



The Hero's Journey: A Creative Act

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This paper proposes the hero's journey as a pathway to psychological creativity. The hero's journey reveals, in story form, the efforts of a hero to resolve a significant problem following a change in life circumstances. This problem lies beyond the scope of the hero's current understanding, skill set and experience. In order to address the problem, the hero therefore begins what Campbell refers to as 'the creative act' of 'sticking one's neck out', undergoing a hero's journey. Invariably the journey involves foreign trials, requiring the hero to tap into unknown inner potentials. Invariably trials become more complex, pushing the hero to move beyond their perceived limits. Eventually all heroes will experience at least two trials which either subjectively or literally, will seem like life and death challenges, signalling the death of no longer useful aspects of the self and the integration of their newfound potential. Transformed heroes are able to innovate and create in their everyday lives, providing an elixir for those around them.

This paper proposes that undertaking a hero's journey, as articulated by Joseph Campbell (1993), is a transformative, creative act. The three phases of a hero's journey provide the everyday person with a pathway to creativity across all life domains: personal, professional, and social. As Campbell (1993) proposed, the individual who undertakes a hero's journey is transformed by the trials of the journey from someone bound by personal, familial, professional, cultural or socially proscribed limits (or as Campbell would describe it, as bound in by their dragon) to an individual who can transgress such limits. For Campbell (1993), undertaking a hero's journey is the ultimate creative process, requiring the individual to initiate rather than merely react to life.

Prior to the hero's journey, the individual may have developed what Campbell referred to as a cliché of response (Toms, 2005) to life challenges, where the hero habitually follows the dictates or shoulds of behavior, fearing rejection, if he or she steps outside these proscribed bounds. For Campbell however, the "creative act requires innovation" (Toms, 2005) and the individual on the hero's journey is learning to innovate, to think and behave in a manner beyond existing knowledge or skills. By completion of a

hero's journey, this transformed hero is able to return to everyday life with greater experience, greater insight and new skills: what Campbell collectively referred to as the hero's "boon" (Campbell, 1993, p. 246). The transformed hero then, either consciously or unconsciously, is able to offer this boon as an "elixir" (Campbell, 1993, p. 246) to her or his family, community or group, causing others to similarly begin to think and behave in a more innovative, creative manner. Campbell held this idea of the transformed individual to be true, not only for mythical, but everyday heroes.

The Hero's Journey as a Creative Act

Campbell's (1993) articulation of the ubiquitous hero's journey from cultures across time, essentially details the recurring story of the individual who experience a change in circumstance, leading to a significant life problem and who then must undertake, willingly or not, the adventure of finding a solution. Campbell (1993) described this adventure as occurring in three sequential phases: a "Separation", "Initiation" and "Return" (p. 30).

The separation phase signals, either a sudden or gradual split from some or all aspects of the hero's previous life. Separation inevitably creates a significant life problem, where existing knowledge is insufficient and existing coping skills ineffective (Williams, 2016).

Initiation, the second phase of the story, is where the hero attempts to resolve the significant life problem by undertaking a series of increasingly more difficult trials. These fearful and foreign tasks force a hero to tap into unknown inner resources and potentials (Campbell, in Moyers, 1988). Trials however provide the essential process of discovering “the unrealized, unutilized potential” (Campbell, 2004, p. 119) within the self. This forced learning facilitates the acquisition of new, often polar-opposite skills (Vogler, 2007; Williams, 2016). For example, fearful heroes must eventually face and overcome their fear, isolated heroes find connection, silent heroes find their voice. Towards the end of initiation however, heroes inevitably experience a major setback.

This setback marks the commencement of problem resolution and the third phase of the hero’s journey, the return. By completion of the hero’s journey, the significant life problem has been resolved, though rarely in the way intended. Most importantly however, by the return, heroes have been transformed (Allison & Goethals, 2017; Campbell, 1993; Vogler, 2007; Williams, 2016) through a death and resurrection process: the death of the old self and the birth of a new more capable self. This new self is in possession of new information, able to utilize new polar-opposite skills, and to act in a manner that transgresses previous notions or limitations of how to live. As Campbell described it, transformed heroes have “come to a new level of understanding, what your relationship to life might be. That’s the creative act” (Toms, 2005).

