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Building a Bridge to a New Career: On Becoming a Life Coach

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Building a Bridge to a New Career: 
On Becoming a Life Coach

by

Lydia Rose Pettis

An Abstract of a Project
in
Creative Studies

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
for the Degree of

Master of Science

May 2010

Buffalo State College
State University of New York
Department of Creative Studies
ABSTRACT OF PROJECT

Building a Bridge to a New Career:  
On Becoming a Life Coach

The purpose of this project is to explore the possibility of becoming a life coach. It pulls together readings in key areas of personal interest that contribute to the development of a personal philosophy of coaching: visualization, questions, and humanistic psychology. The project documents an integrative process. As one cycle comes to an end I am reaching into the near and distant past, and combining skills, talents, and abilities in a new (and some would say surprising) way. The project is intended to lay the groundwork for starting a coaching practice in the near future.

Lydia Rose Pettis  
Candidate for Masters of Science

Date
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Dates of Approval:

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Lydia Rose Pettis
Candidate for Masters of Science
Dedication

For Scamper and Yvonne

Without whom, surely, none of this would be possible.
Table of Contents

The Wheel is Turning 1

Digging Deeper 10
  ➢ Imagery 11
  ➢ Questioning Frameworks 19

How in the World…? 33

I’m On My Way 37

Time to Reflect 63

After Some is Said and Done 68

References 71

Appendices 77
  ➢ A – Choice Model 78
  ➢ B – Self-Perception Chart 81
  ➢ C – Values of Coaching 83
  ➢ D – Pencil Visualization 87
  ➢ E – Concept Paper 89
List of Figures

Figure 1 – Wright’s Coaching Strategy .............................................. 28
The Wheel is Turning

There is a time for everything,
and a season for every activity under heaven:

a time to be born and a time to die,
a time to plant and a time to uproot

Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 (New International Version)
We sometimes get permission to do new things from unexpected sources. Mine came during a psychic reading, in which I was informed that my guides were screaming at me to leave my current job. The world was waiting for me, I was told. Naturally, the guides were silent on the obvious follow-up questions: what should I be doing, where should I go, and what, exactly, was everyone waiting for? Oh, and by the way, why would the world possibly be waiting for me? Really, you have to take such exhortations with a very big grain of salt. Nonetheless, a seed had been planted, and soon it leapt to my mind that I did, in fact, want to do something new. Exactly what that might be was rather hazy, but as I turned this idea over in my mind I felt like a gardener turning over fresh earth in springtime. The desire to dig my hands and mind into something alive with possibility blended with the promise of the unknown bursting into bloom, and before I knew it I realized the true extent of my discontent at work and was ready to walk through any door that opened before me. And so one day in the spring of 2008, as I was enjoying my daily stroll, I thought: “I know - I can get a Master’s degree in Creativity! What better place to come up with some really bright ideas and find a great support group.” Now, I work at a major university and had said for the previous twenty years that I would never go back to school again. So it must certainly be obvious that I was rattled by those guides screaming at me, in spite of the big grain of salt.

While it may seem at this point that I am an airhead flake, in fact I am completely grounded and present in the world. It is much more accurate to say that I have arrived at a point in my life where I trust my intuition and I have chosen to step
out in faith. It has not been easy to arrive at this point, and pieces of that story will be revealed as I document a portion of my journey for this project.

As the “Data Queen” at a university library, my job is to create a variety of management reports from our online library management system. Over a period of six months in 2000, I was engaged in the process of converting ten years’ worth of computer programs from one platform to another. This experience re-connected me with a sense of creativity, and I discovered that the ability to ask questions was one of the foundations of my creativity. I found myself repeatedly asking questions such as: *How am I going to do this? Uh-oh, what just went wrong? How might I figure this out? What else can I try? What’s the best way of doing that? This works, but how can I make it run faster? How else can this be done? How can I make this piece of the puzzle visible so I can see what’s happening?* The excitement I felt doing this work led me to the Creative Problem Solving Institute (CPSI) in 2001 and 2002, to the International Center for the Study of Creativity (ICSC) Master’s degree program at Buffalo State College in 2008, and ultimately to the decision to pursue a career as a life coach.

Looking back on my experience at the ICSC at Buffalo State, it seems as though every course and paper has taken me one step closer to the end I now find myself pursuing: becoming a life coach. I have been given opportunities to explore areas of interest, to reflect on pivotal influences in my life, and to think deeply about what I believe and what is important to me. At the same time, I have taken risks and stepped into my stretch zone as we have learned and experimented with new ideas, tools and techniques, and roles. In Mary Murdock’s *Foundations in Teaching and
Training Creativity class during the winter of 2009, I chose to work with individuals as I practiced facilitating the Creative Problem Solving (CPS) process. This was such an interesting and enjoyable experience that it occurred to me that I might like to be a life coach, and I played around with this idea for quite some time. Then, during an astrology reading in the summer of 2009, I was asked if I had ever considered guiding people to understand what their lives mean in newer, deeper, more meaningful ways. The indicators in my chart emphasized that it was time to take my uniqueness and inspire the unique potential in others. This attunement with the stars confirmed that another door had opened before me, and I walked through it, joining a professional coach training program that began in the fall of 2009.

**Overview of the Coach Training Program**

I am currently enrolled in an 8-month training program with the Institute for Professional Excellence in Coaching (iPEC). As it’s web-site explains, “iPEC’s Accredited Coach Training Program consists of 4 face-to-face intensive weekends, peer coaching, peer groups, niche specialty programs, mentor coaching, practice development, teleclasses, required reading, and other self-study assignments. The program has more than 350 training hours” (iPEC, 2010).

iPEC has three benefits that many coach training programs do not. While several programs are offered exclusively via teleclasses, iPEC offers four intensive 3-day live training events. To fully support its coaches, iPEC offers a business module to help people get started in their business. Surprisingly, it is the only company that provides this service. Finally, the cost of mentor coaching is included in the tuition
package. Most other companies set their tuition and then require the students to hire a mentor coach independently, at additional cost to the student.

Two of the four weekend trainings were completed in November 2009 and January 2010, prior to this last semester of the Master’s program. The third 3-day program was held in April 2010. The final training is in early June 2010. Approximately five hours of phone calls are required each week: 1 hour as a peer coach, 1 hour being coached by a peer, 1 hour participating in a niche peer group, and 1.5 hours on a weekly teleclass. In addition, I have been working with three clients outside of the training program.

For a period of twelve weeks, from February to April, there were weekly Peer Special Interest Group (P-SIG) meetings. These consisted of hour-long phone calls each week for twelve weeks, with each call having a specific topic for discussion. The focus of the P-SIG sessions is to explore and discover whom we want to work with, what our area of specialization might be, and how we want to work with our clients. In many ways it seems too early to make such a decision, and I would like a great deal more experience before I lock myself into any particular niche or clientele. Nonetheless, I find that some preferences are taking shape and making themselves known. Ideas and possibilities are beginning to emerge that are worth capturing. In order to be ready to phase into a coaching business over the course of the next year, I am devoting this project to the process of fleshing out some of these fundamental pieces of the puzzle. Tangible outcomes will include a philosophy of coaching, several quick networking statements, two niche scenarios, answers to anticipated questions, and brief descriptions of two workshops I might offer.
Who Am I?

The choices of who, what and how I want to coach must certainly be grounded in the basics of who I am, and what I have to offer that is unique. I am a woman of a certain age who has lived a solitary life, accompanied for much of the time by beloved cats. I have had the privilege of living an introspective life, spiraling into the center of my being to understand myself and heal old wounds. I freely confess that I find myself to be endlessly fascinating (I was fifty years old before I had an inkling of boredom with myself, and that did not last very long). In another day and age I might have chosen a cloistered life. My work over a period of years with a therapist has transformed my perceptions of self and of the world, and released me from worry and anxiety. Having reached my center, I am now unwinding the spiral and moving outward. For a long time I had to carefully protect my inner flame to prevent it from being snuffed out. Now I am fanning the flame to intensify its glory. I am the center of my universe, and am the most important person in my world. I easily joke “it’s all about me!” Clearly, these experiences and attitudes set me apart from the norm. I am generally recognized as being eccentric.

My strongest talents include making the complex simple, facilitative training, problem-solving, communicating, and enabling others to act. I have a diverse background, with training and experience in theater education, camping and outdoor education administration, working in an academic environment, and programming with relational databases. I create safe, collaborative learning communities. My prized qualities include compassion, sensitivity, awareness, sitting in the unknown, and being of service.
The tension created by these apparently opposing tendencies has been a vast source of entertainment (this is the kindest word I can think of) to me over the years. During a relaxing stroll through the woods, my daydreams are likely to be interrupted with a flood of creative ideas for the next event or workshop. On the day of a planned program, an inner voice suggests that it might just be time to go home now. The balance of power is beginning to shift as I spiral out from my center. My solitary aspect, which has been in ascendency most of my life, is beginning to give ground to the ham in me as I open to my creativity in a different way. This is a process of becoming visible in the world, my greatest desire as well as my greatest fear.

Many years ago I chose not to start an independent business because I recognized that many aspects of that would be challenging. Networking and social mixing can be over-stimulating and are not high on my skill list. Working in an institution offers structured social interactions that are very safe. Operating as an independent contractor, I might discover that I prefer contemplating the state of the universe over getting down to business. I like the structure of an organization and appreciate a regular paycheck and benefits. However, as an aging baby boomer, the idea of a business I can “carry with me” is very appealing. Over the years I have grown and changed in significant ways that may reduce the potential negatives. Paying attention to these issues is an important part of the coach training process.

As we are sinking into the deepest recession in a generation, I am preparing to leave a well-paid full-time job (with great benefits) to begin a new career, possibly in a new location. Normally a somewhat cautious, practical-minded person, this business of stepping into the great unknown is certainly a leap of faith. I was once
described as “being led by a spotlight in my heart.” I have always trusted this instinctual knowing. It has kept me out of some sticky situations and led me down a path that feels just right in spite of, or because of, the challenges I have confronted. A major life cycle is coming to an end. Another is just beginning.

**What do I have to offer as a coach?**

The purpose of my life has been to understand myself. There is not much that I don’t know about the inner journey, its pain and perils and its joy and triumphs. I am intimately familiar with the state of “not knowing.” I have learned that the only way to move past fear is to go through it. My experience has been all about paying attention to myself. Very few people in the world do this… certainly not to the extent that I do. This is something I know how to do. I have struggled with issues of faith and responsibility.

A primary leadership practice is enabling others to act. A key talent that has run through all of my careers is strengthening others by developing their competence and building their self-worth. I have a keen ability to communicate effectively with people at all levels, and am responsive to needs of the people I work with, supplying clear and concise information when needed. I have guided hundreds of people at work through major technological changes with sensitivity and compassion.

My high preference for clarifying contributes to my ability to make the complex simple. This builds confidence in people and reduces stress and anxiety. Through teaching and training, I give people tools to do new things and prepare them for future action and improvements.
Although my creativity lived underground for decades, it is re-emerging in a variety of ways. My background in camping and theater education, my interest in imagery and the power of visualization, and the knowledge I’ve gained about creative problem solving provide the basis for playful and meaningful exploration.

Finally, over the years I have gained a bit of wisdom that may prove helpful in coaching. For instance, I have noticed that people tend to get immobilized in the midst of change by imagining everything that needs to be done, and then believing it needs to be done all at once. Not surprisingly, when confronted with the prospect of rolling a hundred pound ball uphill, they choose not to do anything. Change, however, consists of taking one small step at a time – as I know all too well.
Digging Deeper

Imagery

This morning at waterside, a sparrow flew
to a water rock and landed, by error, on the back
of an eider duck; lightly it fluttered off, amused.
The duck, too, was not provoked, but, you might say, was
laughing.

... 

Oh, Lord, how shining and festive is your gift to us, if we
only look, and see.

Mary Oliver

Questions

Have patience with everything that is unsolved in your heart and
try to cherish the questions themselves...

Do not search now for the answers which cannot be given you
because you could not live them.

It is a matter of living everything.

Live the questions now.

Perhaps you will then gradually, without noticing it,
one distant day live right into the answer.

