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# Intellectual Engagement in the Workplace: What did you do at work today?

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UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

Intellectual Engagement in the Workplace: What did you do at work today?

by

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A THESIS

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## **Abstract**

This hermeneutic research study focuses on Intellectual Engagement in the Workplace. It is an unravelling of situated life stories of people in their “work” to provide intentionality. Four individuals from different careers were interviewed and the conversations taped and transcribed. Each participant was asked a set list of questions about engagement in their work. The key research question is “What did you do at work today?” A hermeneutic inquiry practice with emphasis on careful questioning, provides information on what allows individuals to be passionate and interested in their work.

Through these interviews and research of engagement in the workplace, four common principles emerge.

- 1) The first principle is employers and individuals are creators of “possibilities”. Individuals are responsible for their own learning. No one else can do it for them.
- 2) The second principle is purposeful work, which is meaningful, fulfilling and personal, is “engaging”. The work individuals engage in expands if it is meaningful and purposeful for them. The participants in the interviews are working “beyond” the task at hand.
- 3) The third principle is directive boundaries with feedback, support and experiences enhance learning. Goals, feedback and mentors build successes for individuals to want to continue to learn and discover. Successes build self-efficacy in individuals.
- 4) Lastly, the fourth principle is the workplace is a place of “connection”. The workplace can create community and social belonging for individuals. The workplace has tremendous implications for the future of our learners and society.

*Keywords:* Engagement, Community, Purpose, Passion, Workplace

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I would like to dedicate this thesis to my children, to Sarah and Grant Larsen, to my three nieces, Cailyn Strachan, Megan Strachan and Mia Strachan, and to my nephew, Tai Strachan. I would also like to dedicate this to all the young learners of this century and beyond. Be open to your passions, find your free space, engage in making mistakes and never stop questioning.

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## **Preamble**

*“If you can see your path laid out in front of you step by step, you know it’s not your path. Your own path you make with every step you take. That’s why it’s your path.” Joseph Campbell (1991, p. 22)*

Finding one’s career is a process of finding oneself and one’s place in the world. It is being aware of what moves us forward and what holds us back. This thesis is a journey into the world of work and how people are “engaged” in their work. Becoming “experienced” in the world is part of the process of meaningful work. Life experiences, “disjunctures” (Jarvis, 2006) and reflection transform individuals. Finding interests and passion, being open to embracing uncertainty and cultivating self-awareness through conscious reflection are part of the journey.

The research practice for this thesis is hermeneutic. Hermeneutics, a theory of text interpretation, is a human science research practice. In this paper, hermeneutics will be discussed through the philosophies of Weber, Husserl, Heidegger and Hans-Georg Gadamer. Hermeneutics, is being aware of human structures, which have been built over time, and looking at human experiences to gain a common understanding of situations. Through careful inquiry with individuals “engaged” in their work, an unveiling of life stories of engagement will unravel.

The ideas of Fredrick Taylor, the originator of the Scientific Management movement, continue to infiltrate the present day work and workplace. Standardization and simplification of tasks to find the “best” procedure(s) continues in our workplaces today. Understanding Taylor’s influences provide an awareness of the disintegration of “real” work for the 21<sup>st</sup> century learner.



In this thesis, interpretations from the interviews, literature and working with a framework of learning principles influenced by research by Dr. Sharon Friesen from the University of Calgary, “What did you do at school today?” (Willms et al., 2009), an unravelling of four principles creating “Good Work” within the workplace emerges.

Chapter five titled, Awakening and Deepening care in Good Work, illuminates the “experience” of “Good Work”, lived and participated in, with care and attention to the process. Awakening includes listening to the voices of the participants, the writers and researchers gone before, and “being in” the event of the “lived” experience. We are changed by the experiences we participate in.

The conclusion of this thesis will review how work is part of the development of our humanity and society. “Good Work” is the responsibility of both the individual and the collective. It is caring for, seeing the potential and embracing the flow of change in our work. Employers and individuals need to adapt to our changing future with openness, awareness, connection and care.

## **Chapter One – Why Workplace Engagement**

### **Workplace Fascination**

My favorite game when I was growing up was a game called Careers©, manufactured by Parker Brothers in 1955. It had a “success formula” for life, which included a certain number of points for fame, money and happiness, within each career. Depending on the path you took, you accumulated victory points, subject to your occupation choice. The more experience (occupations) you gained, the more victory points you accrued. Each player set their victory points beforehand and kept it quiet until the end of the game and players would reveal if their “success” formula was achieved or not. It was engaging, fun and really symbolized the “real world” to me.

Now in my present work as a career consultant, I counsel others in their “success” formula. What I realize now is the truth in the quote by philosopher, Joseph Campbell, “If you can see your path laid out in front of you step by step, you know it’s not your path. Your own path you make with every step you take. That’s why it’s your path” (Campbell, 1991, p. 22). It is through exploration, doing and “playing” that we find our path(s). The only thing that is certain, in our world, is uncertainty. Learning to walk “carefully”, and with awareness leads us to new pathways to venture into.

My thesis topic is one that has always “drawn me in” (Gadamer, 2004). How do people find their “work” and what is it about their work that “engages” them? Using a hermeneutic research practice, I will be unravelling and “unpacking” my question, “What did you do at work today?”

## My “work” journey

*You can't connect the dots looking forward; you can only connect them looking backwards. So you have to trust that the dots will somehow connect in your future. You have to trust in something – your gut, destiny, life, karma, whatever. Because believing that the dots will connect down the road will give you the confidence to follow your heart even when it leads you off the well-worn path; and that will make all the difference. Steve Jobs (2005)*

Looking back at the dots in my life, I see my career path of helping others find their “place” has been my vocational “calling” early on. With my first job, packing and carrying out groceries as a clerk at the local grocery store, I learned how to engage and develop my “social intelligence” (Goleman, 2006). “‘Social intelligence’ is being intelligent not just *about* our relationships, but also *in* them” (Goleman, 2006, p. 11).

Our family moved a lot when I was younger. My parents enjoyed renovating a new home every four years, so my brother, sister and I were uprooted to a new school, new community and new scary, judging eyes. My sense of community and “belonging” was taken from me every four years, so I learned quickly how to be a chameleon. I became very good at observing, watching and assessing each situation I walked into. I was terrified much of the time and felt a sense of being an “outsider” in a world where everyone seemed to have a “place”.

Being the “outsider” provided me with the opportunity to try many different activities that I might not have otherwise tried. As I was trying to find my “place” and while navigating that path, I worked with all kinds of people: mentally challenged adults, students, seniors, hospital dementia patients, prisoners,

children, youth and participated in high school council activities. I was becoming “experienced” (Gadamer, 2004) and developing a sense of “*Dasein*” (Being-there) (Heidegger, 2010) in the world. I was recognizing the diversity and wonder of our humanity.

## **Katimavik**

A transformational time in my life at age 17 was during my participation in a program called Katimavik. Katimavik was a not-for-profit, Canadian government funded program for young adults aged 17 – 21. The Katimavik program focused on “the development of lifelong personal, professional and social competencies in the areas of civic engagement, autonomous living, healthy lifestyle and environmental stewardship” (<http://www.katimavik.org/programs>). I left home at 17 years of age to live and work with 13 other Canadians, aged 17 – 21. We received a \$1 a day spending allowance and \$1000 at the completion of the nine month program.

What I learned through that experience was about team work, cultures, understanding the “other” and a lot of self-awareness. I learned how to be “intuitively” smart about other people. I learned how to ask questions. I learned about how to find out what I needed to know, and how to find out who knew what I needed to know. I learned how to push my boundaries.

Looking back, what allowed me to learn while I engaged in Katimavik was the freedom, no real responsibilities and being part of a “team”. This “team” relied on each other for our meals, our entertainment and our sense of “belonging”, when we were so far from home. We developed a “sub-culture” of ourselves. We dressed in Salvation Army clothes and rolled and smoked Drum tobacco cigarettes. We listened to Cat Stevens and spent hours trying to learn French and English with our language counterparts. We were asked to be “active” citizens in the three communities we lived in for

three months, of the nine. We volunteered at winter festivals, day cares, recreation centres and blueberry festivals. We were the grunt work of some of the volunteer jobs but we felt “part” of something bigger than ourselves. We were a “sub-culture” of Katimavik, living within a community in Canada and learning how to “be” in our country and in “our” skin.

The other key learning aspect of the Katimavik experience taught me a lot about “culture”. It taught me that groups create their own cultures depending on the rules and the conformity of the group. We were allowed to try out different personalities and different experiences and be with people, we would never meet otherwise. Each group that I met in Katimavik formed its own sense of self. The group decided what they wanted to do and the group developed its own personality and persona. Groups are infectious and take on the emotions of the members. I was fortunate to be in a group that was positive, active and growing. We supported each other to be our best possible selves in the nine months we were together.

I learned at a young age, “free space” to create and “be” was liberating and expansive. I learned, when I was involved in work that was meaningful, purposeful and interesting, I was ready to give it my “all”. I learned how to knit, drive a 9 seated van, sleep in a teepee in the winter, build an ice sculpture and write and conduct a recreational survey for seniors. I learned having boundaries and getting constructive feedback from program leaders and employers was invaluable to me. I also learned when I was engaged in a “community”, I felt part of a team and willing and excited to be part of a program and group that was “alive”. I learned I had the habits of mind to explore, experience and experiment.

### **Finding my “fit”**

After Katimavik, I went to University to obtain my Sociology major. I struggled to find my “fit”. I wanted so much to “know what I wanted to be when I grew up”. I volunteered for four years at the Kensington Distress Centre, at Collins Bay medium security penitentiary and at the Queen’s University

Career and Development Centre. Volunteering at the Career and Development Centre gave me the opportunity to try out my new research skills to understand different jobs, careers and companies out there in the “real world.” During this time, I had a mentor who guided me, inspired me and exposed me to opportunities to grow, which I eagerly pursued. I continued to venture into places and situations that were uncomfortable for me.

I travelled for a year after I graduated and when I returned to Calgary, during a terrible economy downturn, I was unable to find a “real” job. What I longed for was someone to take me under their wing and point me in the right direction. I was lost, scared and confused. What were my skills, my strengths, my abilities and where did I “belong”?

As he put it, “Your path up through college is kind of decided for you and then it is like the navigation system turns off and you have to pilot yourself and that’s when it gets scary.” Being released into the so-called real world, absent the scaffolding to support ready connection, can leave recent graduates wondering why their life suddenly seems less sparkly, their days more life-draining than life-giving. (Fredrickson, 2013a, p. 193)

Indeed, at this point in my life, I had lost my “path” and my direction.

I worked as a waitress to help pay for my one bedroom apartment and ate restaurant food after my shifts. My student loans started to come due and I was frustrated by the experience of not feeling like I had a “place” in society. My sparkly days at University were over and now I had to start building the scaffolding. I did a lot of soul searching and pavement pounding that year. I talked to many, many different people in various occupations. I took a course on career and life planning. I found a mentor, in

my Career and Life Planning professor, who asked good questions, and is still asking thought provoking questions, years later. I reflected back on my past “success” stories. I started to find “key” people who were in my field of interest. I started to network and expand my opportunities. Finally, I got a job with the City of Calgary in their Youth Employment Centre and I was on my career track of career and employment counselling. I had found my “calling”. Ironically, looking back, some twenty years later, all that searching, questing and angst were all to my benefit. I learned about myself, my capabilities, my successes, and my resilience in the face of learning.

“Insight is something we come to” (Gadamer, 2004, p. 350). When I reflect now, I see my “‘learning through suffering’ (*pathei mathos*)” (Gadamer, 2004, p. 351) has provided me with a broadened openness to new experiences and uncertainty.

### **Disjuncture**

My experiences of being “lost” are what Brookfield (1985) calls a major transition and Jarvis (2006) has termed “disjuncture”. “Our experience occurs at the intersection of the inner self and the outer world and so learning always occurs at this point of interaction, usually when the two are in some tension, even dissonance, which I have always called ‘disjuncture’.” (Jarvis, 2006, p. 7). “Disjuncture occurs when our biographical repertoire is no longer sufficient to cope automatically with our situation, so that our unthinking harmony with our world is disturbed and we feel unease” (Jarvis, 2006, p. 16). When an individual is in a situation or experience which causes a sense of unease or discomfort, this can be a motivating factor for learning. “No longer can previous learning cope with the present situation. People are consciously aware that they do not know how to act. We have to think, to plan or to learn something new. Learning, then, always begins with experiencing” (Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007, p. 100).

Because of this sense of disharmony, individuals want to “right” themselves back into a sense of harmony or control in their lives. It is our innate human tendency, to search for equilibrium within the situation. To make sense of the situation, individuals look to past life experiences. Individuals move into reflection and action to maintain their sense of internal harmony and lessen their internal distress. The way an individual will create equilibrium is to take a step back and reflect objectively on the situation and move into a new awareness. “Disharmony is a driving force for learning and change” (Jarvis, 2008, p. 49).

There is comfort now, years later, to know the transition periods that I experienced had a “name”. It helps me to recognize the space “in-between” (Gadamer, 2004, p. 295) where I am pushed up against the margins (Gadamer, 2004). It is in times of turmoil, I find my potential; and during my transitions, I find myself. I help people navigate this scary and overwhelming task of finding who they are and where they “belong”. I assist people in discovering their unique gifts, and understanding the process of unfolding what is important. I comfort, while they navigate with an awareness of the learning which comes out of chaos and “mud”. I work with people to become “wise” and engage in broadened awareness. “Wise people, studies show, are especially discerning because they are able to see holistically and integrate seemingly contradictory perspectives to achieve balance and well-being in everyday life. Broadened awareness, or being able to ‘see the big picture’ and ‘connect the dots’, can thus be viewed as a core facet of wisdom” (Fredrickson, 2013a, p. 82).

“Career” is a process. It is an evolving, moving, fluid, uncertain process that does not have a neat, packaged “outcome”. People need to understand, they will be in the “mud” quite a lot. This is part of the journey. It is similar to the Dr. Seuss book, *Oh, the Places You Will Go* (1990, pp. 14 - 28):

Wherever you fly, you'll be the best of the best.



Wherever you go, you will top all the rest.

Except when you don't  
Because, sometimes, you won't.

I'm sorry to say so  
but, sadly, it's true  
and Hang-ups  
can happen to you.

You can get all hung up  
in a prickly perch.  
And your gang will fly on.  
You'll be left in a Lurch.

You'll come down from the Lurch  
with an unpleasant bump.  
And the chances are, then,  
that you'll be in a Slump.

And when you're in a Slump,  
you're not in for much fun.  
Un-slumping yourself  
is not easily done.

You will come to a place where the streets are not marked.  
Some windows are lighted. But mostly they're darked.  
A place you could sprain both your elbow and chin!  
Do you dare to stay out? Do you dare to go in?  
How much can you lose? How much can you win?

And IF you go in, should you turn left or right...  
or right-and-three-quarters? Or, maybe, not quite?  
Or go around back and sneak in from behind?  
Simple it's not, I'm afraid you will find,  
for a mind-maker-upper to make up his mind.

You can get so confused  
that you'll start in to race  
down long wiggled roads at a break-necking pace  
and grind on for miles across weirdish wild space,  
headed, I fear, toward a most useless place.  
The Waiting Place...

...for people just waiting.  
Waiting for a train to go  
or a bus to come, or a plane to go

or the mail to come, or the rain to go  
or the phone to ring, or the snow to snow  
or waiting around for a Yes or a No  
or waiting for their hair to grow.  
Everyone is just waiting.

Waiting for the fish to bite  
or waiting for wind to fly a kite  
or waiting around for Friday night  
or waiting, perhaps, for their Uncle Jake  
or a pot to boil, or a Better Break  
or a string of pearls, or a pair of pants  
or a wig with curls, or Another Chance.  
Everyone is just waiting.

NO!  
That's not for you!

Somehow you'll escape  
all that waiting and staying.  
You'll find the bright places  
where Boom Bands are playing.

With banner flip-flapping,  
once more you'll ride high!

The “lurch” place and the waiting place, this is where individuals learn. Being in these places is normal and part of being alive. It is a “*chaordic*, how order emerges from chaos” process. (Senge, 2004, p. 172). To become “wise”, we need to navigate through those scary, overwhelming and unhinged times, with a sense of confidence and openness, recognizing that our life is like art, a work in progress. We all have unique gifts and being open to exploring them is what brings aliveness to our lives.

Parker Palmer, a writer, speaker and activist in education, community and leadership talks about how being in darkness leads us to the light. This journey, from dark to light, is part of being human.

But before we come to that center, full of light, we must travel in the dark. Darkness is not the whole of the story – every pilgrimage has passages of loveliness and joy – but it is the part of the

story most often left untold. When we finally escape the darkness and stumble into the light, it is tempting to tell others that our hope never flagged, to deny those long nights we spent cowering in fear.

The experience of darkness has been essential to my coming into selfhood, and telling the truth about that fact helps me stay in the light. But I want to tell that truth for another reason as well: many young people today journey in the dark, as the young always have, and we elders do them a disservice when we withhold the shadowy parts of our lives. When I was young, there were very few elders willing to talk about the darkness; most of them pretending that success was all they had ever known. As the darkness began to descend on me in my early twenties, I thought I had developed a unique and terminal case of failure. ***I did not realize that I had merely embarked on a journey toward joining the human race*** [emphasis added]. (Palmer, 2000, p. 18 - 19)

There is a kinship, a commonality, a familiarity in the language that we use and the way we frame our situations. Shining the light on our “disjunctures” allows an opening of sharing experiences, although different, they are similar.

Once again we discover that the person who is understanding does not know and judge as one who stands apart and unaffected but rather he thinks along with the other from the perspective of a specific bond of belonging, as if he too were affected. (Gadamer, 2004, p. 320)

It is through the experiences I have undergone, I appreciate the “otherness” in my participants or comrades in life. These experiences are different for everyone and are not something which can be read about or “analyzed” to be understood. It is only in going *through* my experiences; I appreciate the self

and “other”. I am continually fine tuning my “artfulness” and knowing I can only understand and know what to do when I am *amongst* you. (D. Jardine, EDER 603 lecture, May 1, 2014). Having undergone my experiences has made me a better facilitator, counsellor and person. The experiences undergone, provided me with fodder for self-awareness and transformation. I move from “becoming” to “being” and back again. I am becoming *Bildung* (German for “education” or “formation”). “*Bildung* is not achieved in the manner of technical construction, but grows out of an inner process of formation and cultivation” (Gadamer, 2004, p. 10). I am continually moving back and forth in my learning, open to any new experiences which present themselves, to discover and learn from.

