

10 July 2012 – evening notes

I find myself wanting to write again tonight after a full day of decision making at work where I needed to take charge and move on a possible hazardous tree situation. I'm perfectly comfortable in my decision and my knowledge supporting my decision, yet I was somewhat careful to involve my peers as much as I could without stalling the process since I'm only 4 weeks into my new post.

I'm not sure exactly why, but I started thinking about story again on several occasions today. I need to complete the storytelling reflection sooner rather than later for the upcoming summer CCT class and this has been burning in the background. But today I had the thought that the time that has passed between writing this reflection journal or paper and the storytelling workshop in May has helped build new connections to story. I'm finding new connections to storytelling in the way that I'm thinking about my work and life transition. The story I tell myself is... what has been presented to me at this point in my life is a new challenge that will build my capacity for leadership. I have a positive outlook through the story I tell myself when it could be quite possible to focus on the challenges as negatives. We have very limited resources, I have a staff that is somewhat distraught from a poor leadership experience and personnel issues with now retired staff, several injuries keeping staffing levels well below needs, and applications for job advancement refused – even for the position I now hold. The grounds are full of weeds, the work is behind schedule and they don't see a way out. The greenhouse has communication problems with certain staff and many programs are feeling disconnected and frustrated.

In many ways this is ground for many uncertainties. And uncertainties can be daunting and frightening. Yet I am not frightened. I needed a space to allow personal growth in a new environment. Graduate studies are supporting that work and my new place of employment is also supportive of my growth and my ability to bring the greenhouse and grounds team out of their current mental space. I was told I was hired as much for my soft skills as for my experience and technical knowledge. I was thinking about how in my past I developed leadership responsibilities through promotion. This time I'm being thrown into the boiling pot. But if I think carefully, uncertainty is needed for growth.

I heard the bit about being hired for my soft skills... so I need to use them to become a leader who brings her team to their best selves, becoming the leader I wish I had a few years ago. One thing that has stayed with me from one of our monthly dialogue hours is the concept of building community first and doing the inner work that will support the translation. My new supervisor, the Director of Facilities at the Experiment Station noticed that I use intuition to my advantage well. So using myself as a gauge while also listening and developing concern for those I work with will help build trust and community.

10 July 2012

Today I am trying to start up my morning writing again after a several week break where my focus was on painting, new carpets, unpacking and thinking about my new job. I just didn't have the focus to write with so many things going on simultaneously and with Joe here for two weeks fixing up all the cosmetic problems and having to deal with the previous tenants pet problems.

So today I am trying to refocus... to gather thoughts and reflect on what has been going on the past month while settling into a new place. It's a grander transition than I originally anticipated, more responsibility and a different focus at work, and a new community to explore and somehow become a part of.

I see my largest responsibility at work as developing people to do their best, both individually and as a team. Then it's setting goals and finding ways to support attaining them with the limited resources we have both financially and in staffing. Research support through program and staff development while also meeting the day-to-day needs of running a greenhouse is a challenge. And we also have a capital project immediately before us to renovate many of the existing research greenhouses.

I'm not sure how this fits into my life just yet... but I know this is an important transition. I already feel more at ease, less stressed even with more responsibility. So in some ways this transition is my current translation of skills and ways of thinking that I've been learning in the CCT program. I may need to revisit some of the dialogue class to reflect a bit more on some of those tools. I see a connection between getting our group to communicate better and to also help me communicate better with some of the staff that is a bit reserved and careful due to past histories.

I am starting up a 'New Supervisor' class this Thursday at Cornell, suggested and supported for all new supervisors at Cornell. I'm excited to see what they discuss and how this and some of the CCT work might connect. But I'm anticipating that this deeper connection might not happen until the third leadership class in 2014. But we shall see. I'm keeping an open mind at this point with much of my transition, letting thoughts fill my mind and not forcing connections or interpretations. But I now feel a need to make time for reflection. I miss yoga, I miss the gym and I miss photography as ways to support in the moment being. Writing has supported some reflection in its own way, but I need additional time spent in a more immerse experience.

11 July 2012

As I sit down this morning to write, I have 20 minutes before I need to head off to work. I was thinking about Pam DiBona this morning while I was eating breakfast wondering if she struggles with making time for reflection as well. We were supposed to connect last week over the phone. I emailed her, but no response. So now I'm wondering if things are ok. I won't be on the Dialogue Circle tomorrow or the next month because of a conflict with the New Supervisor training I'm attending for Cornell. I couldn't reschedule and I will miss the interactions with my fellow

workshop attendees. Bringing the group back together over the phone I'm amazed at how quickly we are able to get to the heart of what's going on with each of us. Somehow the topics seem to merge into a bigger picture that each of us can relate to in our own lives.

So this morning I'm struggling with how to balance a need for reflective space, meeting expectations for my CCT summer class, time for physical fitness (which I have let go too long because of the move transition), and time for fun... all while working a new job 40+ hours per week. This week my focus is on preparations for the NY State Pesticide Exam next Wednesday; getting this out of the way will be one thing checked off my list so that I can concentrate on CCT work. Next week I'd like to start even if it's just a couple days per week getting back to a gym. Getting up at 5:30am is working for writing something new each day. But I'm not sure the time allows for enough depth to the writing or thinking. I seem to have more reflective writing at night if I'm not pressured by other responsibilities.

My initial intent was to use some of the morning time to write the reflection on the storytelling workshop I participated in leading at the Woods Hole workshop. But I've noticed it's hard for me to get right into this without doing this kind of writing first... somehow becoming present with what is on the top of my mind in the morning. But I seem to ramble on and on about another topic other than the storytelling focus.

I suppose all of this is related to translation... making what we have learned as tools work in our real lives. Is this part of the inner work we need to do that supports the work in our communities, certainly. How much does culture influence self-inflicted expectations/limitations on work/life balance and the ability to translate our ideals to our every day lives?

14-15 July 2012

Lots of things to think about... lots of things have been stirring. I attended my first session for new supervisors offered to all Cornell employees new to supervisory positions at Cornell or new to supervision within Cornell. Myer's Briggs results...

Peters paper

Driving across the farmland after running an errand in the next town. I want to get lost... what am I doing here? Sometimes I know, sometimes I feel lost in the journey. I don't feel connected to the land in the same way.

prepar[ing] students or supervisees to be life-long learners and actively inquire into new topics

18 July 2012

Thank goodness my NY Certified Applicator exam is over! But I was automatically demoted to Technician just by taking the exam instead of transferring my PA license... Nobody foresaw this, we all thought I would just take the exam and be fully certified. No, now I have to wait one year of applications and 12 credits of classes... NY State really does live up to its reputation when it comes to bureaucracy. Oh well, there wasn't enough time for the transfer to happen before the move, so this is the current situation.

But this little obstacle aside... I feel like just having this day pass has lifted a large burden. I can now focus on CCT work when I am home and not be so hindered by juggling work, new supervisor training, CCT and this license! What felt like too much to handle now feels like I can, even if it does mean many evenings and some weekend work. So I'm glad I put this self inflicted deadline on myself to get this test out of the way as quickly as I could upon my new post at Cornell. I'm not looking forward to spraying pesticides again, but this seems to be a necessary evil at the research greenhouses since many faculty are not tolerant of the time it takes to use beneficials to their full capacity. We only have one who is using only beneficials for pest control since she is actually studying insects. Perhaps this can be a model for others?

I'm also thinking about how my drive to Ithaca this morning will be a good time for reflection. The problem is that dictation doesn't work on my iPhone for a long enough time to record thoughts for later. So I've had to let go of this time as productive time and allowed it to become truly open mind time. This isn't troublesome in my normal way of thinking, I just wish for the purposes of this class that I could record some of my thoughts for reflection later.

This morning thoughts of how I'm going to approach one of the HortScience faculty about footwear crossed my mind again. He has historically refused to wear closed-toe shoes in the facilities any many are wondering how I might handle this situation. It's a safety issue that is policy accepted back in 2007. But he is a big personality, in a dominant kind of way, with little in the way of people skills. He is also a role model for his own research staff and I had one encounter with one of his field researchers visiting the greenhouse that came very unexpected... I was talking with another greenhouse worker about her footwear and she soon changed them since her boots were in the greenhouse, but he was standing next to her and I said, "I sure hope you too have a change of shoes?" in a lighthearted tone. He pushed me with his personal space out the door, closed it behind him and said in a very harsh tone, "what are you going to do, throw me out?" Was I ever caught off guard. He then deflected the attention on his footwear to ladders in the hallway (he was visibly searching for something), which I quickly acknowledged as a deflection and brought the conversation back to the original concern. He finally calmed down as I kept my tone non-confrontational but firm. But I saw him in the greenhouse again with flip-flops on yesterday and he looked charged and ready for a fight.

I really don't need to go into much more detail here on how I plan to discuss these issues with these two people. But the important thing here is that I realize this is a great opportunity to use some of my dialogue skills. Ultimately, they need to follow the policy. But I have an opportunity to gain respect and solve a historical problem in the way it is handled. I could certainly go above them and have our OSHA and Health and Safety Officer help. But I will start with them one on one and use this route only if I'm up against a brick wall.

19 July 2012

Thoughts from lunch notes:

It's time to review my own job description again as a follow up to our exercise of writing and reviewing one today in the New Supervisor Training from Cornell. But this also brings up thoughts of my own team with regards to my recent hire of a full time position and recruiting for a seasonal position yet this summer.

For some background, three of them applied for the GH Manager position in the past 3 years, none of them being offered the post and a couple told not to apply again. David Cain passed away after working for Cornell for about 3 years after fighting cancer and dying of a heart attack. He was very respected and liked as the GH Manager. Juan filled the position for one year after David's passing, during which he had many conflicts with his direct reports (many of the same people I now have on my team). So some have thought they could do a better job, some have thought after 18 years, they were due advancement and others were young and ambitious (Smith who is out on disability since he was removed from the applicant pool and I was hired). So with my hire, I've learned they were without leadership for a year as the first round of applicants was tossed out. Even with all this the existing team of 3 who are at work is supportive of me and get along well with each other. I suspect that in some cases they just wanted opportunities to grow and opportunities for monetary advancement. But they also wanted leadership. The positions they all hold are all the same grade with no opportunities for pay increases beyond annual raises... something I feel could be adjusted for performance and growth through staging the position responsibilities from entry level to more technical or supervisory. I can also see the many benefits to dividing the greenhouse and grounds responsibilities in the future since they pull from different technical skill sets and often applicants don't bring both experiences. Even the assistant greenhouse manager is in title only with expectations of additional responsibilities and a couple of one-time bonuses during the time of being without a GH Manager.

So how does all this affect my team? How can I keep this awareness as something present but not negative... i.e. Katie probably doesn't really want leadership since she has done nothing to develop missing skills, but she wants opportunities for growth both professionally and monetarily.

What brought me to thinking about unruly complexity and the things that can be brought forth, new and unforeseen through the process, a complex and varied life, a

career that continues to grow, an outlook or way of seeing the world? How and when are our worldviews formed and what changes them? Not all experiences lead to a change or confirm existing views. Others can open unforeseen possibilities. It's those unforeseen possibilities that are interesting and somewhat unpredictable in how and when they happen.

But I currently feel that like art, photography and other creative acts you must be open to wonder. Children are naturally curious but also naturally open to wonder. Anything new strikes them as amazing as the last new discovery or observation. What shuts this down in some and not others as we live our lives? Meditation can help some become more aware of the present moment. But wonder of the connections to those things not in the present moment can be a source of wonder. Today I am sitting outdoors, at lunch, enjoying a beautiful breeze. Many people are sitting inside an air-conditioned lunch spot away from any realization of how beautiful the day is. Yet at the same time I am intimately aware of how off color the trees are. We are suffering a severe drought according to the DMI (Drought Monitoring Index from NOAA) and much life is under stress. We don't often think about the larger context of life systems or ecologies. Bees are looking for water. Birds are eating fruits just for the water leaving most of the damaged fruit hanging off vines. Why is there so much current resistance to using the Dust Bowl name to discuss what is happening in the Midwest this summer. If we avoid the term are we doing any help to the problem or any other socio-economic problem closely related? It doesn't go away! But choices of words do change our perception or other people's perception of reality. And perception of reality can shape policy and response.

I am feeling more and more thrown into the complexities of managing people, programs, existing problems and both capital improvements and programmatic improvements. Yet somehow my intuition is telling me to think about my strengths, my team's strengths and the obstacles or struggles I perceive we/I have in moving us towards our departmental and team goals.

But the breeze keeps bringing me back to the moment. It feels like a seashore breeze, filtered through moisture and sunlight with a slight chill but perfectly comfortable for a mid-day nap.

Back to New Supervisor Training...  
20 July 2012

Notes to jog my memory from today that might tie in somehow to reflection

Ombudsman - Didn't even know the term but they have had experience with dialogue process

Wish we had this at Swarthmore

Glad we have this at Cornell

One of the Ombudsmen is a graduate of UMass The Department of Conflict Resolution, Human Security, and Global Governance

22 July 2012

Last night was a little rough in that I was sitting down to write and all the while had a terrible headache. Instead of forcing my way through, I took a chance that getting out of the house might help spark some thinking and distract me from the headache. I went downtown Geneva and sat on a picnic table overlooking Seneca Lake from the State Park. The lake itself is not amazing in and of itself except if you think about how it was formed during the glaciations. But today, there is a beautiful breeze blowing through the willow leaves that seem to dance with the light on the table. I can also hear the soft crash of waves along the shore. Many people are out walking tonight or bringing their boats ashore from a day out on the lake. I am missing Joe's company since he is not yet permanently in Geneva with me.

I need to find some hiking trails and get out of the house more often. I've been busy making the "nest" feel comfortable and there are only a few minor things left (rug in the foyer and another dresser would be nice). But as I mentioned in a previous daily writing, I also need to make time for other parts of me... physical fitness, creativity, connecting to this new place as more than just a work place. A theme of balance is emerging when I think about the scope of this summer reflective practice and of making time for reflection.

As I start to think about or "formulate and revise" my own thinking about being an educator or supervisor trying to prepare students or supervisees to be life-long learners and to actively inquire into new topics, I am starting to see some trends.

First, a trend of looking at how I learn and what motivates me to be a life-long learner... are there things that would translate to others? Also emerging are themes of balance, open-mindedness, journey, circles/spheres, story, trust and authenticity and living an example of and being supportive of what you would like to encourage in others. Intertwining ideas of being your best self and supporting that development in others, supporting and acknowledging value in that people have contributions to make even though they might not think they do, people will always remember how you make them feel even if they forget what you said...

And then there seem to be some possible conflicts to these ideas that span culture and expected behaviors. I get a sense that many of our cultural values contradict supporting the whole person. At work we are expected to often remain impersonal especially in the role of supervisor since it is easier to "manage" in the traditional practice of supervising people and productivity. What I'm proposing as my way of managing will take more emotional work on my part and finding ways to support that work in others.

Engaging people from an authentic and more personal space might be uncomfortable at first for many people in the workplace. Building trust becomes paramount, and part of trust is consistency and being listened to?

Vulnerability, risk, chance... being a creative, defining ones identity often links to values.

I've always been a teacher? I've always been a creative? Yet somehow in this culture I have found jobs that embrace this or at least temporarily do as projects need development. Are we all teachers?

As I think about Taylor's "We know more than we are, at first, prepared to acknowledge: Journeying to develop critical thinking" there are several thoughts that ring with me that need further exploration on how they might relate to my thinking or how they might diverge from it. Here are some listed for future reflection:

... "teacher should not be at the center of their learning. " This is interesting to consider as it relates to supervisory role at work.

... "decenter my pedagogy and provide space and support for students to develop as critical thinkers." How would I think about this for employees or coworkers?

... "becoming aware of the forces that hold us or release us." Worthwhile spending some time on for future writing/thinking.

... "to remind me of what I believe I should practice in order to assist you with your growth." A very nice summation of purpose -think about how this might apply to my own paper for this class.

... "being listened to seems to help students access their intelligence... to bring to the surface, reevaluate and articulate things they already know in some sense." Listening seems to be another theme that continually comes up for me in my belief of building trust, building relationships.

... "I see that writing the statement of my teaching philosophy from with these excerpts have been drawn precipitated a phase of self-conscious pedagogical exploration and identity formation." - guess I'm still doing this, and don't we often do this more than once in our lives anyway? Maybe all those "identities" have connection not seen without the benefit of time to reflect back on them.

Negotiating power/standards, horizontal community, acknowledge affect, be here now and develop autonomy themes. - what would my "mandala" look like?

Currently some of the tensions that I can relate to include:

Be here and now... clearing away distractions

Building horizontal community - at work and my new home



Negotiating power/standards – with my employees at work

Opening up heuristics – would be nice to be able to think about some of my own experiences that I could use as examples related to horticulture or teaching or?

Canadian Institute of Cultural Affairs – look into more. Made a note about Myers Briggs assessment for some reason I cannot recall at the moment in the margins of this paragraph.

...”The tension between facilitating and being more directive” – something I struggle with daily at the moment in the workplace with my team.

So while this is messy and very open ended, this is part of the process, “destabilization and uncertainty, gaining the confidence to face and explore ambiguity.” Related to how my own thinking about being an educator or supervisor, trying to prepare students or supervisees to be life-long learners and to actively inquire into new topics, I have much to think about. But I also need to spend some time drawing out “forces that hold us or release us” and exploring “established facts, theories and practices in tension with alternatives.”

Next to do:

Try using Sense Making Response tool with this article

Search for alternative theories

Reflection of possible forces that hold or release us

Think about what my own “mandala” might look like

Finish up Storytelling essay

27 July 2012

Today I am in the depths of bringing back or finding connection in all the diverse thinking and strands I’ve been going over the past few weeks since the workshop. Yes, I got absorbed in the reality of adjusting to a new workplace and home and lost focus for this class for a while... Often reflected in my daily writing. But as I think about that happening, I observe that this isn’t too far from what can happen to just about anybody at any time trying to practice reflective thinking in application. We all have obstacles that can easily get in the way of keeping a commitment and practice to reflective practice.

I read through the Dialogue Session notes from 14 July

2012([http://sicw.wikispaces.com/-](http://sicw.wikispaces.com/-/DialogueHours/Monthly/home?responseToken=0a98d7193b3fe65cc5b294d6d63803288)

[/DialogueHours/Monthly/home?responseToken=0a98d7193b3fe65cc5b294d6d63803288](http://sicw.wikispaces.com/-/DialogueHours/Monthly/home?responseToken=0a98d7193b3fe65cc5b294d6d63803288)) and could not help but be amazed at how the group somehow connected

directly with what has been on the top of my thoughts even though I missed engaging in the dialogue this session! It was not possible for me to participate since

I was actively engaged in a mandatory class for new supervisors at Cornell on

Thursday. But nonetheless, the comments shared resonated with me. “Moving

away from focused work so that we can move back into it with new energy” is a powerful summation of the struggles we all face day to day and cyclically throughout our lives. Making time for reflection, making time for re-energizing, and the idea of finding and keeping opportunities going that involve a group to support us... But this also resonates with the struggles we all have with self-care and not feeling guilty about making time for something that can ultimately benefit more than just self.

Tonight I will be developing a chart to assist with the integration of the workshop experiences to plans for practice as suggested by Peter and his experience with the summer 2012 CrCrTh618 class. I will create a template to keep for future practice and then use this to reflect on the Open Spaces Workshop from May this year.

But sometimes I wonder if all these tools are enough, even if applied well, to bring people to a place of openness. It's kind of which needs nurturing in different individuals... does one thing need to be present in the 4Rs first for the others to follow. Or can you cultivate them all together? They certainly can build upon each other, but I think there might be some truth to the need of safety for risk first before any openness or real risk can be experienced.