Creativity and the Self-Actualized Person

Campbell’s discussion of discovering unrealized potentialities within the self as inherent in personal transformation and creativity, was similarly identified by Maslow (1943, 1971) in his examination of creativity and self-actualization. Though writing in the middle of the twentieth century, Maslow (1971) proposed that the increasing speed of change in modern life required “a different kind of human being” (p. 56). Someone “comfortable with change, who enjoys change, who is able to improvise, who is able to face ... a situation of which he has absolutely no forewarning” (Maslow, 1971, p. 56). In the twenty-first century, this statement is now an understatement, with the increasingly exponential pace of life. Other researchers have similarly identified the need for creativity in what is now a constantly changing world (David, 2014; Runco, 2004).

Maslow’s (1962) initial examination of creativity, focused on types (e.g., artists, poets), with Maslow assuming that such individuals would provide insights into this comfortable-with-change human being. He soon discovered however, that those traditionally considered creative, were often those least psychologically adaptive. In rethinking his approach,

Maslow identified that the most creative individuals he had encountered were usually completely unremarkable in one sense, yet completely creative in the everyday e.g., the homemaker, the parent, the business person, the athlete, etc. (Maslow, 1962). Maslow (1962) described such people as, “original, ingenious, unexpected” and “inventive” (para 4). He subsequently altered his definition of creativity from “product” to “activities, processes and attitudes” (para 8). Maslow (1943) also realized that such everyday creativity was an aspect of the self-actualized individual, that is, those individuals who had undertaken the task of actualizing their full potential, “to become everything that one is capable of becoming” (p. 383).

In describing these creative self-actualized individuals, Maslow noted, they viewed the ordinary in an extraordinary way. Their view was “raw” and “fresh” (Maslow, 1962, para 9). With their unique perception of the everyday, such individuals were “more spontaneous and expressive” than “average people” (Maslow, 1962, para 10). They were “less controlled and inhibited”, able to “express ideas and impulses ... without fear of ridicule” (Maslow, 1962, para 10). Maslow (1962) further identified that such creative individuals had learned to combine qualities previously considered as discrete dichotomies. They could integrate opposite behaviors, qualities and approaches such as intellect and emotion, “duty” and “pleasure”, “work and play”, “selfishness” and “altruism”, “maturity” with “childlike” qualities (Maslow, 1962, para 17). Maslow (1962) described this ability to move beyond dualities as the creative experience in everyday life. As shall be discussed, and as Campbell proposed, the individual on the hero’s journey must similarly learn to move beyond the limitations of dualistic thinking and behavior; “mythology suggests that behind that duality is singularity” (Campbell, in Moyers, 1988).

Both Campbell and Maslow identified the essential importance of recovering unknown or unused potentials within the self as the means by which creativity is accessed. As Campbell noted, the hero’s journey is the “quest to find the inward thing that you basically are” (Campbell, in Moyers, 1988) and as Maslow (1943) reiterated, self-actualization is the act of becoming “more of what one is” (p. 383).

The Hero’s Journey: The Path to Creativity

You can’t have creativity unless you leave behind the bounded, the fixed, all the rules. (Campbell, in Moyers, 1988)

As proposed, the transformed hero is the one who lives with increased creativity across each life domain. How then do the trials of the hero’s journey facilitate this integration of inner potentials that leads to increased creative ability?

The hero's journey commences at phase one, separation. Following a Call to Adventure, which may be intentional or unintentional, sudden or gradual, heroes find themselves in a foreign situation with a significant life problem. Whatever the type of call, the hero's change in circumstance is often unanticipated, often unpleasant, sometimes traumatic, throwing the individual's everyday life into confusion and chaos (Williams, 2016). Heroes are left facing the problem of how to make the intended change a reality or how to resolve the problem that occurred as a result of the unpleasant or traumatic call. Whatever the event, the hero is separated either partially or completely, physically or psychologically from their old life. The separation phase of the hero's journey has begun. Solutions must be found.

Inevitably, a refusal stage follows, even for those who intended to change in their lives (e.g., Why did I leave my old job! Why did we decide to get pregnant!). The hero's thinking is characterized by a sense of limitation (e.g., I can't do this!). This is a fearful hero stating that they are at the limits of their ability, or so they believe (Williams, 2016). They have no unknown inner potential. Disbelief permeates their thinking, usually mixed with grief over losing aspects of their old life (e.g., the loss of colleagues, or one's health, financial security or a loved one) and fear of the future (e.g., What happens now?). Most heroes want and require time to digest the events of the call, the consequences of separation, particularly those who have experienced the unwanted or traumatic kind. Heroes however soon realize that inactivity is not an option. The significant life problem following the call is not going away, and indeed may be worsening. Though still unsure, heroes realize something must be done. Thus ends the separation phase with the impetus to action signaling the beginning of phase two, initiation. It is here that heroes will learn that they are more than they realize. Heroes will learn however that the initial step in problem solving is the scary, creative act of "sticking their neck out" (Toms, 2005).