### **Slow Death**

While dealing in the “real” world, many people choose not to “awaken” to the life-world around them. It is much easier to be a passive bystander than to take responsibility for one’s own life. Robert Quinn (1996) in his book, *Deep Change: Discovering the Leader Within*, explains how many people in our society today are living a life of slow-death. This is similar to the metaphor of the frog in boiling water. The frog, when placed in cold water and when the water slowly boils, will boil to death, without realizing it. This is the experience of following the same old, same old routines, without questioning or being “aware” and being not willing to make necessary changes to experience a full, enriched and engaged life. Many people in our society and in the workplace are living lives of “slow death”. They are conforming to the norms but are not being consciously aware of what the norms are, where these norms stem from, and do not question what is important to them, as individuals and a society. They are following rules and routines imposed years ago, which continue to be maintained as a societal norm. “They are likely to be unconscious of the slowly evolving changes” (Quinn, 1996, p. 18). People live in “quiet desperation”, a role of a victim, believing there is no way out of the situation(s) they are in.

“Making deep change in ourselves is not something we do for the organization; we do it for ourselves. It is a choice to be alive” (Quinn, 1996, p. 22). By taking a conscious, reflective look at the “life-world” which surrounds us, one can engage in the world in which we are living. One way to do this is to provide awareness; career is a process and the evolving of self, is a journey. It is a journey towards self-discovery and a shifting of paradigms, “we experience an ‘expansion of consciousness” (Quinn, 1996, p. 45). It is stepping out of the status quo and creating one’s vision and action plan in the face of uncertainty.

When we have a vision, it does not necessarily mean that we have a plan. We may know where we want to be, but we will seldom know the actual steps we must take to get there. We must trust in ourselves to learn the way, to build the bridge as we walk on it. Deep change is an extensive learning process. When we pursue our vision, we must have courage and confidence in ourselves to reach our goal. We must leap into the chasm of uncertainty and strive bravely ahead. (Quinn, 1996, p. 84)

Awakening to the work world, and how it is structured, maintained and followed, needs to be addressed. Eyes need to be opened. New bridges need to be built.

### **Awakening to the Life-World**

*You can be submerged in the crowd, and if you're submerged in the crowd and have no opportunity to think for yourself, to look through your own eyes, life is dull and flat and boring. The only way to really awaken to life, awaken to the possibilities, is to be self-aware. I use the term wide-awakeness. Without the ability to think about yourself, to reflect on your life, there's*

*really no awareness, no consciousness. Consciousness doesn't come automatically; it comes through being alive, awake, curious, and often furious.*

*Maxine Greene (2008)*

Once people “wake up” through conscious awareness, suddenly, they are “awakened” to the possibilities existing outside themselves and the organization. The “process” can be long and involved; questioning values, wants, desires, beliefs but a clearer understanding of the individual and the importance of their place in the world, unfolds.

To find this “authentic” place is to ask oneself many questions. It is taking time to be reflective and to make changes (possible scary changes), if one is not being authentic.

But because outside influences have the capacity to exercise profound, at times paralyzing, sway over us and how we live our days, it is imperative – at least for the vast majority of us who have ever felt a ‘misalignment’ in our lives, a gnawing lack of engagement and joy – that we work at figuring out how we ended up doing what we do and being who we are. (Loehr, 2007, p. 88)

Not everyone’s experience is similar, but there is a similar pattern to our lives or a “kinship” (Jardine, 2006). It is a way of talking about the world that is understandable only when it is talked about. This is talking about failures, transitions and dealing with fear and courage to face situations head on.

Courage involves the ability to take action and carry on even if we are afraid. No matter how big or consequential a given step may be, that step cannot be said to involve courage if we are not somehow afraid to take it. It may show how smart we are, how energetic, how focused; but not

how brave. It is action in the face of fear that demonstrates courage. We have come to this new appreciation for human courage because we have learned something that may be very hard for successful, capable people to believe: more than we understand, most people deal constantly with fear. (Kegan & Lahey, 2009, pp. 47- 48)

Transition periods will be in our lives whether we want them or not. Courage is being open to living *in* the world of fear and uncertainty with a “come what may” attitude. It is tapping into one’s habits of mind and resilience. One way to do this is to take a different approach to our life-world and see as Professor William Tobert of Boston College has said “there are a galaxy of responses to any situation” (Quinn, 1996, p. 77). When we are open to possibilities, “free space” and venturing into the unknown with quiet confidence and resiliency, our world opens up.

#### **And So.....**

To see someone who really “loves” their work is a joy to behold. When one is passionate and naturally interested in something, the focus of our world is not to “know” things but to “experience” situations and have “self-understanding (*Sichverstehen*: knowing one’s way around)” (Gadamer, 2004, p. 251). I watch with admiration and pleasure when I find someone who is really “on”. Someone who is “on” is truly in joy and alive when they are engaged in their work. They are also extremely valuable to employers. When I meet with clients, I find it fascinating to watch their voice change, their body posture change and their eyes engage with me, when they start to talk about what interests them. With careful questioning and allowing the “free space” to explore themselves and what is important, this rare opportunity allows them a true glimpse of who they really are.

I walk with people through the “experience” into their search for their “calling”. As Jungian analyst, James Hillman says “the search for the soul leads always into the ‘depths’” (Whyte, 2007, p. 14).

Walking into the “depths”, for many people, is frightening. It is taking a critical look at what is important, what the past has brought forward and what the future holds. It is taking a critical look at some of the “taken-for-grantedness” that our society has imposed on us or we have imposed on ourselves. Exploration of “possibilities” brings up a lot of self-doubt and fear but it can also bring life, “aliveness” and vitality to people.

Work is an important part of everyday life in most people’s lives. More than a paycheck, work can provide a place of learning, a sense of well-being, belonging, and an engagement in an interest to oneself, and “beyond” oneself. What engages, inspires, energizes people at work? I walk through the “experience” of being “on” in the workplace with “energizers”. These are people who experience enjoyment, pleasure, play and connection in their work. It is a way of “being” in the world.



## **Chapter Two – Changing Workplace**

### **A Brief Perspective on the Changing Workplace**

Work is a part of our daily fabric of life. It weaves into our lives, defining who we are and allowing us to define ourselves. It is a personal, encompassing way of life, expressing ourselves and what is important to us. Work needs to be held very delicately by both the individual and society. It has the potential to be more than a financial transaction but an opportunity for learning, expansion, self-expression and purpose, community and engagement in life.

### **Agricultural to Knowledge Economy**

Our social world has changed over the past century from an agriculture society to an industrial society to knowledge-based society. The agricultural society focused on farming, community and producing food. The industrial revolution focused on “technological production, work and rational knowledge” (Jarvis, 2007, p. 36). The knowledge-based economy is based less on production but more on value from human innovation and creativity. “The knowledge economy is based on people’s ability to innovate, spark ideas, utilize higher levels of knowledge, both hard and soft, in order to create value” (Isles, 2010, p. 88).

The Industrial Age has often been called the “machine age” because the rise of machines and the way they operated transformed the way people thought and worked. It wasn’t long before people were expected to work like machines and the assembly line became the icon of efficiency and standardization for all organizations. Gradually, machine thinking shaped much more than manufacturing: Economic progress became synonymous with increases in efficiency and productivity; cultural advance became equated with dazzling new technologies; and nature, including the other creatures with whom we share the earth, was reduced to “natural resources,” inputs to the economic machine. (Senge, 2008, p. 11)

“Community”, in the agricultural society, moved to “association” in the industrial society and “association” has moved to “individual” as the shift moved to a knowledge economy. Our “natural resources”, as Senge (2008) calls humans, are being exploited as objects, to be used to increase profits and bottom line margins for business. The future needs to shift from “individual” back to “community.”

In the first stage of the Industrial Revolution (1750 – 1820), the rise of large-scale manufacturing caused labor productivity in England to rise a hundredfold. But the Revolution did not simply change the way we worked; it transformed the way we lived, the way we thought about ourselves, and the way we viewed the world. Nothing like it had ever occurred before. (Senge, 2008, p. 14)

With the rapid change in technology and innovation, the expectations of organizations from their people have also increased a hundredfold. Knowledge has value and value is a market commodity. Organizations make money from the “natural resources” that humans provide.

“Corporations... have spent enormous amounts of energy putting in place systems that attempt to hold back the shifting, oceanic qualities of existence” (Whyte, 2002, p. 10). Systems and policies not questioned can create a society unknowingly conforming to a world that is regulated and not open to exploring, change and growth. Organizations have become detached from community and detached from belonging to humanity.

Among the primary evils of contemporary industry is that it is founded on uniform, standardized processes. This is especially devastating in agribusiness, which demands uniformity in its

products. Nature abhors uniformity. Nature not only produces species diversity but also individual diversity. Nature produces individuals. (Berry, 1999, p. 149)

It is easy to forget, when people become focused on themselves and their wants and needs, that we are all connected. Our actions affect another's actions. We are not robots working in a systematic, programmed structure; we are human beings working in the world of nature.

In the pressures of the day-to-day delivery of “results”, it is easy to forget that organizations are human communities. As a community, the organization came into being because there were enough people who cared about something to pursue it together. At Nike, it was passionate runners trained by a legendary coach who had a major breakthrough in creating running shoes for world class athletes. At Starbucks, it was coffee lovers. At Google, it was technology visionaries who wanted to shape the Internet. Costco was created by a group of people with extensive retailing experience who were genuinely dedicated to high quality and low cost for “member” customers. As time passes, business evolve and new circumstances and visions shape new ways of operating. But, as in any human community, roots matter, and connecting with them leads to change processes that have much greater potential to elicit widespread engagement and success. (Senge, 2008, p. 270)

It is possible to work together to create community, foster innovation and work with the changes in our world. It is important to be aware, human community matters and relationships matter.

Human beings are not resources, they are people. There is no such thing as social capital but we have accepted the colonization of our language passively – even actively: there are people

relating with each other and offering to enter relationships with others in order to respond to each other's needs and together enrich each other's lives. (Jarvis, 2007, p. 199)

## **Taylorism**

"In fact history does not belong to us; we belong to it. Long before we understand ourselves through the process of self-examination, we understand ourselves in a self-evident way in the family, society, and state in which we live" (Gadamer, 2004, p. 278).

In the past, work was a "craftsmanship", which represented expertise, authenticity of work, pride and joy in producing something "real". Our modern workplace has moved towards a model of efficiency and standardization of work processes. In the process, we have lost the sense of relatedness and community that allows people to work together with "care" and engagement toward success.

We live at the rate of a runaway train, at the mercy of the myth of speed, which states subversively and mercilessly that those who don't keep up fall behind, perhaps forever. The myth has its origins in the dream of the Industrial Age and a literally mechanistic belief called "Taylorism". Frederic Taylor is the father of "scientific time management," the genius or culprit, depending on your politics, who brought stopwatches into the workplace. He is noteworthy for having announced, "We don't want the man to do any thinking." Taylor was also the first to look at work scientifically, but he ended up reducing it to little more than slavery, creating the sense everywhere he went that the greatest shortage of all is the shortage of time. (Cousineau, 2001, p. 77)

Taylorism is the scientific management model, which espouses that tasks can be broken down into efficient steps to streamline the process. Taylorism introduced by Fredric Winslow Taylor in 1911 through his book, *The Principles of Scientific Management* (Taylor, 1998), has taken over the way that organizations manage our teams, and how our society manages our lives. Fredric Taylor, hired as a management consultant, introduced Scientific Management into the Bethlehem Steel company, which manufactured pig iron. “One of the important objects of this paper is to convince its readers that every single act of every workman can be reduced to a science” (Taylor, 1998, p. 31). Taylor broke down the tasks of the pig iron manufacturing into specialized repetitive tasks. By selecting men, such as Schmidt, a Dutchman who was very “close” to his money, Taylor wanted to see if he would do the work for pay and “make him glad to do it” (Taylor, 1998, p. 20). The way the management speaks to him is surprising, with a very degrading and superior voice, “Now a high-price man does just what he’s told to do, and no back talk. Do you understand that? When this man tells you to walk, you walk; when he tells you to sit down, you sit down, and you don’t talk back at him” (Taylor, 1998, p. 21). By specializing and controlling the tasks, there was no need for the worker to do any thinking. They were replaceable by any other man/woman to do the same task.

One of the other major parts Taylorism removed was the sense of community and connection in the workplace. He talks about how men will be “solidering”, underworking, or “hanging it out” (Taylor, 1998, p. 3). While studying the “girls” who worked at Bethlehem Steel, he found this “investigation showed that the girls spent a considerable part of their time either in partial idleness, talking and half working or in actually doing nothing” (Taylor, 1998, p. 47). He establishes that “the most favorable working conditions have been established, that the final step should be taken which insures them what they most want, namely, high wages” (Taylor, 1998, p. 47).

Another aspect of the workplace he removed was workers' pride in their work and autonomy. Taylor speaks of these workers as mentally incapable of doing any other work and he uses forced methods of management. He uses the word "enforced" to describe how to get the workers to complete the tasks. "It is only through enforced standardization of methods, enforced adoption of the best implements and working conditions, and enforced cooperation that this faster work can be assured" (Taylor, 1998, p. 41). There is continued reference to the intellectual ability of these men. "The man suited to handling pig iron is too stupid properly to train himself" (Taylor, 1998, p. 31). "In almost all of the mechanic arts the science which underlies each workman's act is so great and amounts to so much that the workman who is best suited actually to do the work is incapable (either through lack of education or through insufficient mental capacity) of understanding this science" (Taylor, 1998, p. 18). "Now one of the very first requirements for a man who is fit to handle pig iron as a regular occupation is that he shall be so stupid and so phlegmatic that he more nearly resembles in his mental make-up the ox than other type" (Taylor, 1998, p. 28).

Taylorism provided a "taken-for-granted" mindset for the workers and organizations of today. The mindset is that work being done is standardized, and the worker can be replaced by someone else who can do the work, once they are trained in the proper procedures. Taylorism suggested workers do not have "gifts" or value which they contribute to the organization. Workers are replaceable, if they are not willing, or do not complete the work. Work is work and play is play. Work is meant to be a profit making venture and the worker is not there to innovate or be creative. He/she is there to complete the task in the most efficient time possible, for the greatest profit for the organization. Relationships, "hanging it out" or connection interfere with production. The worker is to follow instructions and not question the management, because management knows best, and it is best if he just follows orders to

complete the task. This mindset continues into our world of work today. “F. W. Taylor’s thinking so permeates the soil of modern life we no longer realize it’s there” (Kanigel, 2005, p. 7).

With these efficiency practices, disengagement from the “real” work has occurred. Work has become a set of tasks leading to profit for businesses, minus the humanity. It has become a categorization and standardization of explainable steps and tasks toward efficiency. “The difficulty is that with the rise of modern sciences, we began to think of the universe as a collection of objects rather than as a communion of subjects” (Berry, 1999, p. 16).

Being able to categorize everything is not possible or efficient. Individuals and employees are human beings and they need to be able to be more open to “thinking” and working with “possibilities” rather than “certainties.” “Just as the Industrial Age has been an era characterized by the growth and spread of the large hierarchically controlled organizations, life beyond the Bubble may be characterized by a variety of business and non-business organizations based on cultures of relationship rather than cultures of control” (Senge, 2008, p. 363). This is the shift to working in relationship or relatedness rather than one of rigidity and compliance.

Craftsmanship was something that was learned as an apprentice.

The woodcarver knows that to do good work, he must deal with external constraints without compromising his inner freedom, letting these polarities flow into each other like the surfaces of a Mobius strip. So he begins not by focusing on the job the Prince commanded him to do but on a job much nearer at hand; the inner work of reclaiming true self – a work he does without ceasing as his story unfolds. (Palmer, 2004, p. 103)

Craftsmanship was passed down from generation to generation. Having a skill or profession had the status, recognition and pride of quality work associated with it. There was a refinement of the craft and an expertise developed from working with the product or knowledge day after day.

### **What is “real” work?**

*And then I asked myself a lot: what is the real work?*

*I think it's important, first of all, because it's good to work – I love work, work and play are one....*

*The real work is what we really do. And what our lives are.*

*And if we can live the work we have to do, knowing that we are real, and it's real, and that the world is real, then it becomes right.*

*And that's real work: to make the world as real as it is, and to find ourselves as real as we are within it.*

*Gary Snyder (1980, pp. 81-82)*

Real work is engaging, energy giving, interesting and joyful. It is play. It builds community. It allows each individual to add their special uniqueness to their work. This might be the smile, the laugh or the connection that builds positive resonance (Fredrickson, 2013a) within the workplace. It might be the new idea to make things more seamless, which is rewarded with status or recognition within the organization. It might be the potential of seeing something develop from sharing ideas in an informal setting. It might be giving someone the dignity and focus to continue their own journey. It might be building successes for another person by giving them some social connection and building their resilience in their learning journey. It is giving a face to the “other” and seeing a connection among us



all. It is trusting the wisdom within and following our gifts to show us where they can be used. Douglas Cardinal, the Canadian architect “insists he is no rebel, just an individual who must trust his intuitions. He sees his work as a reflection of his inner life. ‘To create, you have to believe there is something inside you that is beautiful. I’m not trying to be a part of any group or style. Cardinal does Cardinal – and don’t expect anything from me’.” (McCarthy, 1984, p. 44). It is being authentic, “aware” and following your instincts.

With the changing workplace, one must be open to continuous learning, self-evaluation and reflection. We will be continuously rewriting our stories to fit with the changing world. It is taking a step away from efficiency and toward authenticity. It is stepping back into craftsmanship, “real”, genuine and meaningful work.

‘The mythic vision has been set into place,’ writes Thomas Berry in *The Great Work: Our Way into the Future*. ‘The distorted dream of an industrial technological paradise is being replaced by the more viable dream of a mutually enhancing human presence within an ever-renewing organic-based Earth community. The dream drives the action. In the larger cultural context the dream becomes the myth that guides the action.’ (Cousineau, 2001, p. 220)

### **The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Society**

*“In a continual cycle of learning, unlearning, and relearning, workers need to master new techniques, adapt to new organizational forms, and come up with new ideas.” Alvin Toffler (1990, p. 211)*

Change is a stable of human history. With the industrial, technical and global changes, our world is in a constant state of flux. Knowledge is changing and evolving at a very rapid pace. When individuals learn to adjust to the change process, they will be able to give more to their families, workplaces and societies.

