi's words. The Messiah is one of us? Could he possibly have meant one of us monks here at the monastery? If that's the case, which one? Do you suppose he meant the abbot? Yes, if he meant anyone he probably meant Father Abbot. He has been our leader for more than a generation. On the other hand, he might have meant Brother Thomas. Certainly Brother Thomas is a holy man. Everyone knows that Thomas is a man of light. Certainly he could not have meant Brother Elred! Elred gets crotchety at times. But come to think of it, even though he is a thorn in people's sides, when you look back on it, Elred is virtually always right. Often very right. Maybe the rabbi did mean Brother Elred. But surely not Brother Phillip. Phillip is so passive, a real nobody. But then, almost mysteriously, he has a gift for somehow always being there when you need him. He just magically appears by your side. Maybe Phillip is the Messiah. Of course the rabbi didn't mean me. He couldn't possibly have meant me. I'm just an ordinary person. Yet supposing he did? Suppose I am the Messiah? O God, not me. I couldn't be that much for You, could I?

“As they contemplated in this manner, the old monks began to treat each other with extraordinary respect on the off chance that one among them might be the Messiah. And on the off, off chance that each monk himself might be the Messiah, they began to treat themselves with extraordinary respect.

“Because the forest in which it was situated was beautiful, it so happened that people still occasionally came to visit the monastery to picnic on its tiny lawn, to wander along some of its paths, even now and then to go into the dilapidated chapel to meditate. As they did so, without even being conscious of it, they sensed this aura of extraordinary respect that now began to surround the five old monks and seemed to radiate out from them and permeate the atmosphere of the place. There was something strangely attractive, even compelling, about it. Hardly knowing why, they began to come back to the monastery more frequently to picnic, to play, to pray. They began to bring their friends to show them this special place. And their friends brought their friends.

“Then it happened that some of the younger men who came to visit the monastery started to talk more and more with the old monks. After a while one asked if he could join them. Then another. And another. So within a few years the monastery had once again become a thriving order and, thanks to the rabbi's gift, a vibrant center of light and spirituality in the realm.”

I unconditionally accept where you are, but respect you enough to help you strive for your ideal.



Current State

The following two meditations are taken from [Ira Progoff's At A Journal Workshop](#) (The Now Period and Steppingstones). Before we look at what the future might hold, we need to examine where we are and how we got there.



Now Period

We begin by becoming quiet. Let us sit in silence for a moment and once again feel the movement of our lives. We are quietly bringing ourselves into harmony with the continuity of our life experiences.

We do not at this point “think” of our life, but we “feel” it. We feel its movement in a general and flexible way. We specifically do not think about it, for if we did, we would only have the same thoughts on the subject that we have always had. We know from our experience that the self-analytic, self-judgmental thinking process tends to move in circular grooves, turning in upon itself and repeating itself.

We wish instead to open the way for something new to enter our experience. We therefore do not do what we have been accustomed to doing. We do not think about our lives, but we sit in silence and we feel the inner movement of our recent experience without judgement. We do not direct our thinking, but we let awarenesses present themselves to us regarding this present period of our lives.

We sit in stillness paying no attention to any special thoughts, not thinking, but feeling the movement of our life. We sit in this quietness for some moments. We find that there comes to us a generalized awareness of what this recent period in our lives had been. An inward sensing of the tone of our life in this recent period. Now we let the quality of our experiences during this time of our life express themselves to us. Perhaps they will take the form of an image, a metaphor, a simile, or some spontaneous adjective that describes in a word. If so, we will take notice of this inward awareness in whatever form it appears to us.

We are in silence, our eyes closed, feeling this recent period in the movement of our lives. While our eyes are closed, as we sit with no thoughts, in the quietness, images may take shape in our minds. We see them inwardly, and they carry a feeling of the movement of our lives. They reflect the quality of this recent period in our experience.

Sitting this way, many different images and feelings can come to you, reflecting the quality of movement in your life. Whatever form it takes, let yourself perceive it. Do not reject or censor it. Neither should you affirm it; certainly you should not interpret it. Simply observe it and take note of the fact that this is what came to you when you closed your eyes and let yourself feel from within yourself the inner continuity and movement of your life. Then record it briefly in the Now Period in your notes.

- When did this period start?
- Was there a particular event with which it began?
- Is there a particular event that stands out?
- What memories come to us?
- Do you recall any dreams from this period?
- Do you recall any strange or uncanny events?
- Were these times of great good luck or good fortune?