Trials as the Path to Creativity

Inventive action is a sticking your neck out and this is what life is and this is what every minute requires. (Toms, 2005)

Traditional initiations are events that mark the cessation of a period of one's life and the beginning of another (e.g., baptism, graduation, marriage). Dazed heroes will have no such awareness of beginning an initiation phase of their hero's journey, nor that their initiation will involve a series of increasingly more difficult trials. Their only focus will be on addressing the significant life problem created by the Call to Adventure.

As stated, invariably the Call to Adventure leaves heroes facing an unfamiliar life problem where existing knowledge and previous life skills will not suffice (Vogler, 2007; Williams, 2017). Initiation, by default, requires heroes to undertake deeds they do not know how to do, may not want to do, and are unsure they can do (Williams, 2016). For example, changing cities or jobs throws one into an unfamiliar place where the hero may not speak the language or know whom or where to ask for help. Expectant mothers may feel uncertain about changes to their body. Is this normal? Should I contact my doctor? Similarly, those who have experienced an unwanted Call to Adventure, such as the loss of a loved one, or a job redundancy may be meeting with lawyers, looking for work, selling homes or examining their financial situation. All heroes are charged with unpleasant, sometimes repugnant trials.

Help in the form of a mentor generally appears during initiation. Whether this is the lawyer, the doctor, a spouse, colleague, friend or neighbor who went through a similar experience, a mentor reminds dazed heroes that resolving the new life problem is possible. They have been on a similar hero's journey and lived to tell the tale (Campbell, in Moyers, 1988; Vogler, 2007). Sponsors in a 12-step program are a good example of a mentor. They have addressed their problem of addiction and the chaos that entails, learning skills to regulate emotions, to return to a more ordered, more connected life. Mentors are well placed to encourage and support, and if necessary, push heroes into action.

With each trial, regardless of success or failure, heroes begin to do what they have previously avoided or considered impossible (e.g., revealing a secret, starting over, asking for help, confronting others). In essence, heroes are being pushed to move beyond what they consider (or firmly believed) are their limits. They are sticking their necks out. For example, asking for help is for many people a forbidden activity as it may involve revealing less than admirable behavior, failure or vulnerability (Edwards, Tinning, Brown, Boardman, & Weinman, 2007; Gulliver, Griffiths, & Christensen, 2010; Williams, 2017). When encountering a foreign life problem, however, where existing coping strategies are ineffective, anxious heroes will need help, even if reluctant to admit it.

The initiation of previously avoided behaviors marks the beginning of a significant psychological shift. 'I can't' is gradually replaced with 'I must' or 'I could'. It is time to stick one's neck out. Even if heroes fail, they will learn that a) the impossible can at least be attempted, b) that failure is an eminent teacher and every failure informs the next attempt, and c) that while they do not enjoy it, they can tolerate high levels of anxiety that they had previously told themselves were intolerable. With each trial, heroes are beginning to tap into inner reserves, gaining evidence that they are more capable than they had previously believed

(Williams, 2016). They are being forced to not only question but relinquish their previously clichéd responses. With the continuing support of the mentor, they are beginning to learn new internal, psychological skills (e.g., how to manage high levels of anxiety) and external, real world skills (e.g., how to engage with people or situations they have previously avoided) (Williams, 2016). Heroes are innovating, moving beyond previous cognitions and behaviors.

In order for any skill to develop however the level of complexity must increase. Inevitably the level of anxiety also increases. A hero who is learning to engage in conflict in the workplace, may suddenly find a major source of conflict with the spouse. A client dealing with the fear of a recent diagnosis and the comprehension of medical terms and test results, suddenly has to deal with the surgery. Each more difficult trial is associated with higher levels of anxiety, more unknowns, and greater risk. Skill level however is increasing as experience is gained.