It (society) demands workers who can adjust to change, be flexible, and be prepared to learn new jobs and even new life-styles. Since the knowledge is new and does not get embedded in society's culture, it cannot always be institutionalized in educational forms and so it is the learners responsibility to learn whatever knowledge they feel that they need or want to learn. (Jarvis, 2008, p. 90)

According to OCED, "Investment in human capital is a shared enterprise" (OCED, 1996, p. 92). It has social and economic benefits. Knowledge workers can contribute to the gain of the organization. If organizations invest in their people, they are investing in individuals and contributing to the whole person and society.

Employers are demanding an educated workforce with the skills and the knowledge to be able to be competitive in today's marketplace. While employers provide some training, the expectation has become that the individual is responsible for their own learning. "In a knowledge economy, citizens have to be employable and so they have to keep on learning (both in work and in the educational system) that necessary information to provide them with the knowledge and skills (and the necessary certificates) to achieve this end" (Jarvis, 2008, p. 46). Being part of the "knowledge" economy is continued learning and evaluation.

Businesses and people are assuming that the educational institutions will provide the necessary skills and knowledge to those in the workplace (Robinson, 2011). This assumption is only partially correct. Individuals need to keep interested in and curious about new learning.

Today, everyone needs robust, rigorous thinking abilities and skills. Learning is a key feature of knowledge societies. Knowing how to learn, being inspired to continue learning and learning together are essential in today's world, as are the ability to build on other's ideas, collaborate to solve problems, address issues, and pose new problems or questions. (Friesen & Jardine, 2009, p. 35)

Individuals who take primary responsibility for their learning will see problems as challenges, be goal oriented, and see their learning as a constant discovery.

When learning is characterized by inquiring, questioning, thinking, organizing and articulating—and when each of these is characterized as inquiring into something in the ways proper to living disciplines of knowledge—then students require the capacities and space to explore, challenge, analyze, critique and create always and necessarily within a field of knowledge that helps cultivate those capacities and helps students and teachers alike learn their way around living landscapes of knowing. (Friesen & Jardine, 2009, p. 35)

With the changing economy and the technological and economic changes, our society needs to readjust the way learning occurs. It is no longer a “known” path or the “right” course to take. The education system is working from a Western perspective, which proposes a linear focus for learning. This must change. Our school systems and workplaces need to have an innovative, creative and openness to

“possibilities” in order to adapt to the changing world. It is learning how to learn and engaging in a life-long process of exploration.

With the focus on linearity, individuals are siloed into jobs that fit our economic model at the time. Instead, what we need to be teaching and educating in the school system and the workplace is a mindset of experimentation, exploration and curiosity.

Learning is an attitude toward facing the unknown. Self-renewing adults don't feel locked into who they were so much as alive to the people they're becoming. Learning helps them feel their pulse, measure their paths, and integrate their lives. Learning unveils more of their human competence and opens doors to new possibilities. (Hudson, 1999, p. 240)

The attitudes of “possibilities”, belonging and creating are important for life-long learning. With uncertainty and change, one engages in self-awareness, self-reliance and education. Our society will be learning to “walk naked into the land of uncertainty” (Quinn, 2004, p. 9). It will require vulnerability, trust and a readjustment in thinking about learning and work.

In the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, the social aspect of the workplace needs to be recognized. In Robert Putnam's book, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (2000), he talks about the decline of civic, and community based institutions of the past. He uses the example of memberships in bowling leagues being down but more Americans are bowling. People are participating in activities of the past but they have lost the connection and the community that coming along with being engaged in the activities. There is a loss of connection amongst and between individuals and between groups. Putnam discusses the difference between physical, human and social capital.

Physical capital refers to physical objects and human capital refers to properties of individuals, social capital refers to connections among individuals – social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them. (Putnam, 2000, p. 19)

He suggests that a strong need exists for people to bond (associate with similar people – same age, religion and education) and a need for people to bridge (associate with individuals from different backgrounds). Our society is becoming more and more isolated and individualized and there is a need for a return of the social institution. An important social institution of the future is the workplace and the workplace can provide places for connection, harmonizing and learning.

*Human capital* is the amount of intelligence, experience and education a person has. Not surprisingly, companies with more human capital tend to do better. However, most studies of human capital ignore the concept of *social capital*, the social connections and social networks within an organization. (Lieberman, 2013, p. 262)

“Trustworthiness lubricates social life. Frequent interaction among a diverse set of people tends to produce a norm of generalized reciprocity” (Putman, 2000, p. 21). Work is a place people can develop trustworthiness. Connection in the workplace is not only good for employers in the productivity and retention standpoint but from the employees perspective there is a sense of meaning, belonging and expansion of civic engagement.

Thomas Moore, author of *Care of the Soul: A Guide for Cultivating Depth and Sacredness in Everyday Life* (1992) is a spiritual writer, former monk and psychotherapist. His work is influenced by Carl Jung and James Hillman. In his book he discusses the difference between “care” and “cure”.

A major difference between care and cure is the cure implies the end of trouble. If you are cured, you don't have to worry about whatever was bothering you any longer. But care has a sense of ongoing attention. There is no end. Conflicts may never be fully resolved. Your character will never change radically, although it may go through some interesting transformations. Awareness can change, of course, but problems may persist and never go away. (Moore, 1992, p. 19)

The focus for employers has been to “solve” the formula to “engage” employees. Approaching learning from the Scientific Management System, there should be a method or “formula” for people to be more productive. Human systems are complicated. To make generalizations about how humans work based on measurement is to create a division between machines and humans. Humans cannot be “cured” in a one size fits all manner. Humans must be held gently and with care. The key is to emphasize care rather than cure in our workplaces.

We've come to believe that the core capacity needed to access the field of the future is presence. We first thought presence as being fully conscious and aware in the present moment. Then we began to appreciate presence as deep listening, of being open to beyond one's preconceptions and historical ways of making sense. We came to see the importance of letting go of old identities and the need to control and...making choices to serve the evolution of life. Ultimately,

we came to see all these aspects of presence as leading to a state of “letting come”, of consciously participating in a large field for change. (Senge, 2004, p. 13)

## Chapter Three – Research Practice

### Research Practice

*“Every story is us.” Rumi, the Book of Love: Poems of Ecstasy and Longing (2014)*

In the spring of 2014, I attended a book launch of University of Calgary professors, Dr. David Jardine and Dr. Jackie Seidel. On the cover of their book, *Ecological Pedagogy, Buddhist Pedagogy, Hermeneutic Pedagogy: Experiments in a Curriculum for Miracles* (2014) is a painting of a Magpie (The Aviator by Connie Geerts). This painting is of a Magpie in flight, with its wings spread. Suddenly, I am much more aware. I see magpies everywhere. They are squawking, flying, strutting during my walks. Everywhere, they are opening their wings. They are tricksters, similar to the American crow. They eat garbage and any kind of insect. They feed their young meat, as they are omnivores. Their nests are big round mounds of sticks. I am struck by their nests. They fly in one way and can only fly out the other end – there is no backing up for them – their tails are too long.

This magpie painting has drawn me in – “understanding begins when something addresses us” (Gadamer, 2004, p. 298). It is the opening of the wings – letting in life and the spreading of the wings to encapsulate life. It is the flight, the soaring, the movement somewhere, which draws me in. It is the thought that the magpie can go in one way to the dome nest and only come out the other side. There is no backing up. This is what hermeneutic research is. There is no backing up. We are forever changed. Heidegger said, (D. Jardine, EDER 603 lecture notes, April 10, 2014) we venture out and come back to the familiar – it is the same but different. There is something about that painting.... There is something about this topic... there is something about hermeneutics that has taken me out, and when I am returning... I am the same, but different. There is no backing up.



Hermeneutics was introduced to me in the mid-1980 when I studying social theory from a sociological perspective. Hermeneutics is a “way of being in the world”. Hermeneutics is a theory of understanding with a historical perspective. It is becoming aware of how the influences around us shape who we are. It is bringing the *Bildung* (culture) into awareness and as Hegel describes *Bildung* “one can recognize the basic character of the historical spirit: to reconcile itself with itself, to recognize oneself in other being” (Gadamer, 2004, p. 12). *Bildung* is to be “cultured” using tact and memory to be able to address each situation with the “knowledge” we have from our experiences and to be able to move into that “knowledge” with a “knowing” that comes from being “cultured” in the area that we are knowledgeable in. “Hermeneutics, as a way of conducting research, is educative in its intent. It wants to listen, to affect and to invite, not merely to inform” (Jardine, 2006, p. 269).

This hermeneutic practice has me spell-bound. I am so consciously aware of what is going on around me – in work and in the world. There is a consciousness that has been awoken within me. I feel alive.

## **Knowledge**

Knowledge, during the Enlightenment period, was grounded in objective foundationalism. “True” knowledge of human action was attained, it was believed, by applying the natural science method to man. Social action was evaluated through empirical and analytical methods to obtain “social facts”. This positivistic, systematic approach viewed man in a very impersonal manner, taking little notice of social reality. Historian, Daniel J. Boorstin is quoted saying, “The greatest obstacle to discovery is not ignorance – it is the illusion of knowledge” (Boorstin, 2014). So this illusion of empirical, non-biased knowledge of studying human behaviour was questioned and challenged.

## **Max Weber**

Max Weber, a German theorist, questioned this “value-free” scientific approach and felt that “social explanation must take account of both meanings and the causes of social phenomena” (Skinner, 1985, p. 6). Weber believed that theorists must try to “understand” (“*Verstehen*” in German) the purpose of human action and to do this, one must reach beyond natural science. Weber’s concern was that human rationality was becoming too instrumental. Social science, by taking a “value-free” approach to studying humans was leading itself into a mechanistic, uncaring, systematic approach. To Weber, the future of society was slowly moving into an “iron cage” because of increased rationality through mechanistic measures. “The ‘iron cage’ thus traps individuals in systems based purely on teleological efficiency, rational calculation and control” (Iron Cage, 2014). Human emotions and feelings, asserted Weber, had to be taken into account and understood. According to Weber, lost was the kinship or tradition and instead, the focus was on efficiency and capitalism.

## **Edmund Husserl**

Another key philosopher in Germany at the time was Edmund Husserl, who established the school of phenomenology. To Husserl, everything could not be broken down into scientific parts and data. He believed in the “experience of” and “awareness” in human experiences and created the philosophical method called Phenomenology. Phenomenology focuses on the “experience of” and something that happens *to* us. It is describing an experience but not being involved *in* the experience.

Phenomenological research is descriptive in nature and is focused on describing the experience from a structural consciousness. While it does bring the human experience into consciousness, the criticism of phenomenology is that “it is ‘disinterestedly’ documented by a ‘disinterested spectator’” (Husserl, as cited in Jardine, 2014b, p. 61).

## **Martin Heidegger**

Martin Heidegger, a student of Edmund Husserl believed in the “experience of” but took it a step further. He implied that we can “experience” worlds but there is a “Being-in-the-world” that has a “taken-for-grantedness” based on our cultural situatedness. He focused on the experience of being a human being. He used the German word *Dasein*, to describe human beings, which translates into “being-there”, “presence” or “existence”. Heidegger believed knowledge is shaped by human beings “thrown-ness”. This “thrown-ness” is the culture and social environment that the human being finds themselves immersed in, without being aware of it. This culture and social environment is one’s “world”. Heidegger coined the term “being-in-the-world”, meaning there is no distance between us and the world. Heidegger’s work is significant because there is an awareness that we are “in” the world. There is an awareness of the “life-world” which one is “thrown”, and an awareness that we are *in* it. One cannot be truly objective when in the life-world because the life-world is already in our thinking.

## **Hans-Georg Gadamer**

Hans-Georg Gadamer, a student of Heidegger’s, took Heidegger’s idea of “being-in-the-world” and brought “understanding” the “life-world” through hermeneutical philosophy. “Understanding is *Dasein*’s mode of being, insofar as it is potentiality-for-being and ‘possibility’” (Gadamer, 2004, p. 250). Gadamer rejected the natural scientific method and developed the concept of “hermeneutics” into his theory. Gadamer’s theory of philosophical hermeneutics is an ontological theory of understanding, which is historically bound. “Philosophical hermeneutics suggests an account of aesthetic attentiveness as a practice, a practice not concerned with the passive appreciation of art and its aesthetic qualities in any standard sense but with actively facilitating movement between significant semantic placeholders in the horizons of both the artwork and the spectator so as to promote the possibility of transformative experience” (Davey, 2013, p. 3).

Ontology is searching for the reality as it is “now”. “Truth” to Gadamer, can only be attained through a “hermeneutic circle” and a continuous “fusion of horizons”. Knowledge is gained through a dialectical dialogue involving questions and answers. This spiral fusion is called the hermeneutic circle. One’s preconceptions must be acknowledged. When one is confronted with a framework which is different from one’s own, an individual can grasp the understanding of his material by “interpreting”. This interpretation involves a “fusion of horizons”. It is a historical-hermeneutical development in which the interplay between the effect of living tradition and the effect of historical study must be understood. Gadamer’s approach is one that is existential and ontological in the search to “understand” humankind. Gadamer believed that “truth cannot be equated with methodical proof” (Weinshemier, 1985, p. 19).

Hermeneutics is “the study of the methodological principles of interpretation” (Hermeneutic, 2014). Hermeneutics began as the study of understanding biblical texts. As it grew, it began to describe “historical” and “humanistic” modes of understanding. Hermeneutics questions what is involved in trying to understand a text and, in the existential view, what understanding is itself. Hermeneutics suggests a process of bringing a thing or situation from unintelligibility to understanding. To interpret any human action, we must try to place ourselves within the actor’s motives and interpretations. This means understanding and interpreting the different person or culture. It is not to “share” the experience with him or her, but rather “fuse” one’s experiences with the understanding and interpretation of the other’s experience. “Philosophical hermeneutics does not seek as its principal ambition to decipher or decode the intrinsic meaning of a poetic utterance or painterly image. That would be to objectify the artwork as a challenging scholarly puzzle. A hermeneutically orientated aesthetics seeks engagement with a work” (Davey, 2013, p. 176).

Gadamer focuses on the notion of historical understanding. For one to “understand” tradition must be looked at and the realization must be made that we stand always within a continuously moving tradition.

The historical movement of human life consists in the fact that it is never absolutely bound to any one standpoint, and hence can never have a truly closed horizon. The horizon is, rather, something into which we move and that moves with us. Horizons change for a person who is moving. Thus the horizon of the past, out of which all human life lives and which exists in the form of tradition, is always in motion. The surrounding horizon is not set in motion by historical consciousness. But in it this motion becomes aware of itself. (Gadamer, 2004, p. 303)

One must try to develop an understanding of meaning within tradition. In order to understand the work of tradition, one must not only understand the question which the text addresses but also have the tradition merge with the question that tradition is for us.

The questioning intrinsic to art aims not at definitive answers to the questions life may pose but at achieving new ways of being attentive to them. The understanding such questioning promotes has less to do with endorsing a way of seeing but more with achieving new if not transformative perspectives. (Davey, 2013, p. 26)

Hermeneutic reflection provides us with a better understanding and knowledge. We must apply the knowledge we gain, which occurs during the fusion of horizons, to our own experiences. “Gadamer has argued, when we engage in research action, thought and interpretation, we are not simply involved in instrumental processes through which we actually make and remake ourselves as human beings” (Morgan, 1982, p. 373). “Understanding is to be thought of less as a subjective act than as participating in an event of tradition, a process of transmission in which past and present are constantly mediated”

(Gadamer, 2004, p. 291). “These conditions (for understanding) do not amount to a ‘procedure’ or method which the interpreter must of himself bring to bear on the text; rather, they must be given” (Gadamer, 2004, p. 295). Understanding is being part of the event, participating in the event and allowing an opening up of the event. The event “includes” me and I am available for the eventfulness (D. Jardine, EDER 603 lecture, March 6, 2014). When one is engaged as an active participant, fully present and being “in the midst” of the event, one evolves. “Sustained watchfulness is central to Gadamer’s conception of aesthetic contemplation as ‘tarrying’ with a work” (Davey, 2013, p. 67). “What we experience in a work of art and what invites our attention is how true it is – i.e., to what extent one knows and recognizes something and oneself” (Gadamer, 2004, p. 113). When one is available for the eventfulness, Gadamer suggests that we move into the art of strengthening. This is necessary for one to “understand” the event. It is becoming “experienced” at something, not an “expert” at something. It is a dialogical experience that opens one up to “possibilities” and not to “completion”. “The true locus of hermeneutics is this in-between” (Gadamer, 2004, p. 295). This “in-between” is the place for self-understanding and moving into a place of possibilities not yet explored. This place “in-between” is where hermeneutics stays because there is no resolution. It is the space in between the familiar and the unknown. “To reach an understanding in a dialogue is not merely a matter of putting oneself forward and successfully asserting one’s own point of view, but being transformed into a communion in which we do not remain what we were” (Gadamer, 2004, p. 371).

When one encounters a situation, when one uses “tact”, “a special sensitivity and sensitiveness to situations and how to behave in them” (Gadamer, 2004, p. 14), true understanding is possible. “If we put ourselves in someone else’s shoes, for example, then we will understand him – i.e., become aware of the otherness, the indissoluble individuality of the other person – by putting *ourselves* in his position” (Gadamer, 2004, p. 304). Understanding is an event; it is not a procedure or method.

“Openness to the other, then, involves recognizing that I myself must accept some things that are against me, even though no one else forces me to do so” (Gadamer, 2004, p. 355).

“Hermeneutics is a *practice*” (Jardine, 2014c, p. 129). It is a continuous, unfinished interpretation of the situations in which we find ourselves. “The discovery of the true meaning of a text or a work of art is never finished; it is in fact an infinite process” (Gadamer, 2004, p. 298). There is openness to the other person that is necessary for human bonding. “Without such openness to one another there is no genuine human bond. Belonging together always also means being about to listen to one another” (Gadamer, 2004, p. 355). It is listening with openness and a readiness of experience and questioning.

“Understanding begins...when something addresses us” (Gadamer, 2004, p. 298).

Hermeneutics is the art of strengthening. It is not a debate or an argument. It is a coming together through giving and taking, and self-awareness and self-understanding. With a genuine dialogue, an opening “emerges” (Gadamer, 2004). “Conversation is a process of coming to an understanding. Thus it belongs to every true conversation that each person opens himself to the other, truly accepts his point of view as valid and transposes himself into the other to such an extent that he understands not the particular individual but what he says” (Gadamer, 2004, p. 387).

### **Intentionality in the research practice**

The research practice used in this thesis will be hermeneutic. Humans are complicated and cannot be pigeonholed into set boxes. It is taking the philosophy of Hans-Georg Gadamer into an “understanding” of our life situations in a situated context. The use of situated life stories will provide intentionality in the research. “Intentionality” is the “consciousness” or “awareness” of a phenomenon through a shared experience.