Steppingstones

To enter the atmosphere in which we can best work with our steppingstones, we close our eyes and sit in silence. In this stillness, we let our breathing become slower, softer more relaxed. As we are quieted we let ourselves feel the movement of our lives. We do not think about any specific aspect of our life, but we let ourselves feel the movement of our life as a whole. In our silence we let the changing circumstances and situations of our life pass before the mind's eye. Now we may recognize the varied events in their movement, not judging them, not even commenting on them, but merely observing them as they pass before us. We perceive them and feel them in their generalized movement without actually seeing the details of them.



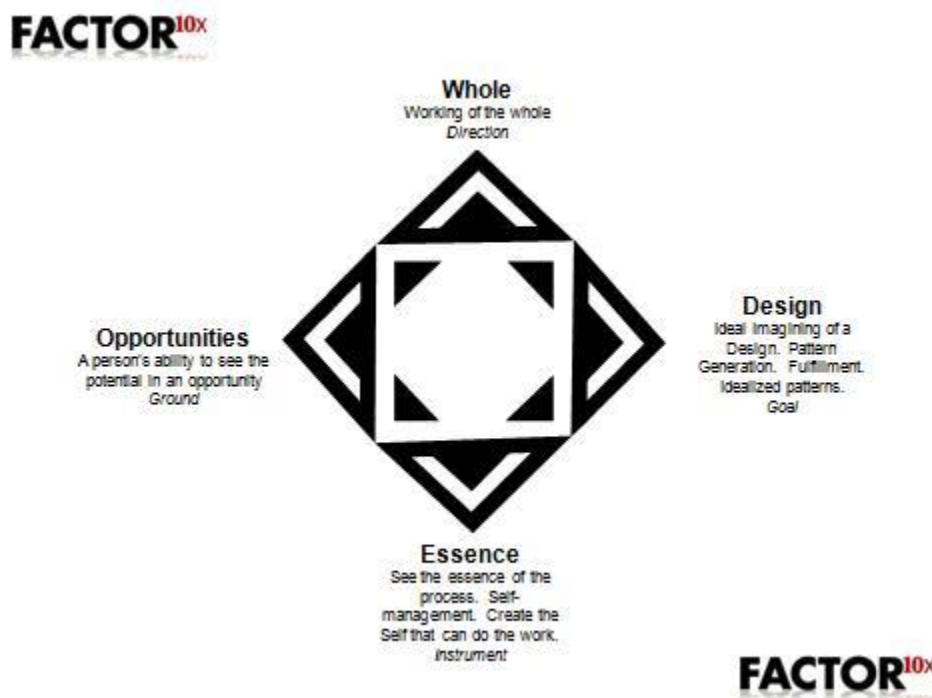
As you do this, it may be that the events of your life will present themselves to you as a flowing and continuous movement, as a river moving through many changes and phases. Or it may be that your life will present itself to you as a kaleidoscope of disconnected events. Whatever the form in which the

continuity of your life reflects itself to you now, respond to it, observe it, and let the flow continue. If images present themselves to you on the twilight level, images in any form whether visual or not, take note of them. As soon as you can, record them as part of your Steppingstones entry.

After making recordings of your Now Period and Steppingstones, take a few minutes to sketch images that occur from both periods. Then create a single sketch of the Now Period and a single sketch that integrates the Steppingstones.

Opportunity Framework – Charlie Krone

This four step tetrad is a way to design a path forward from the collection of opportunities that you see at the moment. Most often when you are contemplating a new career, it is usually a choice between several options. This framework is designed to find what is common between the opportunities.



The process is relatively simple.

1. List the **opportunities** that you are currently looking at.
2. Write down the essence of your core mental process. What are you best at?
3. Using your essence process look at the **opportunities** to see the **WHOLE** that they are a part of.
4. Using the essence process **DESIGN** an action pattern for the containing **WHOLE**.

Ideal – Walk in the Woods to Your Mentor

This section is taken from [Robert Fritz](#)'s [Path of Least Resistance](#) exercises.