Rainer Maria Rilke
Imagery

“Definite images have driving power. Like seeds, they have a life of their own.”
(Builders of the Adytum, 1961a, p. 2)

Forty years ago I read On Becoming a Person by Carl Rogers, and took my first conscious step onto the path of self-discovery by planting a seed chock full of the possibility of becoming more truly myself. In the intervening years I have nurtured and sheltered that seed; I have protected my inner light from the wind and fanned its flame, shown up and run away, struggled and triumphed, plumbed the depths and emerged into the light. Imagery is the touchstone to which I have returned again and again on this journey of becoming and healing. Standing at a critical crossroads, a spotlight would reveal the way. Images, like lampposts, mark and illuminate significant stages and events. I have sheltered in caves, found sanctuary on a protected island and ventured forth, drawn to myself a job that fulfilled an essential need, and stood in the center of polarities and made them one in me. Today I can recall with great clarity many of the images that heralded change in my life. While some were consciously conceived, others rose up and presented themselves to me. A very few became me. The most powerful images are imbued with emotion. In addition to my natural use of imagery, I have studied Tarot extensively through Builders of the Adytum (BOTA), an authentic Mystery School in the Western Tradition (BOTA, 2010). BOTA’s multi-year course of study of archetypal images containing ancient spiritual techniques and truths has profoundly affected me.

A thread about polarity and integration weaves in and out of the readings about creativity and imagery. I have often pictured myself as the centerpiece of a scale, holding two diametrically opposed feelings in my hands. Sitting with the
accompanying tension and unease, I wondered, “What do I do now?” Eventually I simply accepted that two mutually exclusive feelings could both be true at the same time. Later I realized that they were two sides of the same coin. From there it was a short leap to realizing they were one. Finally, they became one in me. The desire to move from dissonance to congruence is a deep-seated and powerful need, driving me to make significant changes in my attitudes, my behavior, and my life. In fact, this has been the focal point of ten years of therapy, so this theme has special significance for me.

Curiously, although the literature describes this as a characteristic trait of creative people, I never identified this facet of my behavior as creative. MacKinnon states, “the creative person has the capacity to tolerate the tension that strong opposing values create in him, and in his creative striving he effects some reconciliation of them” (1962, p. 490). Ainsworth-Land (1982) points out that in Maslow’s theory of self-actualization “internal dichotomies were resolved into unities” (p. 15). Torrance and Hall (1980) observe that highly creative people have the practical ability to solve “collision type conflicts for which there are no logical solutions.” They go on to elaborate:

Highly creative people are at the same time more masculine and more feminine, more conforming and more nonconforming, more independent and more dependent, more serious and more playful, more timid and more bold, more certain and more uncertain, and more receptive and more self-acting than their less creative peers. They successfully integrate these polar opposites
into their personality and their thinking and they seem to have an unexplainable ability to solve problems which appear to defy logical, rational solutions. (p. 10)

Polarity is also a primary theme in Forisha’s review of mental imagery and creativity (1978), and she references several authors who have observed this quality in creative people. She summarizes her findings by observing that the process of growth may be based in this integrative work, and that differences in creative style may be related to this ability.

It is here in the literature that I see myself mirrored. However, even though I embody polarities, it has not been clear to me how that quality contributes to my creative ability. Being comfortable with “not knowing” and tolerant of ambiguity seemed to have a much more direct impact on my sense of creativity. Torrance (1979) clarified this issue for me by observing:

The creativity that comes from the collision of opposites and their integration seems to represent a highlighting of the essence of the problem. The creative solution that results from this collision of opposites comes about as a unity of these opposites. (p.55)

Even though my experience of opposites tends to the extremes at each end of a continuum, the word “collision” is appropriate in that it reflects the upheaval and distress that results from this type of dissonance. Torrance’s comment is very insightful in that it captures something that is very hard to see when you are sitting in the midst of this, namely, that in these moments one is sitting in the middle of a problem space.

Imagery has played a dramatic role in my life. During my childhood my imagery was largely metaphorical, providing pictures that reflected my emotional states. Later I was able to consciously use imagery to counteract negativity and
change self-defeating patterns. Occasionally I have created a picture of that which I desire and proceeded with appropriate action, leading to the fulfillment of my desire. I have used Tarot archetypes to awaken intuition, and in the application of ancient principles for the purposes of spiritual attunement. My personal experience informs me that imagery can consciously and creatively be applied in a variety of circumstances with great success. In what ways can I share this knowledge? How can I facilitate the inner journey? How might I create a safe learning environment for the exploration of imagery?

There is a significant body of New Age literature on the role of visualization in creating and attracting our reality (Gawain, 2008; Mariechild, 1988; Shone, 1998; Webster, 2005). I vividly remember buying the first edition of Shakti Gawain’s book *Creative Visualization* in 1978. She introduced a whole generation of seekers to the concept of creating your reality through the power of visualization and affirmations. Her book still has power today, with its blend of straightforward explanations and simple visualization and meditation techniques. Diane Mariechild’s *Mother Wit* is a feminist classic, chock full of relaxation techniques and empowering visualizations especially for women. Shone (1998) clearly articulates two simple yet powerful principles of visual images: they influence both the body and behavior, and “emotion provides the energy for the transformation” (p. 20). Few authors emphasize the importance of emotion in the imaginative process, yet my experience leads me to believe that charging our images with feeling is a critical factor for success.

While everybody today talks about the Law of Attraction and creating what you want in life as if it were a new discovery, in fact this knowledge is rooted in
esoteric teachings and wisdom. Early lessons from Builders of the Adytum state:

“Your mental pictures are realities which you possess at the moment you contemplate them” (BOTA, 1961b, p4). Further, “the condition of today is always the result of the images of your yesterdays. You have built your present circumstances by subconscious response to mental imagery. Your future will be the materialization of what you image now” (BOTA, 1961c, pp. 2-3). Modern science seems to be confirming this ancient knowledge. In the preface of her book *The Intention Experiment*, McTaggart (2008) notes “heretical evidence” discovered by leading researchers in quantum physics that “suggested that consciousness is a substance outside the confines of our bodies – a highly ordered energy with the capacity to change physical matter” (p. xv). As a contemplative introvert who has spent a lifetime on an interior journey, I have discovered that all of this, and more, is true. Woodrow Wilson also appears to have been familiar with these precepts, writing:

> We grow great by our dreams. All big men are dreamers. They see things in the soft haze of a spring day or in the red fire of a long winter’s evening. Some of us let these great dreams die but others nourish and protect them; nurse them through bad days till they bring them to the sunshine and light which comes always to those who sincerely hope that their dreams will come true. (Webster, 2005, p. x)

> Imagery is an integrative force linking mind, heart, and spirit. Equating spiritual intelligence with the capacity for heart-centered inner experience, Sisk and Torrance (2001) describe training programs and methods designed to develop and nurture spiritual intelligence.

Daniels-McGhee and Davis (1994) present an historical perspective of imagery from Plato to the present time. The earliest directed uses of imagery were for memory and learning. Exploring the relationship of imagery to religious practice and
doctrine, the authors refer to research that traces the decline of imagery and the rise of verbal communication during the Protestant Reformation. This is but one of many examples of the repression of the Divine Feminine, in this case by attempting to stamp out interior right-brain activity and encouraging instead a more external, linear, masculine, and objective style of communication. It is fascinating and disturbing that the Church substantially succeeded in this endeavor to repress inner and intuitive thought processes. Even in the last century many people, including the behavioral psychologists, pooh-poohed the existence of images. Jung brought this life force back into the open by delving deeply into imagery and establishing the concept of archetypal images that are part of a collective unconscious.

Exploring the relationship of imagery to intuition, Shallcross and Sisk (1989) acknowledge that “[t]he power of the unconscious is most directly evoked by the deliberate practice of imagery and visualization skills” (p.35). They go on to discuss the two-way communication that allows intuition to access what is deep inside by delivering images to our conscious minds. We create conscious images to implant seeds of possibility in our subconscious. However, I think the authors overlook a vital concept when suggesting visualization techniques. Offering examples of making collages and writing affirmations (as do most “authorities” on visualization), they leave out what I believe is an essential piece of the puzzle. It is not enough to create an external picture. You must hold the picture in your mind’s eye. It is not enough to say the words. You must capture the feeling essence of the words and deliver the feelings, as well as the message, to your subconscious mind. The power is in the formation of interior images that are saturated with emotion.
De Mille (1976) devised a series of imaginative games for children that introduce them to many important ideas about the imagination. The games help the learner to distinguish between fantasy and reality, and to gain conscious control of many creative skills, such as exploring and visualizing possibilities, and exercising the various SCAMPER functions like substitution, adapting, and minimizing. (SCAMPER is an acronym that stands for substitute, combine, adapt, modify, put to other uses, eliminate and rearrange. The concepts were originated by Osborn in 1949.) By helping students understand what is expected, and providing opportunities to practice, de Mille guides and supports the learner in becoming proficient in imagining. One interesting feature of the games is the emphasis on leaving the details up to the participants. While most guided meditations situate the visualization in a particular place and provide explicit sensory descriptions, the guided narrative in Put Your Mother on the Ceiling purposely minimizes descriptive details. In this way students are given the opportunity to gain control of their own process, and to see that they are the ones actually making these things happen in their imagination.

Affirming that we can manipulate our images, Prince (1975) notes that often we “are unaware of this powerful capacity for experiencing change without danger” (p. 168). He goes on to remind us that in the world of imaging we are “absolutely powerful.” On the other hand, Forisha (1978) points out a potential danger of imagining: “We can create a view of the world which may greatly enhance our life or one which engages us in a prison of our own making” (p 213). In fact, my own early experiences with images did reinforce a sense of being powerless and imprisoned. Being unaware of the control that I was exercising, it never occurred to me that I
could adjust, modify, or change any portion of that process. I wonder how my life might have been different if I had been provided opportunities to practice this type of imaginative stretching.

There is great transformative power in images that grow from the heart and are grounded in spirit. Imagery has the power to lead people out of darkness and into the light.

How might I take this knowledge and experience into the future?

In what ways can I facilitate the movement from darkness to light?

How can I share my journey with others and act as a guide and inspiration?
Questioning Frameworks
and Their Application to Life Coaching

“[I]t is the act of questioning that causes us to go deep inside and examine our emotional selves and questioning that causes us to take actions that turn our lives around” (Leeds, 2000, p. 1).

As a computer programmer I am an expert at working with data, and have developed a series of questions that I ask at every step of the programming and problem-solving process. Clearly, working with people in a coaching situation is different from data analysis in many respects. The ability to ask powerful and empowering questions of the client is an essential coaching skill, perhaps the most important talent a coach possesses. Shifting from sitting alone in my office examining data to engaging a person in meaningful conversation on a broad range of personal topics represents a major shift in focus. It also presents a number of questions: What information, skills and processes do I already possess that I can transfer to the coaching experience? How will I know what to ask and when to ask it? How might I integrate what I’m learning into the fabric of my being? These are some of the questions that are driving this study.

Why are questions important? Questions are a fundamental element of any conversation. Leeds (2000) enumerates seven powers of questions. They require answers, provoke a seeking frame of mind, and provide valuable information. Questions also put you in control, get others to open up, and support quality listening. Finally, when people answer their own questions they persuade themselves to take action. Questions, and the seeking of answers, have played a pivotal role in shaping my life. As a life coach, it is likely that the questions I use will impact the lives of others. In order to use the power of the question wisely, part of the journey toward
being a coach must certainly include learning about its use and application. In this chapter I will share some of my background as it relates to questions and explore a variety of questioning frameworks that are represented in the literature of creativity, coaching, therapy, personal growth and self-improvement, and experiential education. My intent is to form a personal framework of questioning strategies and to compile a ready reference for various questioning scenarios.

**Deep Learning - What do I already know?**

Computer programmers are in the business of solving problems. Typically we are asked to fulfill a wish or goal. This is followed by a fact-finding stage, where we flesh out the basic information that will drive the parameters of the project. There is a stage of negotiation and clarification as we work with the requestor to establish a common language and understanding of the task at hand, to make sure there is a clear understanding of the problem. We then brainstorm ideas about the best programming approach, and engage in a process of experimentation and refinement as we develop a final product. Feedback is solicited from the requestor before putting the program in production. The questioning framework that I have employed for years as a computer programmer is closely aligned with Torrance’s definition of creativity: “the process of sensing gaps or disturbing, missing elements; forming ideas or hypotheses concerning them; testing these hypotheses; and communicating the results, possibly modifying and retesting the hypotheses” (Torrance, 1963, p. 16). Similar to the scientific method, this statement recognizes problem-solving and discovery as a process, with identifiable stages. Early in this process the context must be established: What do you want to do? Why is this important to you? How will this be used?
Different types of questions are asked at each stage of a problem-solving process. Another way of putting that is that questions can serve different purposes, and can be used in a variety of ways.