The purpose of hermeneutic writing is not to give information, but to draw readers into “a hitherto concealed experience that transcends thinking from the position of subjectivity” (Gadamer, 1989, p. 100; see Jardine 2012b). The purpose of hermeneutic writing is to cast both the reader and the writer into the open, the opportunity, of the matters under consideration, so that the life of those matters can be experienced and thought. (Jardine, 2014d, p. 30)

Through face-to-face interviews and the writing of life stories, an unravelling or “unpacking” will occur of “engaged” individuals in the workplace. An engaged employee is someone who enjoys their work and is good at it (See Appendix B). By experiencing the life world, one comes to an understanding or “knowing” in the world (Gadamer, 2004). By bringing and reflecting on one’s own interpretations and lens of the research, one is able to create a broader or expanded understanding of the experience. As Gadamer says about exploring and understanding our research, “all such understanding is ultimately self-understanding (*Sichverstehen*: knowing one’s way around)” (Gadamer, 2004, p. 251).

And so my magpie wings open up to embrace my new learning.

### **The Research Process**

I interviewed four individuals identified as “engaged” in the workplace, by me or through referrals in my network. These individuals come from a range of occupations: an elementary teacher, a sports coach, grocery cashier and a Chief Human Resources Manager of 2,000+ employees. The interview questions are in Appendix A.

Each individual received a letter of introduction and invitation to engage in the study (See Appendix B). A thorough verbal description of the purpose of the research and contact numbers for the researcher and supervisor, in case there were any questions of the study was provided. Participants received the risks



and benefits of participating in the interview and each participant completed and signed an ethic review form before the interview process began. Each individual was aware they were able to withdraw from the study at any time. Each individual was interviewed for an hour and the interview was taped and transcribed.

Through careful questioning, probing and deep listening in the interviews, I am hoping to find the answer to my question – “What “engages” people in the workplace and why?”

### **The “Good Work” Interviews**

*“I mean, that`s one way to choose your life, to do something just to get a job; but if you don`t love what you`re doing, you`re not in it at all” (Campbell, 2003, p. 94).*

Focus, intensity, unwavering eye contact. There is laughter and bluntness in responding to the questions. Each one takes time to clarify the question and truthfully answer me with reflective, conscious thought. They are self-confident, focused and present. These people were “with” me for the time we share together. Nothing else matters. They are “present” in our conversation. The stories, these people tell me, they are a window into their “real” work. These stories tell me a lot.

One of them invites me to do the interview in her home. I drive out to her townhouse and see her in a different context. We talk in her small neat, one bedroom townhouse while her cats roam around and claw at my backpack. One has a sparse office in a large downtown office building. There is a desk, a blank notepad with an expensive pen beside it, and a ticking clock on the wall behind me. I am booked for an hour but her assistant tells me as she walks me down the hall, I will be lucky to get half an hour. At the half hour mark, my interviewee quickly and efficiently ends the interview. The next party she is

meeting with is already at the door. The other has inspirational quotes around his sun-filled office. Quotes are on the wall, on the white board and some even taped to his window. He shares with me that he is a “quote guy.” A stinging sensation hits my eyes and I tear up, when he tells me his mission in his work is to “develop good men”. He discloses his philosophy on how he fosters mentorships within his players. Another meets with me on plastic classroom chairs at a round table with scribbles and pencil marks on the laminate table top. As we progress through the questions, he gets onto a philosophical dissertation of life – about school and life.

They all have what “Elaine Hatfield, John Cacioppo, and Richard Rapson call emotional contagion. Emotional Contagion is a process in which people begin to feel the same way that the people around them feel” (Quinn & Quinn, 2009, p. 67). Emotional Contagion is the ability to emotionally connect – to mimicry the other and to reflect the others’ emotion. I leave feeling invigorated, alive and joyful. They are role models in their work and in their lives. They make me feel ready to take on anything and everything as soon as I leave. These are people that I want to be around. They are “leaders” in their fields. They have discovered the real meaning of life. They have what Joseph Campbell, the philosopher, was alluding to, “People are always talking about looking for the meaning of life, when what they’re really looking for is a deep experience of life” (Cousineau, 2001, p. 13). A deep experience of life is doing work that is meaningful, giving to others in the process and contributing to the whole of the community. This is the meaning of Good Work. In my mind, these people have found the deep experience of life.

*Are you all in?” because that means you are 100% in. You do exercises where you put them in a circle and if your chair is on the circle, you are all in. So in the room put your chair where you really are. It is funny, when you describe “all in” – most kids don’t get it. You talk to most*

*parents, relationships – most people don't get it. I don't think a lot of people understand what that actually means. The kids will think more superficially about it "Ya, I am trying really hard". Well, as much as Yoda might not be the best example, - "Do or Do Not – there is no try". – It is a really good phrase. As soon as you use words like this, you put yourself in a space to not be all in. Kids in their language, "I'm kinda this or I might do this or more likely this... then you are not. "I am doing this" – it makes a difference. (Sinclair (pseudonyms are used throughout this paper for all interview participants), personal communication, February 26, 2014)*

It is being fully present, loving what you do and having a positive resonance mindset (Fredrickson, 2013a). It is learning from mistakes, finding what you want to do, volunteering your time and seeing beyond yourself.

These people are working to make communities better. They engage kids, every day lonely people, staff and communities to live better lives. Before I approach the cashier to interview her for my project, I tell her I think she does a fantastic job. She tells me that someone, whom she does not know, has recently written a letter about her to the National Post newspaper. The letter is part of a question asked to National Post readers "Whom do you admire?" The article is titled, "I admire ordinary people".

I admire [Mitchell], a cashier in my local grocery store. She is a very colorful character, at times outspoken but she always gives her undivided attention to each person that she serves, interspersing cute terms of endearment throughout the conversation in a genuine and caring manner. Every day, many people queue at her till so that they can speak with her. I believe that her personalized interaction is a balm for their loneliness. (Lusignan, 2013, p.13)

Is it their work or workplace? I ask each one of them. It is the work. It is doing what needs to be done and not worrying too much about the workplace. They make the best of any situation that they are in, in any work and in any workplace. Why? I ask. The cashier says of her customers, *“I guess I want to get involved... to be part of their lives”* (Mitchell, personal communication, March 3, 2014). She sits in her car at lunch to regroup to head back into facing the hundreds of people whose groceries she will scan over that day. People wait in her line at her till and she shows an interest – Why? *“I don’t know either!!! 40 fucking hours a week. 40 hours a week and at the end of the week, I am drained”* (Mitchell, personal communication, March 3, 2014). Do we know that someone in her workplace told her that they love when she always says hello, even when she doesn’t always feel like it? *“One of the girls in the deli said to me, Mitchell you really inspire me and us. You are an inspiration to us.....I say hi to her every morning when I see her and she comes to my till a couple times and I chat to her when she comes to my till. I will say how is your day going... it is taking an interest”* (Mitchell, personal communication, March 3, 2014).

The teacher stands in the front entrance of the school when the morning bell rings. He greets every child that comes through the doors. It is about the kids, he tells me.

*I work with everyone, don’t get me wrong but those little guys when you see me greeting them at the door, this is a safe place for them. This is a place they want to be and it is a place that brings happiness to them. Even if they are not doing all their work. They are part of something. They have a place they look forward to going to versus I am at home in an abusive situation or drugs or whatever you have. Those ones get the extra hugs. The others still get hugs too and a good morning but you have to save a little extra for those others and trying to make them feel they are a part of what is going on.* (Evans, personal communication, February 27, 2014)

They are aware of the ups and downs of life. One tells me about a close friend dying of cancer. One tells me about struggling with bipolar illness and the search for the right medication. One tells me about balancing work and family – struggling to balance both and give focus to family. One tells me about the current media “crisis”, which is quickly changed to current media “challenge”. These are part of our lives, they tell me. We need to figure out how to work with them and not fight them. I recognize in each one of them, an open arms attitude of “come what may”.

There is a pattern there – these people have been involved in sport and music. All of them have someone who has “seen” the potential in them somewhere along the way. Been “seen” and “believed” in. One of them tells me she “sees”. She is always watching successful people and observing what they say and don’t say.

*Yes. I watch people. .... I watch how they perform. And how they are and how they act and how they steer a conversation and I think – “you’re good”. You can’t do it the way that they are doing it but you can pick up learnings from what and how they are doing it. You have to make it your own. I can’t copy anyone but I can by observation, learn. I can pick up what I see as some very strong qualities and demeanour or skill. I think, okay, I need to try that. (Anderson, personal communication March 14, 2014)*

She has surrounded herself informally with a strong advisory committee. These are people who know the things she doesn’t. Engaged people in the job make all the difference, she tells me. You can give them the work and let them run with it. When they come to you and ask how to do something, you say, take that away and figure it out, this is why I hired you. It is giving people autonomy to make mistakes

and as this woman said, “If you make a mistake, fix it.” Find the solution, look at it from different angles and perspectives, and choose.

Are they being “played”? Are they taking their work for granted? Each of these participants in the study makes a very conscious effort to keep their values and their “surrounding” in play. They are aware of the impositions from the work culture. They are aware and they are not frightened by the thought of losing their jobs. They are confident in knowing their worth and value and knowing that their “gifts” can and will be used elsewhere.

*I have come out with – “I don’t care what any of you think.” I am comfortable with who I am and what I am doing and I am confident that we are doing the right things. There is a security moment, I don’t know if I would call it professional security. It doesn’t matter if they fire me, I don’t care. What I care about is that I continue to work hard and I am giving the best I can for these athletes (Sinclair, personal communication, February 26, 2014).*

Three of them describe themselves as “Doers”.

*“I am a doer. I am not one to sit by and watch. So I apply that to everything that I do. I assume everyone wants to be here” (Evans, personal communication, February 27, 2014).*

*Oh, yes, I have been described as that all the time. It is good but then I get shit for it. Stop doing that. Sometimes I have to do it because it has got to get done. And I am a Doer. You know the expression, if you want something done - give it to a busy person. It is the percentage of doers*

*that get it done. If I could hire everyone like that on my team – holy shit! But they are not.*

*(Anderson, personal communication March 14, 2014)*

*I have always been a doer and I have no trouble trying things. That has allowed me through my career to become and get to where I am. So I would never stop that. If I decide right now that this is the only way to do it, then I am stopping from learning. I think being a constant learner and having an open mind to new ways of doing things and listening.... That dynamic learning environment is something that everyone should be in (Sinclair, personal communication, February 26, 2014).*

These are the people that put their hand up and say “I’ll do it.” They are people who are focused; confident and willing to take risks, if there is learning to be had. These people are NOT passive bystanders. They are active participants in life. They are not sloppy in their work; they take the necessary time to “see” people, to understand the impact they have on the “other”.

There is a high level of intensity, concentration and listening in our conversations. “Active listening” one of them tells me is his strength. If you listen, he tells me, you get more out of people. How is it, these people can slow down and be in the moment with whoever they are with? They are listeners. They are people that care. “*I want to be kind to people, you know. I guess I care about people*” (Mitchell, personal communication, March 3, 2014). They are people who share and who dare. They are self-aware. They are “conscious” livens. They are aware of how much they can do and how they can manage their time. Most of them had a stable, strong family influence.

Did and do they have Mentors? Yes. They have people who watched them and set expectations. They each had someone who “saw” them. They watch people they admire and work to emulate their behaviours, while making them their own. They read books, they watch successful people and they listen, integrate and mold. The word that comes up over and over is interest and being “seen”.

*My grade 7 teacher was one who was most influential in my education.... He pushed you to do your best. He pushed you to realize what was going on around you. I think he taught me respect for one another. I think he had the most influence as far as realizing there are other people in your class. He really cared about the kids and he constantly talked to the kids. (Evans, personal communication, February 27, 2014)*

*A teacher back in Grade 9. ...He was friendly, engaged with the kids. ....He showed interest in you and us. I think people who show a genuine interest in who you are, not what you can do for them, that is probably a good description of what he did. (Sinclair, personal communication, February 26, 2014)*

*“The piano teacher. It sounds like she took interest.... Yes. Definitely. Definitely. She tried to be my Mom – sort of. She cared for you. She really, oh really cared for me” (Mitchell, personal communication, March 3, 2014).*

They seem to have a basic purpose: “build good men”, “help people get through their day”, “work with the stakeholders and make this the best ever”, “role modelling for kids”. These core beliefs and core values and missions are at the heart of what they do. It is beyond the work they do.



*I need to see these kids develop into good people. In the end if someone hangs a medal around my neck, I don't care. That means nothing. It is something that is going to collect dust but the things that are lasting are people. (Sinclair, personal communication, February 26, 2014)*

*What I try to do when I come here is think how can I make a difference in the lives that I come in contact with. And it is not just the students. It is the teachers, the staff and I make a point to talk to the caretaker to say good morning and chat and find out how his day is going. (Evans, personal communication, February 27, 2014)*

Each one of them has challenges within the workplace – politics, gossipy co-workers, not enough support, media crisis, and bosses with different visions. Does that impact their “work”? “I don’t care if they fire me” one of them says, I know that I am doing what I am supposed to and I am doing the best that I can. “I sit in my car over the lunch hour to keep out of the politics – it is the customers that I want to talk to, not my co-workers.” Somehow these people seem to be able to know that the “work” they do makes a difference and they don’t want to be swayed and poisoned by the workplace.

Have they always been engaged?

*“When I was in Brownies I was engaged. I am wired that way. I am in it” (Anderson, personal communication, March 14, 2014).*

*“Yes. As a habit that is who I am” (Sinclair, personal communication, February 26, 2014).*

*I am not one to sit by and watch. So I apply that to everything that I do. I assume that everyone wants to be here. I am an explorer – I assume everyone wants to explore and try things and do things. (Evans, personal communication, February 27, 2014)*

Whose responsibility is engagement, the individual or the employer?

*I think people want to be engaged, again back to the development. But I think employers if they want to have a high performing group of employees, there are things that they can do to help that level of engagement. A lot of that is simply around informing people, communicating with people, letting them know what is going on. Letting them know how they can have influence and impact on a result, rather than being left out in the cold and not knowing. People get frustrated when they don't know. And the biggest tool that leaders have, and to me it is the simplest thing, is to simply communicate with your people. What is going on? What do you need from me? Is there a problem? How are you doing? (Anderson, personal communication, March 14, 2014)*

*"It is my own. I am accountable.... My players need to lead themselves so that others don't have to"*  
(Sinclair, personal communication, February 26, 2014).

*"I think it is both. That comes back to the intrinsic and extrinsic. You need to want to be part of it, committed"*(Evans, personal communication, February 27, 2014).

One of them tells an employee to leave the company because she is crying every day at her desk. This employer provides an opportunity for the individual to take responsibility, to find their "free space" and move beyond disjuncture.

*People are complex and you never know what is going on in their world, so you leap to people are bad. I have not met many bad people. I have met people that are derailed and people who have enormous stress in their lives and it shows up in poor work performance. I have met people who are sick of doing what they are doing and I told them, you need to leave, you are not happy here. You don't like us, you don't like the company, you don't like your work – go. It is time for a change. That is okay. You can wake up and think I don't want to do this anymore. Then own it and don't sit in it and be apathetic about it and wreck everyone around you. Just make a decision and go and do something else. I think it is owning your own decision. If you don't like this so much that it is making you cry, goodness, go someplace else. Find someone who doesn't make you cry. (Anderson, personal communication, March 14, 2014)*

*I think you have to have a purpose for being there. Again, I am a firm believer. When I hear people complaining, I say – what are you doing here? Why don't you get out? I don't always tell them that, I am thinking that. I think every company, even the best corporation; there are people that drag you down. There are people that constantly see the negative. And you wonder why they see negative but they are viewing it from a different point of view. They perceive it differently. Is that their personality that makes them see it differently? Or is it something that has happened because of the workplace. Do we go through changes? I think you do if you are treated well. If you make this a place that you want to be, that you are excited about. I think that is in any place. (Evans, personal communication, February 27, 2014)*

I am caught up in their “emotion contagiousness”. I am really physically, emotionally and psychologically “with” these people when I am questioning. This is similar to Gadamer’s hermeneutical

practice in which he “emphasises above all the *experience* of art. The experience of art is when an artwork ‘speaks’ to us’ and this, he insists, is the *event* of art, the occasion when *it* makes a claim upon us, irrespective of our willing and doing” (Davey, 2013, p. 11). There is a give and take – an understanding, a clarification of what is being said and the underlying concepts deep at the heart of our talk. It is about intellectual stimulation and challenges, but it is the “challenges” of the human dimension. All these people have focus, intensity and a lifelong belief and practice of being “engaged”. They are vulnerable and open. They are consciously aware that their actions carry HUGE implications – for the youth, society, community and stakeholders. Their work matters, it matters a lot.

## **Chapter Four – Principles for “Engagement”**

### **Principles that foster an “engaged” workplace**

The love of learning starts at an early age through school and our learning institutions. Learning fostered and developed in the school can invite the individual into a world of learning and engage the “human spirit’s desire to know” (Willms et al., 2009, p. 4). Learning principles based on research by Dr. Sharon Friesen from the University of Calgary in “What did you do in school today?” (Willms et al., 2009) provide a framework and rubrics (a standard of performance for a certain population) to engage the learner and the community. This framework can be applied to the workplace and the objectives are similar, to engage the learner and enhance the community. The five “What did you do in school today?” principles are: 1) Teachers are Designers of Learning, 2) Work Students are Asked to Undertake is Worth their time and Attention, 3 ) Assessment Practices Improve Students Learning and Guide Teaching, 4 ) Teachers Foster a Variety of Interdependent Relationships and 5) Teachers improve their practice in the company of their peers.

Taking the “What did you do in school today? (Willms et al., 2009) framework and applying it to the workplace provided commonalities with an “engaged” workplace. Four principles to foster an “engaged” workplace stem from the (Willms et al., 2009) framework, the participant interviews and the literature research. The four principles are:

Principle 1 – Employer and Individuals are creators of “possibilities”.

Principle 2 – Purposeful work, which is meaningful, fulfilling and personal, is “engaging”.

Principle 3 – Directive boundaries with feedback, support and experiences enhance learning.

Principle 4 – Workplace as “connection”.

**Principle 1 – Employer and Individuals are creators of “possibilities”.**

*“It is also why I don’t think it is important if it is just basketball. So building good people, that is important” (Sinclair, personal communication, February 26, 2014).*

My nine year old son and I occasionally pick words for a Word of the Day from Angel© cards. He pulled one out the other day. It was blank. I see it and think “nothing”. “Wow”, he exclaimed, “this is everything!” It is a frame of mind - a world of impossible and scarcity, versus a world of “possibilities” and abundance.