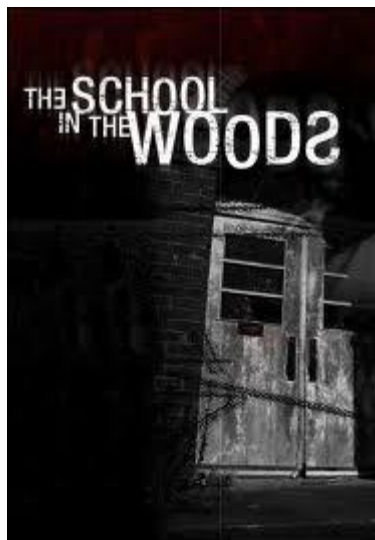


Write two questions to work with that are important to pursuing the intentions you would like to create. These questions should be questions that you want to know the answers to. They should have more than a yes or no answer. Questions involving advice are especially good to experiment with. Take time to formulate and write those questions in your notebook now.

Now that you have written your questions we will experiment with an intuition technique. Sit comfortably. Close your eyes. Take a deep cleansing breath and relax. Take another deep breath and as you exhale relax even more.

Imagine yourself in the woods. Picture the different sense details of the woods. Use your imagination and notice how it looks; how it sounds; how it smells; and especially how it feels to be in those woods. Imagine yourself on a path and imagine walking along that path and find that it is easy to walk along.

As you walk along the path, imagine a clearing in front of you. Continue to walk to the clearing and as you come into the clearing notice the schoolhouse. Look at the schoolhouse and begin to walk toward it. Go up the stairs and through the door into the room. As you enter the schoolhouse, imagine your teacher in the front of the room waiting for you. Begin to walk toward your teacher. Look at your teacher and become open to your teacher. Imagine that your teacher is a symbol of your own intuition.



Ask your first question and write whatever thoughts occur to you.



Imagine the rapport between you and your teacher growing stronger. And now ask your second question. Write an answer as it occurs to you.

Now that you have written both answers, imagine you and your teacher in rapport with each other. Take a deep breath, relax your focus and when you are ready open your eyes.

The next step is to apply critical judgement to the answers you wrote. Review each answer using this question “is the answer you thought of a good answer in your opinion. It is important to judge your intuition from a rational point of view. This way you can easily balance your intuition with your reason.

After you complete your reflections, sketch one or more pictures of what the advice from your mentor means to you.

Integrate

Taking your notes and the images that you saw, sketch an image that integrates the three meditations – the Now Period, the Steppingstones, and the Walk in the Woods.

Similarities in the pictures from Now, Steppingstones, and Your Mentor

Using your notes and the images that you developed, make a list of what you find similar between the Now Period, the Steppingstones and the Walk in the Woods.

Differences in the pictures from Now, Steppingstones, and Your Mentor

Using your notes and the images that you developed, make a list of what you find different between the Now Period, the Steppingstones, and the Walk in the Woods.

Four Human Centers



There are many ways to deconstruct the cognitive aspects of a human being or a human doing. [Robert Pirsig](#) in [Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance](#) gives many examples of how objects can be analyzed

and synthesized. The following task uses a human centers approach of dividing our activities in the world into four centers: action, emotional, intellectual and spiritual. During the course of a given day, we rarely help ourselves by focusing on which center is needed at a given moment and calling up an image that represents our ideal for that center. Just this simple two step process can help us be more effective. The task after the introduction will be to recall a time when you were most effective in each of your four centers. We will then draw a picture that best represents that state of excellence for each of the four centers.

The following material is taken from the seminar *Women in Process* put on by the Synthesis Group of Wilmington, Delaware:

“Within each woman or man four independent centers exist: intellectual, emotional, action, spiritual. As she develops, her challenge is to learn to integrate them in a balanced and harmonious way.



“Each center exists with its own function, its own memory, its own state of being and its own will. These can be referred to as different I’s. Often the different I’s of her centers conflict with one another. One of her greatest struggles results from the fact that she has many different I’s which do not even know one another and which can have different attitudes, convictions, views, likes and dislikes. She can think one thing, feel another, and sense another. One desire leads her one way, one leads another way and she is in conflict. She is divided and not aware. This is her usual state.

“Why is it that the different I’s of different centers tend not to know one another? It is because she is unaware of herself most of the time; that is, she is not operating with conscious attention; she is simply responding mechanically in her centers. The hazard or result of this is that she says and does things without realizing what she is saying or doing.

“When a person operates mechanically, she cannot adapt to any change or use her knowledge in a directed way. She simply responds mechanically. The resulting disequilibrium – if she chooses to pay attention to it – is the signal or catalyst for her development, for it alerts her to the need to “wake up” or become conscious of the information her other centers are trying to provide her. When she calls forth all the centers, she experiences a much more complete picture and is able to see the “whole.”