Quite often, the people asking for a management report do not have an adequate understanding of the system to be able to articulate clearly what they need. Conversely, it is often not clear what needs to be asked to resolve a problem that arises in the program development stage. In both of these instances, it is necessary to ask a variety of exploratory questions to discern both the need and possibilities for solution. What do you mean by that? How do you want to use this? What just went wrong? How can I isolate the records that might be causing this problem? A critical insight arising out of my programming experience is that I often use questions to make visible that which is hidden.

My experience in therapy contributes other tidbits of knowledge. The pace at which questions are asked is important, and may vary from person to person. Questions help people to feel that you are interested in them. People will answer the most surprising questions, even if asked by a stranger. Questions can be used to facilitate connections to oneself, others, and the world. They focus attention, and can shift perceptions. For instance, struggles can be viewed as learning opportunities. Open-ended questions encourage and support exploration and discovery.

**Creative Problem Solving**

The Creative Problem Solving (CPS) methodology has been studied, practiced, and refined for over forty years at Buffalo State College (Noller, Parnes & Biondi, 1976; Parnes 1967; Puccio, Murdock & Mance, 2007; VanGundy, 1987).
Focusing on the business of solving problems, it has evolved over the years into three components, representing a total of six stages: explore the challenge (identify a goal, discover facts, and clarify the problem), generate ideas, and prepare for action (select and strengthen a solution, plan for action). Each of these stages has a divergent and a convergent step. Alex Osborn (1953), the “inventor” of brainstorming, and Sidney Parnes, the guiding force for the creation of the Creative Studies department at Buffalo State College, initiated the development of this methodology and its associated tools and techniques. Each stage of the model includes its own questioning strategy, often making use of question stems to prompt a certain type of investigation. For instance, when identifying a wish or goal, prompts like \textit{Wouldn’t it be great} or \textit{I wish} might be employed. To uncover facts, the well-known “5 W’s and an H” (who, what, where, when, why and how) will be called upon. To assist in looking at a problem from many different angles, one can make use of the stems \textit{How can I…}, or \textit{What might be all the ways…}\textbackslash

\textbf{Shifting Energy} \textbackslash

[Q]uestions are the primary means by which doing, having, accomplishing, and growing are catalyzed - and often even made manifest - in our lives. Because questions are intrinsically related to action, they spark and direct attention, perception, energy, and effort, and so are at the heart of the evolving forms that our lives assume. (Goldberg, 1998, p. 3) \textbackslash

People seek out coaches when they want to make specific changes in their lives. Often clients encounter blocks that interfere with their ability to take the required action to initiate change. An essential coaching skill is the ability to help the client shift energy from habitual patterns of behavior and thought that tend to hold one in place to more open attitudes that admit a greater sense of possibility. Two
authors address this issue of shifting energy and propose similar strategies while using very different language.

In her first book, *The Art of the Question: A Guide to Short-Term Question-Centered Therapy*, Goldberg (1998) presents specific questioning techniques that help clients to better evaluate the choices available to them and take increasing responsibility for their decisions and actions. Her second book, *Change Your Questions, Change Your Life: 7 Powerful Tools for Life and Work* (Adams, 2004), frames the essential concepts for a more popular audience. The “Choice Model” (see Appendix A) has as a basic thesis the idea that in any situation we have a choice about how we react; we can walk down the Judger Path or the Learner Path. The distinguishing features of each path are discerned by paying attention to our self-talk. Judgers tend to believe that others are to blame for their problems. Casting others in the role of winners, judgers become losers. The questions they ask are critical and blaming. Having given away their power, and lacking knowledge of other behavioral options, they repeat automatic reaction patterns. The final result is that they end up going around in circles, stuck in the “judging pit.” Learners, on the other hand, exhibit more creative traits: they are open and curious, solution-focused, and believe that everyone can win. Demonstrating metacognition, learners assess the facts of a situation, examine assumptions, look for learning opportunities, and consider many possibilities for action. Once a person is aware of these two behavioral types, she can use “switching questions” to move from the Judging path to the Learner path. The switching questions are simply reminders to pay attention to behavior, take a look at the facts, and question assumptions. In summary, this methodology helps a person to
assess the positive or negative orientation of his attitude and behavior based on self-talk. Clients are then supplied with specific questioning strategies to help them shift to a more positive and open view of a situation. Recognizing that they have choice in every moment about how to react, people are likely to feel more in control of their lives. Implicit in the model is an assumption that people are likely to make better and more informed choices as a result of asking learner questions.

Schneider (2008) presents a somewhat more complex model that encompasses levels of consciousness, core thoughts and feelings, and action/results. In the *Energetic Self Perception* framework (see Appendix B) there are three levels of consciousness and seven energy levels. The lowest part of the continuum represents a victim mentality, indicated by apathy and lethargy. At the highest end of the scale is an attitude of non-judgment, which is linked to passion and creation. Schneider’s working hypothesis is:

> **Your thoughts determine your feelings and emotions, and your feelings and emotions shape your actions. Based on what you think and feel about yourself and the people around you, you create your world. Although your world is totally real to you, there’s no ‘reality’ to it, except how you personally define what you see.** (p. 20)

As the founder of the Institute for Professional Excellence in Coaching (iPEC), Schneider is focused on shifting people to the highest energy level possible. Working with a client, the core energy coach will introduce the Energetic Self-Perception chart and ask the client to assess the level of thought, feeling, and action that is present in herself or others in the current situation. For instance, people who are angry and aggressive manifest the conflict energy of Level 2. As in the Learner/Judger model, the first step is to bring awareness to current behavior and
introduce the idea that change is possible. Once a particular dynamic has been identified, the implications and consequences of specific behaviors and attitudes can be explored. What are the underlying belief structures? How does this behavior affect others? What do you think happens at the next energy level? What energy level would you like to be operating at? How would that look? What changes do you need to make to move to that level?

It is worth noting that the intended target audiences for these techniques are somewhat different. The Judger/Learner model was originally designed to support people in therapy who were exhibiting behaviors that gave them a feeling of being trapped with no way out. The Energy Leadership model was designed for coaching scenarios, where the focus is on helping people find optimal solutions to present-day problems. As a participant in the iPEC Coach Training program, I will be receiving training in the Energy Leadership model in June 2010. The Energy Leadership model is especially well suited for organizational leaders who want to maximize the effectiveness of their teams. Successful implementation of this model would seem to require a willingness to examine personal behavior as well as the behavior of employees. An underlying goal of the model is to set up a strategic mindset for understanding employee dynamics and introducing specific behavioral changes.

Both models involve changing the one person you can change – yourself – by focusing on identifying negative behaviors and taking specific steps to change your behavior to elevate the level of energy. The Judger/Learner model points out that when your behavior changes, the behavior of those around you will also change. The Energy Leadership model encourages leaders to look not only at themselves but also
at their employees, and to create strategies for impacting employee behavior that will result in more positive energy levels.

**Experiential Learning**

While most coaching is done with individuals, my experience as a facilitator and trainer makes it likely that part of my business will involve conducting experiential workshops for personal growth and development. The Experiential Learning Cycle (ELC) would seem to have application in both individual and group coaching experiences (Project Adventure, 2007). Highlighting a four-phase process, the ELC model is grounded in concrete experience. To help participants derive meaning from an activity, three simple questions can be asked: what, so what, and now what? These questions allow the group to observe and reflect on what just happened (what?), to attend to the consequences of what happened and form a generalization (so what?), and to transfer the learning to other situations (now what?).

Project Adventure’s *Debriefing Tools* workshop highlights processing skills and other specific uses of questions that focus on maintaining a cognitive awareness of what is happening and how one is reacting to the activity or event. Facilitators can use questions to draw out learning, test perceptions, explore deeply, and diagnose what is happening. To facilitate debriefing, questions are organized into objective-based categories, such as follow-up, exploring, challenging, directed, and inviting (Project Adventure, 2007). Knapp (1984) developed an *Idea Notebook* that organizes questions by program objectives, and lists several questions for objectives such as communicating effectively, deferring judgment, trusting the group, and closure.
Focusing on the process-related aspects of conducting an extended workshop program, Strachan (2007) presents a guide emphasizing appropriate questions for various aspects and components of an event, such as opening and closing a session, enabling action, thinking critically, and addressing issues. An advantage of workshop design is that the content is structured and formatted in a way that allows you to pre-plan your questions for every aspect of the program. Throughout the volume, Strachan presents “question banks” or lists of questions for each area being explored. This focus on process highlights questioning from a slightly different perspective and helps me as a facilitator to create a process plan to meet my coaching objectives.

Questions for Coaches

Not surprisingly, there are several books that focus exclusively on coaching-related questions. Stoltzfus (2008) presents an action-oriented guide that is chock full of exercises and coaching tools for specific situations. Containing hundreds of questions, the book focuses the reader on a range of topics. Starting with how to use questions to move from a surface conversation to a deeper, more significant experience, the author moves on to explore conversational models and how to define the problem and create goals. Probing questions lead the coach into techniques for generating options and overcoming obstacles. A substantial part of the book centers on coaching in particular niches, such as life, small business, and wellness coaching. With my particular interest in life coaching, I am intrigued with Stolzfus’ presentation of material in this arena. Linking life purpose and destiny, he breaks questions into subject areas such as “who am I” (inner knowing, roles, revelation, family, and so
on), motivation (passion, energy, fulfillment), dreams and desires, ideal life, and values.

There have been moments in my training coaching sessions when I have felt like a deer caught in the headlights: Why are they telling me this? What do they expect me to do? What should I do now? At the end of the session I am generally able to look back and discern two or three strategies that might have been appropriate. Stoltzfus’ book will be one of the resources I turn to for ideas and guidance when I find myself confronted with specific problems or issues.

In *Breaking the Rules*, Kurt Wright (1998) presents an elegant and simple coaching strategy. Instead of focusing on what is wrong, the emphasis is on what is right:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Type of Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What do I know is already right?</td>
<td>Agenda setting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is it that makes it right?</td>
<td>Energy generating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What would be ideally right?</td>
<td>Vision-building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What’s not yet quite right?</td>
<td>Gap-defining</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What resources can I find to make it right?</td>
<td>Action-engaging</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1 – Wright’s Coaching Strategy

Wright (1998, p. 43)

Many people find themselves mired in negativity, and this offers a simple way to shift perspective and look at their lives from a wider angle. Of particular interest to me are Wright’s thoughts on the impact of praise on self-esteem and his use of the “what’s
right” strategy to praise his clients and reinforce their positive qualities. Reflecting on
his own experience, he noticed that praising a strength in others reinforced that
strength in himself. The implications for a coaching relationship are two-fold. First,
as a coach I will tend to see my own strengths mirrored in my clients, and by
reinforcing the client I will gain a benefit. Second, a client’s sense of self might be
built up and clarified by asking him to engage in an exercise where he looks for
strengths in others and praises those around him over a period of time.