At some point, again inevitably, heroes will experience a major trial and what appears to be, either complete or near complete failure. Campbell (1993) referred to this as the Supreme Ordeal. It appears that their adversary has won (e.g., the boss, the ex, the disease). They will believe the journey is over, that their intended change is not possible or that their significant life problem cannot be resolved. This moment in the hero's journey marks the beginning of a second psychological gear-change, what Campbell (1993) referred to as a death and resurrection or a second birth. The hero "casts off the psychological posture that you happen to be in at the time, so that you may come into a better one. You die to your current life in order to come to another of some kind" (Campbell, in Moyers, 1988). Heroes may be at their lowest point here, believing that all their efforts have been wasted (Williams, 2016, 2017). They will be reminded, however, often in an unpleasant manner, that the significant life problem remains and inaction is still not an option.

Heroes will also realize, that as with previous failures, the failure of the Supreme Ordeal has further sharpened their new skills and provided new insights into dealing with the significant problem. This may come as a shock to a reluctant or tired hero, but with failure comes rewards (Campbell, 1993; Vogler, 2007; Williams, 2016). What were initially rudimentary or flailing attempts at innovation at the beginning of initiation, are with time becoming more refined and nuanced. Subsequently, heroes now not only view the problem with increased insight, they recognize within themselves an element of developing skill with their own increased potential and capability to finally redress the significant problem caused by the call. What they considered an irrevocable failure immediately following the Supreme

Ordeal is now viewed more realistically as a major setback. Setbacks, while unpleasant, are not the end. Heroes are ready to undertake a final attempt to address the problem and commence the return.

In the return phase, heroes either consciously set out to finally resolve their life problem or are again forced to do so (Campbell, in Moyers, 1988). They will again engage in final combat with their nemesis or face their most feared situation (again!). In this phase, trials again are ratcheted up to another level of complexity, a higher level of anxiety. As previously, things do not go to plan, however by the application of new polar opposite skills and drawing on their new inner potentials, the problem is eventually resolved. The hero who set out for a new job, acquires a job. The hero who intended to begin a family is rewarded by the arrival of their child. For those with an unwanted and unintentional Call to Adventure, resolution may in the return of stable health, a regaining of financial stability, or the finding of a new love.

At the return, heroes will demonstrate a degree of mastery of their new polar opposite skills and an ability to harness the knowledge accrued throughout their initiation. This is the completion of the life and death moment for heroes and what Campbell (1993) referred to as the resurrection. The individual at the beginning of the hero's journey is no longer. That person, or aspects of the old persona have died and been reborn (Williams, 2016, 2017). The integration of previously disowned, disallowed or unknown aspects of inner potentialities has been completed (for now). The heroes have gained their boon (Campbell, 1993). They may re-establish their life, significant life problem resolved but now in a new, more capable sense. Theirs is now a life to innovate where and when required. As Campbell stated, "the cliché is in one's psyche and what you have to come to is a new level of understanding. What your relationship to life might be, that's the creative act" (Toms, 2005).

Having stuck their neck out time and time again, undergone trials, innovated in the absence of not knowing what to do, having tapped into unutilized, hitherto unknown aspects of the self, the hero has integrated these potentials and acquired polar-opposite internal and external skills (Vogler, 2007; Williams, 2016, 2017). It is now the duty of this returned hero to share this new potential, the elixir, with the world (Campbell, 1993; Campbell, in Moyers, 1988). "The whole point of this journey is the reintroduction of this potential into the world." (Campbell, 2004, p. 119) "The courage to face the trials and to bring a whole new body of possibilities into the field of interpreted experience for other people to experience—that is the hero's deed." (Flowers, 1988, p. 49)

Case Studies of the Hero's Journey: Undertaking the Creative Act

Over the past 25 years of clinical practice, I have used the hero's journey as a template to help clients navigate a diverse range of significant life problems (Williams, 2016). I use the term 'mudmap' (an Australian term) with clients to indicate in everyday language, that while the hero's journey is a guide, it is not exact. It locates clients at the various stages and phases of the hero's journey, indicates what to expect and most importantly, what may be required to progress their own hero's journey from problem to resolution. What follows are two examples of how the hero's journey may be used to navigate life. These cases are a conglomeration of real life cases with circumstances altered to protect confidentiality. They do not reflect the life of any one person.