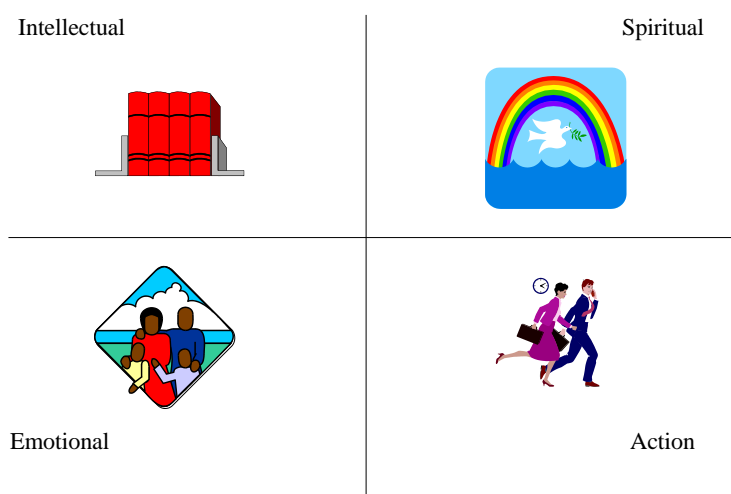
“Our desire as human beings is to come to oneness – to become one integrated “I”, living out our essential Self. This is often referred to as being centered. In order to do anything completely, to know anything rightly, and to arrive where she wants to go, she must become one. She can come to a state in which she has “Will” or one essential “I”. She can manage the centers in a way that allows them to know each other, so that they may work in concert with one another rather than operating in disharmony.

“To become a balanced individual – one in whom all centers are working appropriately – a person must begin to notice which of her centers predominates and interferes with the proper development of the other centers. Because this tends to be a mechanical occurrence, one needs to begin by self-observing, that is, by noticing one’s mechanical reactions to all the little events that happen and one’s reaction to other people. By observing what one thinks, feels and does, one can then begin to see how one responds mechanically to events and people in spite of changing circumstances. The idea is to observe oneself –to be more aware of oneself. One can begin by observing things as they are and classifying them into intellectual, emotional, acting or spiritual functions. As one practices self-observing the centers, she will begin to experience what the essence of each center is for her. Noticing mechanical reactions and observing established patterns allows one to see possibilities for change and for creating the balance necessary for one’s ongoing development.

“As one becomes more conscious of how her centers operate, she can become more skillful in managing them. In fact, within each person lies the power to reconcile her potential with what she does. This reconciliation is a process for bringing her inner values into the world in a way which allows her to be Mistress of each center. This authority over the centers comes from recognizing and managing the essential nature of each center. As Mistress, she can then choose to nourish and support those aspects of herself which enable her to coalesce with her environment so as to allow development for herself and those with whom she engages.”

To start the awareness process, recall a time when you were most effective in each of the four centers. This most likely will be a different time for each center. Draw a picture that best represents that state of excellence for each of the four centers. Spiritual should not necessarily be thought of in the religious sense. It refers to when you felt most connected to a larger whole. The images should be put on a grid that has Intellectual in the upper left, spiritual in the upper right, emotional in the lower left, and action in the lower right. The following diagram provides an example of the pictures drawn on the four centers grid:

Four Human Centers



Values Clarification

As an individual we want to stand for something. This task is to clarify the most important values for your success. This task is taken from the book [Managing by Values](#) by [Ken Blanchard](#) and Michael O'Connor.

Our Values

The most important thing in life is to decide what is most important.

“What should I stand for? What should be the values by which I operate? Look over the list of values below. Circle any values that “jump out” because of their importance to you. Then write your top *three* values, in order of importance, below the list. Feel free to add values if needed.”

Truth	Persistence	Resources
Efficiency	Sincerity	Dependability
Initiative	Fun	Trust
Environmentalism	Relationships	Excellence
Power	Wisdom	Teamwork
Control	Flexibility	Service
Courage	Perspective	Profitability
Competition	Commitment	Freedom
Excitement	Recognition	Friendship
Creativity	Learning	Influence
Happiness	Honesty	Justice
Honor	Originality	Quality
Innovation	Candor	Hard work
Obedience	Prosperity	Responsiveness
Financial growth	Respect	Fulfillment
Community support	Fairness	Purposefulness
Integrity	Order	Strength
Peace	Spirituality	Self-control
Loyalty	Adventure	Cleverness
Clarity	Cooperation	Success
Security	Humor	Stewardship
Love	Collaboration	support

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Behaviorizing the Values

The next task after selecting the three top values to focus on is behaviorizing the values. Brainstorm ways in which you already bring these values into action or ways in which you would desire to bring these values into action. Sketch an image for each of the three values as well as an integrated image that illustrates how you would bring the values into action.