The challenge with possibility is it gets confused with goals, prediction, and optimism.....

Possibility creates something new. It is a declaration of a future that has the quality of being and aliveness that we choose to live into. It is framed as a declaration of the world that I want to inhabit. It is a statement of who I am that transcends our history, our story, and our usual demographics. The power is in the act of declaring. (Block, 2008, p. 125)

With the change in our workplaces, continuous learning and reframing are essential. Both employers and individuals need to take a more holistic and collaborative approach to workplace learning. Changes in workplace practices may involve questioning, focusing on employee strengths, addressing personal and professional stories, awareness of energy expanded in work and nurturing a mindset to learning.

*“I think we have to rethink how our people are being used and how they are treated. Do we treat them like individuals or do we treat them like a company or policy line” (Evans, personal communication, February 27, 2014).*

Individuals engaged and “authentic” in their learning will be able to sort through what knowledge and skills are necessary in the new economy. This engagement involves not being a “passive” bystander but taking a reflective and critical view of the learning that is necessary in today’s economy. Individuals must be consciously aware of what they need and want to learn. Self-awareness and critical reflection are necessary. William Bridges (1997) in his book, *Creating You & Co: Learn to think like the CEO of Your Own Career*, talks about the importance of individuals taking control of their career. This entrepreneurial way of thinking developed in the 1980’s and 1990’s, when people in the economy at that time, needed to take control of their own career paths. It was an individualistic way of thinking, but understanding the changing marketplace and keeping skills up to date and continuous self-reflection, contributes to living an “authentic” life.

*“They need to lead themselves so that others don’t have to” (Sinclair, personal communication, February 26, 2014).*

*“For some people at work they say – people are lousy today. I say, what are you talking about? I think because I try every day” (Mitchell, personal communication, March 3, 2014).*

### **Storying your life**

*“In order to create the end result you need to have a good plan. You have to be able to connect all those things that you don’t love to what you do love in your work life” (Sinclair, personal communication, February 26, 2014).*

One way an individual can create an “authentic” life is to be consciously aware of their “story”. Jim Loehr (2007) in his book, *The Power of Story: Change your story; change your destiny in business and in life*, talks about the importance of setting a vision and working consciously towards fulfilling that

vision. When we become aware of how “asleep” we have been in our lives, suddenly, there is awareness. We as individuals can write our own story. We can choose the people that we want in our lives, the work we can do, the places we live and the community we build around us. People have energy to share and this energy gets distributed in the way we tell stories to ourselves and within our workplaces. “Stories impose meaning on the chaos; they organize and give context to our sensory experiences, which otherwise might seem like no more than a fairly colorless sequence of facts” (Loehr, 2007, p. 5). Stories can “freeze” us into place but we need to question “whose” story we are living. “A life that deeply engages and fulfills us demand that we remain vigilant and conscious about the powerful, unseen forces working to influence and even steal away our sense of who we are, our values, our beliefs, our vision of the future” (Loehr, 2007, p. 97).

*I am curious about my world. I want you to be curious about your world. Everyone approaches it differently. Everyone has a view on how they think it should be done. And I am sure there are lots of different ways but again I really believe that active participation rather than passive. I want to be involved in sports. I don't want to watch sports. I want to play sports. I want to be there. I want to be doing it. I want to be touching it. I want to be in the middle of it. (Evans, personal communication, February 27, 2014)*

## **Where to Invest Energy**

By taking a conscious look at where we are investing our energy in the workplace, we can make changes. People investing their energy in their passion and purpose tend to be more focused, engaged and happier. In turn, these individual become “energizers”.



A study published in MIT's *Sloan Management Review* in 2003, examined the effect of fully engaged workers – called “energizers” – on their colleagues as well as on the larger organization, found that energizers were not just the highest performers but also more likely to have their ideas considered and put into action; were better able to motivate others to act; and elicited more from those around them – that is, others tended to devote themselves more fully to interactions with an energizer (such as giving undivided attention in a meeting led by an energizer). (Loehr, 2007, p. 170)

*“Because I want to be surrounded by the same kind of people that I am. You better care. You better be out there – be a smiley person. You better make my day” (Evans, personal communication, February 27, 2014).*

“Energizers” are infectious and role models of “possibilities”. Their stories impact the individual, but society as well.

### **Nurturing a Growth Mindset**

Dr. Carol Dweck, Stanford University psychologist, in her research on achievement and success says, *“The view you adapt for yourself profoundly affects the way you lead your life”* (Dweck, 2008, p. 6). Her research on fixed and growth mindsets is relevant to individuals seeing the limits or possibilities in the world. The *fixed mindset* suggests that we have a fixed set of intelligence we have been given and we must prove ourselves over and over to be “right”. “The *growth mindset* is based on the belief that your basic qualities are things you can cultivate through your efforts” (Dweck, 2008, p. 7). The fixed mindset is one of completion and the growth mindset is one of learning. Employees need to be taught how to approach their learning with a growth mindset (Dweck, 2008). A growth mindset is one of

overcoming and challenging self-doubt and walking into fear with confidence. It is a mindset of “possibility” versus one of “outcome”. It is an understanding that change, fear, ambiguity and uncertainty are part of our world (Quinn, 1996). With a growth mindset, we learn from failures and mistakes which develop into possibilities. People continue to grow and adjust to the circumstances that surround them.

Coming back to the Angel cards, when I see the “nothing” in the Angel card, I am stifled by the finality of the card. In contrast, when my son sees “everything” in the card, he is excited about the potentiality of the card.

“Learning is the driving force in human living, it is one of the major means by which we become ourselves, it is a stimulus enriching our lives and making us truly human” (Jarvis, 2007, p. 132). While corporations can “lead” learning, individuals, in today’s learning environments will be involved, motivated and tapping into their “fire” or desires to learn if they are “engaged”.

### **Immersion through Interest and Passion**

*“Everyone has been made for some particular work and the desire for that work has been put in every heart” Rumi, the Book of Love: Poems of Ecstasy and Longing (2014a)*

One of the joys of our world is the diversity of humanity around us. Everyone has a unique gift which can, and should be shared with our world. These gifts are being stifled with expectations of “success” or “normalcy” in our society. We live in a context, focused on standardization and “sameness”. “Context is the set of beliefs, at times ones that we are unaware of, that dictate how we think, how we frame the world, what we pay attention to, and consequently how we believe. It is sometimes called a worldview”

(Block, 2008, p. 29). Our society is structured for obedience, control and submission. It is based on the industrial revolution of efficiency and productivity. “Initiative and interest become cast as a *detriment to efficiency itself*” (Jardine, 2014b, p. 76). What is lost in efficiency and standardization is the humanity we live within. Lost is the natural aptitude and passion deep inside each one of us.

One of the necessary components to immersing oneself in something is interest and passion. Ken Robinson in his book, *The Element: How Finding your Passion changes everything*, advises that “The Element is the meeting point between natural aptitude and personal passion” (Robinson, 2009, p. 21). Passion is knowing who you are, your interests, your values and allowing those to shine through one’s work with a sense of pride and ownership.

How do you find your passions?

Reading what you want, and having one book lead to the next, is the way I found my discipline. I’ve suggested this to many of my students: When you find a writer who really is saying something to you, read everything that writer has written and you will get more education and depth of understanding out of that than reading a scrap here and a scrap there and elsewhere. Then go to people who influenced that writer, or those who were related to him and your world builds together in an organic way that is really marvelous. (Campbell, 2003, p. 53)

Finding one’s interest is by making mistakes and trying new things. It is pushing through boundaries, even though we have judgements about ourselves and judgements we think others have of us. “When you follow your bliss, and by bliss I mean the *deep sense of being in it*, and doing what the *push* is out of your own existence – it may not be fun, but it’s your bliss and there’s bliss behind pain too” (Campbell,

2003, p. 217). It is piecing, little by little, our experiences together to make sense of them. It is becoming “experienced” in life span but also in “knowing” that we can be “successful” even when we fail. (Dweck, 2008). It is “not amassing verified knowledge and attaining ‘expertise’, but the process of *becoming experienced*” (Jardine, 2006, p. 286). It is changing our mindsets to “exploration” rather than “perfection”. It is moving from closure to openness. It is moving from having the answers to having questions. It is “fusing” our learning together.

**Principle 2 - Purposeful work, which is meaningful, fulfilling and personal, is “engaging”.**

*Are you “all in”? ...because that means you are 100% in... So “all in” is being in the moment. Little kids know what all in is. We have too many safe guards as adults that prevent us from expressing who we are. ... So being committed is being 100% in, as a starting point.... But part of the battle with being all in is knowing where you are making mistakes and improving on those areas (Sinclair, personal communication, February 26, 2014).*

**Motivation**

Motivated people see the purpose or the meaning to their work. There are two kinds of motivation – extrinsic (external) and intrinsic (internal) motivation. “Extrinsic motivation refers to the performance of an activity to attain some separable outcome” (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p. 71). This could be pay, bonuses or monetary incentives. Intrinsic motivation reflects our interest or enjoyment in a task for the pure pleasure and enjoyment. Intrinsically motivated people are more focused, driven and persistent in their tasks. “Intrinsic motivation results in high-quality learning and creativity” (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p. 55). People who are engaged are people who love their job so much that they would do it for free!

*If I was to study people about engagement, I would study little kids. They are always engaged in what they do. They have no fears. They don’t guard themselves in any manner. They just go out*

*and do their thing when they are little, little. I think there is something unique about that that adults could really absorb and put into their lives in some manner. (Sinclair, personal communication, February 26, 2014)*

## **Flow and Interest**

The term “Flow”, coined by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1990) describes the deep learning which occurs when someone is so absorbed in a task that they lose sense of time, self-consciousness and are fully focused. “Flow” is the state in which we are totally focused, nothing else matters at that moment but the task we are engaged in. We lose all sense of time, self-consciousness and become totally in the moment. There are three conditions to be met to engage in “Flow”. First, clear goals or direction provide structure to the task. Second, there must be immediate feedback about the task to make adjustments as necessary. Third, there must be a perceived challenge to the task and confidence in completion of the task.

“Flow”, the state of total engagement and loss of self is similar to the description of Dr. Barbara Fredrickson’s positive emotion, interest (2013). “Interesting” is “holding the attention: arousing interest” and its synonyms are: “absorbing, engrossing, fascinating, riveting, gripping, compelling, compulsive, captivating, engaging, and enthralling”. (Interesting, 2014). To be interested is the ideal state of learning. “Interest creates that urge to explore, to learn, to immerse oneself in the novelty and thereby expand the self (Fredrickson, 2013b p. 4). Deep learning is engaged learning.

*What are the components you need to feel “on” in the workplace? I think you have to be comfortable in your own skin. I think that is really key. What am I going after in life? I think you need to be comfortable with what you are doing. If you say you are a teacher, you should be happy being a teacher. You are changing minds of tomorrow instead of I have to be up for an*

*award or I have to be the leader. You have to be comfortable with who you are – number one.*  
(Evans, personal communication, February 27, 2014)

*How do you really know when you are “on” at work? How would you describe that experience?*  
*I am completely in the process. I am... always coaching. I will be 2 - 3 plays ahead of what is*  
*going on the floor and what we need to do – adjustments come easily. I am calm. Those are the*  
*moments when I am completely engaged in what I am doing. I am absorbed in the process.*  
(Sinclair, personal communication, February 26, 2014)

*How do you know you are on? I think about it all the time. ... I am thinking about it all the time.*  
*I don't wake up and think shit. I wake up and think “Alright, I have to do this and this, and need*  
*to have these conversations with these people.” I am thinking about how to improve, what to do*  
*and how to move the organizational yardstick. I am always highly engaged with my boss, my*  
*peers, and my employees. I care. I give a shit. If I don't give a shit, then I have to leave.... It is*  
*having the right level of engagement, passion about it and having the energy to want to give a*  
*shit. That is how I know I am “on”.* (Anderson, personal communication March 14, 2014)

“What man actually needs is not a tensionless state but rather the striving and struggling for some goal worthy of him. What he needs is not the discharge of tension at any cost, but the call of a potential meaning waiting to be fulfilled by him” (Frankl, 2006). Individuals need to have a sense of purpose or meaning worthy of them pursuing. It needs to be challenging enough to engage the individual but not too overwhelming to be paralyzing. A healthy dose of “disjuncture” will allow individuals to push through self-doubt and fear into a new place of learning.

*I think people who never have fear, never face into anything difficult. If you are never fearful, anxious or worried over something then you are probably not taking on anything that is outside of your comfort zone. ....And then there is work. I think there are people that don't let fear get in the way of action. (Anderson, personal communication, March 14, 2014)*

Creativity and innovation are key components needed for the 21 century learner. Creative people are usually driven by curiosity and tend to be more intrinsically motivated – more interested in the rewards of intellectual discovery than in financial or status rewards... But the reason innovators are less concerned with money and power is that they get their reward directly from their work. They are satisfied by the excitement and wonder involved in the process of discovery. (Gardner & al, 2001, p. 20)

### **Purpose and self-determination**

When we know that our work has a purpose, it has a deeper meaning to us. “Good work is whatever advances development by supporting the fulfillment of individual potentialities while simultaneously contributing to the harmonious growth of other individuals and groups” (Gardner, 2001, p. 244). Good work benefits the individual by engaging their interests and passion but it goes beyond that. Good work enhances humanity, communities and the broader society.

People need to have a lotus of control in their worlds. They want to know what they are doing is by their own accord and it is worthy of their time. When employees are self-determined, they will focus their energy on what needs to be accomplished. “To be self-determined is to endorse one’s actions at the highest level of reflection. When self-determined, people experience a sense of freedom to do what is interesting, personally important and vitalizing” (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Work with purpose, meaning and a clear objectives can enhance the learning experience.

When people are purpose-centred, they envision and pursue extraordinary results that are not constrained by previous expectations or by the expectations they receive from others. The results they pursue are energizing because they are self-chosen, challenging and constructive. They also provide a clear definition of the situation, focusing people's attention (Quinn & Quinn, 2009, p. 56).

*I think you have to want to be here. I think all of us have problems. I think all of us have things that come in and out of our lives, traffic, family or your kids. Those are always going to be there. What I try to do when I come here is think how I can make a difference in the lives that I come in contact with. And it not just the students. It is the teachers, the staff and I make a point to talk to the caretaker to say good morning to chat and find out how his day is going. (Evans, personal communication, February 27, 2014)*



## **“Owning” the Work**

*“Whose responsible to get you engaged? I think it is my responsibility – don’t you?..... I think it is not his (manager) responsibility to make me interact with people. That is my responsibility.” (Mitchell, personal communication, March 3, 2014).*

People have the ability to make jobs their “own”. “Job Crafting” is a term coined by Dr. Jane Dutton and Amy Wrzesniewski from the University of Michigan in 2001.

Job crafting means essentially this: That people often take existing job expectations—or job descriptions—and expand them to suit their desire to make a difference. In other words, job crafters are those who do what’s expected (because it’s required) and then find a way to add something new to their work—something that benefits their team, their company, or their customer. (Sturt, 2013).

It is looking at tasks, relationships and the perception we have of our work and redefining them to fit our interests and passions. It is re-storying a “victim” role in the workplace, of not being able to change our environment, to one of control, responsibility and active engagement.

*“I have taken the initiative with those that come in every week. Tell me your first name. I see you every week.” (Mitchell, personal communication, March 3, 2014)*

Job Crafting is taking a “devalued job” and reframing it into something that gives value. This value might be to the customers, the organization or co-workers. It is a way employees can reframe their job into something that gives them meaning or purpose. It is thinking beyond self-interest and looking to see

the benefit to society as a whole. It is moving from “me” to “we”. It is creating purpose and meaning beyond the job position itself. It is recognizing that the work one does can have meaning and purpose beyond the position’s tasks.

*“I am interested. I want to hear stories. If you just say hi and bye every time, that is boring, you know. What is the sense of working – you know.” (Mitchell, personal communication, March 3, 2014)*

### **Principle 3 – Directive boundaries with feedback, support and experiences enhance learning.**

*“Work always has been, along with our close relationships and our marriages, one of the most difficult, self-sacrificing, self-revelatory things we can do in our lives” (Whyte, 2002, xvii).*

#### **Goals and boundaries as a focusing centre**

Goals and boundaries provide a situated centre from which to work from. “Goals do more than give people a result to shoot for. Goals also help people define the situation they are facing” (Quinn & Quinn, 2009, p. 60). “Goals, then, direct people’s attention and focus it on extracting relevant information and responding to that information appropriately” (Quinn & Quinn, 2009. p. 61). Individuals need feedback to gauge how they are doing in accomplishing the task.

*“Part of the battle with being “all in” is knowing where you are making mistakes and improving on those areas” (Sinclair, personal communication, February 26, 2014)*

Work one accomplishes and feels good about provides “successes” that fuel a desire to continue to grow and challenge oneself. “The degree to which past successes have etched a given map, script, paradigm,

or myth into our brain affects how we process information” (Quinn, 1996, p. 65). The more “experienced” we become in our worlds, the easier it is to face the next challenge or task.

Mozart – the more music he wrote, the more he was able to write. His increasing experience gave him the momentum typical of the creative process. If you begin to create the results you want today, you are more prepared to create the results you want ten years from now. Each new creation gives you added experience and knowledge of your own creative process. You will naturally increase your ability to envision what you want and your ability to bring those results into being. (Fritz, 1989, p. 55)

It is focusing energy into an interest and from that interest a level of experience and confidence follow. To have positive experiences will allow individuals to build on successes and approach new learning situations with a higher level of self-efficiency (Bandura, 1995).

### **Self-efficacy**

Self-efficacy is an important concept as directive boundaries with feedback, support and experiences enhance learning (Bandura, 1995). “Perceived self-efficacy refers to beliefs in one’s capabilities to organize and execute the course of action required to manage prospective situations. Efficacy beliefs influence how people think, feel, motivate themselves, and act.” (Bandura, 1995, p. 2). Bandura believes that one of the strongest predictors of increasing self-efficacy is *mastery experiences*. This is gaining related experience with the job or task and successes develop a sense of self-efficacy.