Danielle

Danielle had been married for nearly twenty years with a 14-year-old son, when she received a call from police. She pressed them for information, but they insisted she attend the nearby station immediately. In recalling the story later, she could not remember being informed of her husband's suicide, only her distress when she tried to run from the interview room. Her son Andy was collected from school by a member of her husband's family and taken home. Though quite an unemotional boy, she remembered she had to restrain him, such was his distress upon hearing about his father. Danielle had experienced a most unwanted Call to Adventure. Her separation complete, Danielle's initiation commenced immediately.

Her memory of the following weeks and months was patchy but her trials were immediate. Her brother-in-law stepped in and assisted with organizing the funeral. It came and went and, as she expected, her parents-in-law remained aloof. She took time off work and her son remained home from school. Without discussion, he took to sleeping in her bed. As grief overwhelmed her, everything about the family home reminded her of her husband. She began to worry that this might also be happening to her son, and was torn between staying in the place where they had lived for many years or moving to a new home for a fresh start. At four weeks, Andy still refused to attend school, and still feeling lost herself, Danielle allowed it. Her sleep was poor, and her attempts to return Andy to his own bed ended in open hostility. Her guilt about her husband's suicide grew and she castigated herself for what she should or could have done. Simultaneously, she began to learn about the debt accrued by her husband's most recent business venture. This financial hole now added to her stress. In the end, the question of remaining in the family home was no longer a choice. Selling became an imperative. To cap it off, the new apartment did

not allow dogs, so the family dog was sent to her father's property, two thousand kilometers away. In the space of fourteen weeks, Danielle had lost her husband, her home, her neighborhood, her friends, and her dog. She was now a single parent living in another part of the city, with an angry and silent son.

Danielle's initiation trials were constant. All decisions were hers alone. Her son's emotional state, her own lack of sleep, their financial problems, and her husband's family's reaction, all were hers to deal with, as well as her grief. Her anxiety about what to do increased daily. Her previous coping strategy of avoiding conflict was problematic. The realtor on the new rental property badgered her for bond money before the final sale of the house. She fought with her son about losing the dog and returning to school. Her husband's parents were unhappy about the burial site and wanted to know what had happened in the marriage that led to his suicide. Her previously cordial relations with her brother-in-law also disappeared. Andy, who had often played with his cousin on weekends, was no longer invited over.

Unknown to Danielle, she was bumping into the limitations she had placed on herself early in life. Her mother, though well intentioned, could become enraged in a matter of seconds. She had learned to avoid or minimize conflict through silence or by withholding opinions or information. She had unknowingly used the same strategy in her marriage, supporting her husband, ceding to him on final decisions about both major and minor issues. Any frustrations she experienced, she told herself, were inconsequential. When she had dared to criticize him, it had appeared to escalate the situation so she returned to silence as her preferred coping strategy.

As the trials of initiation continued, it became evident to Danielle that this strategy was no longer possible. She was being forced to stick her neck out and speak up or suffer the decision-making or criticisms of others, whether it was her in-laws, the realtor, or her son. A therapist helped with this while managing her anxiety. Initially, it seemed that everyone she confronted retaliated in the same manner. They became angrier and more aggressive. Her in-laws cut her off completely. Despite good intentions and much effort, little went to plan. Similarly, her reticence to allow others to see her grief and anxiety became problematic. Her therapist spoke of emotional regulation as essentially requiring the involvement and support of others. Though initially disparaging the idea, Danielle had at one time become completely distraught with a friend, and to her surprise, found this created some relief. Nothing had changed, yet she had felt acknowledged. Danielle was innovating, guessing with both some success and some failure.

As time passed, Danielle was refining her new skills, finding her voice at work and speaking to her boss and a

lawyer about access to her unpaid superannuation payments. Success with her son Andy was intermittent, as there were periods where he cloistered himself in his room, then returned to school only to have a relapse or inspire calls from his teachers indicating he was wasting time or failing. He refused to see a therapist. On the first anniversary of her husband's death, Danielle organized a gathering with his family, despite her persona non grata status with them. She was beginning to realize that she could act from her own intentions, rather than plan around the expectations of others. None of these events or situation were clear-cut or went to plan, but Danielle was learning some polar-opposite skills; finding her voice and managing significant amounts of anxiety.