28 July 2012

Many circles today... it seems the storytelling workshop I first experienced at the Center for Digital Storytelling at Swarthmore College back in 2009 has continued to influence my thinking well past this initial experience. I took a second class in 2010, then produced another digital story this past spring for a creativity class and discussed the possibilities of digital storytelling as a tool for re-engagement in social and economic change initiative for another. Then I participated in a storytelling mini-workshop at the “Open Spaces for Scientific and Social Change II: Support for Translation” workshop in Woods Hole this May. Today I am starting a brief to discuss tools that “would help teachers or supervisors to prepare people to be life-long learners and actively inquire into new topics.”

But the circle is still growing. Today I looked deeper into Michael White's work on Narrative Therapy. I was very surprised to find links to story, particularly in re-authoring and re-remembering and what he coins ceremony and outsider-witness responses. These paraphrase many of the same principles of the storytelling workshops I attended through working drafts of a story and sharing the story publically. They also help me relate back to Atsushi and Jeremy's interest in the re-telling of stories and having others complete a story for you. I didn't fully understand why they were so interested in what this kind of activity might contribute. But I get a better sense now. It's not important how the story goes, it's important to find ways to encourage an author to re-author and re-member so that they are finding new connections and possible meanings along with identities and empowerment.

I am sorry now that I did not keep a reference of the story I shared in our small story circle to reference back the personal experience of this re-authoring and re-membering. But I recall that my story changed considerably the second time around with a completely new focus and attention. What happened for me was that I found new connections and meanings after the first telling that resonated with my identity and outlook on the story that influenced the re-telling. If I had not experienced this I'm not sure I would be making such a connection today with the empowerment that story can have related to this re-authoring and re-membering. I certainly have experienced the empowerment of sharing. But the re-authoring I did previously was done as editing... not in a public space. So somehow I missed the importance of this part of the process.

The circles keep growing and overlapping as I continue to move through the CCT program. The Dialogue Process class and Creativity Class are continuing to intersect with this storytelling thread. But the link with social change is growing stronger as I explore this as a tool for empowerment. Digging deeper, I found Raising our heads above the clouds: The use of narrative practices to motivate social action and economic development by Caleb Wakhungu and David Denborough. I've ordered the book and hope to explore how this influences additional thinking.

31 July 2012

So now I'm starting to think about how story might translate as a tool for my own perceptions. I'm thinking about how I can deceive myself or support myself through my own stories and how I interpret other stories! Maybe the real power of stories lay in the power they have to engage us as activists in our own learning. But they also challenge us to create those open places so we can make new connections and learning. So there's a circle or a U similar to Scharmer's description in Theory U; there is a destructive side that holds us from moving towards openness.

Hum... I need to think about this. Maybe a lot of what I am learning in the CCT program can be linked through circles or spheres as I outlined in my paper, "A continued practice..." from the Dialogue class.

Now I need to focus on getting the Personal and Professional Development Workbook better organized for submission. I find many of these daily writings as a source of information that would bring things back after a break and help me re-engage in those thoughts. Perhaps even more than just a link to a website or a printed copy of a paper. But those are important too. But these notes or daily writings are even more important when I have something new emerge. One thing that I'm missing is a printed version of comments on my work. And I think this would be helpful for a couple reasons. Gmail doesn't allow me to organize things except by folders and tabs. Keywording would be better since it would bring together many things from the same theme quickly. I have kept a notebook for each class I've taken so far in the CCT program and can quickly reference back to these. They have many comments in the sidebar of articles and copies of all my work. So in

a sense these were my first attempt at a PDW even though I didn't know that's what I was doing. However, the daily writing – or 4-5 days per week I'm able to fit this in and have it be beneficial instead of just writing anything – is a newer practice that I've only kept up with since the summer Open Spaces workshop.

I suppose this will link somehow into the Process Review for this class too!

Rhoda Maurer

CrCrTh688 Summer 2012

This outline of responses is the required account to Peter's notes from the 2012 Workshop "Open Spaces for Scientific and Social Change II: Support for Translation" intended to stimulate my own thinking or intersections with my own work.

A common theme seems to emerge for me from some of the paragraphs presented.<sup>1</sup> Many of the concepts link back to my experience last semester as a new CCT student in the Critical and Creative Thinking Masters Program with the University of Massachusetts or with other experiences as a teacher or life-long learner myself. While some of the paragraphs relate to a stance of inner work, others relate to outer work or work that I might engage with in a community, whether professional or personal.

The most immediately profound statement that resonated true for me is item #5 "[S]elf-care is never a selfish act – it is simply good stewardship of the only gift I have...anytime we can listen to true self and give it the care it requires, we do so not only for ourselves but for the many others whose lives we touch." And while I believe this statement, I cannot help but acknowledge the conflict that is also present for me in self-care... guilt. I find this conflict often centers on cultural norms for women and acceptable female roles in society. I struggle with the balance of what it is to nurture others and nurture self. Women are often expected to sacrifice themselves or their personal goals and desires for others. And to add complexity to this basic struggle, I don't often find many of the culturally accepted norms of female self-care nurturing, like going to the spa or having a girl's night out, satisfying or effective self-care. I'd rather spend time in reflection, often alone but not always, in the out of doors far away from "normal" life. I seek out more intellectual self-care that are often much more time intensive, exacerbating my guilt of taking time away from nurturing others. This conflicts with examples of how much more I can and have given to others when I am at my best and true to myself, translating in touching others in meaningful ways. When I am able to follow through with self-care, I am better able to be present for others, and more open to truths and possibilities.

Following the line of inner work, item #1 resonates with my experience of the power of story. I've created three digital stories to date and created one as a class project last semester for CrCrTh602 Creative Thinking titled "one photographer's journey of self-discovery"<sup>ii</sup>. From item #1 "It is one thing to know that the totalizing and invariably pathologizing accounts of people's lives are social constructions that sponsor highly negative conclusions about their identities. But it is another thing to identify initiatives that might provide a point of entry to the sort of rich story development that brings with it more positive identity conclusions and new options for action in the world (White 2011, p.29). The experience of putting together a digital story, and most importantly the experience of sharing the creative process and development of a personal story among peers<sup>iii</sup> brought me to thinking about how story can be empowering or disabling... and the essence of a story can change depending upon a person's mindset and the quality of reflection they have spent thinking about the experience. Sharing stories can help both the audience and the storyteller to find patterns and make new connections leading to empathy and empowerment, keeping us from hopelessness and transforming our insights into possible engagement. So story itself might be an entry into a place of exchange, common to people of different cultures that can be used to build connections around topics that may at first not have an obvious connection.<sup>iv</sup>

So as I think about how to engage people whether students or supervisees to be life-long learners and to actively inquire into new topics, questions rise around cultivating a mindset for inquiry and wonder. The digital storytelling workshop may be one tool for engagement. But one tool will not fit every need or situation. At the heart of engaging people is cultivating participation, cultivating a mindset for openness and cultivating safe places for exploration and support. For if people are not open to the possibility of wonder, why would it find them?

## **Appendix 1**

### **Sample Stories:**

Brain vs. Nature by Michelle McCauley "Why is it so difficult to live in accordance with one's values when it comes to pro-environmental behavior?" Middlebury Magazine online, Spring 2010.

<http://blogs.middlebury.edu/middmag/2010/04/27/brain-vs-nature/>

Personal Stories of Climate Change in Alaska

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T4qPa2xIU4o>

Beautiful Struggle by Nehanda Imara

<http://vimeo.com/20346139>

Ditching Dirty Diesel

[http://www.ditchingdirtydiesel.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=95&Itemid=171](http://www.ditchingdirtydiesel.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=95&Itemid=171)

Planetize the Movement. <http://vimeo.com/6650863>

Global Warming May Bring More Lyme Disease, Ticks

[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/04/04/global-warming-lyme-disease-west-nile\\_n\\_1400692.html?ref=climate-change](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/04/04/global-warming-lyme-disease-west-nile_n_1400692.html?ref=climate-change)

### **Climate Change Organizations:**

One International: The Faces of Climate Change

<http://www.one.org/c/international/issue/3831/>

Communicating climate change: history, challenges, process and future directions

Susanne C. Moser

[http://www.climateaccess.org/sites/default/files/Moser\\_Communicating%20Climate%20Change.pdf](http://www.climateaccess.org/sites/default/files/Moser_Communicating%20Climate%20Change.pdf)

Stories of Change – Social Entrepreneurship

<http://www.ashoka.org/approach>

<http://www.ashoka.org/stories>

Climate Refugees

<http://www.climaterefugees.com/>

By Charles Rhodes, Xylene Power Ltd.

<http://www.xylenepower.com/Personal%20Impact.htm>

Climate Change Gets Personal

<http://sei-ciel.org/profiles/msimango.htm>

Making Climate Change Personal

<http://crazysexylife.com/2011/making-climate-change-personal/>

How has Climate Change Affected You?

[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/talking\\_point/6506561.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/talking_point/6506561.stm)

Climate Change Affects Me!

<http://www.waggsworld.org/en/cop17/blogs/videos/Beatrice>

### **Assessment Resources:**

Digital Storytelling Rubric for Graduate Studies at University of Houston  
<http://digitalstorytelling.coe.uh.edu/DS-Project-Guidelines-2010.html>

“Evaluating the effectiveness of digital storytelling for student reflection.”  
Martin Jenkins and Jo Lonsdale, Centre for Active Learning, University of Gloucestershire, UK.  
<http://www.cehd.umn.edu/PSTL/Water/Resources/Documents/JenkinsLonsdale2007.pdf>

### **Dissemination Resources, Possible Collaborators, etc.**

Climate StoryTellers (a gathering place on the Internet for in–depth stories)  
<http://www.climatestorytellers.org/stories/james-hansen-makiko-sato-perceptions-of-climate-change/>

Telling Stories to Change the World  
<http://www.terrain.org/articles/19/anderson.htm>

Applied Storytelling vs. Performance/Traditional Storytelling  
By Katharine on December 22, 2010  
[http://astoriedcareer.com/2010/12/applied-storytelling-vs-perfor.html?utm\\_source=feedburner&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=Feed%3A+AstoriedCareer+%28A+Storied+Career%29](http://astoriedcareer.com/2010/12/applied-storytelling-vs-perfor.html?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+AstoriedCareer+%28A+Storied+Career%29)

Gwen Griffith<sup>[L]</sup><sub>[SEP]</sub> “Community Stories in a Changing Climate.” Brimstone Award for Applied Storytelling, National Storytelling Network.  
<http://www.storynet.org/grants/brimstone12.html>

National Storytelling Network. <http://www.storynet.org/index.html>  
The Moth: True Stories Told Live. <http://themoth.org/>  
Center for Digital Storytelling. <http://www.storycenter.org/>

### **Appendix 2**

**Center for Digital Storytelling 3-Day Workshop-Within-a-Workshop Agenda**  
Dates: January 6-8, 2010 9:00 am – 4:00 pm each day

Wednesday, January 6: Day 3 for Trainees / Day 1 for Storytellers  
8:45 - 9:00 Workshop Prep (Trainees only)  
9:00 - 9:30 (All) Welcome and Introductions

9:30 - 10:30 7 Elements of Digital Storytelling Lecture and Presentation of Stories  
15 min Break  
10:45 - 12:30 Story Circle: Review and Development of Story Ideas  
Lunch  
1:30 - 4:00 Story Production: Scripting, Storyboarding, Voice Recording, File Preparation  
4:00 - 5:00 Trainees Check-in: Review and Prep

Thursday, January 7: Day 4 for Trainees / Day 2 for Storytellers

8:45 - 9:00 Workshop Prep (Trainees only)  
9:00 - 9:10 (All) Review Agenda  
9:10 - 10:30 Story Production: Storyboarding, Voice Recording, File Preparation  
10:30 - 12:00 Tech Tutorial: Final Cut Express  
Lunch  
1:00 - 4:00 Story Production: Rough Edit  
4:00 - 5:00 Trainees Check-in: Review and Prep

Friday, January 8: Day 5 for Trainees / Day 3 (Final day) for Storytellers

8:45 - 9:00 Workshop Prep (Trainees only)  
9:00 - 9:10 Review Agenda  
9:10 - 12:00 Story Production: Final Edit  
1 hour Lunch  
1:00 - 2:00 Story export for screening  
2:00 - 3:00 Story Screening  
3:00 - 4:00 Trainees: Post Production: Final Tweaks, File Organizing and Output/Archiving  
4:00 - 5:00 Trainee's: Workshop Review, Self-Assessment Review

---

<sup>i</sup> Taylor, Peter. 5 May 2012, updated 26 July 2012. "Now it is impossible 'simply to continue along previous lines'-- Incomplete and unrevised notes on Enactable Social Theorizing and Open Spaces" for New England Workshop on Scientific and Social Change. <http://sicw.wikispaces.com/-/2012May/OS/Peter+Taylor?responseToken=8ca146b849889f88f4b09c1c27dc1969>

<sup>ii</sup> Maurer, Rhoda. "one photographer's journey of self-discovery" <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jxGazEDF8Jo>

<sup>iii</sup> Digital Storytelling Workshops at Swarthmore College attended in 2009 and 2010 taught by the Center for Digital Storytelling. <http://www.storycenter.org/>

<sup>iv</sup> Maurer, Rhoda. 26 April 2012. "Using Digital Storytelling to Connect in New Ways with Each Other and to Effect Change in Our Communities - A pilot process of developing personal stories around Climate Change".



## A Deliberate Practice to Rejoin Soul with our Work

**“The journey between what you once were and who you are now becoming is where the dance of life really takes place.” ~ Barbara De Angelis**

### **Introduction**

In this paper I will explore the application of action research related to the idea of moving past stuck in the process of discovering purpose and meaning to one's life. Up front I believe it is important that the reader understand that I believe there is great value in developing and sharing one's own journey rather than relying on self help books and other resources as prescriptive actions. There is value in the reflective process that often accompanies the journey and self-help resources might offer insights to new frames for thinking about a specific part of the process of discovery. But their value should not be perceived as holding the key to our answers. I value this position because I value the uniqueness of people and the personal experiences and narratives they have crafted for their lives. And I believe in the power of people to re-craft their stories, empowering change. I believe each person has the capacity to become their best selves and that our humanity depends upon bringing our best selves into community where we might discover meaning to our lives and creative solutions to our biggest problems.

*“A gift isn't just the province of the exceptionally talented, the successful, or the blessed. ... Your gift lies in the place where your values, passions, and strengths meet. Discovering that place is the first step toward sculpting your masterpiece, your life.”*

~ From the book *The Michelangelo Method*.

In an attempt to honor the complexity of finding purpose in one's life, I believe the journey must honor two intertwined realities, of finding purpose in the personal and finding purpose in the professional. I believe these are importantly intertwined in our Western culture and shared belief in doing work centered from our passions and that undertaking an action research project in one area of our lives will impact others. And since I resolve not to write a general prescription for finding purpose in one's life, I will use this paper to share and reflect on the practices I have used, with success and failure, with references to ideas shared in common with other seekers so that others might be inspired to their own deliberate practice.

## The Situation Now and the Deeper Background

People find themselves in the feeling of “stuckness” for many different reasons and at many different times during their lives. Personally I have changed careers three times and moved across the country twice relocating for jobs. None of these times was I stuck in confusion or self-doubt. Fear was still present, but my internal drive used fear as a compass for action, thus recognizing and planning to navigate possible outcomes. Currently I am struggling with the feeling of “stuckness” as a frustration with the slow progression of finding meaning in the wholeness of my personal life and work with my creative self. This might be grounded in the idea that many of my previous life choices were based more upon happiness than meaning. As Roy Baumeister, a Francis Eppes Professor of Psychology at Florida State University has found, happiness and meaning are dependent upon each other in some ways but there are important distinctions as well. “If we just look at helping others, the simple effect is that people who help others are happier. But when you eliminate the effects of meaning on happiness and vice versa then helping makes people less happy, so that all the effect of helping on happiness comes by way of increasing meaningfulness.”<sup>1</sup>

Central to this action research of finding one’s purpose is the premise that we need to support the idea of “living life as inquiry” as Judi Marshall suggests in her 1999 paper in *Systemic Practice and Action Research*. By living life as inquiry she suggests strategies and ways of behaving which encourage us to live in continual process, adjusting, seeing what emerges, and bringing things into question. “It involves seeking to maintain curiosity, through inner and outer arcs of attention, about what is happening and what part [you are] playing in creating and sustaining patterns of action, interaction and non-action... It involves seeking to pay attention to the stories [you] tell about [yourself] and the world and recognizing that these are all constructions, influenced by [your] purposes and perspectives and by social discourses which shape meanings and values.”<sup>2</sup> So as Marshall is seeking, I too must seek to hold an attitude of continual inquiry if I am to live with authenticity and integrity to my central values; and this applies to both my personal and professional life. Engaging action research as a model of inquiry forms a gentle structure to support continual inquiry around a chosen action; I suggest gentle because the central concept of action research is to continually evaluate and grow new actions out of evaluation. And for a project in the realm of finding meaning in one’s life, gentle support is needed from within ourselves and within the community we engage. And while I do believe I have been living a life of continual inquiry evidenced through personal growth and mindset, continual inquiry has not been an intentional practice.

---

<sup>1</sup> Suttie, Jill and March, Jason. 28 March 2014. “The Difference Between Meaning and Happiness.” <http://www.dailygood.org/story/666/the-difference-between-meaning-and-happiness-jill-suttie-jason-march/>

<sup>2</sup> Marshall, Judi. 1999. “Living life as inquiry.” In *Systemic Practice and Action Research*. Vol12.no2. pp155-171.

Also central to my project is the idea that “shelter from the Eight Worldly Winds is mindfulness, awareness, fascination, and curiosity. In Buddhism, the Eight Worldly Winds are influences that both attract and repel us. The pairs are: pleasure and pain, gain and loss, praise and blame, fame and shame.<sup>3</sup> They are unavoidable and it helps to remember their impermanence. Shelter from these winds is about paying attention to physical sensations, internal dialogues, energy levels, and emotional states. It’s about being fully engaged with whatever you are doing, deeply attuned to other people and taking part to ease injustice and suffering in the world. It’s about finding out who you are rather than trying to “be” something. It’s about giving up the praise, gain, fame and pleasure that lead to grasping, tension, and losing track of your true self. It’s to swim against the stream of what we’ve often been told, and to treasure your life and how it feels to relax, be touched by beauty, develop your talents, and feel your connections to others.”<sup>4</sup>

### **The Importance of Reflection to the Process**

Only after multiple exchanges and reflective dialogue around focusing this action research, looking at what others think about the process of finding life purpose, and sharing these ideas in the context of community was I able to start to understand that the action research of finding purpose is a continual practice and must be done by each person seeking; there is no prescription for finding purpose since each of us carries different beliefs and stories built in different contexts. It must be unhurried, careful, and continually measured against our own truths and the secondary gains of instilled habits, the identity of our narratives, and the underlying beliefs we’ve learned.

McNiff suggests that action research allows us to put our values into practice and navigate “living contradictions” a freeing concept in that it allows us to navigate the reality of our lives in our work.<sup>5</sup> You don’t have to have an answer after one action and evaluation cycle more typical of workplace expectations. Rather the practice is continual and allowed to morph as we grow or the conditions change, reflecting the concept of a journey. In contrast, most workplaces I have experienced have needs for reflection on occasion and want their staff to turn off this kind of thinking to become conformist practitioners at the conclusion of a project. And because this is not my natural tendency, I have to wonder, what would it be like to allow this into our lives more often? What kind of workplace would value these tendencies and what kind of structure might be necessary to support it? Thus it would be necessary to create the best possible conditions for actions that might even involve failures as we navigate how to integrate reflection in both personal and professional spaces.