Having used visualization with some measure of personal success, I am
intrigued by Wright’s insight into this process. In speaking of the importance of
becoming vision-driven, he says:

Why do we need a vision? The magic of a vision – the source of all its power
– lies in those parts of it which are not yet known. A vision of an ideal resides
in our conscious, rational mind and, like Swiss cheese, is filled with holes.
These holes furnish our intuitive mind with an unlimited supply of
unarticulated, intuition-engaging questions. I call this “living in the question.”
The state of being on a roll is then fueled by “Eureka!” insights generated
within our intuitive minds in response to our awareness of the holes in our
vision. (pp. 292-293)

The notion of a vision being filled with holes that get filled in by our intuition
corresponds to a visualization that I held in mind over a period of several weeks. One
day, while meditating on a specific image, something shifted and before my eyes the
image was transformed into a vision with a power greater than anything I had
imagined. Wright’s explanation of this process lends support to my own experience
and reinforces the value of imagining, as well as the element of trust that deeper
insights will come with time.
Self-Reflection

An essential component of transformative learning is “help[ing] people articulate and examine beliefs and assumptions that have been previously assimilated without questioning” (Cranton, 2006, p. 135). As a strategy, questioning can challenge assumptions and shift perspectives. Coaches often have the goal of transforming an assumption and broadening a worldview. Cranton recommends specific types of questions to facilitate this process and promote personal reflection. Content reflection questions can be used to shed light on the unconscious assumptions and beliefs we carry. Question stems like What do you know? What do you believe? and What would you like? can be used to help people become aware of their assumptions. To understand how these underlying beliefs were formed and shaped, we can ask process reflection questions, such as How did you come to ...?, How was your view shaped?, and Can you remember...?. Digging deeper into the root of our beliefs and assumptions can be accomplished with premise reflection questions. These take the form of Why is this important? What are the consequences? and Why do you value...?.

Insights of An Investment Advisor

Richard Russell, 86 years of age, has been writing the Dow Theory Letters (DTL), an investment advisory column for fifty years. At the end of 2009, one of his daily columns focused on questions. In this column he articulated the importance of questions as well as any author I have read. The following snippets were taken from his December 23, 2009 website, which is available to subscribers only (DTL, 2009):

Does anyone ever stop what he or she is doing and say, "Why am I working? What do I want? Am I doing what I want? Am I married to the person I want
to spend my life with? Am I living the way I want? Am I living where I want? Did I really want kids? Do I love my work?"

In other words, what's it all about? There are many theories regarding why we are here. Do you ever wonder why you are on this earth? Is there a reason? Some people believe we've been here before (reincarnation). And that we're back on earth again to rectify mistakes that we made in our previous lives. In other words, we're here to learn.

**Question** -- Russell, you're supposed to be writing an investment report, so why the hell are you confronting us with all these questions?

**Answer** -- I wrote the above, because I've been asking myself those questions. Frankly, I don't see the sense of living a life unless you examine your life. The most basic questions are seldom asked. Why is that? Because it can be scary to examine one's life.

The three KEY questions that you can ask yourself or anyone else:

1. What are you thinking?
2. What are you doing?
3. What do you want?

Tell me what a person really WANTS and I'll know as much about that person as I'll ever know. Ask yourself, "What do you really want?" Can you answer that? It's a very difficult question, and I don't think most people ever really ask themselves that question -- it's too specific, it's too blunt, it's too frightening because most people secretly are afraid that they don't have what they want, and that they'll never get what they want (Dow Theory Letters Inc., 2009)

**Reflection**

Embedded in the word “question” is the word *quest*. Throughout my life I have been on a journey to more deeply understand myself and the world around me. Guiding that quest have been many apparently simple questions: *What’s going on? Why is that happening? How can I...?* As I look back on this largely interior journey, I realize that my focus and intent has always been on bringing what is deep inside to
the surface, on making visible that which is hidden. This is a vital aspect that I want to share in my coaching practice.

How might I coach for awareness, discovery, and revelation as I accompany people on their path of becoming more authentic?

What are they noticing that is new?

What is rising to the surface?

What are people ready to reveal about themselves?

How do they want to shine?
How in the World…?

_I surrender to the mystery_  
_I awaken in beauty_

Dr. C. Forest (personal communication, March 8, 2010)
Between working full-time, completing this project, and training to become a life coach, my introverted practice of lying on the sofa contemplating the state of the universe has suffered a severe setback. It is surprising to me how much I am, for the most part, enjoying this process. Two aspects of this experience bear some exploration.

**The iPEC Program**

The iPEC program is a very structured experience, involving in-person training, peer coaching, and teleclasses. Logs are kept to document completion of assignments and will be submitted to iPEC for the final certification process. The total program is comprised of about 350 hours. This is largely about showing up and doing the work. I attended two of the four 3-day modules prior to this semester.

**Module I: Life & Leadership Potentials Training (November 2009)**

This introductory program focused on foundational theories, basic principles, and tools and techniques. The emphasis was on examining our own lives and how we might utilize the material to overcome blocks and maximize our potential.

**Module II: Core Transformation (January 2010)**

Building on the first training experience, this program emphasized specific coaching skills and how to apply our knowledge to eight key areas of a client’s life, such as relationships, work, health and wellness, and finance. Common client concerns and questions were addressed, and we had the opportunity to explore various issues that might come up in a coaching session.
Module III: Breakthrough Coaching (April 2010)

Advanced skills and techniques were introduced with a focus on breaking through a variety of blocks. Also included was an extended discussion on the process of developing the first stages of a marketing plan, with an emphasis on selecting and defining a niche. (More on this is included in Section 4).

Timeline Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>November 2009</th>
<th>Module 1: Life &amp; Leadership Potentials</th>
<th>30 hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>November 2009 – January 2010</td>
<td><strong>Work at home / via phone (weekly):</strong> Peer coaching sessions: Peer # 1 Coached by a peer sessions: Coach #1 Peer group meetings: Group # 1 Weekly teleclasses</td>
<td>6 hours 6 hours 6 hours 9 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 2010</td>
<td>Module 2: Core Transformation</td>
<td>30 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 2010 – April 2010</td>
<td><strong>Work at home / via phone (weekly):</strong> Peer coaching sessions: Peer # 2 Coached by a peer sessions: Coach #2 Peer group meetings: Group # 2 Weekly teleclasses</td>
<td>12 hours 12 hours 12 hours 18 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 2010</td>
<td>Module 3: Breakthrough Coaching Written exam required for certification</td>
<td>30 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 2010 – June 2010</td>
<td><strong>Work at home / via phone (weekly):</strong> Peer coaching sessions: Peer # 1 Coached by a peer sessions: Coach #1 Peer group meetings: Group # 1 Weekly teleclasses</td>
<td>6 hours 6 hours 6 hours 9 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 2010</td>
<td>Module 4: Energy Leadership Coaching Mastery Turn in all required course work and attendance documentation Take oral exam</td>
<td>30 hours</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The time period covered by the Master’s Project corresponds to the assigned work between modules 2 and 3. This consists of selecting a niche area to explore in more detail and fleshing out details of who we want to work with, what we want to work with them on, and how we want to work with them. It is this work that will form the basis of my outcomes. Completing this work will involve brainstorming and stepping into a stretch zone as I project myself into a new career.

I anticipate preparing the following documents:

- Philosophy of Coaching
- A general niche proposal
- Several quick networking statements
- A specific niche proposal
- Answers to anticipated questions
- Brief descriptions of two workshops I might offer
I’m On My Way

_O may I go a-wandering until the day I die_
_And may I always laugh and sing beneath God’s clear blue sky_

The Happy Wanderer
(Ridge & Moller, 1988)
Philosophy of Coaching

In a previous graduate program for Camping & Outdoor Education Administration, we were required to develop a philosophy of camping. The primary intent was to help us understand that sound program decisions are based on core values. For instance, competition and cooperation are contrasting values in camp programs. A camp design based on competition will offer a different suite of programs from one based on cooperation. Similarly, there are different styles of, and approaches to, coaching. This document is an initial attempt to define the values that are important to me and hone in on an approach that embodies those principles. (See Appendix C for a complete list of values.)

Being new to coaching, there is much that I am still learning through study and practice. I have been asked to define a niche: who I want to work with, what I want to work with my clients on, and how I want to work with them. Lacking substantial experience with any particular area or type of client, this is a challenging assignment. It is likely that whatever answers I come up with today will be fluid and open to change in the future. As I begin to explore these questions related to niche, I will focus on the values of coaching that most resonate with my personal experience.

There are two broad categories of coaching: executive / business coaching and personal / life coaching. Business coaching focuses on issues related to leadership, vision, teamwork, and interpersonal communication. Life coaching encompasses areas such as personal development, health and wellness, spirituality, and transitions. My attention is directed to life coaching. The International Coach Federation (ICF) presents this definition of coaching: “partnering with clients in a thought-provoking
and creative process that inspires them to maximize their personal and professional potential” (ICF, 2010). This definition describes my own quest to discover and express my true self. From the previous chapters, it is surely clear that my personal work has involved self-awareness, personal growth, and significant change over the course of my lifetime. This lifelong process to know myself and to become more comfortable in my own skin was motivated by a desire for authenticity. This need to express who I truly was and to become visible in the world both nagged and propelled me to face my deepest fears. Carl Rogers’ book *On Becoming a Person* was my earliest influence in this direction. Rogers revolutionized the field of psychology with the development of client-centered therapy, and went on to impact the fields of education, encounter groups, and international relations. The emphasis of the humanist psychologists, such as Rogers, Maslow, and Fromm, on self-actualization strongly informs my coaching focus.

As I reflect on my journey, I realize that the important achievements in my life were gained by following a three-step process: defining a goal, developing a vision, and taking the necessary action steps to bring the vision alive. Embedded in these steps are the values of dreaming, focus, imagination, courage, and the willingness to act. Everything starts with a dream, answering the question “Wouldn’t it be great if…?” From the array of options, we must be willing and able to choose a specific dream, or goal, on which to move forward. In the absence of that focus, one settles back and maintains the status quo. Once we have chosen a goal, with the use of creative imagination we can then form a vision that embodies our desire. Still, nothing will happen until we move out into the world and take appropriate action to
bring our vision into being. This often requires overcoming fear and stepping out into the unknown. During this process, one’s commitment to the goal can be challenged, and in this way one learns what is truly important.

In the arena of self-awareness and self-discovery, I place great value on the process of looking within. My spiritual focus is Know Thyself. I believe that only as we come to know ourselves, the good, the bad, and the ugly, can we find ease and contentment in the world. And as we form a loving relationship with ourselves, our relationships with others are enhanced.

People typically come to coaching with a goal, and an associated block of some sort that is preventing them from reaching that goal. When we are blocked we tend to do the same thing over and over, expecting different results. A major value of coaching is the opportunity to experiment with new behaviors and develop different strategies for approaching solutions. Coupled with this is the willingness to meet a challenge, to look at what might be blocking you and to have the courage to move through it. Courage is rewarded with recognition of one’s strength and pride in one’s accomplishments, contributing to a greater sense of self-worth.

Action planning plays an important role in coaching. However, as a process-oriented person, I have somewhat different notions of what action might mean than others. The first assignment I ever gave a client was to pay attention to a specific aspect of her life. This apparently simple act, which took only a moment or two, has led over time to deep insights and surprising realizations. There is power in attention. It is the first step on the path of awareness. Formulating action plans that combine process and product, that draw on the insight, intuition, and inner wisdom of the
client, and that are in alignment with personal goals, have the best chance of having lasting impact and results. Associated with action are the values of determination and adventure. While it pains me to say this, given my tendency to contemplation, it seems clear that the willingness to show up and do the work – even when the going gets tough – is an essential value to hold if you are interested in making your life happen. As we venture down the road, it helps to approach the accomplishment of the goal as an adventure, in which we challenge ourselves by moving out of our comfort zone, and keep alert for new insights and opportunities.

**Creativity and Self-Actualization**

I have grown to understand that life is essentially a creative act in which we make daily choices about how to live our lives. As I get closer to declaring that as a coach I want to help people become increasingly authentic and able to fully express themselves, it seems that some attention needs to be given to my creative roots. For how can one embark on a journey to examine one’s life without the basic tools and attributes of the creative spirit?

Creativity is the closest thing I have discovered to a real world example of Great Mystery, in that its definition is elusive, and differs from person to person. Ask a room full of people to give their definition of creativity, and you will get as many different answers. When asked to define creativity, people will grapple a moment as they attempt to capture its elusive quality. I have observed that people tend to define creativity in terms of who they are and what they do. Their life experiences and belief systems form the basis of their perceptions of creativity. This suggests that the notion of creativity is, in and of itself, a fluid and ever-changing process. My own definition
of creativity is “In every moment we are born anew.” While one might not initially define coaching as a creative experience, in fact, each person who participates in a coaching relationship is engaged in a process of bringing something new into the world. Part of the philosophical underpinning of iPEC is a set of foundational principles. One of them is that the greatest freedom is the freedom of choice. This highlights the recognition that choice plays a critical role in how we live our lives. An underlying assumption about coaching seems to be that clients are ready to live their lives with intent. They have made the choice to move in a specific direction and deal with any challenges that pop up along the way. While many people are content to sit back and let the world roll by, coaching clients generally take a more active role in their lives by identifying a desire and making the decision to pursue it. Coaches support clients in examining, and acting on, choices.