Danielle's Supreme Ordeal occurred following another difficult period with her son. As the morning arguments to attend school had escalated, Andy began refusing to rouse from bed. He had also stopped his obsession with social media and was refusing to leave the house or engage in any social activity. On a day when she was central to an event at work, she left home for several hours, leaving Andy alone. Returning sooner than expected, she found him tying a rope in the high-set hallway ceiling. No one can prepare for such life-changing moments. Andy was admitted to a psychiatric ward that evening. This was Danielle's darkest hour, her Supreme Ordeal. Despite all her efforts, it appeared to her that not only had she failed her husband, but now she was failing her son. Without Danielle's awareness, this event marked the end of initiation and the beginning of her return.

During the months that followed, she realized that her early-learned, survival strategy of not voicing her feelings or her needs, had been similarly shared by her husband. Though he could be critical or angry, it was evident that he had not been open with his other feelings or needs in the months, or possibly years, prior to his suicide. It dawned on her, following her son's suicide attempt, that he too remained silent about his inner world. Emotions such as frustration or irritation were allowed, but distress, loneliness, despair were private affairs. She had also finally realized that neither she nor her husband had allowed themselves to be completely vulnerable, expressing feelings and needs to each other. Danielle realized Andy was chock-full of feelings and unmet needs with no skills in voicing these. Following his hospital discharge, Danielle stuck her neck fully out and consciously opened up to her son. She allowed him to see the depths of her grief while reminding him that grief was a logical response to what had occurred. It was painful, but would not harm her. She acknowledged her loss instead of pretending she was fine. She encouraged Andy to share, though this proved challenging. Adolescent boys do not seek to engage in emotional conversations with their mothers. It was her brother-in-law who finally helped in this area. While on

a weekend trip away with his cousin (the invitations had recommenced), Andy finally told of his anger at his father, and openly wept with his uncle. Things were not made perfect, but Danielle noticed a shift in his demeanor, an improvement in his social life, and, at times, a willingness to talk with her about his father. Her own openness, Danielle further extended to others in her life, including her in-laws, colleagues and friends. Though some were uncomfortable with her new vulnerability and voice, Danielle had grown tired of keeping quiet. A death of an old aspect of herself had commenced.

Following Andy's suicide attempt, Danielle became acutely aware she was once again living in a space tainted by suicide. In discussion with Andy, they decided to leave the apartment and move back to a house. With much joy, this meant the return of the family dog. Danielle also decided to cast off her long-held security blanket of working for others. Despite the protestations of in-laws and some friends, she found a space and opened a café, knowing this was financially risky, opening at a time when major retail book businesses were closing down due to online sales. In her store, she was also open about what had occurred in her life, attracting mental health groups. Her café also sold books and was a meeting place for health and community groups. She even participated in a podcast about depression and suicide. Her days of silencing her feelings and needs were gone. The integration of unknown inner strengths and potentials has been achieved. The death of an old aspect of self, finalized. Transformation achieved.

In this new chapter of her life, Danielle did not consider herself as creative, however in almost all instances, she behaved quite differently. Her use of polar-opposite skills, by simply stating her feelings and needs to others, continued to surprise her. Though still sometimes anxiety provoking, Danielle had found her voice and though some still responded with anger or disapproval, she found she could accept this and move on. Danielle further discovered that some also highly valued her voice. She was sought after in relation to mental health issues, as evidenced by the invitation to the podcast. A local radio station soon followed. Things with her in-laws also improved. Danielle had decided that she wanted them in her life for the sake of Andy, and so she invited them to events, attended theirs and, as in other areas of her life, she was no longer reticent in voicing her feelings and needs with them. She had mastered these skills to the point where she could simultaneously convey her positive regard for them, as well as her concerns. This confused her in-laws.

Danielle's response to her new life was in many areas the polar-opposite of her old. She had been forced to tap into previously disconnected aspects of herself. She found her voice and had realized she could survive conflict and rejection, and that her experience and skills were valued,

personally and professionally. Across each life domain, she was able to use these reconnected aspects of herself. Though still fearful of conflict or rejection, she was a different person, a more integrated woman, business owner, mother, and community spokesperson.

Kumar

Kumar worked in project management and construction. He had taken the job with the idea that it would provide him with experience in building, and he saw his future as forming his own company. In his own words, his marriage day had been the happiest of his life. Veena was fun and shared his interest in creating a family, and a financially secure future. Only in hindsight did Kumar realize that a shift in the marital relationship had followed the arrival of their child. Though they lived together and spent time together as a family, intimacy with his wife had become almost non-existent. Kumar had no idea that an almost imperceptible, but definite, separation phase of his hero's journey had commenced.