---

<sup>3</sup> Kasl, Charlotte Sophia. January 2005. [If the Buddha Got Stuck: A Handbook for Change on a Spiritual Path](#). Penguin Books. p.55.

<sup>4</sup> Kasl, Charlotte Sophia. January 2005. [If the Buddha Got Stuck: A Handbook for Change on a Spiritual Path](#). Penguin Books. p.57.

<sup>5</sup> McNiff, J. “Action research for professional development: Concise advice for new action researchers.” pp. 4-39.

As I struggle with how much 'personal' information to share in this paper related to my own journey of finding meaning and purpose, I do recognize the importance of articulating my thoughts to my own process of learning and the importance of sharing to the potential benefit of others. And so I have chosen to share some of the key moments related to the process of development and thinking related to this project. And in this context I am personally aware of how "being stuck is often reflected in the body as a feeling of congestion or being tightly held."<sup>6</sup> I experienced the ultimate warning in the form of thankfully benign tumors and later the loss of these tumors and other body signals once a toxic stress was removed from my life. For this reason and the consequences of not listening to our bodies, reflection offers one tool to bringing new understanding and learning from the mind-body connection. Reflection offers a way to revisit and evaluate actions, and can be done alone or in the circle of others by supportive and active listening connected with the concept Critical Friends.<sup>7</sup> One of the greatest and most effective self-supportive actions I did during the last 3 months of this action research process was to reach out to other seekers in both giving support for their own journeys and in receiving support for mine. On a deeper level it is hard for me to take down my walls of independence when I am solely responsible for the end product. Their listening helped me tease out my own thinking but it also gave me an audience to write to that freed my writing to flow. I especially needed extra support this semester considering the emotional load of personal loss experienced in the past two months.

The McNiff and Marshall<sup>8</sup> readings brought me renewed insights into how the personal aspects of our being and work relate to our professional work and how they cannot be separated. These works encouraged me to continue my quest to better understand how Action Research is connected to our stories and values and the whole person. Before these articles, I was struggling to make my own connections outside the narrow educational field that AR has been primarily represented and practiced in. The readings encouraged my persistence to follow a connected vision between Eastern philosophies and Action Research.

Showing up when I planned attention to this action research project was another essential part of working through this action research project. And while this could be something that is essentially expected in a graduate study, it also had real time benefits to my stress levels and anxiety about giving the project all I could at this time. Showing up and doing the work kept my whole space of work less stressful. Granted sometimes this persistence and commitment worked to the detriment of other parts of my life: my exercise routine was reduced to twice per week and I have yet to make time for photography. But I also realize that my priority is this Science In a Changing World Program at UMass Boston right now. I'm not suggesting the

---

<sup>6</sup> Kasl, Charlotte Sophia. January 2005. *If the Buddha Got Stuck: A Handbook for Change on a Spiritual Path*. Penguin Books. p.5.

<sup>7</sup> Critical Friends: A Process Built on Reflection.  
[https://depts.washington.edu/ccph/pdf\\_files/CriticalFriends.pdf](https://depts.washington.edu/ccph/pdf_files/CriticalFriends.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> McNiff, J. "Action research for professional development: Concise advice for new action researchers." and Marshall, Judi. 1999. "Living life as inquiry." In *Systemic Practice and Action Research*. Vol12.no2.

exercise and photography (my meditation practice in the past) are not essential, rather this project has helped me develop a different level of understanding of how they work with and against my graduate studies.

Important to my own process of reflection is writing with a reflective intent. The more I write and share with others on their own journeys of finding life purpose, the more clarity I feel in my own. I have discovered some of my own personal obstacles and biases, connections between my personal narrative and life choices, repeated behaviors and beliefs that need further clarification and maybe letting go of to move forward, and connections to continual change and growth in the context of ecology and spirituality. Keeping a journal has been and will continue to be a central method of bringing ideas into the present for me to observe and evaluate against bodily sensations and effectiveness of actions intents. The journal may be a rough expression of ideas and my photography blog a place of sharing my journey as an artist and human being.

But the thing about keeping journals, notebooks, or blogs is that you have to revisit them in order to make the most out of them. You have to flip back through old ideas to see what you've been thinking. Much like my practice of revisiting my detailed journal for this project, "Once you make sharing part of your daily routine, you'll notice themes and trends emerging in what you share. You'll find patterns in your flow. When you detect these patterns, you can start gathering these bits and pieces and turn them into something bigger and more substantial."<sup>9</sup>

## **Discovering and Building Constituency**

It may at first be difficult to think about what a constituency might look like for action research on finding one's life purpose. But finding meaning in your life cannot be done alone simply because meaning is grounded in the connections you have with others. And it's important to recognize the need to do personal work before you can take action in service of others. You cannot expect the work done in service of others to be the personal work you do for yourself; it simply feeds the reflection and work you need to do.

Through this action research project, I have expanded my constituency without realizing it existed in the first place. Actions of giving myself the time to this research topic built the constituency naturally and yet it was also built because I let it go... it gained its strength because I didn't try to control what it might become. Through reaching out to Critical Friends and taking risk in sharing the background of what brought me to this place of inquiry, I have discovered that community builds around sharing the process with those close to us or those people we trust to have their own desire for clarification in a space of non-judgment. And most of us caught up in our Western culture need better relationships for taking risks for growth. As part of finding meaning, I have a desire to help bring others to their own

---

<sup>9</sup> Kleon, Austin. 12 March 2012. "Show your Work."

<http://www.brainpickings.org/index.php/2014/03/12/austin-kleon-show-your-work/>

authenticity/honorable life grounded in discovering purpose and connection with the natural world; and this suggests another need for engagement with others. Again there are many possible routes to building a community of exploratory support and dialogue. But maybe community can happen because of honoring my gifts and purpose, because of the actions I choose most important, so that the “right” community forms around the work and me. Maybe the actions themselves will grow, connecting with fellow travellers from diverse interests and cross-disciplinary fields of work.

For me the metaphor of the scaffold branches of a tree helps to explain my new understanding of the value and relationship of community to finding meaning in one’s life. The scaffold branches are often referred to as the primary supports from which the smaller branches develop and grow. It's interesting to consider that we tend to focus on the "upward" direction of scaffolding when in many cases the scaffold that might be more important in many situations (including the tree) is the health of the network of scaffolding below ground... if you consider the longevity of the tree's life, the health of the roots and the uptake and availability of needed nutrients through it's transportation system of xylem and phloem are primary. But it's important to recognize that the aboveground and belowground parts are all part of the whole and needed by each other much like we need community and community needs our best selves.

### **Proposing Actions, Practice and Play**

*“Art begins not in the learning of skill, but in the decision to live artfully; to be a farmer of the spirit rather than an agent of turmoil; to accept ambiguity; to not ignore but to acknowledge the many problems in the world, and to uphold one’s capacity for awe and compassion in defiance of them.” ~ Guy Tal*

Action of any kind, even inaction, has an effect on the space of stuck. The primary belief here is that any process might include proposing actions as the journey continues and allowing ourselves to practice them, building the support and courage we need for taking action when fear is a barometer of where to go next rather than something to avoid. “It’s not enough for organizations to want to be able to change. It’s not enough to just read the right books and adopt a new belief system that says, okay, everything is changing.”<sup>10</sup> We need to take action.

My first action on this journey was to acknowledge where I sit today and evaluate the possible histories attached to wanting to live an honorable life connected to my values. Through dialogue with Critical Friends and other Critical and Creative Thinking program communities, the meaning of an honorable and connected life became clearer to me: today I value an undivided life rejoining my soul with my

---

<sup>10</sup> McLeod, Melvin. January 2001. “Changing How We Work Together: an interview with Peter Senge and Margaret Wheatley.” Shamahala Sun.  
[http://shambhalasun.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=2382&Itemid=0](http://shambhalasun.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=2382&Itemid=0)

work, simplicity, supporting well-being for everyone, living wholeness, investing in deep and meaningful relationships, following my inner compass and my personal creative expression. And this clarity helped me understand that my search was different now than it was 20 years ago when I chose to follow a path through horticulture as a profession; in the past I've followed happiness rather than looking for connective meaning. But it's important to recognize that this is where I stand today and that this understanding of an honorable connected life will continue to grow. "The goal of action is always contemplation – knowing and being rather than seeking and becoming."<sup>11</sup>

I've also come to understand the value of small actions in the context of big problems as strategies for growth and exploration in the context of progress and risk, a kind of scaffold scaled to allow for constant evaluation and modification best served when implementation and evaluation are practiced hand in hand. Those smaller actions, in both personal and community spaces, will be the action research action and evaluation cycles with new actions appropriately proposed and tried as I move towards that space of feeling in sync with my inner self-awareness. My daily practice will be to notice my stories and hiding places, then dare to tease them into silence, stillness and my physical body and experience what arises. Much like an experience last week when I noticed thinking that belittled my work accomplishments, right after I said them publically. I felt as if someone else was responding with the belittling words and a rush of tension pass through my body. Upon noticing the thought, I brought it to the surface and asked myself, why am I saying this, and is it possible that I am responding with a more gender specific expected behavior? In the moment afterwards calm settled in. The answers lie within our bodies – from noticing our sensations, to our energy level, to what rings right, clear and true for each of us.<sup>12</sup> In the conversations following a few minutes later, I gratefully accepted my responsibility for the new garden I designed. With practice the awareness should be quicker and I might even be able to honor and navigate inner dialogues that currently serve as obstacles to my better self.

*"Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, fabulous? Actually, who are you not to be? You are a child of God. Your playing small does not serve the world. There is nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you. We are all meant to shine, as children do. We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us. It's not just in some of us; it's in everyone. And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others."*

~ Marianne Williamson

---

<sup>11</sup> Watts, Alan. The Book: On the Taboo Against Knowing Who You Are. 1966. Random House Inc. New York, NY. p.137.

<sup>12</sup> Kasl, Charlotte Sophia. January 2005. If the Buddha Got Stuck: A Handbook for Change on a Spiritual Path. Penguin Books. p.93.

I also need to continue to develop my journey's mantras: notice where you are stuck, show up to do the work, pay attention, listen to my truths, live in now, connect with others in the larger context of life, move from thinking about it to action and let go. Let go of fears grounded outside now when you've done all you can to plan for them. Don't deny them, but realize their proper place, power and use. Let go so that the gifts you share with the world can become more than you can create on your own. Let go to allow new energy into the process of finding your new openness. "No work or love will flourish out of guilt, fear, or hollowness of heart, just as no valid plans for the future can be made by those who have no capacity for living now."<sup>13</sup>

What is becoming revealed to me through this action research project is that I need to become a better listener and that it might be possible to practice being a better listener to myself and have that translate into better listening for others. There are certain seeds to nurture more than others, primary seeds that need sowing in the early spring of understanding. I need to sow a seed for meditation that has yet to take firm root in my life. A deliberate practice for meditation would look much like my experiences with musical training, photography or starting a new exercise routine; start with a commitment to small amounts of time, a few days a week and let it grow naturally from there. And while the benefits of this practice may not be quickly seen, I expect new insights through awareness and reflection will start to surface after 100 days. The concept is that after 66 days, most people are able to form new habits and 100 days offers permission to lose it, come back, get distracted or overwhelmed and yet there is an attraction and commitment to coming back.<sup>14</sup>

*"There are different qualities of silence. There's the silence that sustains us, that nourishes us, the silence where I believe our true voice, our authentic voice, dwells. But there's also the silence that censors us, that tells us what we have to say does not want to be heard, should not be heard, has no value. And that if we speak, it will be at our own peril. This kind of silence is deadly."*

~ Terry Tempest Williams

The other side of taking action might be developing a way to determine actions that might be eliminated as well, those taking up space and energy that are either habitual or comfortable but no longer a priority in the space of current vision. There are certain seeds to remove, the weed seeds that strangle the development of the beauty of life. Weeds often have better dispersal systems and easily out compete the desired plants in a garden, needing the gardener's hand to help nurture them along. All seeds have what they need to begin flourishing held inside their embryos and protected by their seed coat; but ultimately they need complex relationships with water, nutrients, sunlight and other life forms to become their best potential. And seeds also have the ability to sit for very long times, sometimes

---

<sup>13</sup> Watts, Alan. The Book: On the Taboo Against Knowing Who You Are. 1966. Random House Inc. New York, NY. p.112.

<sup>14</sup> Szpakowski, Susan. 2010. Little Book of Practice for Authentic Leadership in Action. ALIA Press. Halifax, Nova Scotia.



only germinating after the perfect environmental circumstances. The complexity reveals itself in judgment of right or wrong seeds since a weed is only a plant judged to be in the wrong place at the wrong time – and so can be viewed by one person as both a weed and a treasure. So my primary proposed action revolves around becoming attentive to the seeds and the environments conducive to life so that I can help nurture the ones I feel to align with what I hope will connect me to becoming my best self and in presence for others to become their best selves. Implementation and qualitative evaluation must be practiced hand in hand in the context of paying close attention to my body and developing guiding questions rather than metrics related to my current beliefs around living an honorable life.

So in an attempt to discover both the desired and weed seeds, their true nature of dispersal and persistence, I intend to use reflection and dialogue, both internal and among a community of trusted friends, along with a meditation practice to tease them to the surface. I've started this process and interestingly found the seed of giving and receiving support from friends and family at the core of those needing nurturing and the seed of perfectionism to need tempering. Yet behind this is the need to nurture myself and build courage too. Historically it has been very difficult for me to ask for help and I've taken pride in my independence in many ways, building other walls I don't readily see. These walls can also keep me from building courage to take risks, staying within the seed coat and waiting. It took the death of both my grandparent's these past two months to help me see the value of living simply in a different light. I've come home with an action to clean out the clutter from my home so that something new might grow.

### **Implementation and Evaluation Hand in Hand**

While there are many possible actions to consider, careful consideration must be given to which action might be appropriate when. This project is constant, never flowing in a linear direction and never really finding an end; it's the process of living in concert with natural cycles. The implementation needs to allow for wandering in the context of non-judgment of right or wrong for decisions made in one direction or another. I need to hold a collection of ideas in a broader view of my process without needing a linear path. And as George Vaillant would suggest, "Positive emotions, not cognitions, are the engines that drive meaning."<sup>15</sup> So if we are looking to understand our life's meaning and purpose, we need to use emotions as a qualitative measurement of how close or how far away from desired meaning we are at any given time. Being aware of bodily reactions and using regular meditation to increase awareness in a space of non-judgmental stillness are methods of frequent evaluation that can serve as a way to pay attention close to the moment with an intent of growing in the moment awareness.

---

<sup>15</sup> Vaillant, George E. 16 August 2008. "A Fresh Take on Meaning."

<http://talentdevelop.com/articlelive/articles/758/1/A-Fresh-Take-on-Meaning/Page1.html>

And because any scaffold built would be a continually moving target (since it is both used and discarded in the process), evaluation for this topic of continual growth and action selection might develop as questions rather than metrics related to living an honorable connected life (and what that means for each of us). Is my approach to life working? Are my beliefs and actions helping me feel at ease in the world or putting me on a treadmill?<sup>16</sup> We cannot disregard the events of our lives, the choices we've made along the way and the personal narratives we've built to frame our current understanding of where we are. This is the background inquiry of the Action Research cycle. Yet I still struggle with the tension of allowing myself the time and focus, selfish time, nurturing the emerging seeds (within, without, and maybe yet to be discovered) and that historically I have found comfort alone, using time in nature as a place to reconnect with feeling and hearing those deeper voices of knowing. I feel conflicted between knowing how much I gain in these experiences and guilt over taking time away from others and my job to pursue them. Yet I know from experience that meaning is found in community so I must venture outside myself on this journey.

### **For Further Consideration – Taking Action More than Once**

In living a life connected to our core values, creative expression and wholeness, we need to recognize the continual nature of this kind of action research, taking actions and evaluating them, of how the process of action research itself ties into the cycles and meaning of life. Finding purpose and meaning to one's life is not strictly a do it yourself process of finding the right book and working through the tools. It's about taking action in our lives with attention to what our souls feel, taking one step so that others might be presented to us. We need an awareness of why we are on this journey and an evaluation of the qualitative benefits of past actions as a continual development of complex interconnected parts of our lives. But it's also important to allow the time it takes to do the larger action. "We can't will the stuck places to release at any given moment... the mind lets go of its obsessing when we take action to speak the truth or face reality."<sup>17</sup>

In my personal quest to understand my life purpose there are some mantras that need regular visiting: notice where you are stuck, show up, pay attention, live in now, connect with others, move from thinking about it to action and let go. Let go of fears grounded outside now when you've done all you can to plan for them. Don't deny them, but realize their proper place and use. Staying unattached to the outcome of our actions is key to staying unstuck. For any action is only the best we can do today with what we currently know, and breathe. Today, I propose taking small actions towards listening to others and myself better through a deliberate and gentle practice of meditation. I propose creating a short mantra to read each

---

<sup>16</sup> Kasl, Charlotte Sophia. January 2005. *If the Buddha Got Stuck: A Handbook for Change on a Spiritual Path.* Penguin Books. p.196.

<sup>17</sup> Kasl, Charlotte Sophia. January 2005. *If the Buddha Got Stuck: A Handbook for Change on a Spiritual Path.* Penguin Books. p.206.

morning as part of my present practice of arriving 30 minutes early to work. And I need to honor the trigger that first connected me with the oasis of community exploration that brought me out of the belief that purpose can be discovered alone, a Center for Digital Storytelling workshop in 2009, by sharing more of that experience at the upcoming New England Workshop for Science and Social Change in Woods Hole, MA.

There are possibilities for community and training among the Association for Contemplative Mind in Higher Education and The Center for Courage and Renewal yet to research and opportunities through my workplace for further mindfulness training that need scheduled into my next year's personal development training. And as mentioned earlier in the report, I need to revisit the possibility of how to use my photography blog as a connective tool. So there are many possibilities to help connect soul with my work yet at the center is my action around using meditation to help focus awareness, evaluation and build an appropriate community.

For any deliberate practice or discipline, you need attentive time (not quantity but quality of time). And this is a difficult reality to make in the context of our Western ideal of how to spend time. Time has seemed to disappear in the modern workplace, home and community. It's something we don't value as much as we value work ethic and material possessions. So it's interesting to consider that allowing time for stillness might be the most important action each of us needs to take right now. With this realization it may also be important to consider new actions related to removing additional time absorbers not centered in living an honorable life or seeded in our own personal narratives as false truths. This may involve asking others to be an active listener, life coach or Critical Friend. And it may involve letting go of our own personal expectations, past narratives, or relationships as they no longer serve to support our best selves.

It's important to be aware that I am not suggesting that meaning and purpose will bring only happiness. Happiness is fleeting while meaning and purpose has potential to align our values with our actions. Much more like the beauty of the seasons, our meaning and purpose cannot be without the presence of both our dreams and burdens, the dance of connecting our souls with our lives.

*"One part is about being grown-up enough, confident enough, fearless enough to face my deepest, most secret dreams and to bring them out into the world. And the other part is to embrace all those forces that seemingly work against those dreams, those burdens I have chosen by the act of living and surrendering myself to those that I love. Celebrate the dreams. Celebrate the burdens, too. For it is in that delicious tension point—where dreams pull forward against the backward draw of one's burdens, where life becomes a beautiful work of art." ~ Shannon Hayes*

## **Bibliography:**

Ackerman, Larry. The Identity Code: The 8 Essential Questions for Finding Your Purpose and Place in the World. 2005. Random House. New York, NY.