A primary role of a coach is to create an appropriate and safe relationship in which the client can explore uncharted territory. In seeking to answer the question “How can I provide a relationship which this person may use for his own personal growth?”, Carl Rogers (1995[1961], p. 32) defined the type of individual growth and change that takes place in a psychologically safe and accepting environment:

If I can create a relationship characterized on my part by: … genuineness and transparency…warm acceptance of… the other person as an individual; by a sensitive ability to see his world and himself as he sees them; then the other individual in the relationship will understand repressed aspects of himself, become better integrated, will be more self-directing, will become more of a unique person, accepting of others. (pp. 37 – 38)

Although Rogers initially developed this conception for the therapeutic setting, he applied the same behavior to groups and the field of education over time. This seems
also to define the role of the coach in creating a supportive, non-judgmental environment.

Rogers (1954) and Maslow (1973) both observed that psychologically healthy individuals exhibited unique traits, and linked these traits to creativity. Rogers presents this definition of creativity:

the creative process is that of the emergence in action of a novel relational product, growing out of the uniqueness of the individual on the one hand, and the materials, events, people, or circumstances of his life on the other. (p. 251)

He identifies the primary motivation for creativity as “man’s tendency to actualize himself, to become his potentialities” (p. 251). This corresponds to the ICF definition of coaching with its goal of maximizing potential. Rogers describes the movement toward wholeness as a process, noting that as people move toward a life unencumbered by anxieties and fears they do not arrive at a fixed state, rather they live in a fluid world that has several characteristics. First, there is greater openness to experience as they are able to drop their defenses. Second, they live increasingly in the present moment, allowing “the self and personality [to] emerge from experience, rather than experience being translated or twisted to fit preconceived structure” (Rogers, 1995[1961], pp.188-189). Finally, they demonstrate increasing trust in themselves. For me, the movement toward this result is powerfully creative. Especially intriguing and thought-provoking is the notion that as we “become a person” we begin to live our lives as a process.

As Maslow (1968) explored creativity in self-actualized people, he also observed a greater spontaneity and openness to experience. He attributes this, at least partially, to the absence of fear of the unknown. Indeed, self-actualized people seem
to be attracted to the unknown and are comfortable with it. Manifesting a lack of concern about societal norms and expectations, they possess a high level of self-acceptance of themselves and all their thoughts and feelings. Another trait exhibited by self-actualized people is the resolution of dichotomies into unities. This quality has often been described in the literature on creativity (Forisha, 1978; MacKinnon, 1962; Torrance & Hall, 1980). Finally, Maslow notes, “the creativity of my subjects seemed to be an epiphenomenon of their greater wholeness and integration, which is what self-acceptance implies…They waste less of their time and energy protecting themselves against themselves” (Maslow, 1968, p.141). As someone who has achieved this integration, I find myself asking “In what ways might I help others to do the same?” Indeed, this single question is a primary motivation for pursuing a coaching career.

Several years ago I was designing a stone circle, and the mantra that today is my definition of creativity grew out of that process. A chance reading of Erich Fromm (1959) startled me, in that he says, almost word for word, what I wrote more than ten years ago. Speaking of the “willingness to be born every day” (p. 53), he captures the essence of self-knowledge and self-discovery and its link to creativity:

Every act of birth requires the courage to let go of something… to let go eventually of all certainties, and to rely only upon one thing: one’s own powers to be aware and to respond; that is, one’s own creativity. To be creative means to consider the whole process of life as a process of birth, and not to take any stage of life as a final stage. Most people die before they are fully born. Creativeness means to be born before one dies. (p. 53)

Creativity takes many forms in my life. It supports my daily work, and drives my deepest desires for wholeness. Each creative encounter and process has a different feeling state and fills a different need. The most interesting, challenging, and
significant outcomes I have experienced have been in the arena of *becoming*, the quest for integration and wholeness. My life’s goal has been to understand myself.

This has largely been an interior journey, quite often fraught with peril, more recently filled with expectation and delight. Some of the qualities that contributed to this transformation include courage, showing up to do the work, trying and failing, then trying and succeeding, imagination, curiosity, perseverance, and faith. Fromm (1959) captures an essence of creativity that seems vitally important to me:

> The willingness to be born… requires courage and faith…faith means certainty; to be certain of the reality of one’s own experience in thought and in feeling, to be able to trust it, to rely on it, this is faith. Without courage and faith, creativity is impossible, and hence the understanding and cultivation of courage and faith are indispensable conditions for the development of the creative attitude. (pp 53-54)

These ideas form the foundation of my personal philosophy of creativity and of coaching.

***************
Statement of Intent

My goals as a coach include: facilitating the client’s journey by enabling individuals to risk, grow, and act; supporting people to act in their own best interest; and helping people to make visible that which is ready to be revealed.

I believe:

- The most creative journey you can engage in is to *Know Thyself*... and then to act on it.
- You are engaged in a process of becoming, and are creative in every moment of your life.
- You can choose to lead your life with intent.
- The process of knowing and becoming is a life-long learning experience.
- Throughout your lifetime you can acquire skills, abilities, insights, knowledge, and wisdom that help you to discover and become more fully YOU.

*Share your light with the world. Dare to dream your life into being.*

*I provide personal coaching, visualization techniques and creativity tools to help you manifest your heart’s desire.*
**Tangible Outcomes**

My primary goal in the coach training program is to receive a professional coaching certificate. Along the way I am enjoying the opportunity to participate in a variety of coaching experiences. These are providing both successful and frustrating experiences, prompting glimmers of insight as to whom I do, and do not, want to work with in the future. This project forms a theoretical and practical foundation that will guide future decisions about my coaching practice. There is a great deal more work to do, and in the following documents I begin to explore the shape and direction that my coaching practice might take:

1. A general overview of my market niche, exploring whom I want to work with, what I want to work with them on, and how I want to work with them.

2. Possibilities: 1-minute networking statements

3. Exploration of a specific niche

4. Answers to anticipated questions

5. Workshop outline: Improv Yourself

6. Workshop outline: Questioning Strategies
General Market Niche Scenario

Whom Do I Want To Work With?

My background suggests that my preferred clients are interested in some sort of personal change and growth. They are ready to bring something new into the world. My clients are willing to take risks and face their fears. Understanding that change often lacks glamour; they show up in their lives and do the work. They are prepared to move from dreaming into action. When they encounter blocks, they are willing to stop and examine what is going on. Recognizing that what they have tried in the past may not be the best way of moving forward, they are willing to experiment with new behaviors and try new things.

My clients are ready to step into their lives in a new way and are seeking a collaborative relationship to help move them to the next level. They are open about who they are and the issues with which they are grappling. The ability to accept feedback is important, as is the willingness to be challenged to step into their stretch zone. They are motivated to make changes now, as demonstrated by their commitment of time and their willingness to make a financial investment in their future.

In the process of learning to express themselves more fully and comfortably, they are also able to laugh at themselves. The journey to becoming more authentic requires work coupled with laughter and celebration.

It is clear that I have begun to describe my preferred client by describing who I am and what I have done in my life. This is what I know. Another important perspective is that on a visit to my brother’s family I spent time talking to a 20-year
old nephew. His mother repeatedly commented that she had not heard him talk so much in a long time, and that I should be coaching young men like him. This is about as far away from my experience of life as I can get, but it is useful to bear in mind that perhaps we have something to offer those who are very different from us. A goal for the near future is to spend time coaching as many different types of people as I can, to get a better understanding of the opportunities that may be present.

What Do I Want To Work With Them On?

By combining the Creative Problem Solving process (CPS) with visualization techniques, I am creating a powerful methodology for bringing dreams to fruition. Every change begins with a dream or goal. Many changes present obstacles or challenges. I want to work with clients to clarify where they are in the CPS process and help them to move to the next stages. Some people I would like to work with include those going through a mid-life transition of some sort, such as a career change, moving, or going back to school; the woman who has spent her life taking care of others at home and at work and realizes now it is her turn; and the seeker who is striving for authenticity.

How Will I Work With Them?

I anticipate utilizing a combination of workshop programs and private sessions in my coaching practice. Workshops may take the form of a day-long retreat or a series of hour-long programs over a period of weeks. While I have become fairly comfortable working on the phone, I plan on making arrangements for in-person sessions as well.
By combining my communication, teaching, and training skills with my experience in camp counseling, problem-solving, theater education, visualization, and creativity, I am putting together a toolkit of techniques and activities that can be used to support growth and forward movement.

**Outcomes**

When clients are able to be present in their lives, they are better able to recognize opportunities and move toward them. When people learn to break problems, issues and processes down into bite-sized chunks, they are better able to manage change and reduce stress in their lives. Our creativity comes alive when we become more spontaneous and develop more effective problem-solving strategies. Using our intuition, we can come closer to discovering and expressing our authentic self. As we get in touch with our heart’s desire and take the necessary steps to make it a reality, we become beacons of light that inspire others to do the same.
1-Minute Networking Statements

These statements are quick networking blurbs that identify the types of things I might like to do with coaching. This is another way of looking at the questions of whom I want to work with and what I want to work with them on.

A lot of people, women especially, have spent so much time taking care of others that they’ve neglected their own needs. I help people move themselves a notch or two higher on their priority list. Working together, we discover simple needs and buried dreams and create some action plans to make them happen. Change doesn’t have to be a big thing. It can be as simple as enjoying a bubble bath or taking a walk.

A lot of us are in the midst of midlife transitions. These can be anxiety-provoking and stressful. I help people manage the stress and find a quiet, still center inside themselves.

Have you tried the Law of Attraction and ended up disappointed, or feeling like it just didn’t work for you? Attracting what you want with the power of your intention sounds easier than it actually is. I help people identify what they want and determine appropriate action steps to bring that desire into being. We will experiment with visualizations and affirmations, as well as intuitive and creativity techniques to align you with the energy of your goal. You will have the opportunity to develop a tool kit that you can use for the rest of your life.

Do you have an important decision to make and you’re just not sure which way to go? I can help you explore your choices and get more clarity on the pluses, potentials and challenges of each option. Once you make a decision, we can brainstorm ways to overcome the obstacles and develop a strong solution and action plan.

Are you a seeker? Do you want to become more of who you truly are and express your authentic self? I will join you on the path and provide a safe place for you to explore your deeper self and experiment with new ways of being. Using visualization techniques and creativity tools, you’ll have the opportunity to tap into your intuition and inner knowing.

Are you stuck in a box with a problem that requires outside-of-the-box thinking? I help people jump-start their creativity by introducing them to a creative problem solving methodology. Using a variety of creativity tools and techniques, we’ll explore your challenge, generate ideas, and select and strengthen a solution.

You know how people often have something they want to do but they just can’t get going? I help people identify what’s stopping them and brainstorm ways of moving forward. People often lose traction because the change seems so big that they don’t know where or how to get started. Working together, we can discover the little steps that will lead to success.
Exploration of a Specific Market Niche

_I work with people to identify what they want and determine appropriate action steps to bring that desire into being. We will experiment with visualizations and affirmations, as well as intuitive and creativity techniques to align you with the energy of your goal. You will have the opportunity to develop a tool kit that you can use for the rest of your life._

As discussed earlier, the manifestation process consists of three steps, or components: selecting a goal, creating a vision, and taking action. Each of these components has multiple aspects, and contains opportunities for growth. Here I will lay out some thoughts about how this process might be approached in coaching sessions, including issues that might arise, questions that might be asked, and foundation principles that might apply.

Selecting a Goal

Many issues come up when we consider what we want to do with our lives. Some people have devoted their lives to others and are hesitant to examine what they want for themselves. Others have plenty of ideas, but are unable to make a choice or commit to one thing. Some are burdened by the sense of responsibility that choice seems to imply.