*They have something that has drawn them and pulled them all together. They can draw on that, talk about it, reflect on it and they know they can do it. If you have a little taste of success, that is a big powerful thing. (Anderson, personal communication, March 14, 2014)*

Bandura has four main forms of influence for people's self-efficacy: mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, social persuasion and physiological and emotional states. "Efficacy beliefs influence how people think, feel, motivate themselves, and act" (Bandura, 1995, p. 3). The higher your self-efficacy, the more confidence you have in your ability to succeed in a task. So in difficult situations, people with low self-efficacy are more likely to lessen their effort or give up altogether, while those with high self-efficacy will try harder to master the challenge. Individuals high in self-efficacy seem to respond to negative feedback with increased effort and motivation, while those low in self-efficacy are likely to lessen their effort when given negative feedback. Four ways to increase self-efficacy (Robbins & Judge, 2012) are:

1. *Enactive Mastery* – Enactive mastery is gained with relevant experience with the task. If one has been successful in the past, one is more confident one will be able to do it in the future.
2. *Vicarious Modeling* –The person becomes more confident because they see someone else doing the task. This is effective when one sees oneself as similar to the person one is observing.
3. *Verbal Persuasion* –Confidence increases because someone convinces the individual they have the skills necessary to be successful.
4. *Arousal* – Arousal leads to an energized state which drives a person to complete a task. The person gets "psyched up" and performs better.

"The higher your self-efficacy, the more confidence you have in your ability to succeed in a task"  
(Robbins & Judge, 2012, p. 18).

Taking these four components into consideration, employers and individuals can seek out situations to build self-efficacy. Role models and mentors who guide individuals through the "experience" of the workplace are invaluable. Verbal feedback or social persuasion to adjust the work and the mindset to

work collaboratively helps an individual to find ways to be successful. Providing opportunities for individuals to use their talents and interests will increase the desire to learn. Eager learners exhibit excitement and successes to move into the next unknown situation with determination.

To create a learning environment open to the growth mindset, there must be a willingness to share. There must be a strong level of trust between the teacher and the student. There must be dialogue about the learning which includes collaboration, communication and sharing of ideas. A growth mindset allows the individual to be vulnerable and authentic. There is no “right” or “wrong” way to do things. It is reflecting on the learning and incorporating what works and discarding what does not work. It is allowing a place for exploration. This is experimentation, feedback and being in a place of “unknowing”. It is having a direction but not a final destination. It is working in alignment with one’s values and beliefs. It is being open to new ideas and new ways of doing things. It is listening with both ears and taking the “person” into account rather than the “result”. Providing a place for self-efficacy to expand is invaluable for the individual, employer and society as a whole.

*What else drives me... the challenge of having different kids. They teach you in different ways. I never thought of that. They teach you as much as you teach them. I think that is a big part of it. (Evans, personal communication, February 27, 2014)*

*I think some customers, they are role models for me, you know. I look at them or ask them and I think I could learn from that you know. (Mitchell, personal communication, March 3, 2014)*

*People that are ambitious and want to get better, seek out advice from others. People who are not interested in self-reflection, they don't. I think it is about development. I can't develop you*

*until you want to be developed. You have to steer it, own it and guide it and get to a certain place and then I can facilitate the path. But me sitting, telling you and bestowing all my great advice on you and you rolling your eyes – that doesn't help. So it has to come from the person who wants to get better. (Anderson, personal communication March 14, 2014)*

## **Feedback, support and mentors**

*“The way we treat a thing can sometimes change its nature” (Lewis Hyde, 1983, p. xiii)*

The word mentor originates from the 8<sup>th</sup> century BC Greek poem, Homer's *Odyssey*. The mentor is the advisor to young Telemachus. A mentor is “an experienced and trusted advisor” (Mentor, 2014).

One of my mentors introduced me the other day as her protégé. Protégé is “a person who is guided and supported by an older and more experienced or influential person” (Protégé, 2014). I felt so touched by this introduction. This is someone who has taken an interest in my career and who has looked out for me. I am honored to be taken under this individual's wing. I have watched, emulated and admired her, and she watches me. She has given me support, advice and friendship. I know that she is looking out for my best interests. I am learning from her, just as she is learning from me.

*I won't bother someone if they are not going to get engaged or they are too busy. But most people I have found, if you say, can I have an hour of your time. I would really like to pick your brain about this. Almost 100% of the time, people say “sure”. They are happy to share their experience with you and provide some guidance and advice. If you are genuinely seeking input to make yourself better. If you are just placating me or blowing smoke up your ass, they are not interested. But if I am asking, because I am trying to learn from you, they will share. (Anderson, personal communication March 14, 2014)*

Mentors are a gentle reminder that you can do it and you have potential. This is the awakening of the “can do” inside yourself. Mentors believe in you when there is chaos and confusion around you. They are your guiding force – your strength, your beacon. You like to be around them because they seem to know more than you do. You like to hear their stories and the struggles they have overcome. Mentors give you strength. Mentors move you forward. Mentors push you to places you would not normally go. Mentors give you stability and grounding. They give you a listening ear and a guiding path. They watch you go through your struggles and gently nudge you places you may not have seen before. Two important skills in a mentor are nurturing and mirroring of behaviours. Mentors groom and provide candid feedback for protégés to make adjustments to their behaviours. “In humans most of our grooming is verbal rather than physical. When others spend time verbally grooming us, it is a sign that we are safe and cared for” (Lieberman, 2013, p. 92).

“Many leaders have had a mentor who changed their lives. The best mentoring interactions spark mutual learning, exploration of similar values, and shared enjoyment” (George et al., 2007, p. 6).

*If you ask any coach or player – what do you remember? They are not going to talk about the encore shot – they are going to talk about the relationships they had and the experiences they had with those people. (Sinclair, personal communication, February 26, 2014)*

Mentors provide stability, a confidence and a place to hold onto in times of turmoil. Their caring and their “active listening” stems not out of a “task” in their work, but in their genuine interest in another human being’s potential and growth. In a genuine energizing mentorship relationship, both parties will grow.

*He provided me with very candid, professional feedback. Very candid. Not hurtful. But in the moment, if there was something that I did or something I was discussing with him. I work well with direct..... He would engage in discussion or debate or hit me right between the eyes when he thought I was out to lunch. But he always had my best interests at heart – always.*

*(Anderson, personal communication, March 14, 2014)*

*He (the principal) was the one who said it was time for me to go even though I was very comfortable where I was. I had never really thought about it. I had been there seven years and he said you need a better challenge than I can give you. You need people in your life like that. That push you, and make you feel a little uncomfortable and push you beyond your comfort zone. He did that. (Evans, personal communication, February 27, 2014)*

Mentors and apprentices are partners in an ancient human dance, and one of teaching's great rewards is the daily chance it gives us to get back on the dance floor. It is the dance of the spiraling generations, in which the old empower the young with their experience and the young empower the old with new life, reweaving the fabric of the human community as they touch and turn. (Palmer, 1998, p. 25)



#### **Principle 4 – Workplace as “connection”.**

*“Where there is little sense of belonging there is little sense of soul” (Whyte, 2007, p. 14).*

“Being human is about being “somebody”, not just “anybody” (D. Jardine, EDER603 lecture, Jan 23, 2014). Dr. David Jardine’s words “addressed” me in his lecture. What struck me in this sentence is the disconnect created by the efficiency movement. It has created our workplace full of “any bodies”: replaceable, dispensable, same and predictable. Anybody means “any person.” (Anybody, 2014). Somebodies, on the other hand, are “some person: someone”. Somebodies are connected to one another.

Canadian author, Miriam Toews talks about connection in her novel, *A Complicated Kindness* (2004).

I had a thought, on the way home from the rock field, that the things we don’t know about a person are the things that make them human, and it made me feel sad to think that, but sad in that reassuring way that some sadness has, a sadness that says welcome home in twelve different languages. (Toews, 2004, p. 98)

“Community does not necessarily mean living face-to-face with others; rather, it means never losing the awareness that we are connected to each other” (Palmer, 2004, p. 55)

*“Belonging. That is what it all comes down to. For the kids and the staff. For all of us” (Evans, personal communication, February 27, 2014).*

## Social Connection

In Matthew Lieberman's book, *Social: Why our brains are wired to connect*, he talks about our basic human need to be social. "Being socially connected is a need with a capital N" (Lieberman, 2013, p. 43). "Love and belonging might seem like a convenience we can live without, but our biology is built to thirst for connection because it is linked to our most basic survival needs" (Lieberman, 2013, p. 43). Fairness is an important social need and fairness implies that others value us and sharing of resources is the result. As researchers are discovering, our basic need to be admired, loved and cared for, are our basic social needs, which promote well-being. "Positive social regard is a renewable resource. Rather than having less of something after using it, when we let others know we value them, both parties have more" (Lieberman, 2013, p. 79). Positive social reinforcement is important to our well-being; our workplaces can build increase social connection.

There are two kinds of social rewards – the social rewards we receive when others let us know they like, respect, or care for us and the social rewards we receive when we care for or treat others well. (Lieberman, 2013, p. 92)

*I think we have to rethink how our people are being used and how they are treated. Do we treat them like individuals or do we treat them like a company or policy line. (Evans, personal communication, February 27, 2014)*

By engaging individuals in positive learning, people will have the opportunity to engage in self-fulfilling work and be more willing to engage in active citizenship. The workplace can provide a sense of "belonging" and a place of positive learning and learning how to care for the "other". Individuals given

the opportunity to learn on the job and develop lifelong skills can be provided with knowledge, a sense of well-being, inclusiveness and learning.

“Learning is always personal but some of the opportunities to learn are provided by social institutions, such as the State and employers” (Jarvis, 2007, p. 99). It is through the learning society that one is provided with the opportunities to learn. The learning society is one

in which the majority of social institutions make provisions for individuals to acquire knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, emotions, beliefs and senses within global society. In other words, it is a society in which people are enabled, even encouraged to learn, but they have to take responsibility for that learning; it is the individuals who learn and not the society, and that society may be changed, even transformed, as a result of the learning of members of its population. (Jarvis, 2007, p. 100)

By being actively involved in learning, individuals develop a stronger sense of confidence and, as a result, they will become more vocal in their needs and the needs of others. Learning is necessary to make sure our society does not form compliant, conforming individuals who do not question their role in society. Individuals need to recognize their role and part in having a “voice” in engaging our society in an equal learning world which provides opportunities for all to learn, engage and be heard.

By engaging in collaboration and continuous relationships through work, mentors and other persons, individuals will find their sense of belonging, purpose and space to develop networks, relationships and community. When people find or develop their community, they are more invested in it and emotionally and intellectually more invested in the learning.

## Relationships at work

According to a Gallup poll, people who have a best friend at work are seven times more likely to be engaged in their job, get more done in less time, have fewer accidents and are more likely to innovate and share new ideas. An employee's satisfaction jumps by almost 50% when he or she has a close relationship at the workplace. (Loehr, 2007, p. 32)

*If I don't engage with my players and I don't show that I care about them or about them as people not just as players, then I think it is harder to develop trust and create an environment and culture that you need for success. I have to get to know them. I need to know when their birthdays are. I need to know who they are dating and what they are doing and what they are planning for their future lives. (Sinclair, personal communication, February 26, 2014)*

*Do you find that people who are friends at work perform better? Friends? That is tricky. I think it is more collaborative. I would use a different word than friends. If you have a workforce that is collaborative; it is competitive but competitive against them not each other. .... I find that people that are on high performing teams are people that have gone through something together. They had to claw out of something. They had to rally to get something done. Those people are close.....For me, it is less about being friends as having a purpose and a mission together. (Anderson, personal communication, March 14, 2014)*

This idea of sharing and being part of something in which one “belongs” provides safety, a connection and a willingness to work together to accomplish what needs to be done. It is not necessarily being

“friends” but sharing a common goal, which focuses individuals to work collaboratively to a common purpose.

### Seeing the “Other”

‘Transposing ourselves.’ If we put ourselves in someone else’s shoes, for example, then we will understand him – i.e., become aware of the otherness, the indissoluble individuality of the other person – by putting *ourselves* in his position.

Transposing ourselves consists neither in the empathy of one individual for another nor in subordinating another person to our own standards; rather, it always involves rising to a higher universality that overcomes not only our own particularity but also that of the other. (Gadamer, 2004, p. 304)

One of the keys in hermeneutic practice is to put oneself into another’s shoes. To listen, really listen to the situation of the other. It is a sharing of horizons that produces new ways of looking at situations. When we engage with another, we align ourselves with their energy, their ideas and their emotions to enhance or deplete our world.

“Emotional contagion is a process in which people begin to feel the same way that the people around them feel. Contagion often happens without people realizing it is happening” (Quinn & Quinn, 2009, p. 68). This is noticing other’s facial expressions and emotional cues, mimicking them and then feeling the emotions that accompany those emotions. “Facial expressions not only express emotions; they also cause them” (Quinn & Quinn, 2009, p. 68).

Dr. Barbara Fredrickson, a psychologist from the University of North Carolina, focused her research on positive emotions. Through her studies, she has found that “people with positive emotions think more broadly about their social world” (Quinn & Quinn, 2009, p. 70).

The effect of positive emotions on resource creation is another finding of Fredrickson: people who have more options for thought and action are more likely to try more things, develop more skills, learn more principles, gather more information and so forth. (Quinn & Quinn, 2009, p. 70)

Barbara Fredrickson’s Broaden- and-Build theory of positive emotions focuses on an upward spiral effect of positive emotions between and among people. Fredrickson identifies ten positive emotions people experience in their daily lives: joy, gratitude, serenity, interest, hope, pride, amusement, inspiration, awe and love. These positive emotions radiate out to the self and community.

What I’ve found is that even though you experience positive emotions as exquisitely subtle and brief, such moments can ignite powerful forces of growth in your life. They do this first by opening you up: Your outlook quite literally expands as you come under the influence of any of several positive emotions. Put simply, you see more as your vision widens; you see the bigger picture. With this momentarily broadened, more encompassing mind-set, you become more flexible, attuned to others, creative, and wise. Over time, you also become more resourceful. This is because, little by little, these mind-expanding moments of positive emotions add up to reshape your life for the better, making you more knowledgeable, more resilient, more socially integrated, and healthier. In fact, science documents that positive emotions can set off upward

spirals in your life, self-sustaining trajectories of growth that lift you up to become a better version of yourself. (Fredrickson, 2013a, pp. 7 – 8)

The broaden-and-build theory suggests that “boundaries of awareness stretch open a bit further during positive emotional experiences, enabling people to connect the dots between disparate ideas and thereby act creatively, flexibly, and with greater sensitivity to future time horizons” (Fredrickson, 2013b, p. 18). When people are feeling stressed, anxious or depressed, their ability to see beyond horizons is diminished.

Evidence also suggests that the broaden effect of positive emotions extends into the social domain. Relative to those experiencing neutral states, people induced to feel positive emotions expand their circle of trust (Dunn & Schweitzer, 2005). They are also more likely to form inclusive social categories (Dovidio, Gaertner, Isen, & Lowrance, 1995; Isen, Niedenthal, & Cantor, 1992) and common in-group identities such that they are more likely to see “them” as “us” (Dovidio, Isen, Guerra, Gaertner, & Rust, 1998). (Fredrickson, 2013b, p. 23)

In work, key components needed to develop positive emotions are interest, self-efficacy, clear goals and social bonding. What opens up people in their work is love as shared positivity. “Love can even give you a palpable sense of oneness and connection, a transcendence that makes you feel part of something far larger than yourself” (Fredrickson, 2013a, p. 16).

Love motivates mutual care. Each person, in a moment of shared positivity, becomes momentarily invested in the other’s well-being. This is an idea from crossing emotions science with relationship science. The momentary experience of love brings an urge to focus on the

other person, holistically, with care and concern for his or her well-being, a motive that momentarily eclipses any tendency toward self-absorption. And this caring motive is mutual, reflected back and forth between the two. (Fredrickson, 2013a, p. 41)

When one is feeling “loved” in the workplace and develops strong social bonds and has clear objectives and goals, the broaden-and-build theory of positive resonance can spiral upwards, creating an engaged workplace.

Love is the momentary upwelling of three tightly interwoven events: first, a sharing of one of more positive emotions between you and another; second, a synchrony between your and the other person’s biochemistry and behaviors; and third, a reflected motive to invest in each other’s well-being that brings mutual care. (Fredrickson, 2013a, p. 17)

Fredrickson (2013a) suggest that there are two preconditions to positive resonance. The first is the perception of safety. This is trustworthiness and open communication.. The second is the physical presence of another human being. “Feelings of oneness surface when two or more people “sync up” and literally come to act as one, moving to the same hidden beat” (Fredrickson, 2013a, p. 20). These two preconditions create positive resonance and can be created in the workplace.

*A lot of that is simply around informing people, communicating with people, letting them know what is going on. Letting them know how they can have an influence and impact on a result, rather than being left out in the cold and not knowing. People get frustrated when they don’t know. And the biggest tool that leaders have, and to me it is the simplest thing is to simply communicate with your people. What is going on? What do you need from me? Is there a problem? How are you doing? (Anderson, personal communication, March 14, 2014)*



When we engage in micro-moments of positive resonance, we lose the self-absorption focus of “what is in it for me?” and instead start to think “What can I give to others?” “Love stretches your circle of concern to include others to a greater degree. Love carries its characteristic *care* and *concern* for others, a warmth and genuine interest that inspire you to extend your trust and compassion to them” (Fredrickson, 2013a, p. 67). Love is the supreme emotion. If we can teach our children and ourselves to love and to spread that throughout our communities, we will be stronger. “Smiling, then, does not just open the face, but it also opens the mind” (Fredrickson, 2013b, p. 21).

This outward focus can cultivate love and good feelings of sharing with others. When we change individually and focus on what can I do in the workplace to cultivate moments of positive resonance or love, we will be rewarded. The rewards will be trust and meaningful connections. This is done by noticing moments of connection. It is looking at our lives in the workplace and asking ourselves, am I really “connecting” with others? Am I listening? Am I slowing down? Am I making time and opportunities to really “connect” with others? When we feel respected, heard and engaged, we are more willing to seek out those positive moments in that place again.

*If I walk down the hall and don't say good morning to someone, how can I possibly ask them to do some extra work? There is some give and take with people in the workplaces. Where I might be a more volunteeristic guy because I am really engaged and love what I do. The janitor down the hall that I need to have the gym cleaned by, maybe he isn't. But if go in there and smile and give him a shot in the arm and give him/her some swag and t-shirts and say thanks very much, then maybe they feel more engaged in what they do and more valued. (Sinclair, personal communication, February 26, 2014)*

Learning of positive resonance begins in our school systems, our family lives and workplaces. We can cultivate positive resonance if we understand the importance of it. This concept of “love” is not a romantic notion that can only be found with one other person – our “soul mate”. It can be cultivated with people we know and people we don’t know. Plato’s quote “Always be kind for everyone is fighting a hard battle” (Goodreads, 2014) reminds us that everyone has something they are working through. When people have a safe place or safe face which provides an understanding of our “oneness” or “commonality”, reaching out is more comfortable. It is reaching out and engaging in the “possibilities” of love. “Loving the folks in front of us consists of little moments of connection that build understanding of who we are” (Baldwin, 2002, p. 80).