Clear, James. 4 April 2014. "This Coach Improved Every Tiny Thing by 1% and Here's What Happened." <http://www.dailygood.org/story/684/this-coach-improved-every-tiny-thing-by-1-and-here-s-what-happened-james-clear/>

Esfahani Smith, Emily. 9 January 2013. "There's more to Life than Being Happy." <http://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2013/01/theres-more-to-life-than-being-happy/266805/>

Frederiksen, Devon. 22 March 2014. "Beauty Feeds A Different Kind of Hunger." An interview with Terry Tempest Williams. Syndicated from Yes Magazine. <http://www.dailygood.org/story/675/beauty-feeds-a-different-kind-of-hunger-devon-fredericksen/>

Harris, Jonathan. January 7th, 2014. "Navigating Stuckness" The Transom Review Volume 14/Issue 2. <http://www.dailygood.org/more.php?n=5831>

Hayes, Shannon. 30 March 2014. "A Radical Homemaker Celebrates 40." <http://www.dailygood.org/story/681/a-radical-homemaker-celebrates-40-shannon-hayes/>

Kasl, Charlotte Sophia. January 2005. If the Buddha Got Stuck: A Handbook for Change on a Spiritual Path. Penguin Books.

McLeod, Melvin. January 2001. "Changing How We Work Together: an interview with Peter Senge and Margaret Wheatley." Shamahala Sun. [http://shambhalasun.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=2382&Itemid=0](http://shambhalasun.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=2382&Itemid=0)

McNiff, J. "Action research for professional development: Concise advice for new action researchers." pp. 4-39.

Marshall, Judi. 1999. "Living life as inquiry." In Systemic Practice and Action Research. Vol12.no2. pp155-171.

Maurer, Rhoda. 30 December 2011. "a time between...". <http://ramaurer.wordpress.com/2011/12/30/a-time-between/>

Palmer, Parker J. Let Your Life Speak: Listening for the Voice of Vocation. 2000. Jossey-Bass. San Francisco, CA.

Popova, Maria. 17 October 2013. "The Psychology of Getting Unstuck: How to Overcome the OK Plateau of Performance & Personal Growth."  
[http://www.brainpickings.org/index.php/2013/10/17/ok-plateau/?utm\\_content=buffer56545&utm\\_medium=social&utm\\_source=twitter.com&utm\\_campaign=buffer](http://www.brainpickings.org/index.php/2013/10/17/ok-plateau/?utm_content=buffer56545&utm_medium=social&utm_source=twitter.com&utm_campaign=buffer)

Schonert-Reichl, Dr. Kimberly and Koyczan, Shane with the Dalai Lama Center for Peace and Education. "Educate the Heart." Video.  
<http://dalailamacenter.org/educate-the-heart>

Suttie, Jill and March, Jason. 28 March 2014. "The Difference Between Meaning and Happiness." <http://www.dailygood.org/story/666/the-difference-between-meaning-and-happiness-jill-suttie-jason-marsh/>

Szpakowski, Susan. 2010. Little Book of Practice for Authentic Leadership in Action. ALIA Press. Halifax, Nova Scotia.

Taylor, Peter and Szteiter, Jeremy. Taking Yourself Seriously: Process of Research and Engagement. 2012. The Pumping Station. Arlington, MA.

Vaillant, George E. 16 August 2008. "A Fresh Take on Meaning."  
<http://talentdevelop.com/articlelive/articles/758/1/A-Fresh-Take-on-Meaning/Page1.html>

Watts, Alan. The Book: On the Taboo Against Knowing Who You Are. 1966. Random House Inc. New York, NY.

# BRAIDING A NATURALIST'S JOURNEY OF EMBRACING COURAGE

by

RHODA A. MAURER

© RHODA A. MAURER 2015

SYNTHESIS\*  
MASTER OF ARTS  
SCIENCE IN A CHANGING WORLD  
UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS BOSTON

May 2015

Advisor: Professor Peter Taylor

My capstone synthesis is focused on my development as a leader/mentor of people I work with while also honoring my personal development as a reflective practitioner. I present a journey: the accomplishments, struggles and practices essential to embracing courage from a different space of intention, from a space of supporting others, while I continue to journey myself. The journey is also one of tensions scaffolded by walls built long ago that kept my tree from joining a collaborative forest. Through the repetitive process of revisiting, letting gestate, and revising my personal narrative, written papers, professional workbooks and daily writing practice, I share how the Science in a Changing World (SICW) program has manifested in my workplace and a growth of courage to practice. The inclusion of contextual personal narratives helps demonstrate the complexity of process: the structural roots of our learning, ever working to slowly reveal and shape new awareness much like how stories are working on us all the time, reshaping us in the way that flowing water gradually reshapes a rock. I believe story is the connective tissue that builds empathy and support for risk-taking rather than a weakness lacking academic or scientific rigor.

What I've come to understand is that just because a story defined me at one time in my life, it doesn't necessarily define me now. Much like a child who speaks later than expected developmental models, I too am finding my voice, my way of finding clarity, through a combination of creative modalities developed asynchronously yet in concert with each other. I share how experiences I once saw as broken limbs on my tree are now gifts in my own personal development. As in tree physiology, these wounds compartmentalize rather than heal; they are always part of the tree, but hidden from surface awareness as calluses grow to cover scars. Only later in the life

of the tree may these wounds become apparent again when the tree is stressed by wind.

I invite the reader to see extended strands of the braid connected to your own life experiences by paying attention to what resonates or brings up tension for you, noticing the beginning of possible meta-awareness; to make conscious the story just beneath the surface of your talk and invite you to speak it. My synthesis helps readers to connect with an awareness that:

- Story has power to shape our thinking, beliefs and behaviors and that our beliefs can grow but are always connected with the deeper layers of our narratives
- Dreams and burdens are essential to the beauty of the journey
- Courage and empowerment are grown through practice and community
- Co-creative spaces of supportive non-judgment allow for risk-taking as a serious practice of learning and growth
- Others need scaffolding to support their own growth and practice that might be similar or different than our own
- Transparency of intentions may help build community despite tensions of differences

Through my research and writing, I have come to appreciate that my original inquiry is deeply rooted in my quest to understand my own connection with nature in the context of my life purpose and work. I continue to be on a journey framed in working to support exploration and change at the individual level of awareness rather than the bigger scale of the environmental movement. Yet I have also come to understand that the power of change is held within me and that supporting myself in this environment will translate into supporting others.

*subject codes* .COM .COR .FRP .RPN .WRL

\*The Synthesis can take a variety of forms, from a position paper to curriculum or professional development workshop to an original contribution in the creative arts or writing. The expectation is that students use their Synthesis to show how they have integrated knowledge, tools, experience, and support gained in the program so as to prepare themselves to be constructive, reflective agents of change in work, education, social movements, science, creative arts, or other endeavors.

# GRATITUDE

## **Professional Acknowledgements:**

Foremost, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my advisor, Professor Peter J. Taylor, for the continuous support of my M.A. study and research, for his patience, enthusiasm, steady and gentle support, immense knowledge and friendship. His guidance helped me build belief in myself as a capable researcher, someone more comfortable with slow process, and an agent of change in a complex world while recognizing that my tree no longer stands alone.

Our forest has grown with the help of other Critical & Creative Thinking faculty members. Jeremy Szteiter offered supportive listening to my written as well as verbal thinking, contributing to my personal and professional growth as a mentor and leader. Felicia Sullivan held my hand through the first few months of distance participation, offering technical assistance and a warm welcome. Nina Greenwald helped me to see my asynchronous development as a gift. Olen Gunnlaugson for supported me through growing my understanding of dialogue practice. Luanne Witkowski helped me see alternative views of how art scaffolds science and encouraging my artistic practice.

Joe Lambert (Center for Digital Storytelling) introduced me to the empowerment of personal narrative through his organization and story circle environment. His continued friendship supports the process of our individual journeys as storymakers and agents of social change through the deeper narratives that shape behavior.

From Cornell University, Peter Paradise Dann Braid, and Dr. Christopher Dunn, never doubted that the graduate work I was doing was important to support through the Cornell University tuition aid program. They sincerely helped me navigate the application of my learning in workplace practice. Jess Cisco and Jim Sheridan have listened deeply and supported me through creating spaces for the development and practice of my own definition of leadership. And I am thankful for the patience of my staff as I continue to journey alongside them.

Thank you to many of my classmates for stimulating discussions, supportive dialogue, and for all the fun we have had in the process. Teryl Cartwright took on the editor role of this synthesis paper two weeks after my contract with another editor was dropped and countless times she offered me a supportive and constructive space of clarifying my feelings and thinking outside of the classroom.

## **Personal Acknowledgements:**

My life partner, Joe Bocchiaro, whole-heartedly believed in my ability to do such challenging work and made room in our life to support the time and emotional energy required. While comforting me on my journey, he encouraged me to practice over and over again as I struggled to explain why what I was doing was important, the primary structural support roots of my newly braided journey.

And not in the least, thanks to my dear mother and her husband for giving me financial support immediately following the loss of my job to continue my studies. And thank you to my grandmothers for the lessons they lived but never imposed upon me.

And finally, mentors and friends, Dr. Bob Lyons, Tim Boland, Dan Hinkley, Jeff Jabco, Joe Henderson, Lynn Demarco, Jack Dykinga, Guy Tal, and Chuck Kimmerle who openly share their contagious wonder of the natural world. They helped me see that sometimes seeds need to be sown outside the forest to grow while also learning how much my forest extends beyond the small grove of public horticulture. Thank you for sharing yourself with me, for sharing your seeing, and for the diversity of your being and the support of mine.



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
PREAMBLE .....	1
1. TWO IMPORTANT FRAMES .....	5
Why Story? .....	5
Why Science in a Changing World? .....	8
2. CONTEXTUAL STORIES PART OF THE BRAID .....	9
December 2011 .....	9
October 2013 .....	10
January 2014 .....	15
Early January 2015 .....	17
Late January 2015 .....	18
Last Week of January 2015 .....	20
February 2015 .....	21
March 2015 .....	22
3. IRREDUCIBLE, CONTINGENT, INTERACTIVE, CHANGING PARTICULARITY .....	23
4. ANOTHER LOOK AT THE COMPLEXITY OF OUR JOURNEYS .....	26
5. CALMING AND USING FEAR .....	31
Tools and Fears of Practice .....	31
Letting Go and Letting Come .....	32
6. GROWING FROM HERE .....	36
7. REMAINING QUESTIONS AND CHALLENGES .....	41
APPENDIX .....	48
BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	56
SUPPLEMENTAL BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	58

## PREAMBLE

My synthesis this semester has been a process of thinking about how my work in the Science in a Changing World (SICW) experience has manifested in my workplace practice through a process of writing and reflecting upon my personal narrative.

My initial framework to guide my writing attended to:

- Where I was three years ago when I was looking for something to help me grow my thinking and engagement around horticulture, society, processes of leadership and action
- What I learned about myself and the larger connections related to my questions about
- What I practiced and continue to practice that has helped me gain clarity of my values and beliefs
- What I want to bring into my future spaces of engagement with public horticulture and extended communities

To support this inquiry and conduct a review of my experience in the program, I have revisited the written papers and professional workbooks that I have kept during my graduate studies alongside my daily writing practice. Before presenting this synthesis, I have written two more 9,000-word papers and over 35,000 words in my daily writing practice this semester and worked with four different structures, each honoring different parts of the whole as the primary mode of communication. You will see my experience in the SICW program has supported my own transformation into someone more deeply concerned with the process of change and with how best to empower others to grow and direct change. Yet, it is important to clarify that this transformation was not as much a literal change as it was a depth of confidence, clarity, and defined purpose for me in the how of leading

change, a growth of courage. This is not simply defined by the tangible skills that I learned and continue to practice as much as it is about the alignment of heart, mind, and hand I have experienced through the program. I have become empowered through a supportive structure that allows for my individual growth and reconnection with the deeper parts of myself (a belief in myself as an agent of change, but from a position of concern for possibility, a tolerance for ambiguity, and honoring others rather than absolute knowing). The skills I've practiced and the spaces I have experienced have been scaffolds to my own learning, supporting a transformation of my heart and an alignment between my soul and behaviors. This transformation of self has grown to support others in my life through sharing my practice in the forms of various tools and stories.

Because of my experiences within horticulture that acknowledges the importance of creativity, my experiences with the Center for Digital Storytelling, my dialogue experiences in the SICW program, and my experience with photography as a reflective story of the artist, I am drawn to the power of personal narratives as a form of writing that helps to empower the authentic voice of the author. This is explored in more depth, as are other values and beliefs associated with the tools and practices I have grown with during my experience. So the format of this synthesis shares samples of my personal narrative, a tool central to both my process of learning and the depth of self-awareness that I have gained and applied as I have come to understand its complexities over the past three years. These stories are given to the readers so that moments of witness will in some way metaphorically allow the readers to connect with the possibility of change within themselves, scaffolding the readers to listen to themselves and to extend diverse points of potential interaction.

As Christina Baldwin suggests, “We learn that if we have practiced articulating our story, if we have honored the path to this moment by writing it down, the choices

we make are congruent with who we say we are.”<sup>1</sup> I, too, have witnessed a clarity and voice coming from my heart with more ease because of writing. Yet because I believe in the power of story to open the heart, even if the mind does not change, I am attempting to honor using story to open spaces of empathy between the readers and what I have written.

In my workplace, I have hoped that through the practice of listening and witnessing each other’s stories in a supportive space of inquiry, we can begin to create a new collective narrative that supports nature’s health, as well as diversity and humanity’s expression and cultural diversity. I am following a path of crafting a story for the vision of how plant collections and the public garden that I am newly employed at can support biological diversity by strengthening cultural diversity. Bridging empathy between the gaps is the deeper work that story can do by indirect culmination of many small activities, framing change in unpredictable, but real ways.<sup>2</sup> Catching those beginnings of story, an agency of metacognitive awareness, is fundamentally important to growth that opens insights of learned and ingrained narratives that drive behavior and choices.

*So I am attending to the beginning of noticing a new story. Today I am hearing from deeper within how being shut down from music was a shutting down of practice and a shutting down of my courage to practice with others, the biggest mixed message of my life that’s been surfacing over and over again. I am just figuring out how to creatively play in the spaces of adult life through sharing my works in progress in supportive spaces of constructive feedback while also letting go of emotional defenses.*

In the next chapters of this synthesis, I will share a loosely braided narrative of three strands that became revealed to me during the process of revising this synthesis. I invite the reader to see extended strands of the braid connected to their own life

---

<sup>1</sup> Baldwin, C. (2005). *Storycatcher: Making Sense of Our Lives through the Power and Practice of Story*. Novato, CA: New World Library. p.43.

<sup>2</sup> Lambert, J. (November 2014). Personal Interview.

experiences. At this time, my braid consists of the importance of some primary relationships, searching for my vocation, and building supportive community for my continued growth. I realize that the needs of the readers may at times be in tension with my own process of ongoing synthesis; the readers may be looking for tools for their own application while I will not be prescribing them. Rather, I will introduce tools and my application, leaving the readers to decide how to shape them into their own practice. My hopes are that the readers will read and reread parts of this synthesis as they grow their own lives and practice, finding new questions and deeper awareness with each visit. The structure of this paper will help demonstrate the complexity of how important process is as the deeper underground, like structural roots, ever working to slowly reveal and shape new awareness. Even if readers are not immediately certain how to make sense of this synthesis for themselves, I believe that by paying attention to what resonates, noticing any possible gaps, and seeing what stirs tension, readers can shift into their own meta-awareness. This will also make conscious the story just beneath the surface of our talk and invite us to speak it.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> Baldwin, C. (2005). *Storycatcher: Making Sense of Our Lives through the Power and Practice of Story*. Novato, CA: New World Library. p.30.

## CHAPTER 1 TWO IMPORTANT FRAMES

### Why Story?

When I was young, my father would always tell stories. I'm not talking about the stories typically shared with a five year old... he told those too. Rather, he would tell stories that exaggerated reality – and the entire family knew it. And no matter how many times, and still to this day, he doesn't see his exaggeration. For him, this is reality. So, at a very young age, I was aware of the power of perception. As an adult, I attribute this trait of his as part of his artistic expression and sometimes as a method he uses to get his way (even if he is not aware of his metacognitive process). Yet as a child I felt a double-edged message of right and wrong, of lies and truth.

Prior to my acceptance into the SICW program at UMass Boston, I had participated in two Center for Digital Storytelling workshops where I witnessed first hand the power of creating a personal narrative in the space of a supportive exploration of meaning-making and sharing. Yet the most revealing insight I've experienced through the putting back together phase of the SICW experience is that stories are not sufficient for personal and social change on their own. Nor are writing papers in academic formats ad nauseam helpful to bring the participatory experience of story-making into the deeper understanding of its important role in helping us gain better metacognitive awareness of our personal narratives. Only through the *process* of story-making *in supportive creative community* do we begin to open ourselves to seeing anew. For it is the re-assemblage through the right kind of supportive spaces that can be profound. This re-engagement is critical to allowing us (me) to build and deepen our (my) understanding of ourselves (myself) as agents of change.



©2010 Rhoda Maurer

*"If you don't know the trees you may be lost in the forest, but if you don't know the stories you may be lost in life." ~ Siberian Elder*

Vivian Paley advocates for the importance of “those of us who truly do believe that play and its structure – story – are the wheels that go around, the connective tissue,

don't spend enough time explaining it to each other in story form."<sup>4</sup> Instead, we are structuring discussions in places where the vulnerability of story and play are seen as weaknesses and lacking academic or scientific rigor. What is harder to see, and perhaps more impressive, Gottshall suggests, "is the way stories are working on us all the time, reshaping us in the way that flowing water gradually reshapes a rock."<sup>5</sup>



©2010 Rhoda Maurer

---

<sup>4</sup> Paley, V. G. (1997). Story and play, the original learning tools. Walferdange, Luxembourg. Retrieved from <http://www.script.men.lu/documentation/archiv/decoprim/paley.htm> p.4.

<sup>5</sup> Gottschall, J. (2012). *The Storytelling Animal: How Stories Make Us Human*. New York, NY: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company. p.153.



*"The camera is an instrument that teaches people to see without a camera."* ~ Dorothea Lange, documentary photographer and photojournalist

## **Why Science in a Changing World?**

Historically, many well-known public gardens were created by the transfer of a private garden after the death of the owners. These gardens had often been established from the vision and resources of one person or family. While the wonder of their vision as a piece of art, a historic tribute, or living collection of biodiversity is something valuable to share with others, the reality and complexity of the perpetuity of the garden is problematic. Why? Because it often relies on the philanthropy of people to support it and this can drive the future vision at the expense of the public it was intended to be gifted to serve. Rarely do public funds support public gardens, except when the garden is owned by a public entity. Those that are built from the ground up with public funds often don't have enough to be sustainable. So the questions become as follows: what is relevant enough for the public to find important to support? How do we connect with a new philanthropy... people interested in a different vision, not just the prestige of showcase that is deeply rooted in private garden plant collecting? Fundamentally, I was questioning how public horticulture might relate to larger socio-economic and biological systems in a growing atmosphere of disconnect with nature. There is a new frontier of engagement and community that contradicts with its current and historic roots in philanthropy, suggesting a re-examination of what our collective and individual gardens' cultural values might be. At the root of this for me is the importance of how to explore and implement change. I believe this cannot be a top down instruction or hierarchy as mirrored in historic Western management practices.