For those who have not dreamed in years, giving permission to do so is a first step. In one case I gave a client a packet of sticky notes and asked her to allow herself the luxury of dreaming over the course of the week. She was to write all of her ideas, from taking a bubble bath to traveling to Italy, on the sticky notes, and bring them in the next week. She managed to come up with fifty ideas.
Kick-off questions to stimulate ideas about potential goals include:

- What are some goals or dreams you would like to begin or accomplish this year?
- How will your life be different a year from now?
- What is important to you?
- What’s been on your mind lately?
- What opportunities are on the horizon?

Clients who are having a hard time making a choice might be asked “What does it mean to be free to choose?” Alternately, a PPCO (Pluses, Potentials, Challenges, Overcoming obstacles) might be performed to help clarify the differences between the options. A reluctance to commit may be related to a need for perfection, which tends to immobilize people. Exploring the foundation principles there are no mistakes and life is a perfect adventure; a game that cannot be won or lost, only played might spur meaningful conversation and insight.

Creating a Vision

People often have a hard time forming a vision. They may not be able to project the goal into the future and know what it will look like or where it will lead. Some may believe that because they are not visual thinkers that they cannot visualize. A reluctance to commit to a goal may manifest itself in resistance to setting a vision. There are many simple techniques that can support people in the process of forming a deeply felt vision that captures the essence of what they desire. Collages and storyboarding are popular methods used in a variety of circumstances. Tarot cards, with their rich and varied imagery, can be used to good effect by asking a client to look at the cards and select ones that represent the present and the future. As
previously described, there are many books and resources that contain visualizations. Clients may prefer to write, or draw a vision rather than form a mental image. A stance, or dance, may embody what they desire.

Ferrucci (2004) has many simple techniques that seem well suited to coaching. He starts by offering simple exercises to determine which senses (sight, hearing, touch, taste, or smell) are most active. In this way “visualizations” can be adapted, to use language appropriate to the primary sense. His strategies invite the client to be active in creating the scene of the visualization to a greater extent than many other authors. For instance, once the client has formed a goal, he might be asked to imagine an image of that goal on a mountain top, and to see a road leading directly from him to the mountain top. The client is then asked to begin walking along that road and to notice the things that might distract him along the way, as well as who or what is available to assist and support him.

Key questions include:

- What do you see yourself doing?
- How will you feel when you have achieved this goal?
- How will you hold yourself differently?
- What has become easy for you to do?
- In what ways are people treating you differently?

Foundation principles that might be appropriate during the visualization stage of the process include each moment describes who you are, and gives you the opportunity to decide if that’s who you want to be and we are each here for a special purpose.
Taking Action

Nothing happens without action. The finest dreams remain mere fantasies unless we are willing and able to commit to taking the steps to make them real. Quite often, it is at this stage that we discover whether or not what we are working toward is worth the effort. We may realize that we are pursuing the goal because it is expected of us. Or, as we get closer to achieving the goal, we might realize it is not what we thought it would be. Perhaps a new interest arises and we move onto a different path. Blocks will be highlighted here, as this is the most visible of all the process steps.

Appropriate questions might include:

- What is stopping you?
- Is this a “should”? Whose voice do you hear telling you to do this?
- How is your experience different from what you expected?
- What have you learned?
- What is pulling you?
- What new opportunities are you discovering?

Foundation principles that might apply include now is all there ever is; we either grow or we die; and doing is work, being is effortless. Action takes place in the moment. The choices we make about whether or not to act will move us toward growth and change, or result in our maintaining the status quo. Recognizing what is ready to pass away, and what new growth is pushing up out of the earth, is part of a normal cycle of growth and change. Stepping out beyond our comfort zone provides the opportunity to experience the fine line between doing and being. A goal that is properly aligned with the essence of who we are may require a great deal of doing,
but if the work expresses our beingness in some way the rewards can be great. People like me, with an overly developed sense of responsibility, appreciate an occasional reminder that if we walk hand-in-hand with the universe, we do not have to do all the work by ourselves. Rather, we can let go of the sometimes burdensome effort of doing and feel the gift of giving over to a greater power.
Answers to Anticipated Questions

What Exactly Is “Creative Studies”?  

At Buffalo State’s International Center for Studies in Creativity, the focus is on programs that cultivate skills in creative thinking, innovative leadership practices, and problem-solving techniques. Students develop skills in practical leadership, facilitation, training/teaching, and problem-solving. My elective credits were in the field of education and included courses in adult learning and innovative teaching.

Programmatically there are three strands of coursework in Creative Studies. The focus of the CPS and Facilitation strand is to foster creative potential by learning, applying, and teaching specific creative problem-solving tools. The Foundations of Creativity strand encompasses the various approaches to assessing and defining creativity, and models and theories of creativity. Finally, there is a research strand, of which the Master’s Project is the culminating course.

What Is Coaching?  

The goal of coaching is to help people maximize their personal and professional potential. A coach works with the client to identify goals and develop action plans to achieve them. Working together, the coach and client will create a structure that supports the client’s efforts to bring something new into her life. A coach helps the client to keep on track, by acting as an accountability partner, as well as a sounding board. Clients will acquire tools and techniques that they can use throughout their lifetimes. The coaching process often uncovers opportunities to reframe beliefs and examine assumptions, adding an important dimension to the client’s growth process.
Why Would Someone Hire A Coach?

- To go from humdrum to WOW!
- To keep energy level high
- Provide structure
- Set sights higher to create goals and achieve them
- Become more present
- Build confidence
- Someone to talk with, plan with; to be challenged by and accountable to
- They want more.
- To grow and be more productive
- To discover innovative ways to do things more effortlessly
- Chance to put things into words – get encouragement
- Move from thought process to ACTION
- Stretch thinking

What Is The Focus Of Coaching?

The client is instrumental in defining the focus of the coaching relationship. The first one or two sessions will flesh out the primary issues and establish an initial framework for our work together. Regular check-ins will be used to determine whether we are on the right track or need a course correction. Discussions might include:

- Where are you now in relation to where you want to be?
- What are your goals? Are they based in your values?
- In order to get what you want from any situation, what are your areas of strength and what are the areas for improvement and focus?
Workshop – Improv Yourself!

This one hour program was successfully conducted on two different occasions in my workplace to rave reviews. Billed as *Stress-Busting Improv*, it is designed for people who have no experience in theater or improv, and who are likely to be introverts. It is based on the underlying assumption that we can all be spontaneous… if only we have enough time to think about it!

1. **Introduction** and overview

2. **Loosen up** – In a circle, participants follow the leader and move, shake, jiggle and wiggle to relax and loosen them up. There are verbal prompts to encourage using every part of the body. Alternately, we may play a “follow the leader” type game, with one person making a motion and everyone mimicking it by making it bigger.

3. **Breakfast-making machines** – in groups of three or four, participants are asked to create a breakfast-making machine. They are reminded that machines make rhythmic, repetitive motions and noises.
   a. In the large group the following prompts are given to explore what moves in the kitchen and how it moves:
      i. What are all the physical actions and motions you perform while making breakfast? [we all make the motions as they are suggested]
      ii. What else moves in the kitchen? How does it move? [make the motions]
      iii. What are the appliances doing? What noises do they make?
      iv. What’s happening to the food?
   b. In small groups participants have about 3 minutes to design a machine in which they are each a moving part. They are told it can be as simple or complicated as they are comfortable with.
   c. Each group presents its machine
4. **Props** – a pile of props is placed in the center of the circle and people are told they will be asked to pick a prop and do something with it. Before we start I introduce the concept of “forced connections” to help people see different ways in which an object might be viewed.
   a. Picking up an object at random, ask:
      i. What are the attributes of the object?
      ii. What does it remind them of?
      iii. What are all the different ways this object might be used?
   b. As ideas are given, act out some of the suggested uses
   c. Ask each person to pick an object and join a group of 3 – 4 people
      i. As a group, they repeat the forced connections questions for each object and brainstorm ways that each one might be used.
   d. Coming together as a large group, people take turns presenting their object in whatever way feels comfortable. They are told they can act something out or simply tell us the different uses they identified for it.

5. **SCAMPER Visualization** – The Pencil (see Appendix D)

6. **Wrap up & closing**
Workshop – Questioning Strategies

This workshop is designed to be presented in 60 – 90 minute segments over a period of weeks. Each program is dedicated to a different questioning strategy. I am just beginning to formulate my thinking about this, so the outline is a jumping off point for future development. The questions suggested for each session are intended to stimulate discussion and sharing of experiences.

1. 7 Powers of Questions (Leeds, 2000)
   a. What do we already know about questions?
   b. When and how do we use questions most effectively?
   c. What kinds of questions support us?
   d. When don’t questions feel good?
   e. What questions do you most wish someone would ask?

2. Creative Problem Solving
   a. How do questions help us solve problems?
   b. Stages of problem solving
   c. How do we know what stage we’re in?
   d. What techniques / questioning strategies are most useful for each stage?
   e. What stimulates thought and action?
   f. In what stage of problem solving are we most comfortable?

   a. We can make a choice only if we are aware that we have a choice.
      When do we tend to lose sight of that option?
   b. How can we recognize when we are reacting instead of responding?
   c. When are we most aware of our choices?
   d. In what ways can we move from tunnel vision to an expansive view?
   e. How might we wake up our curiosity?
4. Assumptions and beliefs (Cranton, 2006)
   a. What is an assumption?
   b. How is an assumption different from a belief?
   c. Because these are often unconscious, how do we know when we are making an assumption?
   d. What assumptions are you making right now?
   e. How were they formed and shaped?
   f. Why are they important to us?
   g. Are they true today?
   h. How do you change a belief or underlying assumption?

5. What’s right? (Wright, 1998)
   a. What would happen if you focused on what’s right instead of what’s wrong?
   b. What’s right?
   c. What makes it right?
   d. What’s your ideal vision?
   e. What’s the gap?
   f. What resources do you need?
   g. What question might open up the problem space?

6. Wrapping it up
   a. What was your most significant insight?
   b. What was familiar? What was new?
   c. Why is this important?
   d. How might you practice these strategies?
   e. Where might each be applied?
Time to Reflect

Change is the end result of all true learning. Change involves three things: First, a dissatisfaction with self – a felt void or need; second, a decision to change to fill the void or need; and third, a conscious dedication to the process of growth and change – the willful act of making the change, doing something.

Leo Buscaglia (1972, p. 77)

... learning is a place where paradise can be created

bell hooks (1994, p. 207)
More Deep Learning

Learning Something New / Life-Long Learning

In addition to the thoughtful preparatory work necessary to develop a personal philosophy of coaching and prepare to launch a business, I have enjoyed several opportunities to practice coaching. In addition to two iPEC peer clients, I have been able to work with three local clients. This business of sitting with people in a helping way is a new experience for me and, not surprisingly, I often find myself wondering what on earth I am supposed to do or say now. Fortunately, I have been able to draw on my early experiences as a computer programmer to provide some guidance as to how to approach this new arena. My entrance into the world of computers was as a microcomputer specialist and trainer. When my manager suggested a programming position to me, I was initially overwhelmed and at a complete loss as to what to do and how to approach this very different way of thinking and working. The qualities that moved me from the bottom of the programming ladder to my current role of “Data Queen” are the same qualities I draw on today as I am learning about coaching: a willingness to ask for help, a strong analytical ability, attention to detail, problem-solving, curiosity, and asking lots of questions. Several of these traits comprise a beginner’s mind, based in curiosity and open to whatever might appear without judgment.

Still, it has become clear that there is more, much more, to this coaching business than meets the eye. My regard for coaches and therapists has sky-rocketed as I sit with people who are so very different from each other, and so very different from me. As I write this, I find myself in the “I just don’t know if I can do this” stage.
However, I will continue to hang in there and ask, after each session, “How else might I have approached that?” This is a necessary step for me, because my after-thoughts always seem like much better ideas than what I actually did or said in the session. I am not yet at the point of being able to think strategically during the session – I am just trying to keep up!

This learning process has a lot to do with understanding myself well enough to know how I process information and learn new things. As a computer programmer I learned to move through every step of the CPS process, to expect things not to work the first time, or the second, or the third, and to know that eventually I can bring the missing piece into focus and resolve the problem. Also, that this process of trying and failing repeatedly, then succeeding, gradually builds up a base of knowledge and experience that leads to a high level of expertise. This is a process that requires vast amounts of patience.