“Possibilities” can be cultivated in the workplace. People need a climate or “culture” to feel safe to explore. They need work they feel good about – work they enjoy or feel a “passion” about. They need to have autonomy to be able to make the changes and make decisions about the work they do. They need to have someone who supports them or believes in their work. They need leaders and they need to take on the mindset of a leader. They need to allow themselves “free space” to explore, cultivate or grow within their workplace. “Studies show that as you learn to cultivate micro-moments of love more readily, your everyday interactions with friends and coworkers becomes more lighthearted and enjoyable” (Fredrickson, 2013a, p. 67).

By looking for moments of connection or moments of positive resonance in the workplace and actively seeking it out, we become more engaged and more “full” in our workplace. It starts with an explanation to the workplace about positive resonance and then a conscious experimentation of practicing this. In small ways, by practicing moments of positive resonance, every day will create a climate of trust, engagement and flourishing.

## **“Feeling into”**

The key component to community is “other” focused versus self-absorption. It is working in a collaborative fashion versus a competitive fashion – “we” versus “me”. It is reaching out to help others as a genuine act of care and humanity. It is engaged in empathy, or the German word *empathie*, meaning “feeling into”. It is connecting with another person’s experience.

Empathy is arguably the pinnacle of our social cognitive achievements – the peak of the social brain. It requires us to understand the inner emotional worlds of other people and then act in ways that benefit other people and our relationships with them. It can motivate us to alleviate another’s pain or to celebrate someone else’s good fortune. (Lieberman, 2013, p. 160)

Taking time to be self-reflective and see the broader picture, can provide a shift in thinking. No longer do the methods and procedures work in all cases. The cultural norms of the Scientific Management era eroded our ability to “connect” and to “disengage” from the task at hand. It is necessary to step back as an individual and as a workplace to see the bigger picture. We need to give more attention and awareness to the cultural norms our society has unwillingly created in our workplaces.

It’s also worth considering whether you’ve unwittingly placed constraints on your own experiences of love by following cultural norms. These constraints may have been holding you back from reaching your full potential for health and happiness, and from making deeper contributions to the lives of others..... The task of upgrading love remains incomplete without self-reflection and self-change. (Fredrickson, 2013a, p. 186)

People are more engaged, healthy and happy when they are working in collaboration towards something bigger than themselves. It is a search for “making a difference”. It is the responsibility of the learning world, which includes employers and employees, to be actively involved in engaging continuous learning in the workplace. If an employer can provide a positive place for informal or formal learning to take place, an individual is more apt to be engaged in the workplace, have a sense of belonging and be more willing to contribute to the organization and the greater good of the community and society. It is the individual who learns, and if an individual has a sense of purpose or focus, they are more willing to learn.

Workplace learning can provide a place for individuals to develop an understanding of how we learn, gain confidence to continue to learn, provide a sense of purpose and in turn, engage the individual in active citizenship. Workplace learning could potentially facilitate a movement towards an equal and socially inclusive society where there will be better jobs and more skilled, knowledgeable and flexible workers to occupy them (Senge & Drucker, 2001). “Who we are at any time depends on who the people around us are, and who they are depends on who we are. We weave our relationships in the stories we tell and act out with others” (Quinn & Quinn, 2009, p. 10).

### **Why is “engagement” in the workplace important?**

Ambiguity and uncertainty, with an ever changing world, are part of our future. How we deal with this state of flux is important. “The discovery of the true meaning of a text or a work of art is never finished; it is in fact an infinite process” (Gadamer, 2004, p. 298). What we engage in, will be an on-going process – acting, refining, shifting, adjusting, but recognizing it will never be “complete”. Being able to adapt a “growth” mindset (Dweck, 2008) contributes to a “world of possibilities”. Making mistakes can provide individuals with “experience” and give them a sense of “control” or determination.

“Control” because they are being given permission and freedom to explore choices and possibilities. The freedom is in knowing, the choices may not be the “right” decision. When one chooses to experiment freely, a sense of control returns to the individual. This sense of control can provide the upward spiral of the broaden-and-build theory. Positive builds on positive. Success builds on success. Individuals can work within a framework to develop their goals and skills and find their “purpose”. They can learn to understand each skill and experience is like a building block, like Lego®. Each block enforces and builds a foundation. Suddenly, they will see, they are building “You Inc.” which provides a sense of control and can move into “We Inc.”. “Honoring the soul as an end in itself can strengthen our capacity to do the work of the world well” (Palmer, 2004, p. 172).

Self-doubt and anxiety needs to be understood as part of the learning process. Fear can be harnessed and managed positively. Canadian astronaut, Chris Hatfield, in an interview with Maclean’s magazine, says:

A lot of people live in fear because they haven't figured out how you're going to react when faced with a certain set of circumstances. I've come to terms with this by looking deeply into whatever makes me fearful -- what are the key elements that get the hairs up on the back of my neck -- and then figuring out what I can do about it. Even if the fear-inducing event doesn't happen, you feel much more at peace because you know you have a plan. It's a learned behaviour, but I think it's an effective one. Don't ostrich it. Then, when you are inevitably faced by something, you're relying on gut instinct -- not skills or planning -- to pull you through. It might work, but there's a pretty good chance it won't. (Gills, 2013, p. 15)

When individuals have successes, mentors, training and the free space to work within to learn, they will be able to “experience” the challenges in work that they love.

Businesses need to aware they have a social responsibility to the community to provide positive learning opportunities for individuals and individuals must explore possibilities through seeking, experimenting and finding their “Element” or passion. Individuals need to have a sense of purpose or meaning worthy of them pursuing. It needs to be challenging enough to engage the individual but not too overwhelming to be paralyzing. A healthy dose of “disjuncture” will allow individuals to push through self-doubt and fear into a new place of learning.

Individuals in today’s world need to recognize, to be part of their society; they need to be continuously learning and being “authentic”. Individuals involved in “authentic” learning will question and reflect in their “life-worlds”. Innovative learners of society will engage in innovative learning, questioning, reflecting and engaging in change. “They externalise through action, speech and so forth and, in a sense, influence others” (Jarvis, 2007, p. 33). It is the influencing others through relationships that brings about individual and societal change. The individual can change his or her thinking or “knowledge” by being influenced in a new way of approaching those “taken-for-granted” situations. When the individual is able to recognize this change in thought and take action, the individual now “becomes an ‘agent’ – with will power – in future processes and acts back on the structures transforming them through learning and being transformed by the learning” (Jarvis, 2007, p. 34). These agents of change are necessary to transform our society and ways of thinking to influence others to transform as well.

There is a need to rethink and broaden the notion of lifelong education, not only must it adapt to changes in the world of work, but it must also constitute a continuous process of forming whole human beings – their knowledge and aptitudes, as well as the critical faculty and the ability to

act. It should enable people to develop awareness of themselves and their environment and encourage them to play their social role at work and in the community (Delors, 1996, p. 21).

## **Deep Experience**

The deep experience of life is to be able to have micro-moments of positivity building on one another. “Love is connection.” (Fredrickson, 2013a, p. 17). It is bringing self-awareness to light to know struggle is part of life. Life is a circular experience. Positive resonance may be fleeting and brief but if we pay attention to the good and bad, we allow ourselves to be fully whole and authentic. We make mistakes; we can learn from them and move on to become a stronger person. It is becoming “experienced”. It is to be open to learning. To be open to the “free spaces” and possibilities that exists around us. To see the world and life with fresh eyes; eyes, open and sparkling. It is reaching out to make a connection, to learn something new, to feel something in your body and know that you are alive. It is not being safe and it is not living in confinement. It is being able to spread yourself out to find those things, people and ideas which give you life. Things that make you feel alive and in turn, you make alive. It is a journey and it is infinite. It is on-going and it is vast. It is being pulled towards something that draws you into it. You are forever changed once you engage in the experience. It is the experience of life.

When individuals are engaged in learning, they become more self-aware. With this self-awareness becomes an understanding of how their skills and knowledge fit into their environment. Understanding where they can “be” in their environment can cause individuals to be more engaged in their learning. They understand the purpose and see how their role has meaning. When they are employable, they are more willing to engage in the community and are more apt to be active citizens. Being active citizens, they are more willing and able to engage in making societal changes. When the learner is able to take an

active stand in understanding their position in society, they are more willing to engage in debate to make positive change. We make our path by walking on it and we need to be aware, open and willing to invest in our human potential and “aliveness” to find our “authentic” selves.

My wings are open.



## Chapter Five - Awakening and Deepening Care in Good Work

### My “Good Work”

Our deepest calling is to grow into our own authentic selfhood, whether or not it conforms to some image of who we ought to be. As we do so, we will not only find the joy that every human being seeks – we will also find our path of authentic service in the world. True vocation joins self and service, as Fredrick Buechner asserts when he defines vocation as “the place where your deep gladness meets the world’s deep need.” (Palmer, 2000, p. 16)

This topic of “Good Work” has “drawn” me in for years – it is the topic of “awakening and deepening care” in ourselves, our work, our community and our society. This “awakening care” has been playing with me. I hear the voices of my participants and the voices of the writers and researchers of the past. This is not work I do alone. It is a way of “being” and participating in the world.

[It] compels us over and over, and the better one knows it, the *more* compelling it is. There comes a moment in which something is *there*, something one should not forget and cannot forget. This is not a matter of mastering an area of study. (Gadamer, as cited in Jardine, 2014a, p. 25)

*It is not a 9 – 5 job where you clock in and clock out. There is a fair amount of volunteerism in it. I don’t know if it is pride. I don’t know if pride is the right word. You just want to do well at what you do. (Sinclair, personal communication, February 26, 2014)*

It is “awakening care” that brings me close and holds me there. I am not mastering this area of study. I am living this area of study. I am “participating in an event of tradition” (Gadamer, 2004, p. 291).

“Awakening care” – what does that mean? Interviewing and researching these “on” people has brought awareness to my work and my life. In my research questions and dialogues, I am struck by how these people impact their worlds. “Man did not weave the web of life, he is merely a strand in it. Whatever he does to the web, he does to himself.” (Campbell, 1988, 43). What I do has an impact on the world around me. I am merely a strand in the weave of life.

Once again we discover that the person who is understanding does not know and judge as one who stands apart and unaffected but rather he thinks along with the other from the perspective of a specific bond of belonging, as if he too were affected. (Gadamer, 2004, p. 320)

*“I don’t know what else to say Laura about being engaged. I care about people. I care” (Mitchell, personal communication, March 3, 2014).*

“Good Work” in a sense that is held with reverence and with care. What I do matters – it matters a lot. Ripples from my work cascade on and on and on..... It is my work to “see” people. This has been my “calling” from an early age.

*“When I was in Brownies I was engaged. I am wired that way. I am in it.” (Anderson, personal communication March 14, 2014).*

To “see” people in their place, and to allow them the “space” and “free space” to be. To be .... To be real, to be human, “to be a somebody, not an anybody.” (D. Jardine, EDER603 lecture, Jan 23, 2014).

*“I enjoy passing on some life skills. I enjoy the challenge of some of them when they are ornery and they are making mistakes in life and they need to come to somebody and we chat about it” (Sinclair, personal communication, February 26, 2014).*

When I walk into my workshop room, I know that what happens there in that room is not the scripted, workshop material. I know that it has a bigger place. I know that in those 1 - 3 day workshops – magic and life happens. I watch with fascination at the blossoming of the human spirit in front of me. I see you and you see me.....

I feel like a voyeur – a lurker, a fly on the wall. It evolves in front of me. It is like I have a telescope, or I am sitting with a periphery lens. I sit on the outside and look, but I am “in” the room. I am part of it, part of the whole that happens. I am “in” the room all day. I explain that to the participants, “you have me for the day. Pick my brain. Let’s pick each other’s brains”..... and then I begin. I start slowly because I know there is huge fear in even coming to the workshop in the first place. I allow them to watch me, like animals do when they are sizing up their competition or their mate. They circle around me – watching my face, my clothes, my body posture... my words. Every story I tell is different and the stories that come out of me, only arrive when I see the needs of the group or the individual. In the room, I do not “read” the PowerPoint slides, I do not follow the “format” that has been given to me by the administrators, instead I speak to the needs of the group, the needs of the people that sit in front of me – lost, confused and scared.

*There are some balances there that are necessary and the unique part about coaching is the job never ends. There is no end – I am recruiting or I am talking to a kid about a problem. You are*

*constantly measuring someone or you are planning – there is always something I could be doing.*  
(Sinclair, personal communication, February 26, 2014)

I know this material. I have “experienced” it and practiced it for years – 25 years to be exact. I have become experienced in understanding the needs of those placed in front of me. Am I nervous? Yes, always. I have been given a special task and I must hold it gently. Every time I walk into a room, I have the rush and excitement and hesitation of “what will come”.

*You get better at working through it. You think about it less. The Doers – I don’t weigh it and risk it – I think Shit, I wish this was going to be easier but it’s not, oh well. So then you go to solution A. I think a doer will think how will I solution my way through this. They park the anxiety and anxiousness and fear about it because it doesn’t matter. You have to figure out how to get through it. And then you get better at it. (Anderson, personal communication, March 14, 2014)*

I realize that I have my ritual the night before. I unconsciously start to get geared up... I do the slow walk to the basement to gather the binder which contains the workshop material. My binders are different colors, with white sticky labels worn off, with the residue of the glue on the spine. I gather my books and binder together, along with my pencil bag that holds my white board pens, a loonie or two for a Tim Horton’s coffee, pens and business cards and slips of paper people have given to me over the years. I walk to work. I am always struck by how lucky I am and give thanks to the universe that I can walk past the streams of traffic, moving my legs and my body and sometimes singing to myself. I get geared up.... Who will be there?... What will I share? What will I need to share – what will they share? How might I be changed by my interaction with them?

*“I take an interest in people. There are certain people that stand out more than others that I am interested in. They have good stories.” (Mitchell, personal communication, March 3, 2014).*

I am *in* the room with them and lead them into places they might not go. I create space for them to explore and find each other..... I provide them a space, a place for them to express themselves. I make sure people feel safe. How do I create that safety? I do this by normalizing their personal experience into a universal experience. I tell them stories of myself and stories of other people on the way that I have met. I believe this creates a safe space. I, we, will hold each other reverently and gently. I see you and you see me.....

*I think the unique part about building a team is – every team has some stars but the team only wins based on whether the ones that are in the gray area grow and become stars. Or find a way to contribute or play their role in a manner that allows the team to be successful. And I think teaching young people to buy into that concept and embrace it and then to give it value or learn what that value really is. (Sinclair, personal communication, February 26, 2014)*

I reach out to draw them in. I reach out to find that spark, that flicker of hope and place where they are able to expose themselves, bit by bit. It is creating a space, a place of wondering, understanding, sharing and caring.... “I care, you matter” – I see you and you see me.

I tell them that I have been there. Not exactly where they are but I have had similar experiences. I have been lonely, sad, lost, in turmoil and underemployed. I joke about my dating life... my rejections, my rejecting and my loneliness before finding my partner. I joke about not being called back... Me, thinking I was great, good, funny, connecting and the despair and hurt at not being called back. I point

out the feelings of rejection and the No's that one gets in life. How those No's hurt, feels like being punched in the stomach. No's dig deep into the soul which feels like it can't take any more rejection..... the fear and the place that the mind takes us to.... Never EVER getting a job... useless and lonely FOREVER.... The spiral of fear. I remind them that they WILL get a job, they will find a place, a space – I promise them that. But in the same sentence, I tell them that when they find that space, they must be ready because that space will shift and move and they will be in that “other” place again. “Life is not solvable”, I tell them. We never know what is around the corner but we can only know if we look and don't stay stuck..... We use words that normalize the experience and then we laugh. A good hearty laugh....

*I joke a lot with the kids and you get the joking back. It puts them at ease. They open up more when they are more relaxed and when you challenge them academically and emotionally, they respond. (Evans, personal communication, February 27, 2014)*

There is a joy of recognition. A joy of seeing each other in this place, in this mess, in this world we live in. I see you and you see me.

“If we put ourselves in someone else's shoes, for example, then we will understand him – i.e., become aware of the otherness, the indissoluble individuality of the other person – by putting ourselves in his position” (Gadamer, 2004, p. 304).

I want people to understand that we live in a world that is fragmented and “doing”. “Doing” is not always done for the right reasons and that our ability to “care” is losing ground. I “awaken care” in these workshops. “By forming the thing, (I) form (my) self” (Gadamer, as cited in Jardine, 2014c, p.

130). I allow people to expose the underside of themselves – the raw, the broken, the dirt – the fear.....  
When I hold that gently... when I look into your eyes – really look... I see you and you see me.

To do “good” work – one must pay attention. Good work is hard work, but hard work feels good deep in the soul. I bring the awareness into my work, this work matters. It is “knowing” that I am playing with people’s lives, families, communities and futures. How I hold this group and allow them to “be” may make a difference out there in the world. This is a heavy responsibility but awakening care to this small group is one of the tasks that I have been given.

*What I try to do when I come here is think how can I make a difference in the lives that I come in contact with. And it is not just the students. It is the teachers, the staff and I make a point to talk to the caretaker and to say good morning and chat and find out how his day is going. Noticing things – hey you have a new car or a new hairdo. (Evans, personal communication, February 27, 2014)*

I see Joan, the administrative assistant who has given her heart and soul to her work and who now is burnt out, fried, weepy and off kilter. She is proud of her work history (so she should be) but today she struggles to get the right words on paper for her resume to explain her experience. She gave so fully and without boundaries that she can’t function now. She is on short-term disability, unable to cope – despairingly asking me for a referral to a psychologist or counsellor I would recommend. She hid it so well in the first part of the workshop – answering questions, being chirpy but I knew... I saw it and she tells me. I have touched something in her through my examples of other people that have “fried” themselves. Did I know that when I told the story? No, but somehow I knew that was the right story to tell today. This is not pretty. It is an ugly, scary, pus-filled mess I see rear its ugly head when I bring it

into the open. The fact is we are “doing”, and not “being”. We don’t stop to question – why? What will happen to our young people who watch as slowly the elders around them crumple from overwork and stress.... We need to awaken care to our bodies, our minds and our work.