Mission Statement Development

The task of this section is to develop a personal mission statement. An example personal mission statement with values is:

“My mission is to teach myself and others how to bring out the best in ourselves so that we can better accomplish our goals and gain more satisfaction. My three prioritized values for fulfilling this purpose in life are integrity, love and success.”

Develop a mission statement that provides the context and linkage to your values.

Questions that are useful for testing the mission statement are:

- Do I see this mission and these values as guidelines I can identify with to sustain pride in my work and actions?
- Do the mission and values provide a basis for daily communications and decision making with all those I come in contact with?
- Do the mission and values provide a new set of rules of the road for allocating my resources and solving task and people problems?
- How would this mission and values affect the continuation of relationships I value?
- Do such principles really make a significant difference in deciding whom I create and continue relationships with?

Brainstorm Ideal Future State

Now that we've gotten to the core of what we are and how we've gotten here it is time to turn to what it is that we would like to create for ourselves. Often we begin to contemplate changes in career because of tension or dissatisfaction with what we are doing, or because we get a sense that it is time to move on, maybe because we feel we are getting stale. Brainstorming the future should not be about working against the past, but on creating the future we would like to move into.

The core questions for this section are:

- What would I like to create for myself?
- How will I know that I've created it?

To help the brainstorming process along reflect on the following:

- Recall times when you have had the most energy around work. Who were the people you were involved with? What was the physical environment like? What was the nature of the work?
- List items that you consider to be outrageous and that the rational part of you would not ordinarily contemplate as a "career" or work choice.
- List options you've been accumulating of choices you were asked to consider or that you think might be interesting.

Using the above as guides come up with a list that has at least 20 options or attributes for your ideal future.

Draw an integrating image of your ideal state.

VisualsSpeak Future State

Using the online [VisualsSpeak ImageCenter](#) select a set of images in answer to the question "What is my desired intention?" After selecting and arranging the images, write the words that capture the essence of the imagery. Share this story with a colleague or partner. An example of this process is:

Prompt: What do I want in the future?



Participant Comments:

At the core is the team that has multiple hands, yet is only as strong as the weakest link. For the journey up the mountain to celebrate with fireworks, we need sustenance. It is a journey not a destination, that spirals to the tree of life which is a door to the legacy I seek - the transformation of the linear paper book from the tree of life to the layered content in context "digital" future contributed by many hands.

Finding that Special Place That Speaks to You

With your digital camera, go to a place in the world (close by) that speaks deeply to you. This place might be a favorite place in the woods, a Church, a library, or a room in your house. With your camera take at least ten pictures of different aspects of your special place from different locations and with different scales (wide angle and zoomed in close on some aspect).

Using a tool like [Animoto](#) create a [Lifelet video](#) of those ten plus images.

From these images, select the one image that speaks most directly to you about that place. Capture in words what that place says to you. Capture in words and sketches what you feel about that special place.

Differences

Looking at the words and images from your many meditations and dream reflections like the Now & Steppingstones Pictures, your mission and vision, your VisualsSpeak, your special place and your brainstorming of your ideal state, generate a list of at least 20 differences between your current state and your ideal state.

Difference that Makes a Difference

Looking at the list of differences between your current state and desired ideal state, what on the list is the difference that makes a difference? What is the one thing that if you could accomplish that would tend to bring all the other differences forward? Sketch an image that best represents this difference that makes a difference. What would you see, hear, and feel in this new state that would be different than today as a result of the difference that makes a difference?

This difference that makes a difference is your intention for strategic networking?

Now that you have your intention expressed as what you want, select one image from the collection of what you've created that best expresses "what you want." Then write a one paragraph story that captures both what you want (the story behind the story) and how you will know that your strategic networking intention will be met. In other words:

- What do I want to create?
- How will I know that I've created it?



Clearly, you are not alone in your path through this world. As you work through these please feel free to take the time to share your reflections and your synthesis with your significant other or appropriate colleagues.

What is my Sword?

Introduction

One of the core questions I've been pursuing for way too long is [what am I going to do with my life](#). Now that I am 64, the question becomes one of what am I going to do with the next ten years of my life. I keep

thinking that at some point I will grow up and this question will be more obvious. As life moves on it seems like most days I am farther away from an answer to this question than when I first started posing it.