## CHAPTER 2 - CONTEXTUAL STORIES PART OF THE BRAID

December 2011

*I haven't known what to post for a long time [on this blog]. You see, I was hit with a bomb in late October... "You're being laid off in two weeks." And while this isn't nearly the worst thing that could happen, I still found myself confused about how a place I put so much of myself into could let me go so easily and scared about how I was going to make ends meet and keep food on the table. I don't have an emergency fund since I was investing in the development of my photography and counting on the full-time job's monthly salary to live. As many people know first-hand themselves, this is not the best time to be needing to look for work in America, let alone in the field of public horticulture, one of the many areas hit hard by budget cuts and philanthropic decline. As I grew past the shock and initial fright over the last two months, I realized that unemployment will help for a while and I have a loving partner who will not let me go hungry or without shelter, a gift I cannot be thankful enough for.*

*I had already applied to distance learning graduate school in September, wanting to pursue an advanced degree in Critical & Creative Thinking at the University of Massachusetts while working, bridging horticulture and photography in a personally meaningful way that would help advance my career. Last week I received the wonderful news that I have been accepted for the program. But the layoff has removed my funding sources and I need to brainstorm some funding possibilities while looking for employment and trying to sell photographic prints. I'm committed to finding a creative solution, but welcome any advice in this area since it's been years since I've been in the scholarship/granting circles.*

*So with all these details running in the background and the holidays slowing any progress on the job front, I find myself wondering what winter this year will be like. I've been running at 100 mph most days these past two months looking for employment. But the holiday week has been a real gift, a time to slow down and reflect, a time to really talk with those closest to me. The time between has begun... a time between to awake my soul.*

*Winter will be time to think, to ponder, to photograph... to listen to myself closely, to reconnect with my truth, and discover a new direction on my path. I've been reflecting on how many*

people define themselves by the work they do, rather than the person they are before work. Don't get me wrong; I've always enjoyed work. But work is something to do to earn a living in this world; it's something you do, not something you are. So now I find myself wondering more than ever how I want to spend the next 50 years of my life. I know this about myself. I need to create. I need to connect with nature on a spiritual level. I need and value the people close to me. I also have faith in the process, so I don't doubt that things will work out well and that the journey will be one I will learn much from. But it's still difficult to make time for meaningful reflection and imagining what could be... but this week of reflection has reawakened just enough of my soul that I cannot help but commit to making time in January, winter, so I'll be ready for whatever spring gifts me.<sup>6</sup>

October 2013

Tonight I'm in a place of Work In Progress ideas wandering in and around my mind... As I search for a format to scaffold the WIP, I am thinking about something written, but more like a story. I've never written anything fictional, as I prefer to ground stories in reality and connect what might at first seem disconnected into something unexpected. As I mentioned in our emails, fiction would be a lot harder for me, and I want to answer your question about what I think depth might include in story. The 3-D scaffolding modality that I seek in stories comes in when there are multiple possible connections or interpretations connected to the story; it's not so linear and allows people to connect in complex emotional ways tied to personal values. There is possibility of bringing new insight into something not seen before, something that at first seems superficial would somehow connect to the human condition; there would be wonder.

As we have now moved through two related Collaborative Explorations on story and scaffolding learning, and we have grown space for authenticity and trust, I would like to continue the dance and hope that you will be open to an ongoing exchange of ideas with me, a dance in the spirit of exchanging ideas and not keeping track of who is getting what. Keeping track is a destructive exercise. So I follow [another] suggestion and continue the dance; I offer some of my raw thinking as it currently relates to storytelling and scaffolding in the context of today, built on past CEs. But obviously much of what we have each built is rooted in our past experiences as well.

---

<sup>6</sup> Maurer, R. (Dec 2011). *A Time Between*. Rhoda Maurer Photography Blog  
<https://ramaurer.wordpress.com/2011/12/30/a-time-between/>

And the seasonal cycle of scaffolding means it will continue to grow, become clarified, and stirred up and confused over and over again! So in this dance I'll offer some backstory, because the transparency of our thinking is often helpful in ways we don't realize, both for our own learning process and that with others. I just hope that this transparency does not become a bore and that I am able to appropriately estimate how much to share.

As my scaffolding tree has continued to grow, both above and below ground, to include mathematics and social change both visually and theoretically through the connections you and others have sparked, I've found unexpected meaning in sharing the struggle for transformative learning with others.

And recent experiences I once saw as broken limbs on my tree are now gifts in my own personal development. In tree physiology, these wounds compartmentalize rather than heal; they are always part of the tree, but hidden from surface awareness as calluses grow to cover scars. Only later in the life of the tree may these wounds become apparent again when the tree is stressed by wind.



©2013 Rhoda Maurer created during Scaffolding CE October 2013

*My life has been an amazing turn of events, something the tide has brought to me, slowly and methodically on her own terms. And like Peter Bregman's article about procrastination and surfers he watched one morning, what resonates is "No matter how good, how experienced, how graceful they were on the wave, every surfer ended their ride in precisely the same way: By falling."<sup>7</sup> So today I venture into giving myself the time to ride, practicing despite falling, with less concern for cultural expectations of what I am supposed to do. So, in the spirit of non-judgmental sharing, I hope to dig deeper into the understanding of my own scaffolding and personal narrative as a way of thinking about why and how they are constructed for others.*

*It's only been since last June that I moved from Pennsylvania, and so much has transformed in my life. As I see those 14 years in Pennsylvania now, they were full of a dichotomy of confinement and growth that ultimately stifled my true self in many ways. Those closest to me always knew photography would help me grow, but nobody could have foreseen in what ways. If I look further back, I was fortunate to have a mother and father who believed in nurturing wonder at a young age. I am thankful for the mentors who cared enough to share of themselves beyond their guarded spaces of decided thinking, who shared their authentic selves as a gift and without expectation. I am thankful for friendships that have helped sustain my dreams and always keep me thinking with possibility.*

*I am finally allowing myself to feel grateful for the loss of my job two years ago. As you know, this was a turning point in my life when I was able to let go of a dead-end job and toxic workplace. Although I grieved these losses, I found new insight and strength through the honoring of these feelings, new scaffolding, and both new and enduring friendships built in concert with my graduate studies, opportunities to develop my own leadership, and opening to see some of my own potential in new ways. Of course, this potential was always there, but we build our own blind-spots that are difficult to acknowledge and move beyond. Sometimes the scaffolding is too rigid and needs to be deconstructed in order to see anew. Maybe it was pure naïveté, following uncertainty, but maybe it was the pull of nature herself, rooted in deep seeded identity surfacing to share with others. I'm learning that we often don't necessarily know what*

---

<sup>7</sup> Bregman, P. (2013). *The Unexpected Antidote to Procrastination*. Retrieved May 2, 2015, from <https://hbr.org/2013/05/the-unexpected-antidote-to-pro/>

we need or when we need it. But that only through the practice of listening do we have the possibility of hearing.

*I connected with Barry Lopez's story of watching a river, because I have been an observer of nature from a naturalist's perception all my life. As he suggests, "... the more knowledge I have, the greater becomes the mystery of what holds that knowledge together... The longer I watch the river, the more amazed I become (afraid, actually, sometimes) at the confidence of those people who after a few summer seasons here are ready to tell the county commissioners emphatically, what the river is, to scribe its meaning for the outlander."*<sup>8</sup>

*I often reflect back to days I felt total awareness in the presence of nature. The world has so many things yet to discover if only we open our eyes to wonder. Looking at my narrative again, I still have a discomfort in rigid scaffolding concepts. I find comfort in the cyclical nature of seasons and life events. The seasons are something I can count on... unlike the experience of my teenage years and the compound lack of support for my dreams. The breakdown of my family and forced social expectation of helping my newly divorced grieving mother with raising a newborn baby brother have built some strong scaffolding of its own.*

*I don't make meaningful friendships easily, although I can make acquaintances as smooth as milk pours from the milk jug. Yet when I do open myself up to giving, I give deeply. And this builds those chosen close connections I do have in my life. As I've learned more and more about others and the authentic connections of being human, I am opening myself more and more to sharing more and more with others in hopes not so much of helping myself, but of genuinely helping others find meaning for themselves. I don't want children or adults to feel helpless in their learning or life stories.*

*Somehow I've been fortunate to find spaces grounded in life's grace. Being in spaces of authenticity with others, where motivations and games were not manipulative, but transformative to people's growth and potential, were essential to learning that even bad things can be*

---

<sup>8</sup> Lopez, B. (2014). *What I Learned From 30 Years Of Watching A River*. From The Daily Good Blog at <http://www.dailygood.org/more.php?n=5151>

*experienced through a positive lens. It is interesting to think about what we find comfort in and what we guard. The only concepts I have come to believe is that there is change, people will always have different ways of expressing the same things, and that we are all connected through what it means to be human.*



©2011 Rhoda Maurer

*Two autumns ago I found myself crying in the Sierra Nevada Mountains on one of my photography adventures because I realized I could no longer control what was emerging inside me. I had to let go and allow something else to come.*

*A good friend of mine once suggested I was fleeing jail the week I left for Upstate New York. And while I am still in a place of confusion about what that next path on my journey might be, I know this time of confusion is necessary and a gift of its own. In many ways I am honoring my roots for the first time after a venture into the wider world. And at the same time, I'm becoming a reflective practitioner, an artist, and acknowledging my whole person, not just one part of me at a time, as I've tended to do in the past.*

*I'm beginning to feel this letter has rambled long enough; I don't want this to be a diary of sorts, but rather bringing a story into a space of exploration with others, to share our vulnerabilities enough that others feel trustful enough to engage in support of each other's growth. So I still have questions about how we ensure that the space and intent becomes alive rather than muffled in ourselves. Maybe your butterfly is a metaphor for the possibility of merging identity in this space of discovery? Or maybe my tree needs to be seen among the forest? If our work is only as good as the inspiration we find in the life we lead, then I must dance. I don't have answers about how scaffolding is related to story other than through my own experience. And the only way I see to expand my understanding is to dance with others. Thank you for dancing with me.<sup>9</sup>*

*January 2014*

*In my young adulthood, I refused to lose touch with wonder despite a middle-class message of adulthood as a servant of the workforce. Thankfully, and from the guidance of my parents, I was never able to do a job just for the reward of a paycheck. My grandmother's words still resonate with me today, "Money will never buy you happiness, but it can make life a lot more comfortable. This will be something you will struggle with in your adult life. Be careful to choose what is right for you." My family story was full of these double messages:*

---

<sup>9</sup> Maurer, R. (2013). *A Moment in Time*. Written as a work in progress for a Collaborative Exploration: Scaffolding Creative Learning. Hosted in October 2013 by CCT program of UMass Boston.





©2013 Rhoda Maurer

- *You are smart; make the most of your education so you can get a good job. When are you going to get married and have a family?*
- *Do what you love, follow your heart and the money will follow. You are a talented musician, but you won't be able to take care of yourself being a violinist.*
- *You are an artistic child with a creative imagination and gifted with lots of available choices. You need to choose one thing to do for your career and focus your entire life on that or you will fail to have monetary security.*

*But I always found solace in nature; nature, no matter how small, was always my comfort after my great-grandmother passed away. Nature never lied to me. Nature never mislead me. Nature was just there as supportive arms to discover more about myself through being with her. So is it so difficult to understand why I kept her close?<sup>10</sup>*

---

<sup>10</sup> Maurer, R. (2014). From my daily writing journal.

*Early January 2015*

*I am in winter right now; the earth is in winter right now. But I can feel spring around the corner, even though we have only past through mid-January. Winter is deeply contemplative. But it's a time when we need to honor the stillness we need in our lives that the earth reminds us of during this season of calm, barren structure and silence. Winter three years ago I noticed this stillness and the need to honor this in myself to feel the transition happening inside me. And now I find myself in this same place as I transition into this new job.*

*Letting go in winter, of what I have experienced, feeling it all, sitting with those feelings for a while and allowing what comes from it to surface into awareness, into the mind... We can build scaffolds of support, distrust, or hypocrisy through the stories we create.<sup>11</sup>*



©2014 Rhoda Maurer

---

<sup>11</sup> Maurer, R. (2015). From my daily writing journal.

*Late January 2015*

*The values that I bring to the principles I hold central to how I practice leadership have grown from a place of personal desire to find meaning, purpose, and community for myself. And these principles are framed in the context of my life's experiences and choices in which I have had my share of loss.*

- *Divorce of my parents*
- *Loss of my childhood - surrogate mother to my youngest brother*
- *Musical career dream smashed by mixed messages*
- *Loss of my self-confidence and a cry for help*
- *Near death experience and reality of "friends"*
- *Loss of my great-grandmother*
- *My family spread out across the country*
- *Loss of my identity that I attached to my work*

*Yet in each of these life experiences, I chose the way of being my great-grandmother inspired me to follow; value life as a gift and process of discovery. Hold an attitude of continual inquiry and tolerance. Find and honor the beauty in everything and everyone and love unconditionally. Places with nature, often alone, became a place to nourish and heal my soul. And the seed for this connection was sown when my parents would travel the back roads of the U.S., selling their wares or taking my brother and me on one of the summer adventures they desperately sought to keep despite having children. When my great-grandmother Lucy died when I was 20 years old, I felt alone and relied upon nature to help heal my deep wounds. I built a wall between any real belonging for me with other people.*

*Horticulture inevitably lit a fire within me and sustained me through most of my adult life. I was finally able to grow lasting and deep friendships through reconnecting with an awareness of the cycles of our journeys and the cycles of the natural world. Yet it took three very important events to bring me out from behind my biggest walls: meeting my life partner, immersing myself in photography, and later finding words and the practice of writing during my graduate studies. Joe*

*gave me the support and love I was missing my whole life, permission to be me without judgment and with full support of my dreams.*



©2014 Rhoda Maurer

*When people ask me why I photograph, I usually try to coin a short explanation about my work experience in horticulture and my upbringing in an artistic family. These explanations really just serve as a superficial answer to engage people in polite conversation. I believe in, and appreciate, the magic of catching and re-crafting stories built from experiences of story circle empowerment. Photography has become a way of telling my own stories, expressing the wonders that speak to my heart and their relationships with me. I value the uniqueness of people and the personal experiences and narratives they have crafted for their lives. And I've come to understand the strengths of vulnerability, allowing myself to act upon my dreams rather than keeping them in the closet, connecting with purpose.*

*Today I am trying to lead more from my heart, to help build scaffolding for trust and risk-taking, both for myself and the community where I work and live to help us all navigate the exploration and synthesis of finding life purpose, thus empowering people to feel a sense of safety, belonging, and appreciation. For the first time in my life, I feel the values I hold dearest, the support I need to be authentic to myself, and the values of the organization I work for are in alignment. Instead of trying to "fit in," I am journeying into a space where by honoring my gifts*

*and purpose and choosing supportive actions, the “right” communities will grow alongside feeling engaged in something worthwhile.*

*For me, the metaphor of the scaffold branches of a tree helps to explain my understanding of the value and relationship of community to finding meaning in one’s life. The scaffold branches are often referred to as the primary supports from which the smaller branches develop and grow. And it’s interesting to consider that as members of a Western culture, we tend to focus on the “upward” direction of scaffolding when in many cases the scaffold that might be more important in many situations (including the tree’s) is the health of the network of scaffolding below ground... if you consider the longevity of the tree’s life, the health of the roots and the uptake and availability of needed nutrients through its transportation system of xylem and phloem are primary. It’s important to recognize that the above ground and below ground parts are all part of the whole and needed by each other much like we need community and community needs our best selves. And like the beauty of the seasons in which a tree lives, meaning and purpose cannot be without the presence of both our dreams and burdens.<sup>12</sup>*

*Last Week of January 2015*

*... There was little excitement in the room about our accomplishment as a team and the facilitators asked us why. It didn’t take long for me to open up and share. “What happened here... this was a simpler version of exactly what happened for me in the morning session. Here we focused on the task accomplishment as the goal at the sacrifice of something else. And that something else was the foundation of the stepladder, the foundation of process, the foundation of people.*

*We accomplished our task at the expense of people. We accomplished a task I could care crap about and we overlooked the potential of building something lasting with greater impact to the system and group dynamic. We missed the opportunity to build empowerment, engagement, collaboration, and a supportive space for working together.”<sup>13</sup>*

---

<sup>12</sup> Maurer, Rhoda. (2015). Written as background to crafting my own leadership definition at Harold D. Craft Leadership Training, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY.

<sup>13</sup> Maurer, R. (2015). From my daily writing journal.



©2013 Rhoda Maurer

February 2015

*Why do I still struggle to accept my part in the good things that I've done in the past three years? Often when people help me see this, I'm surprised that they see me as a pivotal player in the shift. Why does my inner voice still question this? Didn't I set forth to create a place and culture that I wanted to be a part of and that honored each person's contribution? So why should I be surprised it worked? Joe reminded me that it's part of what I bring because it's part of who I am and what I value and practice... it's what I hold as a central principle to every encounter and every challenge I had. Do I struggle to allow myself the same value as I give*

others? Or am I simply so focused on the process I forget to stand back and view from the outside?

*I see a change in my confidence and own thinking - this is probably more accurately stated as I see the value in being comfortable with sharing my own process and allowing for collaborative approaches to feed me and to feed others. I have a better sense of allowing for imperfection while not giving up on the striving. The product can be imperfect while the persistence in seeking must be practiced. Fundamental to my willingness for action was a supportive practice of participation, witness and hosting dialogue circle in many classes, workplace opportunities and the NewSSC Workshop for Science and Social Change.<sup>14</sup>*

March 2015

*Writing was never a strength of mine, or so I was told in grade school... my grades in English were always lower than my grades in science, math, music and art. I always struggled with vocabulary and I took this as part of my identity; later I learned this experience is coined asynchronous development, not inability. More importantly, what I've come to understand during my graduate work is that just because this story defined me at one time in my life, it doesn't necessarily define me now. No, writing is central to building the clarity of my learning so that I can share my thoughts with others. And professional peers are confirming I'm good at it. Much like a child who speaks later than expected developmental models, I, too, am finding my voice, my way of finding clarity, through a combination of creative modalities developed asynchronously, yet in concert with each other.<sup>15</sup>*

---

<sup>14</sup> Maurer, R. (2015). From my daily writing journal.

<sup>15</sup> Maurer, R. (2015). From my daily writing journal.

## CHAPTER 3 - IRREDUCIBLE, CONTINGENT, INTERACTIVE, CHANGING PARTICULARITY

By living life as inquiry, Judi Marshall, Program Director, Leadership for Sustainability at Lancaster University, suggests strategies and ways of behaving which encourage us to live in continual process, adjusting, seeing what emerges, and bringing things into question.

*It involves seeking to maintain curiosity, through inner and outer arcs of attention, about what is happening and what part [you are] playing in creating and sustaining patterns of action, interaction and non-action... It involves seeking to pay attention to the stories [you] tell about [yourself] and the world and recognizing that these are all constructions, influenced by [your] purposes and perspectives and by social discourses which shape meanings and values.<sup>16</sup>*

It is about finding out *who you are* rather than trying *to be something*. It is about giving up the praise, gain, fame, and pleasure that lead to grasping, tension, and losing track of your true self. “It’s to swim against the stream of what we’ve often been told, and to treasure your life and how it feels to relax, be touched by beauty, develop your talents, and feel your connections to others.”<sup>17</sup>

When I first heard this phrase, “irreducible, contingent, interactive, changing particularity” as part of a supportive exchange of ideas in a Collaborative Exploration centered on Scaffolding Creative Learning in the summer of 2013, I was confused by what this characteristic might mean to my own way of being. It felt like a label alongside other labels that others used to define me, something that I needed to explore. Why do people seem to have a need to categorize things and people?

---

<sup>16</sup> Marshall, Judi. 1999. “Living life as inquiry.” In *Systemic Practice and Action Research*. Vol12.no2. pp155-171.

<sup>17</sup> Kasl, Charlotte Sophia. January 2005. *If the Buddha Got Stuck: A Handbook for Change on a Spiritual Path*. Penguin Books. p.57.



Many people have tried to answer that question, from author Jonathan Gottschall in his book The Storytelling Animal: How Stories Make us Human, psychologist Carl Jung and others with the development of constructivist psychology, and Margaret Wheatley, co-founder and President emerita of The Berkana Institute, through her explorations of leadership, influence and control. But two stories centered in understanding nature help frame what it means for me.