Previous readings in the areas of cognitive apprenticeship, reciprocal teaching, meta-cognition, and expert systems provided valuable ideas and insights, and sparked questions that are appropriate in this learning situation: What thinking skills and activities are required for success as a coach? How can I build a bridge between my existing knowledge and this new endeavor? In what ways can coaches involve clients in new thinking strategies?

I have discovered that learning is best viewed as a lifelong process. Going back to school has been an engaging, opening, and invigorating experience. That said, it is clearly time for this learning cycle to come to a close. I can feel my mind shutting down, saying, “Enough is enough.”
People Can be Trusted

I have always trusted my inner knowing, and confess that I have not always extended this thinking to others. It has been eye-opening to work with just a handful of very different people and discover that they each have an intuitive understanding of what they need. This suggests two significant roles of a coach: to support the process of bringing that inner knowing to the surface, and to help organize the steps to shift the knowing into action. The uniqueness of each person’s process, focus, and perceptions makes each coaching session a surprising event.

Change

The first and most striking thing that I learned in coaching is that the notion of change can be daunting and overwhelming. So often, the changes we contemplate are huge, and seem to require so much work that we are unable to see how to get started. The ability to understand change as a lot of little steps that, when taken one at a time, are simple, is critical to success in moving forward.

Challenge and Response

As someone with strong introverted tendencies, I can be somewhat slow to respond to what people say. One effect of this is that I might be perceived as a passive listener, and it is likely that I listen for a longer period of time before interjecting a question than most coaches. This is especially true when people talk a lot, or talk fast. For the most part, coaches focus on moving the client into action to quickly achieve results. This is somewhat at odds with my slightly dominant process-oriented philosophy, although I can, as needed, be task-oriented and focused on outcomes.
In general, my style provides a sense of spaciousness that may be lacking in the work of other coaches. It also supports exploration and insight. These are traits that may distinguish me from the rest of the coach pack.
After Some is Said and Done

There's been so many things that have held us down
But now it looks like things are finally comin' around
I know we've got a long, long way to go
And where we'll end up, I don't know

But we won't let nothin' hold us back
We're puttin' ourselves together,
We're polishin' up our act, yeah
And if you've ever been held down before
I know you refuse to be held down any more

And don't you let nothin', nothin'
Stand in your way
I want y'all to listen, listen
To every word I say, every word I say

Ain't no stoppin' us now
We're on the move
Ain't no stoppin' us now
We've got the groove

Where Do I Go From Here?

The wheel of my life is turning, with major life cycles coming to an end. The ICSC Masters degree and the coach training program have been preparatory steps for the next phase of my life. The last two years have been about beginning the process of integrating various aspects of myself in new and different ways. With this paper I have laid a foundation on which to build a new life and a new way of being in the world.

As I approach the end of this cycle of preparation, and contemplate the next steps in the process of changing careers, I am experiencing opposing tugs. On the one hand there is a sense of excitement, a feeling of striding forth into a new life, a belief that there truly “ain’t no stoppin’ me now.” On the other hand, the drag of inertia is making itself felt. Having spent so much time and money to prepare for the next stage, will I be successful in taking this new knowledge out into the world, or will I sink back into the comfort and security of life as it is? Once the structure of the college and training programs is absent, will I be able to continue taking the next steps?

From this tension emerges the sense that the first thing I need is a complete rest. This summer I intend to pursue training offered by Marilee Adams on her work with questioning strategies. This is likely to have both personal and professional applications. On the next page is the list of some of my “to-do” assignments over the next few months.
Summer 2010
- TAKE A WEEK OFF!
- Go on hikes, and have picnics with friends
- Complete coach training program
- Update resume and complete LinkedIn profile
- Attend a program at a local credit union to create business plan
- Get business cards
- Offer summer coaching discounts to staff at work

Fall 2010
- Visit Santa Fe, NM and Asheville, NC as potential places to relocate
- Develop two workshops, one for work and one for the general community
- Investigate Mastermind workshops, being offered by many coaches
- Develop marketing materials
- Experiment with building a practice

Spring 2011
- Apply for jobs in Santa Fe / Asheville
- Make plans to move

Summer 2011
- The journey starts anew!

Much of this feels daunting, and many of my to-do items do not appear on this brief list. I would soon feel overwhelmed were I to put everything that needs to be done down on paper. The goal for now is to keep moving forward, taking one small step at a time, while maintaining a balance of health, humor, and rest.
References
References


Appendix A

The Choice Model (Adams)
Thoughts  Feelings  Circumstances
Anything that impacts us at any moment

Learner Path
What happened?
What do I want?
What are the facts?
Choose
What assumptions am I making?
What can I learn?
What are they thinking, feeling, and wanting?
What am I responsible for?
Whose fault is it?

Switching Lane
What are my choices?
What’s best to do now?
What’s possible?

Judger Path
Why am I such a failure?
Why are they so stupid?
Why bother?
What’s wrong with me?
What’s wrong with them?

LEARNER
• Thoughtful Choices
• Solution Focused
• Win-Win Relating

JUDGER
• Automatic Reactions
• Blame Focused
• Win-Lose Relation

Ask Learner Questions to Avoid Judger Pit

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The Choice Map™ and You

Imagine it’s you who’s standing at the crossroads on the left side of the Choice Map. Something has just happened. Now you have to solve a problem or make a decision. Maybe it’s related to an important goal in some area in your life. Perhaps it’s with your business or career. Maybe it’s in a relationship with family, friends, or colleagues. It’s about your health, finances, or plans for the future.

Do this experiment while you think about that situation. First, ask yourself Judger questions (see below) and notice how they affect your mood and confidence. Now, breathe, switch and instead ask yourself Learner questions (see below). What was it like the second time? What about your mood and confidence? What solutions and possibilities can you see now?

You really can change your questions and change your life. When you find yourself in Judger and want to be in Learner instead, ask yourself Switching questions and “reset” to Learner, including:

* Am I in Judger? Is this how I want to feel? Where would I rather be? and How else can I think about this?

**Use the Choice Map™ as a powerful tool for getting better results. It’s simple and it works!**

**Judger Questions** include:
- What’s wrong with me?
- Whose fault is it?
- Why are they so stupid?
- How can I prove that I’m right?
- Haven’t we been there, done that?
- Why bother?

**Results of Judger Questions:**
- A mood of pessimism, stress, and limitation
- A mindset that’s judgmental, reactive, inflexible
- Relating with “attack or defensive” behaviors

**Learner Questions** include:
- What do I want?
- What works?
- What are the facts and what can I learn?
- What are my choices?
- What action steps make sense?
- What’s possible?

**Results of Learner Questions:**
- A mood of optimism, hope, and possibilities
- A mindset that’s thoughtful, understanding, flexible
- Relating that is connected and collaborative

*We all ask both kinds of questions and we have the capacity to choose which ones to ask — moment by moment by moment.*
Appendix B

Energetic Self-Perception Chart (Schneider)
Appendix C

Values of Coaching
Values Brainstorming List

This document lists a collection of values related to coaching that have resonance for me. As it is early on in my career it is likely that this list may change over time. From this list several values were highlighted for inclusion in the Philosophy of Coaching document.

**Self-awareness / Self-discovery**
- Greater awareness of self
- Learn to recognize feeling states and triggers
- Get in touch with what you love
- Experiment with different ways of doing things
- Exploring important questions and issues
  - Who am I really?
  - What’s important to me?
  - What’s my passion? What do I love?
- Broaden perspective
  - Move from 2-D (tunnel vision) to 3-D perspective
  - Open to new possibilities
  - Expand your sense of what’s possible
  - Imagine new opportunities
  - Get a fresh perspective of issues and problems
- Self-discovery
  - Discover what lights you up
  - Examine belief structures: think through false reasoning
  - Identify beliefs, values and goals
  - Clarify issues and values
- Challenge yourself
  - Learn what’s blocking you
  - Develop strategies for moving through blocks
  - Identify and test your assumptions
  - Examine your automatic thinking models
- Valuing self
  - Move yourself up on your priority list
  - Value yourself enough to take care of yourself
- Change how you react to people, things and situations
  - Control what you can control (you)
Personal Development
- Develop skills to last a lifetime
  - Intuition & inner guidance
  - Visualization
  - Communication
  - Self-awareness
- Problem solving
  - Break problems down into small, achievable steps
- Allow yourself to dream
- Identify the characteristics of the life you want
- Plan specific actions to move toward goals
- Achieve a greater sense of balance

Action Planning
- Look at things and evaluate them
- Create movement
- Navigate transitions
- Discover your own solutions
  - Draw on inner wisdom
  - Insight
  - Intuition
- Define observable outcomes
- Try new things – experiment with new behaviors
- Create and carry out realistic action plans
  - Measurable
  - Achievable
  - Manageable

Climate / Relationship with coach
- Get help organizing your thinking
- Coach can suggest new strategies, resources, ideas
- Have someone on your side to help you work things out
- Objective sounding board
- Reality check
- Non-judgmental
- Get support when moving into new territory
- Accountability via regular check-ins
- Someone to toss ideas around with no judgement
- Share your insecurity and uncertainty
- A coach may challenge you to examine your assumptions and beliefs
- Empathy
- Encouragement
- Reliable and dependable
- Accountability for deadlines and task implementation
- Collaborative relationship
Benefits of Coaching

- Learn to be true to yourself / authentic
- Reduce stress
- Behavior and attitude change
- Opportunities to vent and release
- Resolve conflicts
- Pursue dreams / overcome fear
- Gain support and encouragement to achieve goals
- You are not alone
- Develop the discipline to follow through on commitments
- Receive candid feedback
- Ask for help
- Hope
- Achieve balance
- Enjoy an active, dynamic life
Appendix D

Pencil Visualization
The Pencil – A Guided Fantasy
By Michael Podd


Hold a pencil in your hand. Take a good look at it and then start to write with it. What are you writing on? Go over to a sink and fill the sink half full of water. Write on the surface of the water. Now pull the plug and let the water drain out. What is happening to the writing?

Take your pencil and make it very, very large. How big is it? Can you carry it? Can you move it around? Lay it on the floor and jump on the eraser. How bouncy is it? Bounce way up and land on your back in a pile of fluffy pillows. How did the eraser feel? How does it feel in the pillows?

Put the pencil against the wall and slide down to the floor. How did that feel? Now use your body to sharpen the point of the pencil. Feel the point with your bare feet. Is it sharp enough to cut through the wall of the room? Go ahead, pick up the pencil and try it? Did you make it all the way through the wall? If you did, what do you see on the other side of the wall? Was it worth the effort?

Put this pencil aside and pick up another one. Notice that the point is covered by an eraser. Write with the eraser point, then drop the pencil on its point and catch it when it bounces up. Try that again. Is it hard to catch? Did you drop it? Now take the eraser and erase something from your body with it. Do you feel it missing? How can you put it back?

Take this new pencil and turn it on. How did you do that? What does your pencil do when it is turned on? Now turn it off and remove the “on” button. Look for the button marked “shrink.” Press it and watch the pencil become small. How small did it become? Use the small pencil to put a button on a shirt. What color is the shirt? Take this pencil and draw a picture on the back of a ladybug. Did the picture change the appearance of the ladybug? Would you know her if you saw her again?

Now imagine your favorite pencil, and perhaps the next time you use it you might look at it differently… with all its potential to be different.
Appendix E

Concept Paper
Section One

Purpose and Description of Project:

The purpose of this project is to participate in and complete a life coach training program, resulting in a professional coaching certification. I am currently enrolled in an 8-month training program with the Institute for Professional Excellence in Coaching (iPEC). “iPEC’s Accredited Coach Training Program consists of 4 face-to-face intensive weekends, peer coaching, peer groups, niche specialty programs, mentor coaching, practice development, teleclasses, required reading, and other self-study assignments. The program has more than 350 training hours.” [http://ipeccoaching.com/timeline-coach-training-programs.htm](http://ipeccoaching.com/timeline-coach-training-programs.htm)

Two of the four weekend trainings were completed in November 2009 and January 2010. During the upcoming semester I will attend the third 3-day program in March. The final training is in early June. There are approximately five hours of required phone calls each week: 1 hour as a peer coach, 1 hour being coached by a peer, 1.5 hours participating in a niche peer group, and 1.5 hours on a weekly teleclass. In addition, I am currently working with two clients outside of the training program.