At first Kumar attributed his wife's reluctance to tiredness. As weeks turned into months however, he became more critical and demanding of her, which in turn met with increased resistance. It became a nightly affair that their daughter now shared the marital bed, his wife arguing it was easier, and that it helped with her guilt over her long workday while their daughter was in childcare. By the time their daughter was two, Kumar claimed that he could count on one hand the number of times they had been intimate. Lately, his wife had taken to sleeping with her daughter in her daughter's bedroom.

When Kumar realized that his attempts to re-establish intimacy with his wife were increasing the conflict, and her distance from him, he recommenced gym, thinking that somehow a return to his younger, slimmer self might help the situation. He initiated his first business venture, though something he had long dreamt of, as another means of hopefully winning praise and admiration from his wife. As his work hours became longer, he continued to find himself alone on the couch most nights watching television, his wife asleep with their daughter in the other room. As his business grew, Kumar alternated between showering Veena with gifts and compliments and when intimacy did still not occur, falling into frustration, anger and lately rage. Unrecognized by Kumar he was relying on two long-standing coping strategies. Firstly, with any problem work harder and longer. Secondly, if that does not work, get angry.

Kumar's mentor appeared from an unlikely source; his brother-in-law. They went to football together and following one game with more than usual post-game drinking, Kumar had let slip about his marital situation. He did not say much,

but was surprised by his brother-in-law's response, which was also critical of Veena. His brother-in-law remarked he had witnessed Veena's distance to Kumar at family functions. He then offered that he and his wife, Veena's sister, had had a similar problem. His solution had been to get tough. He had told his wife if they were not going to be sexually intimate, then he would be initiating sex outside the relationship, unless she attended marriage therapy. Kumar was shocked. A similar idea had occurred to him, though his was simply to have sex on the side and never tell Veena.

That weekend Kumar began to stick his neck out. As he again attempted to initiate intimacy with his wife, and was rebuffed in his rage, he vented that he was now seriously considering having sex with others, adding, as his brother-in-law had. Veena, shocked to hear about her sister's marriage, accused Kumar of lying. With little warning, and at his limit, Kumar broke down. His wife had never seen this. She was shocked. We have to do something, he had simply stated through tears. With some trepidation, his wife placed her hand on his shoulder. It was the most intimate gesture between them in years. The following fortnight they attended their first session of marital therapy. Kumar had not realized, but he had commenced a polar-opposite skill, being vulnerable. It would prove to be an initiation for both of them.

In therapy, Kumar's trials moved to a more complex level with the stakes decidedly higher: the life of his marriage. Kumar vented about his wife's coldness while Veena defended her behavior stating long work hours and minimal time with their daughter. Encouraged to be open about their feelings, Kumar described himself as very much alone. Though he loved his daughter, he described himself as an outsider, as his wife and daughter appeared to be the dominant relationship in the home. He was merely a bystander. As he again broke down, Veena acknowledged that she needed to provide Kumar some physical intimacy, but he would have to be patient while she worked on this. In the sessions that followed, each week Kumar patiently waited for his wife to stay up later, or return to the marital bed. Neither of these occurred, though throughout the day Veena was more affectionate. They had even gone out together, alone, without their daughter. Kumar was still not satisfied.

Back in therapy, both Kumar and Veena were encouraged to avoid criticizing each other, instead telling each other their needs. This initially appeared to be too stupid for words to Kumar, however the therapist added, that if their needs remained unmet then separation, possibly divorce, would follow. This scared Kumar. He was torn between being obedient so that Veena would remain in his life no matter what or taking the advice of the therapist, and if his needs remained unmet, then leaving. The divorce consequence voiced by the therapist similarly shocked Veena, and it was

at this session that for the first time she became distressed though determinedly trying to regain her composure. It was Kumar this time who reached over to physically support his wife.

In subsequent sessions, Kumar began to see that it was their individual distress that appeared to trigger a loving response from the other. At home, he attempted to not criticize Veena though this was incredibly challenging. He would have to physically remove himself, and create a few dot points in his head before re-entering and telling his wife how he felt, and what he needed in that moment. Things completely fell apart, however, when Veena attended a work function rather than accompany Kumar to his father's birthday celebrations. In his rage, he had smashed a hole in the kitchen wall. Veena left the house with their daughter. In the days that followed, Kumar believed his marriage was over. Despite his best efforts to cease old behaviors and replace these with new, despite his increasing vulnerability with his wife, it appeared that it had all been for nothing. With the Supreme Ordeal over, Kumar's initiation was complete.