The author Carol Kaesuk Yoon wrote, "*Umwelt* [pronounced OOM-velt] is a German word that means literally 'the environment' or 'the world around', but scientists studying animal behavior use it to evoke something much more specific. For these biologists, the *umwelt* signifies the perceived world, the world sensed by an animal, a view idiosyncratic to each person, fueled by its particular sensory and cognitive power and limited by its deficits."<sup>18</sup> Once you start noticing organisms, "once you have a name for particular beasts, birds, and flowers, you begin to see the shape, the natural order of living things. You begin to notice life where it is, all around you."<sup>19</sup> I suggest that the *umwelt* can be witnessed through story and through experiences of wonder. I knew, before I knew about the idea of a human *umwelt*, that giving names to plants as an adult when I returned for my second undergraduate degree in horticulture was an extension of my childhood longing for feeling wonder and understanding of our natural world. "Once you learn its name, its shape, its meaning, you begin to see it everywhere. Those rare remaining naturalists know it too."<sup>20</sup>

*"May your search through Nature lead you to yourself"* ~ Author Unknown

So when I think about irreducible, contingent, interactive, changing particularity in this context, I've come to understand that this tendency not to simplify, to value the

---

<sup>18</sup> Kaesuk Yoon, C. (2009). *Naming Nature: the Clash Between Instinct and Science*. New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company. p.15.

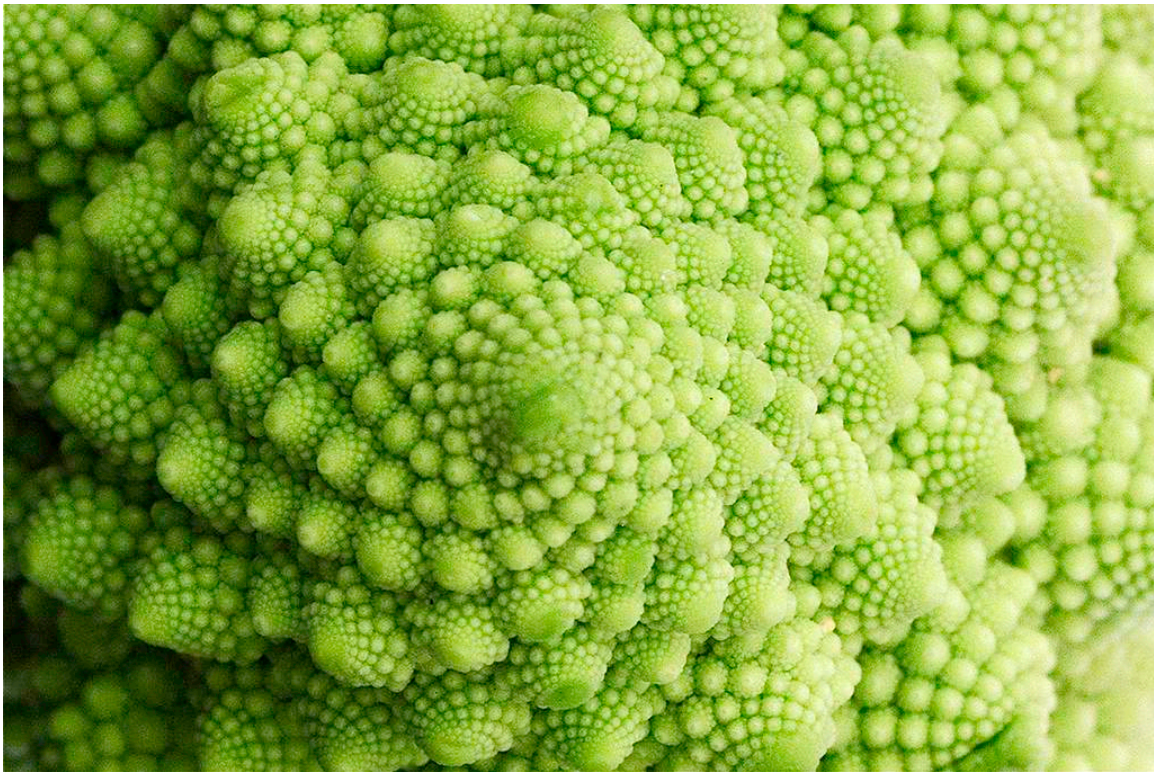
<sup>19</sup> Kaesuk Yoon, C. (2009). *Naming Nature: the Clash Between Instinct and Science*. New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company. p.298.


<sup>20</sup> Kaesuk Yoon, C. (2009). *Naming Nature: the Clash Between Instinct and Science*. New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company. p.298.

unforeseen interactions and unpredictability of things, and the uniqueness and value of each person's contribution to the world is also grounded in my search for maintaining wonder in my life. I am not a scientist in the narrow academic sense. Yet I am an attentive observer of our natural world. As I've struggled to find my way, and as I've come to learn that the struggle is part of my own perception, I've found new ways of engaging with others that honors their individuality and supports my expression as well.

## CHAPTER 4 - ANOTHER LOOK AT THE COMPLEXITY OF OUR JOURNEYS

I've been thinking about circles of leadership, community, the natural world, my choice of profession, and a vision for the future of public horticulture for some time. I'm coming to realize that the experience in the SICW program is another circle; a circle of gaining tools, processes, and clarity to support organizing my mind and the actions that lead from my heart. I first visualized these circles connected through a complex spherical layering. Yet the visual that best represents how I currently understand the complex relationships of theory, practice, and our lives now resembles the vegetable Romanesco.



 Taraji Blue on Flickr at <https://flic.kr/p/9biSZx>

This exotic variant of cauliflower demonstrates a complex of the Fibonacci sequence and fractal geometry. I can spiral up or spiral down the florets and take a different path interconnected with every other path at any time. Inward spirals may be more about getting clear about the authentic me, while outward ones might be providing more and more hand holds for readers to be scaffolded by me into their own meaning making. When cutting this vegetable in half, it also resembles a simple coniferous tree, adding to the complexity of spiral direction with tree root and branching pattern scaffolding.



 Feliciano Guimarães on Flickr at <https://flic.kr/p/6SYC9B>

The change of mind I have developed through the graduate program does not represent anything better than I have ever been. It represents another place on the path towards living an authentic, undivided life that links circles of concentrated attention in the larger network of spirals. I have gained a depth of understanding that my tolerance for differences is really a tolerance for ambiguity.

*Yet when we understand winter in the natural world, we realize that what we see out there is not death so much as dormancy... But much of it has gone underground, into hibernation, awaiting a season of renewal and rebirth... Spring is the season of surprise when we realize once again that despite our perennial doubts, winter's darkness yields to light and winter's deaths give rise to new life. As spring's wonders arise from winter's hardships, we must hold to live life fully and well – and to become more confident that as creatures embedded in nature, we know in our bones how to hold them... Summer is the season of abundance and first harvest. Having traced the seed of true self on its arduous journey from birth, through death and dormancy, into flowering, we can look at the abundance that has grown up within us and ask, “Whom is this meant to feed? Where am I called to give my gifts?”... The idealists among us tend to ask the “whose” question prematurely: we want to serve the world's needs, but we burn out trying to do more than we are able. I cannot give what I do not possess, so I need to know what gifts have grown up within me that are now ready to be harvested and shared. If the gifts I give are mine, grown from the seed of true self, I can give them without burning out. Like the fruit of a tree, they will replenish themselves in due season.*

~ Parker Palmer, founder and Senior Partner of the Center for Courage & Renewal<sup>21</sup>

More often than not, I'm finding myself realizing that the people with whom I most deeply connect with are those who are comfortable with ambiguity, those people who are learning how to hold space and manage the experience of life's tensions, people who value that living life is a creative act, always growing and always connecting from past history in new ways as we move through life. Christina

---

<sup>21</sup> Palmer, P. J. (2004). *A Hidden Wholeness: The Journey Toward an Undivided Life*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass. pp.82-84.

Baldwin, author and co-founder of PeerSpirit, would name them fellow storycatchers.

*Storycatchers are intrigued with making – perhaps driven to make – sense of experience and to make stories out of our sense. Storycatchers are: Intrigued by human experience, inquisitive about meaning, insight and learning, more curious than judgmental, more in love with questions than answers, empathetic without over identification, able to hold personal boundaries in interpersonal space, able to be present while others experience emotions, able to be present while others have insight, able to safeguard the space for listening, able to invite forgiveness, release and grace, aware of story’s power and use it consciously, practitioners of the heart of language.*<sup>22</sup>

~ Christina Baldwin

Our work will never be done. Unlike traditional story structure where there is a plot, rising complex problem often grounded in conflict, and a resolution or moral learning, a life story is not a linear structure, nor does it have one definitive lesson. Instead, the beauty of practicing is the fundamental story. Through my own life experience, I know story has the power to open the heart, even if the mind does not change. Baldwin again writes:

*Story is empathy in action between people... Storycatchers are people who value story and who find ways in the midst of their everyday lives to honor this activity. They signal to the rest of us that something important is happening in the moment and invite us to notice and pay attention... The storycatcher’s job is to help us shift into narrative; to make people conscious of the story just beneath the surface of our talk and invite us to speak it.*<sup>23</sup> ~Christina Baldwin

---

<sup>22</sup> Baldwin, C. (2005). *Storycatcher: Making Sense of Our Lives through the Power and Practice of Story*. Novato, CA: New World Library. p.29-31.

<sup>23</sup> Baldwin, C. (2005). *Storycatcher: Making Sense of Our Lives through the Power and Practice of Story*. Novato, CA: New World Library. p.30-46.



<http://www.wordle.net/> composed from Maurer, R. (2014) *A Deliberate Practice to Rejoin Soul with our Work*

The inward and outward spirals are coming closer together in my new position as Director of Horticulture for the botanic garden and arboreta of Cornell University, Cornell Plantations. I have been asked to help craft a vision for the collections and to maintain an updated collections policy that is responsive to the changing needs of society. This is accomplished with an eye towards conservation and sustainability while contributing to the organization’s strategic development and implementation of its mission. Central to this process is critically and creatively cultivating an exploration of Cornell Plantation’s history, the history and future of public horticulture, and possibilities for this organization’s future. We cannot do this without looking at our name; we cannot do this in isolation; and we cannot do this without deep listening to others and ourselves. And I cannot do this without attention to the structure of how.

*Unarticulated collective experience that is not allowed into the social story shows up years later as political upheaval, violence, resistance, revolution, fundamentalism, spiritualism, disconnection, apathy, and disassociation from reality. But when these same experiences are shifted into language and successfully worked through, they lay the groundwork for transformative cultural development.*<sup>24</sup> ~ Christina Baldwin

---

<sup>24</sup> Baldwin, C. (2005). *Storycatcher: Making Sense of Our Lives through the Power and Practice of Story*. Novato, CA: New World Library. p.84.

## CHAPTER 5 - CALMING AND USING FEAR

### Tools and Fears of Practice

Freewriting, Dialogue Process, Daily Writing and Critical Friends<sup>25</sup> were some of the greatest and most effective supportive actions I practiced during the SICW program that have supported me in finding clarity of my own thinking and in supporting others with theirs. For those interested, I have included a summary of how the tools have been used outside my SICW classroom experience in the Appendix; an outline of the tools and processes themselves can be found in Taylor and Szeiter's book, Taking Yourself Seriously: Process of Research and Engagement, listed in the supplemental bibliography. The deeper realization that I have witnessed from developing a practice of these tools is that the practice has calmed my fears and allowed me to see fear as a useful guide that I am on to something important to me. Some tools can be used alone, but they become more powerful when used in a community of people trusted to give supportive listening and to share their own desire for clarification in a space of non-judgment. The beauty is that the community building, sharing, and clarity gained for everyone involved works because you practice.

My deeper fears linger in making big mistakes, not the small ones that surface as part of the process, not the small ones that can be used as learning tools and that can help frame the next move, but the big ones that cannot be overcome or have a lasting impact on others in a detrimental way. These are the mistakes I am afraid of making. My rational mind tells me I cannot predict or prevent them. All I can do is be my best self in the presence of creation, so that I can navigate better through the processes. I also know that because I am aware of this concern, I will pay attention

---

<sup>25</sup> Critical Friends: A Process Built on Reflection.  
[https://depts.washington.edu/ccph/pdf\\_files/CriticalFriends.pdf](https://depts.washington.edu/ccph/pdf_files/CriticalFriends.pdf)



to it. Even though the emotional memory of perfectionism as an expectation of being the first-born lingers, it is freed each time a work-in-progress is shared from a place of gratitude on my part.

Eight weeks ago, I was given an opportunity to attend a weeklong workshop dedicated to leadership development, hosted by Cornell University, and scheduled between my places of employment. During this experience, I witnessed my own clarity of what has been growing inside me for the last three years (January 2015 daily writing) and I crafted my own definition of leadership: I strive to create spaces for people to become their best selves in the context of a larger purpose where each person can find meaning to their contributions. Leadership is grounded in our interconnection of humanity and nature for me. Yet I need to find ways to allow for others to have room for different connections. I seek to inspire them to become their best selves, to help them plant, nurture, and grow the seeds of their wonder, their gifts, in the context of creating a better world.

*Even though worker capacity and motivation are destroyed when leaders choose power over productivity, it appears that bosses would rather be in control than have the organization work well. And this drive for power is supported by the belief that the higher the risk, the more necessary it is to hold power tightly. What's so dangerous about this belief is that just the opposite is true.*<sup>26</sup> ~ Margaret Wheatley, author and co-founder and President emerita of The Berkana Institute

## **Letting Go and Letting Come**

I recognize that the critical and creative learning space that I've been thinking about cannot be without grounding in what I wish I had for myself as I explore my own

---

<sup>26</sup> Wheatley, M. (2005). How is your leadership changing? Retrieved from <http://margaretwheatley.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/How-is-Your-Leadership-Changing.pdf>

questions about place in the world. As a good friend recently reminded me, I need to be selective of where and when I spend my energy and efforts so that I do what is most important to me and so that I do good work, so that it doesn't drain me too much, creating blocks for my own work and blocks of support for others. This does not negate the reality that everyone is asked to do less favorite parts of their jobs; they must be done in order to keep a job. Rather, I am suggesting that prioritization of our available choices needs careful consideration and reconsideration as we navigate life. We need to discard the idea of doing everything asked of us to perfectionism and to ask the question of ourselves that helps us determine where to spend our energy and time in alignment with our values, recharging us to be available to support others. The Western culture in which I belong often coins this as selfish time, especially for those who identify as female, adding to the mixed messages of how to live an authentic life against that shaped by external expectations.

*Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, fabulous? Actually, who are you not to be? You are a child of God. Your playing small does not serve the world. There is nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you. We are all meant to shine, as children do. We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us. It's not just in some of us; it's in everyone. And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others.<sup>27</sup>*

~ Marianne Williamson, author and co-founder of The Peace Alliance

Yet the support I've received and the courage of heart that it has fostered has been witnessed in several ways. Three years ago, if I had taken a job like this, I do not know if I would have been as comfortable with the discomfort of this kind of

---

<sup>27</sup> Williamson, M. (1996). *A Return to Love: Reflections on the Principles of A Course in Miracles*. HarperOne.

transition, recognize when actions were not producing desired results, or as willing to try new strategies in light of this awareness. Nor would I have been able to allow actions grown from process in collaborative space to shape outcome, to truly let go and let come what wants to be born from the process. I do not know if I would have been so confident in the slow process, giving myself permission to change my mind, adapt and model the kind of environment I want to create. As part of my interview with Cornell Plantations, and unlike any previous interview in my career, I was able to take risks in sharing where my thinking is and how it came to be here. I took a bigger risk in sharing that I didn't have an answer to the question they posed to me for my 40-minute presentation. Instead, I adopted and shared an approach that my presentation was a work-in-progress that needed their community to become something emergent from us through collaboration. I shared my heart and the personal narrative of how I came to be a person concerned for *how a botanical garden in a world-class university might use its living plant collections to address and interpret contemporary environmental issues*.

Other evidence of how processes have become an integral part of my practice include not hesitating to follow up with a suggestion that I engage people from the place I was transitioning from in a reflection. This activity was intended to help others to see how much and in what ways each one of us contributed to growing our workplace culture and team effectiveness. I was humbled to hear their words and hopeful that they would carry some things forward. I did not think of this action myself, it was suggested to me by my advisor in the SICW program. Yet the experience of doing this supportive and reflective practice did not stir up fear inside me as it might have in the past. Instead, I was able to easily craft and implement the reflection with my peers.

Another example of this connection with heart includes how I quickly realized the framework for my "openness meeting" (as named by one of the staff participants) was not reflecting the idea of supporting them when I was reflecting on how the process might affect the people and the outcome of our meeting. My original

structure might have been perceived as pulling information for an unknown purpose. Considering their history, I needed to pay closer attention to how this was framed, including autonomous feedback opportunities, transparency of my intentions for the meetings, and empowering them to tell me how and what they wanted the next meetings to do. Following up and crafting an email back to participants with a summary of our experience also created the evidence of support and intention. I was able to pay attention during the crafting of the meeting structure by asking myself... what is my deeper intention and is this reflected in the way I'm engaging people?

## CHAPTER 6 - GROWING FROM HERE

I'm beginning to understand that courage is not simply being able to act despite fear. Courage is an alignment with heart, rooted in knowing that we are enough as we are. We have value simply because we are. Connecting with heart allows us to speak the deeper truths and questions we feel, know and seek, aligning intention to change the minds of others while authentically honoring the differences of mind. With this kind of courage, I feel more able to find an opening into hearing others and myself as valuable contributors to the beauty of our complex humanity, finding solutions we might not have seen before. For me, there is a growing connection of heart and courage to deconstruct the barrier walls built as part of my narrative and identity. For others, there may be ways to deconstruct the scaffolding that disconnects them with other people and the larger definitions of "other" that may include a new perspective on nature-human relationships.

As I've transitioned into my new place of employment, I've brought my practices with me. The interesting thing is that there is plenty of pull to focus on the day-to-day priorities of my job. The harder thing to do is take the time that it takes to do the deeper work of listening to myself in response to what I'm hearing and seeing around me in this new place. Yet three years ago, I might not have taken the time, or honored the time, with such enthusiasm and deep understanding of its importance. Most likely, I would have allowed the newness and pull of others and of smaller tasks to drive my attention away from this important part of a foundation of how to grow into this place, this vital need for keeping a daily writing journal. As Christina Baldwin explains, writing has changed everything about how I live.

*The reason I spend thousands of lifetime hours creating something 99 percent of which no one else is likely to ever read is that writing itself is the gift. Writing organizes the*

*mind and the actions that lead from the mind. Over time, the decisions and choices we make in the rush of the moment are informed by the self-knowledge our story gives us. We learn that if we have practiced articulating our story, if we have honored the path to this moment by writing it down, the choices we make are congruent with who we say we are.*<sup>28</sup> ~ Christina Baldwin

The attention that I have given to witnessing through my studies of plant identification and ecological relationships and through my photography of the natural world is now being honored across my human expressions. The poet Mary Oliver writes eloquently about this quality of attention in an opening essay of her memoir to her life partner.

*It has frequently been remarked, about my own writings, that I emphasize the notion of attention. This began simply enough: to see that the way the flicker flies is greatly different from the way the swallow plays in the golden air of summer. It was my pleasure to notice such things, it was a good first step. But later, watching M. when she was taking photographs, and watching her in the darkroom, and no less watching the intensity and openness with which she dealt with friends, and strangers too, taught me what real attention is about. Attention without feeling, I began to learn, is only a report. An openness — an empathy — was necessary if the attention was to matter. Such openness and empathy M. had in abundance, and gave away freely... I was in my late twenties and early thirties, and well filled with a sense of my own thoughts, my own presence. I was eager to address the world of words — to address the world with words. Then M. instilled in me this deeper level of looking and working, of seeing through the heavenly visibles to the heavenly invisibles. I think of this always when I look at her photographs, the images of vitality, hopefulness, endurance, kindness, vulnerability... We each had our separate natures; yet our ideas, our influences upon each other became a reach and abiding confluence.*<sup>29</sup> ~ Mary Oliver, poet

---

<sup>28</sup> Baldwin, C. (2005). *Storycatcher: Making Sense of Our Lives through the Power and Practice of Story*. Novato, CA: New World Library. p.43.