As part of this pursuit, I sent out a request to several treasured colleagues to help me answer the question from their perspective. What follows is the request, their responses, and several generations of reflections.

Memo Sent to Colleagues, Friends and Family

Dear treasured colleague,

I recently re-read Paulo Coelho's *The Pilgrimage* for the third time. The book is about a journey that Paulo took in Spain to the shrine of San Tiago.

[The Pilgrimage: A Contemporary Quest for Ancient Wisdom](#) by Paulo Coelho

From the first reading, I have endeavored to come to the insights of Coelho that life is not about acquiring a sword, but about figuring out what to do with the sword. I've spent a lot of time trying to answer the same question - what am I going to do with my sword?

Yet on this re-reading I had to laugh at myself as I realized I had not ever asked the question, what is my sword? No wonder I couldn't answer the second question.

As someone who I trust and value and who has known me for a long time, I would appreciate some help in your point of view on "what is my metaphorical sword?" What do you think is my best skill? What is my special gift in this world? What is it that I'm really good at?

Thanks ahead of time for your insights.

Peace,
Skip

Selected Memo Responses (sent to 20 colleagues)

From [Mason White](#), a product and market champion

Your sword? I have had most of a flight to pare this down to a bumper sticker.

Your sword is swordmaking.

#####

How Skip makes swords.

Reading, listening, observing and discussing BROADLY and then reflecting to better frame the problems at hand, understand the relevant environment and synthesize a set of plausible potential solutions.

Developing a set of definable concepts and vocabulary to improve communication about the problem, environment and solutions.

Wash, rinse, repeat to sort through the impacts of the candidate solutions. Present the choice space and a recommendation.

#####

How many times do you suppose you have done this as a student, employee, teacher, consultant, executive, mentor and parent?

From my Daughter [Elizabeth Walter Shelly](#), a User Experience Consultant

Hello,

So, if life is about figuring out what to **do** with a sword rather than how to **acquire** one, does that mean that the "attaining" of a sword is unconscious, so you can't figure out how to do that anyway? Like, you are naturally good at some things (and naturally gravitate towards some things) and those abilities are your "sword"? What do you think? (And why did the book only get 4 stars on Amazon if it is so good? ;)

As someone who I trust and value and who has known me for a long time, I would appreciate some help in your point of view on "what is my metaphorical sword?" What do you think is my best skill? What is my special gift in this world? What is it that I'm really good at?

Ok, so I have been thinking about this for a few days and here is what I have come up with...

(It is quite possible that my perspective has been shaped by your note about how "A vine is a machine for transforming [terroir](#) into stories" and by the "[Digital wizard](#)" story and I am a shameless copycat. But perhaps there is something useful in what follows nonetheless.)

You have many talents. From my perspective, the keystone in all of these is that you **identify (and create) stories** and **communicate** them to relevant individuals far earlier in the unfolding "tale" than anyone else is able to. And this lets you shape the story more than most others. I would wager that what allows you to do this is your ability to be open + **curious** to new people and ideas (ie: true enjoyment of "networking" in the deeper sense), and your tendency to be **humble** + interested enough with the people who matter that they want to teach you about new fields (ie: you don't seem to pigeon-hole yourself into one domain). And you "get" how **business** works, so you are able to write some of these stories in the marketplace. You also have **passion** -- you care about the underlying story -- which gets you very excited at times, but also very upset when someone else comes in and starts editing with a giant black marker.

To be totally low-brow: What you do best can be likened to reading a [Clive Cussler](#) book. You know how these books start off with 4 seemingly unrelated chapters occurring many years apart? Some of us need the connections spelled out in the later chapters, while other readers can predict the connections right away. It seems to me that you are in the latter category, in terms of reading real life events. You are able to grasp unrelated interactions and see the story weaving through many disparate events about 10 years (+/- 5 years) earlier than anyone else in related fields is able to. You see the arc of the storyline before most of us have even identified the main players. And you appear to have a good memory for remembering key players in earlier chapters, to bring them back into the story when the time is right.

You have said yourself a number of times that you have had to figure out how to "lead" people to see the story line in your head by "planting seeds" that will eventually sprout to get them to get themselves to a place that they can't be dragged to.

So, perhaps you are a farmer of ideas. (And after refraining from using a witty comment about "hammering swords into plowshares" I think my work here is done. ;)

Eliz.

When you need a break from all this great head and heart exploration, check out **Fl!p** and the gang at [Fl!p Comics](#).