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Finding Your Voice— Again and Again

Uncovering and connecting to your purpose

The moment of achievement has come! You've succeeded in what you so longed to achieve. You became the department head, a member of the millionaire club once or for several years. You are celebrated as bringing in the biggest sales in the company. Or your children have grown, left home and started their own lives, families, and careers. You feel a profound emptiness. Shouldn't you feel fabulous? Look at what you accomplished! You ponder, "Is this all there is?" Your unrest grows. You ask "What now?" You wonder why you are feeling this way. Wouldn't others be satisfied with what you have accomplished? Is there something wrong internally? Why aren't you satisfied? What more do you want?

Living through "the greatest miracle in the history of our species—the

increasing number of generations living simultaneously" (MacGregor, 2003), finding our voice—again—requires a substantial knowledge of who we are and what we want. Alan Fricker reflects, "the global crisis is a crisis of meaning....The old story of how we understand the world...and how we fit into it is no longer effective. We have yet to learn the new story." (Fricker, 2001)

Purpose provides a focus for knowing who we are and what we want. Viktor Frankl's classic book, *Man's Search for Meaning* (Beacon Press, 1959) inspired current and ongoing studies of "meaning." Research using the "Personal Meaning Index" finds that "personal meaning increases with age." (Reker, 2004). A "Spiritual Meaning Scale" extends the concept to encompass "purpose"—that we

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doubling of life expectancy since the Industrial Revolution..." (Freedman, 1999), we encounter the challenge of finding our voice—again and again. As our society becomes progressively more complex "populated by an

"are participants in a meaning that transcends them." (Mascaro, Rosen, & Morey, 2004). What we desire is not more achievements or more success, but more "meaning" in life!

By uncovering and connecting to



purpose, we transcend the old story and find our voice to create the new story that gives us meaning. Purpose transcends specific phases of life and underlies them all. We do not have to uncover our purpose alone. As coaches, we have negotiated our way to find our voice with the assistance of others. Our training provides us the tools to assist our clients in uncovering their purpose. Purpose infuses our commitment.

If the old story left us bereft of meaning, continuing along that path has little potential to reveal the underlying purpose of our lives. The old story may have been based on values we incorporated from our society—achievement, high status, wealth, and public recognition. The meaning of a new story may reside in a different foundation of values, those that are fully resonant with the essence of who we are. It takes time to disassemble ways of thinking based on our previous path and develop a new approach to living, one built on a set of values we may have previously ignored.

As coaches, we are poised to part-
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ner with others facing this tremendous shift in perspective. We can help our clients re-experience what has brought them joy and fulfillment previously. This is not an idle exercise. It

ability to extract information from past experiences that we might not have been conscious of during the initial event (Tulving, 2002). Using this capacity, we can assist clients in re-

ness" of pursuing a specific trajectory becomes clear earlier, as well as later in life. Our commitment to our clients' capacity to thrive leads us to use all the tools we have acquired to facilitate their discovery of the underlying themes of their lives. Our intuitive capacities honed by training will continue to be invaluable to individuals living in a complex society and for a longer period of time. Our services can make a significant contribution not only to individuals but also to society, as we traverse the "crisis of meaning." •

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has the potential to bring to consciousness that which the client may not have been aware of during the experience. Humanity's unique capacity to "consciously re-experience past experiences," termed "epi-critic" memory is the basis of our

experiencing those seminal moments of meaning and uncover the transcendent purpose of their lives.

Age is no determinant. Both younger and older clients have a "crisis of meaning." Possibly due to the complexity of our lives, the "empti-

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