<sup>29</sup> Popova, M. (2015). Mary Oliver on What Attention Really Means and Her Moving Eulogy to Her Soul Mate. from <http://www.brainpickings.org/2015/01/20/mary-oliver-molly-malone-cook-our-world/>

I now see my photography and my new writing practice as two parts of a whole. Even if I only find the time to write in my journal for fifteen minutes a day, I am connecting with my original voice and practicing attention that today feels a bit like stillness commonly associated with mindfulness practices.

Several years later now, I understand why the Center for Digital Storytelling workshops were such a profound experience for me. They honored my visual expression through my photography. They honored a space of learning from our histories. They honored a supportive environment for taking apart and putting back together again things held tightly to my identity. And they created lasting community. The experience of the CCT Dialogue course and being able to spend time digging into the creation of safety for risk taking through many CCT class structures further deepened my appreciation for how important and how difficult these spaces are to make and to hold. During my action research work in the fall of 2014, I conducted a semester of research centered on my clarification of personal narrative story-making in a supportive social space as the connective tissue that supports de-polarizing people's beliefs while supporting cognitive, emotional, and social development alongside metacognitive awareness.<sup>30</sup>

*Stories move in circles. They don't move in straight lines. So it helps if you listen in circles. There are stories inside stories and stories between stories, and finding your way through them is as easy and as hard as finding your way home. And part of the finding is the getting lost. And when you're lost, you start to look around and to listen.*<sup>31</sup> ~ Deena Metzger, author

During the later synthesizing process of this research work, I started to understand the importance of building some guiding principles as both a qualitative measure of aligning my practice and my intentions for the envisioned foundational need for

---

<sup>30</sup> Maurer, R. (2014). *Restoring Nature While We Restore Ourselves*, (November). A working paper for CCT692: University of Massachusetts Boston Graduate Program, Science in a Changing World.

<sup>31</sup> Metzger, D. (1992). *Writing for Your Life: Discovering the Story of Your Life's Journey*. HarperOne.

supportive space. These are adapted with the help of the Center for Digital Storytelling's Workshop Principles<sup>32</sup> and personal reflection of application to my own values and beliefs. As I return to these experiences over and over again, I'm now in a place of being able to ground principles around a plan for practice so that important processes can be supported that help me evaluate whether we are [I am] supporting these principles or not.



©2009 Rhoda Maurer

---

<sup>32</sup> Lambert, J. (2013). *Seven Stages: Story and the Human Experience*. Digital Diner Press.



These include the importance of:

- Supportive and Confidential Spaces to Allow for Building Trust, Taking Risks and Sharing without Judgment
- Grounding Experiences in Something Common to Being Human
- Discussing Polarized Topics from the Side (gently supporting the value of diversity while allowing for awareness)
- Allowing Enough Time to Dig Deep, Reflect and Put Things Back Together
- Living Ethics Through Process and Practice
- The Process as Important as the End Product
- Ownership and Informed Choices of Participation

Part of the focus of the next daily writing I need to do is to tease out the meaning and possible quantitative values against which I can measure these guiding principles. The complexity sits with the reality that creation of an evaluative method is not done first; rather, they are emergent together and grown from the spiral of practice and evaluation hand in hand.

## CHAPTER 7 - REMAINING QUESTIONS AND CHALLENGES

*One part is about being grown-up enough, confident enough, fearless enough to face my deepest, most secret dreams and to bring them out into the world. And the other part is to embrace all those forces that seemingly work against those dreams, those burdens I have chosen by the act of living and surrendering myself to those that I love. Celebrate the dreams. Celebrate the burdens, too. For it is in that delicious tension point—where dreams pull forward against the backward draw of one's burdens, where life becomes a beautiful work of art.*<sup>33</sup> ~ Shannon Hayes, author

I continue to develop my journey's mantras that began forming in the Metacognition class of the SICW experience: notice where you are stuck, show up to do the work, pay attention, listen to my truths, live in now, connect with others in the larger context of life, move from thinking about it to action, and let go. Let go of fears grounded outside now when you've done all you can to plan for them. Do not deny them, but realize their proper place, power, and use. Let go so that the gifts you share with the world can become more than you can create on your own. Let go to allow new energy into the process of finding your new openness. As the writer and philosopher Alan Watts suggests, "no work or love will flourish out of guilt, fear, or hollowness of heart, just as no valid plans for the future can be made by those who have no capacity for living now."<sup>34</sup>

And in the spirit of authenticity, I know that I will be continuing to craft stories, experiencing new insights and sharing community around some deeply interconnected spirals. As I transition out of the SICW program, I anticipate having a different realization about time and my ability to focus, growing something deeply connected with my heart from a space of courage, self-confidence, and self-

---

<sup>33</sup> Hayes, S. (2014). The Radical Homemaker Turns 40. Retrieved April 14, 2015, from <http://www.yesmagazine.org/blogs/shannon-hayes/the-radical-homemaker-turns-40>

<sup>34</sup> Watts, Alan. The Book: On the Taboo Against Knowing Who You Are. 1966. Random House Inc. New York, NY. p.112.

acceptance that has become part of my new braid. Much like an arborist's rope or a high tensile wire, braids are often constructed from a complex of clustered threads that when braided increase the strength of the relationships. During this synthesis, threads that I've started to braid include:

- Crafting and Catching Stories
- The use of Metaphors to Deepen Communication
- Facilitating Shifting My Thinking into Meta-awareness
- Feeding the Roots
- Practices of Contemplative Observation
- Supporting Others in Ways They Need Supported
- The Power and Recognition of Mixed Messages
- Processes to Support my own Clarification
- Practicing without Having or Needing Answers
- Courage to Practice
- Living An Undivided Life
- Tension, Gaps and Intention

As I am writing today, I am witnessing awareness that everything I engage with is grounded in the question of how we want to be with each other in the world and of how I want to be more deeply rooted in the world. These seeds that we all want to plant in our lives and communities also have a collective seed wanting to be born. What support do we need to bring these seeds into reality; what do they require to grow?<sup>35</sup> Some of those answers for me are to continue to build these kinds of spaces for inquiry and support beyond the SICW experience. I need to honor the time it will take to sow the right seeds, nurture them, weed around them, and let them grow. So what can I do now to help ensure this happens?

---

<sup>35</sup> Scharmer, O. (2015). U.lab: Transforming Business, Society, and Self Source Book. Notebook for MIT edX course.

In my workplace, several challenges that are with my collaborators and me as we venture to create a vision for Cornell Plantations. These include the disconnect/connection duality of our predominant Western worldview and the realities of working in an Ivy League and Land Grant university where the “hill” of academic and professional achievement often overshadows the stillness required to support development. Adding to this scaffolding complexity is awareness that our connection with nature is framed in the duality of our cultural values. There is a predominant world-view of nature as a resource, creating a duality of connection and disconnection that challenges us with needing alternative ways to explore environmental problem solving. Additionally, the Western idea that conserving nature in a pristine state is possible might even be reinforcing our cultural connection-disconnect dichotomy.

*In Western culture, we often seek truth through confrontation. But our headstrong ways of charging at truth scare the shy soul away. If soul truth is to be spoken and heard, it must be approached ‘on the slant.’ I do not mean we should be coy, speaking evasively about subjects that make us uncomfortable, which weakens us and our relationships. But soul truth is so powerful that we must allow ourselves to approach it, and it to approach us, indirectly. We must invite, not command, the soul to speak. We must allow, not force ourselves to listen.<sup>36</sup>~ Parker Palmer*

I have hope that through the practice of listening and witnessing each other’s stories in a supportive space of inquiry, we can begin to create a new collective narrative that supports nature’s health and diversity, humanity’s expression, and cultural diversity. I am speaking of social change, the indirect culmination of many small activities, framing change in unpredictable, but real ways.<sup>37</sup> Building upon the belief that personal narratives and the process of creating them (in the context of a social environment supportive of respect building, risk taking, self-revelation, and personal growth) empowers metacognitive awareness through cognitive, emotional

---

<sup>36</sup> Palmer, P. J. (2004). *A Hidden Wholeness: The Journey Toward an Undivided Life*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

<sup>37</sup> Lambert, J. (November 2014). Personal Interview.

and social development. This agency of metacognitive awareness is fundamentally important to growth that opens insights of learned and ingrained narratives that drive behavior. As author and Senior Lecturer at MIT Leadership Center, William Isaacs, states, “The most important parts of any conversation are those that neither part could have imagined before starting.”<sup>38</sup>

In the communities in which I engage, I need to navigate this with the confidence I feel for the processes grounded in my own experiences. I also need to be authentic as a learner of how each person and group will respond differently to what is presented and how. Acknowledging this as part of the experience may support seeing that "one size fits all" is not part of my value system. At Cornell Plantations, I do not think we can make the vision changes we are growing to understand in the gardens and collections without addressing the workplace dynamics and support systems first, to at least consciously move alongside with reflection and adjustments. I do not think we can honestly look at growing these spaces without quickly honoring our awareness of the nature of our name, an offensive remnant of slavery around the world. Our humanities cannot be left out of the efforts to find solutions to our problems.

So at the root of this bigger question is how do I want to lead this change... not just what I do I want to change? From the ULab edX MOOC (massive online, open course), Otto Scharmer suggests that there are roots of enabling infrastructures at the center of all visions/projects.

- Creating New Learning Environments that Link Heart, Mind and Hand
- Creating New Platforms of Collaborations
- Knowledge Creation between Science, Consciousness, and Social Change

---

<sup>38</sup> Isaacs, W. (1999). *Dialogue and the Art of Thinking Together*. New York, NY.

*People with high level of personal mastery live in a continual learning mode. They never 'arrive'. Sometimes, language, such as the term 'personal mastery' creates a misleading sense of definiteness, of black and white. But personal mastery is not something you possess. It is a process. It is a lifelong discipline. People with a high level of personal mastery are acutely aware of their ignorance, their incompetence, and their growth areas. And they are deeply self-confident. Paradoxical? Only for those who do not see the 'journey is the reward'.<sup>39</sup> ~ Peter Senge, Senior lecturer at MIT Sloan School of Management and the founder of the Society for Organizational Learning*

As I am crafting the final draft of my synthesis, the idea of paying attention to my true self is surfacing because I am witnessing deep emotions connected with finishing. I miss time behind the camera, I miss time with my partner, and I miss time with nature. I see and feel more clearly that stillness is the most important action I need to take right now during this intense synthesis semester. I have struggled with enough time for stillness to recharge my energy and my spirit. The pull of learning a new job, the depth of the problems within the culture of this new workplace, not having a manager's role filled yet for the gardening staff, shopping for a house, and writing this synthesis have necessarily put some of my attention for my own health, well-being, and support for my life partner aside. Yet I've continued to search and find the right kind of supportive space in relationships, physical spaces for writing, and sitting in nature to renew my courage and energy for the work. This stillness is fundamentally important so that I can better choose the right actions aligned with my heart.

With this realization, it may also be important to consider actions related to removing additional time absorbers not centered in living the life I want or those seeded in my own personal narratives as false truths. This may involve asking others to be an active listener, life coach or Critical Friend to help tease out clarity. For me now, it involves building my listening with my life partner with more

---

<sup>39</sup> Senge, P. (1994). *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of The Learning Organization*. Doubleday Business.

attention. It may involve letting go of my personal expectations, past narratives, or professional relationships, when they no longer serve to support my best self. My challenge ahead is to continue to nurture the right seeds of community and the stillness of the soil for my replenishment after these three years of intense focus. Another challenge is to not allow the past narrative of my experience in public horticulture to frame what is in front of me today. I need to craft or join a supportive community of fellow writers and continue to practice the tools I have gained in the SICW program, in my workplace, and personal life. I am intensely aware that the journey is the gift and that the SICW experience will continue to help me decide the most important support, communities, and actions I need if only I attend to the stillness and listen.



©2009 Rhoda Maurer

## Lost

*Stand still. The trees ahead and bushes beside you  
Are not lost. Wherever you are is called Here,  
And you must treat it as a powerful stranger,  
Must ask permission to know it and be known.  
The forest breathes. Listen. It answers,  
I have made this place around you.  
If you leave it, you may come back again, saying Here.  
No two trees are the same to Raven.  
No two branches are the same to Wren.  
If what a tree or a bush does is lost on you,  
You are surely lost. Stand still. The forest knows  
Where you are. You must let it find you.*

~ David Wagoner from *Collected Poems 1956-1976*



## APPENDIX

While it is not my intention to duplicate what Peter Taylor and Jeremy Szteiter have outlined in their book, Taking Yourself Seriously: Processes of Research and Engagement, which provides guidelines for each of the tools below, I will speak of how these tools have been used outside my SICW classroom experience and the connections I see with building courage for my continued journey. These are not an inclusive list of tools experienced in the SICW program; they are a list of those that have grown deeply into my practice, knowing that others will sprout again later.

### **Daily Writing**

The practice of 15-30 minutes of writing new words in a journal each day has been essential to building the foundation of my research clarity. This has not been without struggle to make the time to craft new words. Competing priorities, the pull of getting daily chores done, and wanting to be supportive of others in both my personal and professional life sometimes find me working from home. The new words are not always immediately evident in how they may relate to my current thinking or research. But they are necessary in the *process* of creating clarity, even if the majority of the words never find their way into any shared writing.

### **Dialogue Process**

Perhaps this is the single most profound experience, practice, and tool that grounded my confidence for process in spaces of potential tension. With practice and intention, I have not only gained confidence in facilitating dialogues in the

classroom, but have extended those practices to my workplace, modifying the exact process to allow for time constraints, and using components of the process to open and close circles of exploratory inquiry where other tools may fit in between. What I realize from using this process is that it needs constant practice to remain proficient. Yet, much like riding a bicycle, once you can lead this process without a supplemental guide, and once you begin living the principles behind the process, you can facilitate its use effectively in many alternative environments. Practicing dialogue and practicing its facilitation help to practice listening and attention; this is the underlying skill that builds the confidence and courage to continue to practice in new places of engagement. The dialogue need not focus solely in places of known tension. Rather, building dialogue practice in spaces of support, like the Writing Workshops experienced in the research and synthesis classes in the SICW program, offers us spaces to practice and build confidence in the process without the added complexity of divided tension.

### **Focused Conversation**

During one of our recruitment efforts, I used the concept of the focused conversation to help me navigate a complex series of interviews for a vacancy. Knowing from past experience that a stakeholder group might have some bias to navigate around one of the internal applicants, I decided to try out the ORID (objective, reflective, interpretive, decisional) tool as a way to understand and move through my thinking carefully. The experience in class built my practice and understanding of the value this tool might use in finding blind spots in our thinking. I found both personal benefit and an opening of thinking among group members when I was able to share the why and how I came to interpretations through observations made. Instead of writing down the interviewee's responses to our questions, I wrote down observations about how each one responded or engaged with the group or individuals present. At the end of our interviews, I shared the process I used to help me navigate the complexity of the interview while sharing the

insights I gained. For me, the transparency of this is as important as the insights gained since no learning is without bias. An important depth of understanding gained was not only the value of practicing these tools in order to better understand how they work in different circumstances, but also how they work for me personally before introducing them to others in a facilitative role.

## **Freewriting**

Freewriting has been a practice I have used since my first experience with it early in my graduate studies, but its frequency of use and where it is used is growing in my practice. I started by using it primarily in preparation for engagement in online classes. Then I found myself using it in preparation for writing assignments, and then in preparation for important discussions at work. Yet all of these have been practiced in private, with the exception of guided freewriting in some of the SICW classes or NewSCC workshops. Granted, the nature and principle of freewriting is to bring yourself into a state of present awareness and to unlock thinking just below the surface, so I'm not suggesting that the content of freewriting become public. Rather that introducing the concept and process with others has been something that I have only begun sharing with a few people at work as a practice around preparing for important meetings. Freewriting has been successful in its intent, although I don't have any other evaluative measure than my "in the moment" realization that it facilitates its immediate purpose of helping to clarify my intent or hopes.

## **Making Space for Taking Initiative in and Through Relationships**

When I first repeatedly experienced the idea of making space for taking initiative in and through relationships, I spent my attention on the actions of relationship building in support of my graduate studies. I took time to clarify what teachers in

the SICW program expected of me since the space of problem-based learning and self-guided inquiry was foreign in my classroom experience. I took time to negotiate and build work relationships around time off from work and provided copies of my work to my supervisor to help him understand what I was spending my time on. This attention was primary to allow me to let go of the anxiety I felt about my studies of interest and my performance. I suffered what I now know to be common to many graduate students, imposter syndrome. Only after the Metacognition class have I realized more deeply how this feeling relates to my feeling of being different than classmates throughout my childhood years. But trying to stay on topic, the practice of actions that I've taken for each class, each semester, and each place of employment has allowed me to dig deeper into understanding that the making space part is a space of tension. For me, it is about learning how to not feel flustered that my time should be spent elsewhere. It is about looking at how the things that seem in tension may be related, so that I know my actions are having impact on the things in tension! Maybe working on one thing helps hold space for the other.

## **Mapping**

The making of maps to outline ideas and their relationships often helps me share my thinking in a way that allows others to speak to the relationships they see, opening me to thinking differently about what I have visualized through the process of making the map. The process of making the map often stirs up the possibilities of connections that I may not have made from my initial thinking. I often learn better with visual metaphors. Through the process of making and sharing thinking maps, I have come to appreciate that they also help me communicate and clarify my own thinking with others. They can be relatively quick to put together and allow me to play with ideas that are less fixed than writing words on a sheet of paper. I have come to prefer the use of Post-It® notes to move themes or ideas around, later seeing patterns that may evolve into a drawing. The freedom of creating and

sharing ideas without any expectation of perfectionism is easily applied with this tool.

### **Personal and Professional Development Workbook**

This concept is different than a simple journal for me because I see this workbook as focused on a project or focused on a particular problem I want to address. I experienced the process of keeping this kind of workbook in the three research classes in the SICW program, Metacognition, Processes of Research and Engagement, and Action Research. Keeping this kind of journal allowed me to organize my thinking in a chronology of processes. The real value in keeping the notebooks was revisiting them. There is value in flipping back through old ideas to see what you've been thinking in order to see anew -- seeing new connections, alternate possibilities, different directions, depths of tensions, clarity or synergy, etc. You have to revisit them in order to make the most of them. These are connected with the mixed messages (both those I've built and recognized in my experience of living) of believing in myself as an agent of change, of having a written record of my objectives, of my thinking and accomplishments which helps keep me from dismissing the impact I've had. This also reminds me of them later, building courage to continue difficult work. As I transition into the role of developing a new vision for Cornell Plantations, I intend to keep this kind of workbook alongside Daily Writing.

### **Plus Delta Feedback**

I appreciate and I wonder, these are two very powerful questions to ask and give as feedback for our work. My first experience with this frame was during our work-in-progress presentations in the SICW program, since they were built into many of the classes as mid-progress thinking strategies. I also experienced the possible brevity of this feedback frame during many of the four-week Collaborative Explorations that

were hosted by the program outside of regular coursework. This brevity did not dilute the power of this kind of feedback. The frame of "what I appreciate" and "what I wonder" held a space of support for the person receiving feedback and focused the person giving feedback to listen differently than if listening for his or her own benefit alone. I have grown this practice into how I frame feedback for my own workplace meetings. I have witnessed again and again how having a simple frame around how to give feedback changes the dynamic of how open people are to receiving it.