The project will be used to explore related topics of interest in some detail and to develop a toolkit of skills and activities that will support a coaching practice. Areas of interest include:

- the art of asking powerful, and empowering, questions
discovering appropriate visualization techniques

identifying ways in which creativity tools can be integrated in a coaching session

developing a philosophy of coaching

preparing a variety of materials to support a professional practice

In addition to the nuts and bolts “to do’s” involved in creating a coaching toolkit, this project may also highlight ways in which I have changed over the years, allowing my self-perception (which in some ways is mired in the past) to catch up with the current reality of who I have become. In that sense the project may serve as an experience which allows me to reflect on and integrate those changes.

Finally, because the coach training program is a work in progress, I expect that there will be some fluidity to the project as new insights, questions, and areas of interest emerge. The training is first and foremost a learning experience and I anticipate significant changes in knowledge and experience to take place over the next few months. To some extent, the project will mirror those changes.

Rationale for Selection:

When I entered the ICSC degree program in 2008 I came with the recognition that a major cycle of my life was coming to an end. Having spent almost 25 years at Cornell University I felt enough was enough, and it was time to do something else. What better place to get some bright ideas about what to do next than a Master’s in Creative Studies? During the spring semester of 2009, as part of an assignment for CRS 570 (Foundations in Teaching and Training Creativity) I worked with individuals to solve specific problems they were experiencing. This was an enjoyable and successful process, and based on the positive feedback I received it occurred to me that I might like to be a personal coach.
I spent some time over the summer investigating various coaching programs and selected the iPEC program based on the live training weekends, the scope of the training, and the fact that it includes a business planning module. While I entered the program with some trepidation in October of 2009, I find the program offers a great deal of satisfaction. Indeed, it has become clear that whenever I put myself in a position to talk about or facilitate creativity, or engage in coaching that I get amazing feedback on how powerful I am and how much people enjoy the experience. Some exercises that I have presented, such as a SCAMPER pencil visualization, elicit remarks like “I have never been able to visualize, but I was able to see everything”. In my most recent coach training weekend a dozen people approached me and offered what can only be described as exuberant feedback on my coaching, my presence, and a presentation I gave. Based on this I might describe the pursuit of a career in coaching as a flower following the sun across the sky.

Having spent most of my life looking inward, the last few years have marked a turn-around in focus. It is time for my light to shine brightly and the path that is unfolding before me is one of being engaged in helping others to discover how to align their actions with their values and become more fully who they choose to be.

Section Two

Identify Pertinent Literature or Resources:

In addition to the training material provided by iPEC, I am examining books about questions, visualization, and coaching. The topic of questions has been on my mind for almost a decade, and it was with some surprise that I discovered that many people have written books about questions. A primary part of the project will be a literature review of questions as I begin to form a questioning framework to support my coaching
practice. Material on visualization techniques will be drawn on to create a suite of exercises that can be used both with groups and individuals. A handful of books about other coaching methodologies will be briefly scanned so that I can begin familiarize myself with the various philosophies of coaching.

References


Section Three

How Do You Plan to Achieve Your Goals and Outcomes?

The iPEC program is a very structured experience, involving in-person training, peer coaching and teleclasses. Logs are kept to document completion of assignments and will be submitted to iPEC for the final certification process. The total program is comprised of about 350 hours. This is largely about showing up and doing the work. A summary outline of the program from iPEC is attached.

In addition to completing all of the iPEC requirements I will explore the topic of questions in depth via a literature review, and create a series of notebooks containing techniques and tools appropriate for coaching. Examples would include questioning techniques for various issues, visualizations on a variety of topics, and creativity tools appropriate to the coaching experience.

Prepare Project Timeline:

iPEC training:

- January 15 - 17: In-person training weekend, Module 2 (30 hours)
- iPEC Weekly activities for 12 week period between modules 2 and 3 (54 hours):
  - Peer coaching 1 hour per week
  - Being coached by a peer 1 hour per week
  - Weekly peer group meetings 1 hour per week
  - Weekly teleclasses 1.5 hours per week
- April 9 - 11: In-person training weekend, Module 3 (30 hours)
- iPEC weekly for 6 week period following module 3 - ditto above (27 hours)
Special Topics:

- Write section on questions by mid-February (30 hours - includes reading)
- Complete notebooks of activities, tools and techniques visualization techniques by mid-March (25 hours)
- Write section on philosophy of coaching by mid-April (15 hours)
- Final project write-up for May (20 hours)

Section Four

What Will be the Tangible Product(s) or Outcomes?

The primary tangible product will be a professional coaching certificate. Due to the timing of the certification and testing process it may not be in hand by the end of the semester. To support my learning process and future business I will develop a series of notebooks containing reference material, tools and techniques related to questioning strategies and visualization techniques. As preliminary steps to launching a business I will create an elevator speech, a sample script for an introductory session, and a philosophy of coaching statement.

It is becoming increasingly clear that I need a great deal more experience in coaching before I choose a target market on which to focus. However, there is much that I know about myself and my values that can inform my foundational principles and give direction to potential areas of interest. To contribute to this understanding I will assess what sets me apart from other coaches in terms of my life experience. Part of the exploratory process will involve sharing thoughts and ideas with friends and getting their feedback on what the most rewarding coaching focus might be.
Section Five

Personal Learning Goals:

- Develop a questioning framework.
- Create a visualization that will support my upcoming change in career.
- Organize, organize, and organize!
- Strengthen my solution by asking friends and colleagues for feedback and input.

What Criteria Will You Use To Measure The Effectiveness Of Your Achievement?

The coach training program I am engaged in has very specific goals and measurements, and these must all be completed in order to qualify for certification. Consequently, to a large extent the applied criteria are external, with the coaching certification indicating the final achievement.

The preparation of the notebook toolkits represents an intentional effort to integrate the new information from the ICSC program and the coach program with a lifetime of knowledge. The point of the notebooks is to facilitate my learning of the tools, questions, and activities employed by coaches. By April I should be feeling a greater sense of ease and comfort with this material. This will be measured by fewer coaching sessions where the primary feeling is “Oh boy, I’m in way over my head”!

Evaluation:

I am receiving feedback from the program participants as we move through the training. The ultimate evaluation, of course, is receiving the credentials - both the Master’s degree and the coaching certificate. The following pages describe the iPEC coach training program.
The Most Comprehensive Coach Training Program in the Industry

Curriculum, Timeline, and Tuition

Become a Certified Professional Coach in 8 to 9 Months

We Applied the Model For Rapid and Sustainable Growth to Our Own Curriculum!

One day all coach training programs will help their students more quickly enter the world, make a difference, and succeed using powerful skills – all without cutting corners. Until then, we’re happy to lead the way!

iPEC’s Accredited Coach Training Program consists of 4 face-to-face intensive weekends, peer coaching, peer groups, niche specialty programs, mentor coaching, practice development, teleclasses, required reading, and other self-study assignments. The program has more than 350 training hours.

The Program Curriculum Summary and Timeline

Pre-Training Work (Timeline: from enrollment and acceptance to your first module. Assignments to be completed as soon as possible, but not required by Module I.)

Pre-Training Work Summary: To acclimate yourself to the profession of coaching and to create the most desirable frame of reference for your learning experience.

- Self-study program
- Learning contract
- Life review
- Review of the Core Energy Coaching framework

Module I: Life & Leadership Potentials Training

(Timeline: 3 Days)

Module I Summary: You’ll learn to understand the Core Energy Construct and coaching process (theory, tools, skills, etc.) so that you can immediately apply it.

The first 3-day intensive face-to-face weekend of the iPEC program is invigorating and inspiring. It gives you the opportunity to experience the power of Core Energy Coaching firsthand, and provides practical knowledge about how to utilize its
potential in many aspects of your life. You’ll learn transformational coaching skills that help you get to the core of clients’ belief systems, challenge their paradigms, shift their energy, and open up infinite new possibilities. You’ll also learn foundational theory and application to move clients forward with clear next steps to form well-thought plans and hold them accountable to the progress they want to make. Most importantly, in all live modules, you’ll coach and receive feedback.

You’ll also quickly see that you won’t be learning all this through a boring lecture or academic format. Instead, you will live it, and in the “process,” have the experience of a lifetime.

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**Between Module Work: Application, Integration, & Enhancement**  
*Timeline: 12 Weeks*

Between modules is the time to integrate what you’ve learned. You’ll do this through a combination of peer work, mentor coaching, teleclasses, required reading, and self-study assignments.

The assignments, mentoring, and teleclasses will specifically look to challenge you to apply what you learned in the first module and expand your coaching knowledge on key coaching topics.

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**Module II: Core Transformation**  
*Timeline: 3 Days*

*Module II Summary:* By working with current thinking and emotional patterns, you’ll learn to assist ANY client in each area of life and then create powerful action plans that lead to significant change.

Module II builds upon everything you learned in the first module and applies this information and experience to eight of the main areas of focus in a client's life. The second module covers many of the most common client concerns, questions, and issues that you might encounter during your coaching experiences. Through a variety of means, you develop and refine new and advanced coaching skills. By the end of this module, you are ready to select, develop, and practice in your area of coaching specialization.
Between Module Work: Application, Integration & Coaching Specialization
(Timeline: 12 Weeks)

In addition to the integration work you’ve already begun and will continue, after Module II, you’ll actually select a coaching “major” from 1 of 9 primary coaching fields. You’ll select from a focus in corporate, professionals, health and wellness, life, executive, sales, relationships, transitions, or small business. Based on your selection, you’ll then enter a focused program to develop your coaching expertise in your major.

Module III: Breakthrough Coaching
(Timeline: 3 Days)

Module III Summary: You’ll understand and explore core (near-causal) thinking and break through deep physical, emotional, psychological, and spiritual blocks to success. You’ll also learn and develop exceptional change tools.

In Module III, you continue to develop your area of specialization and have ample opportunity to practice coaching situations within that area. New and deeper opportunities are provided for you to demonstrate and apply life-changing empowerment and engagement skills within a wide variety of coaching settings. You’ll take your written exam on the final day of this module.

Post Module III: Completion of Certification Requirements
(Timeline: 4 – 8 weeks; Total of 30 – 34 weeks at this point)

You’ll complete your peer work, mentor coaching, teleclasses, required reading, and self-study projects. Once all your requirements have been fulfilled and submitted, you’ll take your oral exam to complete your certification process, after which you’ll earn the designation of Certified Professional Coach.

Module IV: Energy Leadership Coaching Mastery
(Timeline: 3 Days)

Module IV Summary: In this module you’ll learn about getting to the very core of being, the place from which thoughts arise, and shifting consciousness for transformative and sustainable change. You’ll become certified in iPEC’s exclusive Energy Leadership Index tool, applicable for all clients, and receive a complete marketing and coaching system.
Energy Leadership: Coaching Mastery, iPEC’s capstone event, is the final 3-day weekend of your journey. This training is offered approximately every 3 – 4 months around the country in the East, Midwest, and West.

The Energy Leadership training program is a complete graduate program that iPEC has recently included as a part of its regular curriculum. This program offers the most advanced theories, tools, and techniques that are available anywhere to help break through anything that stops people from reaching their potential.

At this module, you will experience the 7 levels of energy (from the Energetic Self-Perception Chart, which is a powerful tool that will teach you how to understand anyone’s behavior and perceptions, including your own, better than ever before). You’ll learn how to administer, interpret and debrief the Energy Leadership Index (ELI) Assessment, and find out how to literally shift someone’s perspective on life in just one coaching session and debrief. You will also be trained on how to use the complete 12-segment Energy Leadership Development System with your clients. Most people consider this aspect of the training a “business in a box” -- which includes not just the above assessment, debrief, and complete development system, but also full marketing materials, web copy, word-for-word workshop scripts with PowerPoints, and more.

After this module, you’ll complete a series of debriefs and brief assignments. Upon successful completion of these requirements, you’ll receive the additional designation of ELI Master Practitioner.

Permission to place this Project online as part of the International Center for Studies resources.

I hereby grant permission to the International Center for Studies in Creativity at Buffalo State college permission to place a digital copy of this Master’s Project (Building a Bridge to a New Career: On Becoming a Life Coach) in an online resource.

__________________________________________

Lydia Rose Pettis

__________________________________________

Date