In the subsequent weeks, Veena came and went, usually to collect clothes for herself and their daughter. Something however had shifted in Kumar. Though he loved his wife, he realized he was not willing to have a sexless marriage, and stated this openly in therapy. He had apologized verbally, in texts and emails and gifts to Veena throughout the week, more times than he could remember, but he had drawn a line in the sand. He would move out, Veena could return to the home and a formal separation would commence. Kumar did not realize, but his old fearful self, afraid of losing Veena, of holding on to her at any cost, was no longer. A death of an old aspect of his self had occurred. A resurrection was around the corner.

Kumar's return, a final resolution, took shape at therapy with his wife, three weeks later. Again, it was their mutual distress that appeared to save them. She appeared visibly exhausted and, uncharacteristically, openly distressed. Her move from the family home, dealing with parenting alone in her mother's home, while still working had taken its toll. Her criticisms of Kumar's threatening behavior, attempting to dominate her, segued into stories of similar actions from her father. Following further questions from the therapist, she described how she had learned to avoid him, and if that was not possible, to simply shut down when around him. Kumar recognized these responses. They were the same his wife had used with him in their home.

This was not the first time Veena had accused him of being dominating and scary, but he had dismissed these comments as tactics to avoid being intimate with him. His view on his behavior was that he worked slavishly to provide for his family, and to please Veena at every turn. Seeing her deeply distressed, however, he saw, as if for the first time, her

fear of him. Kumar felt shame. When his own distress then overwhelmed him, he apologized to his wife through tears. Again, it was his wife who reached out to comfort him and, he in return grabbed her hand.

In the subsequent sessions, days and weeks, Kumar's overriding concern was to never engender fear in his wife. Following her return to the family home, he walked on eggshells, asking, checking repeatedly, if he was distressing her. This soon wore thin with Veena, who simply reminded him that while she did not want to be fearful in her own home, she also wanted him to feel at ease. As his skill in being vulnerable with her became more a part of his daily behavior, he found that he was able to simply tell her of frustrations, of being lonely or confused. Though solutions were not immediate, they were now working together to address both his and her concerns. New skills, new insights had been gained. Polar-opposite skills were in use. Kumar's boon was evident.

In the weeks that followed, Kumar was a different man. He realized there was another option between pleasing someone and being critical. It was simply asking for his needs to be met. With some initial trepidation, he took this new polar-opposite skills and insights to work, reflecting to staff his pleasure or disappointment, his joy or frustration, with a greater awareness of any possible dominating behavior. His boon was now an elixir. He was explicit about what he and the business needed. His wife, too, had taken on board some polar-opposite behaviors. Now, when feeling anxious, she informed him. If needing space, though awkward, she stated it. Though not truly glad to hear such things, Kumar supported all such requests. Intimacy was on the improve and so was the business.

The Transformed Hero and Creativity

Campbell informed us that undertaking a hero's journey is a creative act, a "sticking one's neck out" experience (Toms, 2005). As with Kumar and Danielle, the hero's journey then is the challenging yet rewarding path to creativity. In the course of undertaking the necessary trials to address the problem created by a Call to Adventure, the hero must connect with unknown inner reserves, inner resources, and inner potentials. The integration of these, which can only occur through heroes undergoing trials and ordeals, transforms heroes, allowing them to live creatively, beyond existing notions, beliefs and behaviors. Trials force heroes to find ideas, energies within themselves that lead to increased skills and insights. In a very real sense, aspects of the previous persona must die and heroes are reborn with these new integrated ones. It is these new aspects of the self which allow a more psychologically creative life. As Maslow (1962) described it, the creative person is able to live with a fresh

perspective, increased spontaneity and expression and less fear of adhering to prescribed modes of behavior. Transformed heroes are subsequently able to innovate in their daily lives, and in doing so, offer their new skills, experience and insights to others to do likewise. As Campbell said:

The influence of a vital person vitalizes, there's no doubt about it. The world without spirit is a wasteland. People have the notion of saving the world by shifting things around, changing the rules, and who's on top, and so forth. No, no! Any world is a valid world if it's alive. The thing to do is to bring life to it, and the only way to do that is to find in your own case where the life is and become alive yourself. (Campbell, in Moyers, 1988)

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