### **Sharing of Work to Elicit Responses and Works In Progress**

Sharing Works-in-Progress (WIP) has been built into many of the SICW classes, Collaborative Explorations, and New England Workshop on Science and Social Change. Even though I have years of experience presenting topics and teaching adult education classes, I have always struggled with the anxiety of presenting. The anxiety of performance is part of that, but the deeper anxiety sits in the perfectionism I've struggled with since childhood. Each and every WIP was built by the facilitator and supported by the participants with the frame of being a space where responses would be offered to help the growth of our work. And each WIP built a little more trust that this kind of space would not hold me to having something perfectly thought through. During my last 3-4 classes in the program, I have transitioned to a feeling of looking forward to the WIP presentations, knowing I will gain clarity with my work and knowing that others will support me in that process. I've gained so much comfort with this knowing that I risked presenting a WIP for a job interview, contributing to my position as top candidate. The depth of my wanting this kind of space connects with the practice/play of music and making art that was deeply ingrained in my childhood. I now recognize how powerful this space is alongside the realization of how few places like this exist in adult life. I want to help facilitate spaces with this kind of intentional support for others. In my

immediate future, this seems most likely in my peer group of Cornell Plantations Directors and the Horticulture team I guide.

## **Supportive Listening**

Through multiple attentions to practicing this type of listening, I have gained the insight that this tool intends gentle guidance in support of the teller. There are many ways this can be done, yet I prefer to offer focus on the teller, allowing natural space for silence and carefully crafting and executing questions to support them in finding their own clarification and possible solutions to their problem. The exercise and the comments from other observers to my practice helped me value this tool and appreciate that this might be important to my own understanding of the process as well as the transparency in how I might offer listening to others. This also connects with what a fellow traveler on life's journey to find purpose helped me understand – that this kind of conversation is rare and empowering for the teller. Most striking was this experienced facilitator's comment that the practice is difficult as the listener, knowing what questions to ask when, knowing when to support silence, and reading the subtle language of the teller (not just words).

Julian Weissglass, Director of the Center for Educational Change in Mathematics and Science and Professor of Mathematics at the University of California, Santa Barbara, defines many forms of listening, such as active, passive, inattentive, pretend, conversational, argumentative and informational, before suggesting a definition for constructivist listening as “one that is for the benefit of the talker. The goals are to encourage the talker to reflect on the meaning of events and ideas, express and work through feelings that are interfering with clearer thinking, construct new meanings, and make decisions.”<sup>40</sup> Yet I feel this term of constructivist is a bit too

---

<sup>40</sup> [Weissglass, J.](#) (1990). "Constructivist listening for empowerment and change." *The Educational Forum* 54(4): 351-370.

laced with structural undertones to fully explain the flexibility and adaptability the listener too must practice in order to support the talker in the process.

I can only speculate that this natural growth into supportive listening for others is growing because of paying attention to listening to self. I am choosing to become a better listener. It might be possible to practice being a better listener to myself and have that translate into better listening for others. I have found in recent dialogues the ability to listen to what I am and am not saying (and taking notes with this focus) as a kind of awareness note taking that can be later revisited in reflection. I find myself toggling between attentive listening to what is placed in the space and attentive listening to myself.

### **Think-Pair-Share**

Think-Pair-Share might be an alternative to a go around of individual Check-ins (see Taylor and Szteiter's book). Implementation can be easily structured when co-hosting or organizing meetings. Think-Pair-Share might work in the meetings as a way to build more respect among participants, to give structure to the need to share, and to offer more equity at the table. Additionally, Group Zap or other Post-It® note connecting activities offer ways to synthesize information in community.

Just a year ago I wrote about feeling not quite comfortable with this tool yet, having only experienced it a few times. Adding to my discomfort was realizing the experience of using Group Zap was experimental each time – so it was difficult to feel confident that it gave rise to the intended principles and feelings of engagement and creative learning. Yet in the first month of employment with Cornell Plantations, I have used this as a way to support people being heard when large groups of people were in attendance at meetings. Part of the success was having a bigger process the activity fit into while sharing the hopes of what we might do with what we learn.



## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Baldwin, C. (2005). *Storycatcher: Making Sense of Our Lives through the Power and Practice of Story*. Novato, CA: New World Library.
- Gottschall, J. (2012). *The Storytelling Animal: How Stories Make Us Human*. New York, NY: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company.
- Hayes, S. (2014). The Radical Homemaker Turns 40. Retrieved April 14, 2015, from <http://www.yesmagazine.org/blogs/shannon-hayes/the-radical-homemaker-turns-40>
- Isaacs, W. (1999). *Dialogue and the Art of Thinking Together*. New York, NY.
- Kaesuk Yoon, C. (2009). *Naming Nature: the Clash Between Instinct and Science*. New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company.
- Kasl, C. S. January 2005. *If the Buddha Got Stuck: A Handbook for Change on a Spiritual Path*. Penguin Books.
- Lambert, J. (November 2014). Personal Interview.
- Lambert, J. (2013). *Seven Stages: Story and the Human Experience*. Digital Diner Press.
- Lopez, B. (2014). *What I Learned From 30 Years Of Watching A River*. From The Daily Good Blog at <http://www.dailygood.org/more.php?n=5151>
- Marshall, J. 1999. "Living life as inquiry." In Systemic Practice and Action Research. Vol12.no2.
- Maurer, R. (Dec 2011). *A Time Between*. Rhoda Maurer Photography Blog <https://ramaurer.wordpress.com/2011/12/30/a-time-between/>
- Maurer, R. (2012). *A continued practice: Developing capacity for deep listening*. A working paper for CCT616: University of Massachusetts Boston Graduate Program, Science in a Changing World.
- Maurer, R. (2012). *Cultivating Better Collaborative Explorations: a Discussion about Discovering New Connections in Science and Society*. A working paper for CCT645: University of Massachusetts Boston Graduate Program, Science in a Changing World.
- Maurer, R. (2012). *Using Digital Storytelling to Connect in New Ways with Each Other and to Effect Change in Our Communities: A pilot process of developing personal stories around Climate Change*. A working paper for CCT649: University of Massachusetts Boston Graduate Program, Science in a Changing World.

- Maurer, R. (2013). *A Moment in Time*. Written as a work-in-progress for a Collaborative Exploration: Scaffolding Creative Learning. Hosted in October 2013 by CCT program of UMass Boston.
- Maurer, R. (2013-2015). My daily writing journal.
- Maurer, R. (2014). *A Deliberate Practice to Rejoin Soul with our Work*. A working paper for CCT693: University of Massachusetts Boston Graduate Program, Science in a Changing World.
- Maurer, R. (2014). *How does a botanical garden in a world-class university use its living plant collections to address and interpret contemporary environmental issues? Starting an Exploration with You*. Presentation for Cornell Plantations.
- Maurer, R. (2014). *Restoring Nature While We Restore Ourselves*, (November). A working paper for CCT692: University of Massachusetts Boston Graduate Program, Science in a Changing World.
- Maurer, R. (2015). Written as background to crafting my own leadership definition at Harold D. Craft Leadership Training, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY.
- Maurer, R. (2015). *A Reflection on HDCLP and CCT as applied to my Values and Life Experience*. A working paper for CCT694: University of Massachusetts Boston Graduate Program, Science in a Changing World.
- Maurer, R. (2015). *The Values that I bring to the Principles I Hold Central to how I Practice Leadership have grown from a place of Personal Desire to Find Meaning*. A personal narrative constructed during Harold D. Craft Leadership Workshop, January 2015.
- Metzger, D. (1992). *Writing for Your Life: Discovering the Story of Your Life's Journey*. HarperOne.
- Palmer, P. J. (2004). *A Hidden Wholeness: The Journey Toward an Undivided Life*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Paley, V. G. (1997). Story and play, the original learning tools. Walferdange, Luxembourg. Retrieved from <http://www.script.men.lu/documentation/archiv/decoprim/paley.htm>
- Popova, M. (2015). Mary Oliver on What Attention Really Means and Her Moving Eulogy to Her Soul Mate. from <http://www.brainpickings.org/2015/01/20/mary-oliver-molly-malone-cook-our-world/>
- Scharmer, O. (2015). U.lab: Transforming Business, Society, and Self Source Book. Notebook for MIT edX course.

- Senge, P. (1994). *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of The Learning Organization*. Doubleday Business.
- Taylor, P.J. and Szeiter, J. (2012). *Taking Yourself Seriously: Process of Research and Engagement*. The Pumping Station.
- Wagoner, David from *Collected Poems 1956-1976*
- Watts, Alan. *The Book: On the Taboo Against Knowing Who You Are*. 1966. Random House Inc. New York, NY.
- Weissglass, J. (1990). "Constructivist listening for empowerment and change." *The Educational Forum*. 54(4).
- Wheatley, M. (2005). How is your leadership changing? Retrieved from <http://margaretwheatley.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/How-is-Your-Leadership-Changing.pdf>
- Williamson, M. (1996). *A Return to Love: Reflections on the Principles of A Course in Miracles*. HarperOne.

## SUPPLEMENTAL BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Adams, J., Anderson, P., Anzelone, M., Britton, S., Bullen, P., Collins, T., Fantin, E., Godman, L., Goodness, J., Hefele, N., Lester, T., Lydon, P., Maltby, E., Miss, M., Perelli, L., Radok, S., L. T. and S. V. S. (2014). How can art (in all its forms), exhibits, installations and provocations be a better catalyst to raise awareness, support and momentum for urban nature and green spaces? Retrieved December 16, 2014, from <http://www.thenatureofcities.com/2014/11/02/how-can-art-in-all-its-forms-exhibits-installations-and-provocations-be-a-better-catalyst-to-raise-awareness-support-and-momentum-for-urban-nature-and-green-spaces/>
- Baldwin, C. and Linnea, A. (2010). *The Circle Way: A Leader in Every Chair*. San Francisco, CA: Berret-Koehler Publishers Inc.
- Bayles, D. and Orland, T. (1993). *Art & Fear: Observations on the Perils (and Rewards) of Artmaking*. McNaughton & Gunn Printers.
- Beery, T. H., & Wolf-Watz, D. (2014). Nature to place: Rethinking the environmental connectedness perspective. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 40, 198–205.
- Bobrow, E. (2005). David Foster Wallace, In His Own Words. *Kenyon College*, 1–7.
- Boyd, B. (2009). *On the Origin of Stories*. Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University.
- Dahlstrom, M. F. (2014). Using narratives and storytelling to communicate science with nonexpert audiences. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 111(Supplement\_4), 13614–13620. Retrieved from [http://www.pnas.org/content/111/Supplement\\_4/13614.abstract](http://www.pnas.org/content/111/Supplement_4/13614.abstract)
- Dickinson, J. L. (2009). The People Paradox : Self-Esteem Striving , Immortality Ideologies , and Human Response to Climate Change. *Ecology and Society*, 14(1).
- Dirkx, J. M. (1997). Nurturing Soul in Adult Learning. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, 1997(74), 79–88.
- Eisenstein, C. (n.d.). Self and Cosmos: Human Nature Restored. Retrieved November 21, 2014, from <http://www.ascentofhumanity.com/chapter8-1.php>
- Eisenstein, C. (2015). Changing the Climate Change Narrative. *UTNE Reader*, 77–80.
- Elbow, P. (2008). The Believing Game--Methodological Believing, (January).
- Friedman, S.D. (2014). Integrating Work and Life. Retrieved December 23, 2014, from <http://www.dailygood.org/story/903/integrating-work-and-life-knowledge-wharton/>

- Gardner, J. (1994). The Road to Self-Renewal. *Stanford Alumni Magazine*. Retrieved from <http://faculty-gsb.stanford.edu/aaker/pages/documents/johngardner-roadtoself-renewal2.pdf>
- Gosling, E., & Williams, K. J. H. (2010). Connectedness to nature, place attachment and conservation behavior: Testing connectedness theory among farmers. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 30(3), 298–304.
- Gray, P. (2014). Children are suffering a severe deficit of play. Retrieved October 25, 2014, from <http://aeon.co/magazine/culture/children-today-are-suffering-a-severe-deficit-of-play/>
- Hempton, G., States, U., Inch, O. S., & Foundation, S. (2013). The Extinction of Quiet by Ilima Loomis. Retrieved from <http://www.dailygood.org/story/850/the-extinction-of-quiet-ilima-loomis/>
- Hinds, J., & Sparks, P. (2008). Engaging with the natural environment: The role of affective connection and identity. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 28(2), 109–120.
- Jefferies, R. (1883). *The Story of My Heart*. Richard Jefferies Society Online Publications. Retrieved from <http://richardjefferiessociety.co.uk/Story of My Heart.pdf>
- Jensen, B. (2004). *Letting Go of the Camera: Essays on Photography and the Creative Life*. Anacortes, WA: Lenswork Publishing.
- Kahane, A. (1996). *Changing the World by Changing How We Talk and Listen*. *Changing the World by Changing How We Talk and Listen* (pp. 34–40).
- King, K., & Church, A. (2013). “We don’t enjoy nature like that”: Youth identity and lifestyle in the countryside. *Journal of Rural Studies*, 31, 67–76.
- Kosta. (2013). Why Learning is a Leader’s Most Important Skill. Retrieved from <http://articles3.com/en/articles/why-learning-is-a-leader-s-most-important-skill/>
- Kosta. (2015). Developing Your Leadership Skills. Retrieved from <http://articles3.com/en/articles/business/developing-your-leadership-skills/>
- Lélé, S. (2006). Thinking about ecological sustainability, *Seminar*, 564, 48-52, August.
- Louv, R. (2005). *Last Child in the Woods*. New York, NY: Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill.
- Louv, R. (2012). *The Nature Principle: Reconnecting with Life in a Virtual Age*. Chapel Hill, NC: Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill.

- Maulding, W. S., Peters, G. B., Roberts, J., Leonard, E., & Sparkman, L. (2012). Emotional Intelligence and Resilience As Predictors of Leadership. *Journal of Leadership Studies*, 5(4), 20–30.
- Maurer, R. (2011). *Daddy Longlegs*. Digital Story created at Center for Digital Storytelling Workshop. <https://youtu.be/pyMZorP7W28>.
- Maurer, R. (2012). *A Moment in Time: a letter from Rachel Carson* for CCT602: University of Massachusetts Boston Graduate Program, Science in a Changing World.
- Maurer, R. (2012). *One Photographer's Journey of Self Discovery*. Final narrative for CCT602: University of Massachusetts Boston Graduate Program, Science in a Changing World.
- Metaphorest, RoboJ and Fajijajiga. (2012). *ITERATIONS - A Musical Journey*. From [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jtxN\\_axxmDE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jtxN_axxmDE)
- Meyer, E. (2014). Map Out Cultural Conflicts on Your Team. Retrieved October 22, 2014, from <http://blogs.hbr.org/2014/09/predict-cultural-conflicts-on-your-team/>
- Morgan Reis, S. (1998). *Work Left Undone: Choices & Compromises of Talented Females*. Mansfield Center: Creative Learning Press, Inc.
- Muller, W. (2014). The Only Way We Really Change. Retrieved November 22, 2014, from <http://www.dailygood.org/story/896/the-only-way-we-really-change-wayne-muller/>
- Mumford, M. D., Zaccaro, S. J., Harding, F. D., Jacobs, T. O., & Fleishman, E. A. (2000). Leadership Skills for a Changing World: Solving Complex Social Problems. *Leadership Quarterly*, 11(1), 11–35.
- Outdoor Recreation Participation: Topline Report 2014*. (2014). Washington, DC.
- Paley, V. G. (1997). Story and play, the original learning tools. Walferdange, Luxembourg. Retrieved from <http://www.script.men.lu/documentation/archiv/decoprim/paley.htm>
- Paley, V. G. (2010). *The Boy on the Beach: Building Community through Play* (p. 104). University of Chicago Press. Retrieved from <http://books.google.com/books?id=t2sdKv6noAYC&pgis=1>
- Pergams, O. R. W., & Zaradic, P. A. (2008). Evidence for a fundamental and pervasive shift away from nature-based recreation. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*, 105(7), 2295–300.

- Perrin, J. L., & Benassi, V. A. (2009). The connectedness to nature scale: A measure of emotional connection to nature? *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 29(4), 434–440.
- Popova, M. (2014). A Sweet Celebration of Connection and Inner Softness in a Culture That Encourages Hard Individualism and Prickly Exteriors. Retrieved October 22, 2014, from <http://www.brainpickings.org/2014/09/15/hug-me-simona-ciraolo-book/>
- Proctor, J. D. (2009). Environment After Nature: Time for a New Vision. In *Envisioning Nature, Science and Religion*. West Conshohocken, PA: Templeton Foundation Press.
- Rappaport, J. (1995). Empowerment meets narrative : Listening to stories and creating settings Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 23(5), 795–807.
- Ritchin, F. (2015). How Photography’s “Decisive Moment” Often Depicts an Incomplete View of Reality. Retrieved January 17, 2015, from <http://www.nowseethis.org/thispicture/posts/1459/essay/18>
- Schank, R. C. (2002). Every curriculum tells a story. *International Journal of Cognition and Technology*, 1(1).
- Scharmer, O. (2015). U.Lab: Seven Principles for Revolutionizing Higher Ed. Retrieved February 21, 2015, from [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/otto-scharmer/ulab-seven-principles-for\\_b\\_6697584.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/otto-scharmer/ulab-seven-principles-for_b_6697584.html)
- Scharmer, O. and Kaufer, K. (2013). *Leading from the Emerging Future: From Ego-system to Eco-system Economies*. San Francisco, CA: Berret-Koehler Publishers Inc.
- Senge, P., Scharmer, O., Jaworski, J., Flowers, B.S. (2004). *Presence: Human Purpose and the Field of the Future*. Crown Business.
- Sinclair Bell, J. (York U. (2008). Narrative Inquiry : More Than Just Telling Stories Jill Sinclair Bell. *TESOL Quarterly*, 36(2), 207–213.
- Sinek, S. (2013). *Why Leaders Eat Last*. <https://vimeo.com/79899786>
- Suzuki, D. and Grady, W. (2004). *Tree: a life story*. Vancouver, BC: Greystone Books.
- Svoboda, E. (2015). Across time and culture, stories have been agents of personal transformation – in part because they change our brains. The Power of Story: Retrieved February 21, 2015, from <http://www.dailygood.org/more.php?n=6247>
- Szpakowski, S. (2010). *Little Book of Practice for Authentic Leadership in Action*. Halifax, Nova Scotia: ALIA Institute.

- Taylor, P. J. (2005). *Unruly Complexity*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Valente, M. (2014). A coaching journey to explore your purpose in the world. Retrieved November 11, 2014, from <http://eccemarco.wordpress.com/2014/10/12/a-coaching-journey-to-explore-your-purpose-in-the-world/>
- Walker, P. (2001). Journeys around the Medicine Wheel: A Story of Indigenous Research in a Western University, 29(2), 18. Retrieved from <http://search.informit.com.au/documentSummary;dn=249291504077478;res=IELIND>
- Wallace, D. F. (2013). *THIS IS WATER*. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DKYJVV7HuZw>
- Wheatley, M. (n.d.). Margaret Wheatley : On Working With Human Goodness by Margaret Wheatley. Retrieved from <http://www.dailygood.org/story/842/margaret-wheatley-on-working-with-human-goodness-margaret-wheatley/>
- Wheatley, M., and Frieze, D. (2008). Using Emergence to Take Social Innovation to Scale. Retrieved from <http://margaretwheatley.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/How-is-Your-Leadership-Changing.pdf>