*“People need to appreciate. People need to slow down. We need to take time” (Evans, personal communication, February 27, 2014).*

Dwang, the fourth year undergrad Asian student, maybe 22 years old, in business, majoring in accounting, sits in my workshop. Why is he here? I wonder as he introduces himself. Shouldn’t he be at the University? Throughout the day, he is struggling not to fall asleep in the workshop.... His eyes slowly glazing, closing and head bobbing. I know it is not me... something is up. I ask him about it privately. He tells me that he is in the middle of final exams and was up late studying. He has accessed the University career resources but wants to make sure he is prepared for the upcoming interviews. He is stressed, depressed and anxious. I ask him about his interest in basketball that he has highlighted on his resume – who does he play with? Where does he play? He hasn’t played for a while he tells me, too busy. I see this in his posture and with the flabby stomach, a young man of 22 years of age should not have. What is it about our society that makes young people shut down their pleasure in activities to focus on “doing” the “right” thing so they can get into the “right” job? He does all the “right” things. He thanks me, gives me a thank you card and tidies up his space.... What will become of him... where will his essence go.... If he has lost it so early, will he find it and how will his “being in the world” affect other people in the business world.... I tell him as he leaves.... Be gentle with yourself... go and play basketball... I see you and you see me.



*“You can see that in some of these kids – you can see the nervousness of “I can’t that” rather than – who are you? What makes you unique? What makes you different?” (Evans, personal communication, February 27, 2014).*

*I think we all go through that, trying to figure out who we are, what we are good at, what can I do. We get a lot of pressure from our parents. You will go to University right? But there is huge uneasiness that comes with that. I think they have to love what they are doing and they have to pursue the dream and go after it. (Evans, personal communication, February 27, 2014)*

How can I help ease the pain, the frustration and the awakening of what is happening around us. How can I stop it, help it? How can I shout out, Joseph Campbell’s – “Follow your bliss”, Follow your heart .... I think people are losing heart... they are losing themselves in the busyness of the world. I stop a middle aged woman during break in my workshop by asking her about her interests and loves – why are you not doing that now? She tears up and looks me right in the eye... “I am crying because you just pulled out what I love to do. I know what I must do. I know what I really LOVE to do”. There is a break through, an opening, a possibility, a place to explore, an allowing of humanity – an awakening of care in the world.

*It is more about guided discovery, in an education term, then me pointing it out. It has less value if I say “you are doing it this way” instead of helping them see it themselves. Then they take more ownership over the solutions for it. (Sinclair, personal communication, February 26, 2014)*

I hold an opening, a possibility, a place for people to venture into. I reach out and welcome, engage and pull toward the other..... I want to create a sense of wonder, belonging, connection, community of “relatedness” in that workshop room, with the IKEA clock that is 5 minutes slow, and looking out onto the TD bank below. I want to provide a place, a moment in time, when people can feel and tell their story.

Mary is so depressed that she can’t meet my eyes. Her white and black flecked hair is disheveled and short. Her eyes are red rimmed and glassy. I know that she is on some medication – probably a lot. Her walk and posture has the slowness of molasses and it holds sadness and grief. Her crooked teeth mouth struggles to smile, even to get the lips high enough out of the snarl to open her mouth to speak. The slow waving motion of her body that tells me she is struggling to be here, in this world. I know she can’t concentrate. I know she is questioning why she is here. At break, I speak to her. She used to be a nurse. One of her patients injured her and she is in so much pain, she can’t work. She can’t work. I am angry that someone upstairs would have referred her to the workshop. She can’t be here – what were they thinking – did they not take a really good look at her – she is bordering on suicide – I sense that in my bones. She can’t work and will probably never work again. She is barely holding on. Barely holding on to herself and to this world. I hold her delicately – not physically but gently in my world. This is a woman who is struggling, hurting and scared. She starts to cry – tears of anguish, hurt, pain and fear. The tears fall easily for her – she has done a lot of crying – she doesn’t know what else to do. Stuck, immobilized by physical pain, emotional pain and loss of community and self. During one of the exercises, she struggles to find something to talk about and struggles to compose herself. “Please”, I gently say, looking around at the group for an understanding and allowing a space for her...”Please, just sit here. Be with us, listen to us and stay here with us.” She needs people, a presence of beings, people and people around her – a space, a place. She can’t work today.... Never.... I see you, you see me.

*“It doesn’t matter if they fire me, I don’t care. What I care about is that I continue to work hard and I am giving the best I can for these athletes. That’s it.” (Sinclair, personal communication, February 26, 2014).*

He is a salesman, through and through. I recruited sales people for 6 years. I can spot them a mile away. He is middle aged – 55 plus, briefcase, pressed shirt and buffed shoes. He is confident in the way he speaks but I know that underneath there is great fear. He has been a salesman in the financial industry for years – made lots of money. He is proud of his past. This is a man who is used to rejection, I know, but not the sting of not having work for over a year. The continuous “No” is wearing on him and he is scared. He uses his sales skills at the break, asking me about my family, my ski holiday and my experience as a recruiter. I know he wants something from me – I haven’t figured out what it is yet. He talks, smiles but has a frantic look in his eyes. I watch, I wait, and I listen. At lunch, he approaches me again, this time with a hint of desperation. He has been so good in the group, offering suggestions and ideas but I wait..... He has been out of work for a year now, money is getting tight, his wife is worried, his daughter in University and he is tapping into this savings... Can I help him, who do I know, any suggestions, thoughts. He is edgy, fearful – like an animal cornered... He needs to get out..... I reassure him, I know he will get work – he is confident and smart... sometimes we lose our way. I see you and you see me.

*If you want anything you have to understand your secretary, if you want your room cleaned, you need to understand the caretaker. If I can help you, how can you help me. I am a firm believer in that. We are all in this together and it is not a hierarchical view of things. (Evans, personal communication, February 27, 2014)*

She is quiet, shy. Her name is written lightly on her tent card... how she did that with a white board marker, I don't know but I know she does not want to be noticed. I am curious and watch her all day (making eye contact when I am speaking – focusing and “seeing” her). She watches me with hesitant, fearful eyes – is she depressed, introverted, told to be here? I watch. I wait. She takes a few notes – she says a few words but very little. She wants to go into banking ... that is her background. What is her story, I wonder. What is going on.....? She watches me, I watch her. I don't have a chance to talk to her separately the first day – she disappears out the door as soon as our session is over. Will I see her tomorrow; did she get anything out of today? Did I “touch” her in anyway? I always give people their space – they will come around..... She comes the next day, putting her tent card up, getting her materials out. She is an accountant but hard for her to explain her background and skills. Something is going on.... Her glasses lean to the right side of her face. I want to reach out to straighten them – the nose bead on her glasses needs to be adjusted – can she see clearly, I wonder. It makes her look unbalanced – those vigilant eyes watching me. I watch her, she watches me. She has a baggy shirt on and sits with slumped posture. We start our practice interviews and I start with her – one on one – face to face, knee to knee – no one can hear us. I question her – why has she been out of work, why did she take time off – she went to an Ivy League school in Canada – Graduate work – smart woman. Suddenly, she stops – she looks me right in the eye with a questioning of an animal – can I trust you? Will you hurt me? Will you judge me? I wait. I open my heart. She had surgery – a mastectomy – she has taken time to recover, to heal. She looks like it is her fault she got sick. She keeps her eyes on my face – waiting for judgment, repulsion, disgust. I hold this moment carefully. I know a trust has been shared... an opening... a space... a place. I listen. I walk her through how to talk about the gap in a way that feels comfortable and safe for her. I see you and you see me.

*If you are not in a good mood, I am not going to poke you in the same way I would someone that is in a good mood. However, I certainly will try to help you see that there is more to what is going on than what you are perceiving. (Evans, personal communication, February 27, 2014)*

Angela is tall, lanky and has a runner's body. She has dyed hair that is covering the gray and hair that is the mousy brown with a texture of straw – too many chemicals. Her hands are long and lean with the veins showing through – she holds them close to her and uses them sparingly. She wears an oversized running jacket – the kind that covers your bum and is shorter in the front. She has running shoes and jeans on. She looks hurt. She carries pain in her eyes. She watches me, I watch her. Slowly she starts to tell stories in the group. She is a nurse, went back to school after doing upgrading of high school. She worked with seniors and with death. She tells us that she has held many hands when people have passed on. She talks about the “rattle of death” – the last breath a person takes before they die. There is something she is hiding in her story and I sense it. She gets nervous and her eyes change when she talks about her recent “gap”. I question her gently at first and then more directly. I don't know what it is but there is something that is not being said. Tell me the story, I say, let's walk through this together so we can understand it, without this uneasiness that is unspoken. She tells me she took some time off... I know there is more. I wait, I listen, and I push her further. She is a recovering addict. The death of one of the patients threw her off and she is shameful and full of guilt. We walk through it gently and carefully – without judgement or accusations... we walk together down the path of understanding – the work she does is hard work – how could you not be affected.... What a gift she has given to many. She talks about it, gets it out and then goes at it again to see if I sense the uneasiness in her story. She has got it. She let go of the fear, judgement and expectations and can talk about this experience with an openness and clarity. I see the change in her posture, approach and energy when she waves goodbye at the end of the workshop – she will be okay... she will move forward. I see you and you see me.

Once again we discover that the person who is understanding does not know and judge as one who stands apart and unaffected but rather he thinks along with the other from the perspective of a specific bond of belonging, as if he too were affected. (Gadamer, 2004, p. 320)

Jerry is handsome, young and strong. He wears a loose, red basketball jersey and sits with his legs open and splayed. He has a great smile, strong energy and I like him immediately. He is shy and it takes some drawing out but soon he starts to talk. He was MVP at his high school for three years running, basketball player, coach to kids – athlete. He loves to play ball. I can tell he is an athlete. He has the gift of being a team player – you can see it when he interacts with the group. He is proud of his basketball successes; I sense it in his energy when telling the story. There is a gap on his resume that concerns me – I question, I probe, I wonder. He quietly tells me so that the others in the group don't hear; he spent time at spy hill, a juvenile correctional institution, for aggravated assault. Damn, a record, a history, for such a young man with so much potential. My experience with the prisons comes back to me – men in the medium security prison – never getting out... wasting away ... stuck and wasting. Why did someone not hold them gently? Stuck, frozen, labelled, FUCKED – Damn... why does this happen.... who let him do this... where was his community... where were WE? His place, his space, all changed by one experience. I sit with him, listen and watch.... What a waste, what a waste.... I see you, you see me.

*Your heart goes out to some of these little guys that come hungry or without the love and the care or some of these kids come from broken homes so it is really tough for them. You just make this about them. They want to be here. (Evans, personal communication, February 27, 2014)*

She sits with the plain beige scarf covering her head. How do they arrange those scarves so no hair shows and the hair is so neatly tucked in? She has a pin that holds it in place. She wears glasses that have no frame and she says not much. Does she speak English I wonder? She has been in Canada a year. Her English is fine. She listens, she watches, she waits. I focus on the pin - a circle of diamonds. I know they are not real diamonds but the neatness and care she has taken with her scarf surprises me. On day two, we talk further; she asks me if I can tell that she can't hear from her left side. She is deaf – lost her hearing back in her country... her eyes well up with tears... I know that the loss of hearing is from some form of violence – family, protests, bombings, fighting, shooting... I don't ask, she doesn't tell. I just listen. She is frightened, new to this country, without the senses she had. She has little children and is trying to get a job. We hold each other's' space – woman to woman, person to person, mother to mother – I reassure her, I comfort her, I accept her, I focus on her abilities and gentle presence. She will be fine... in a safe country ... what a scary ride... I see you and you see me.

“Each person, in a moment of shared positivity, becomes momentarily invested in the other's well-being.” (Fredrickson, 2013a, p. 41)

*“If you want to understand what is going on you need to be a listener – an active listener even more so. I think to be engaged, an active listener is a big part of that engagement” (Evans, personal communication, February 27, 2014).*

This awakening of care in a small workshop setting – focused on “job search and employment counselling” allows me a place and “free space” to explore possibilities with people. Allowing each of them, a slice of humanity within a government workshop room, it is bringing different needs, people and experiences into a place of “sameness”. Everyone is struggling with something.

*“I think you have to want to be here. I think all of us have problems” (Evans, personal communication, February 27, 2014).*

We have lost our way, we have lost our place in the world and we need to get a grounding. The grounding is the sense of community, belonging and being “seen”. Being seen, warts and all and knowing that the source, the universe and the earth reaches out its hand to us – reminding us to be human, be real, question, ask and be. Reminding us to not become “doers” without “caring”.

*I need to see these kids develop into good people. In the end if someone hangs a medal around my neck, I don’t care. That means nothing. It is something that is going to collect dust but the things that are lasting are people. (Sinclair, personal communication, February 26, 2014)*

To not forget to question why we do things and why can’t we be ourselves – our flawed, delicious, wonderful, radiant selves. “Good” work is caring, seeing the impact our work has on the world and holding that “calling” and gift gently and reverently. This is not just my “work” – it is my life.

Awaken the care... I see you and you see me.

*“Belonging. That is what it all comes down to” (Evans, personal communication, February 27, 2014).*



## Chapter Six - Being and Becoming Experienced

My “success” formula for work and life is “playing” with me. This topic of workplace engagement has “addressed” me. The interviews with the participants, combined with my *Bildung* of “on” people have provided data and awareness of components needed to be “engaged” in the workplace. This unravelling has revealed how the work of “on” people contributes to the greater good of our society. In the data and in the interviews, there is a commonality, a likeness of “engaged” individuals. “Hermeneutic interpretation comprehends the recognition that occurs when something rings ‘true’ of what is said; there is a familiarity, a kinship, a resonance, and a likeness.” (Moules, 2002, p. 5). It is not the sample size or the “right” number of participants in the research; it is the deep understanding, the hermeneutic practice of deep listening to “hear” the topic. “*Understanding is to be thought of less of a subjective act than as participating in an event of tradition*, a process of transmission in which past and present are constantly mediated. This is what must be validated by hermeneutic theory, which is far too dominated by the idea of a procedure, a method” (Gadamer, 2011, p. 291).

Through the “events” of life, the experiences and disjunctures along the way, there is an awareness of the “other” struggling through common passages in life. There is an unravelling of the commonality of these experiences with the “other” – we get lost, we find our way and then we get lost again. The common thread in this work is to follow your intuitions, find your passion and do what gives you pleasure. The most important part is to “do” the work. When individuals allow their gifts to come forth, they “play” in their work. When people find free space and passion, people can “feel into” their work. When people “play” at what they love, they expand out in many dimensions. In this play, there is an opening and an expansion of self which occurs. It is Gadamer’s hermeneutic practice of “instability, questioning and challenge of otherness” (Davey, 2013, p. 60), which provides new learning and

experiences. Individuals transform and develop into unique beings through trial and error. It is through being “lost” that self-awareness, connection with “other” and blossoming inward and outwards begins. It is becoming “experienced”. “A person who is called experienced has become so not only *through* experiences but also from being open *to* new experiences” (Gadamer, 2004, p. 350).

Our society has moved in the past century into an individualized, linear world, striving for certainty, compliance and rigidity. The expectations to work methodically and systematically to produce results, needs to include the human dimension. Humans are not biologically wired to be individual focused robots, working without thinking. Working without thinking, caring or “engaging” is “slow death”. We are wired to connect, care and be part of something bigger than money or results. We are wired for connection. Learning, pushing boundaries and moving into uncomfortable places, provide us with aliveness. With each new experience, openness for the next experience develops. “Gadamer insists that nothing justifies and gives meaning to life other than life itself” (Davey, 2013, p. 58).

Interest, purpose, meaningful goals, mentors and belonging are important to deep learning. To find our gifts, we need free space to be able to explore, discover and ponder. The perception of safety and the actual physical presence of others opens up learning. (Fredrickson, 2013a). There is no “right” button to push to make individuals learn. It is listening to our hearts, challenging the status quo and engaging in everyday, small gestures of “caring”. This makes a difference in our relationships. To belong means to have a place, a space and a community which supports, watches and cares. We are all connected. We change and adjust to the circumstances around us. Life is complex and shifting infinitely towards new learning. Part of learning is engaging in dialogue with “other” and working towards understanding each other. Lord Tennyson Alfred, the Victorian poet, in his writing of the poem Ulysses wrote, “I am a part

of all that I have met” (Alfred, 2014). It is to be “in the midst” of life and be attentive to the everyday and the world as we are “in” it. We are a part of the whole around us.

“Then there comes another kind of life, which involves giving oneself to others one way or another. This is the one that’s symbolized in the opening of the heart” (Campbell, 1988, 268). When one engages in good work, one gives of oneself to “feel into” humanity. “Each individual has the power to make the difference in the course that humanity takes” Douglas Cardinal (Cook, 2012). There is something about “on” people you can feel in your bones. I can feel it in my body. We used to call it in the recruiting business, the “spidey” sense. It is the manner in which they conduct themselves and how they talk about their experiences – good and bad. It is not about their place of education or where they grew up. It is in the way they “look” at you and the way they talk (really talk) to you. You can tell if someone really cares. Finding someone who is “on” is rare and immensely valuable to employers and to society.

My work experience with youth, prisoners, corporate clients, students, unemployed people and recruiting executives has provided me with some *Bildung*. In my interviews and workshop facilitation, I have been physically present to hundreds of people year after year. In my workshops, I normalize life for people. I provide comfort and hope, and a few laughs. I give people an exaggerated version of life, real life stories, to see the humor and see the light in the tunnel. I point out to them the various paths they can move down and provide them with a growth mindset toward this experience of finding their work. I can’t “experience” *for* them. They need to walk their own path. They need to take stock of where they are, accept the reality of the situation and set a plan. It is gathering support and previous success stories and encouraging a mindset of resilience. To start, one must begin engaging, participating, questioning and opening up the mind. It is seeing things in new light. It is being open to

trying new things and exploring. There is no “set” path in life and once we understand that, we are free to “experience”.

When I look at the participants I interviewed for this study, I see that they “get” what they need to do to “engage” themselves in their work. I saw the cashier this morning at work, while buying my groceries. She was her usual self, smiling and calling everyone “Doll and Hun”. She makes me smile. She has no makeup on today and looks a little worn, but she is still smiling, joking and laughing.... I know she will be in her car at lunch. These people have purpose and the impact they have on those that they interact with is evident. They “own” their work by taking pride and ownership in it. This pride and “ownership” is not just in the work they are doing now, but any work they engage in (including Brownies!). They have mindsets of purpose and contribution. They care about how things are done and the impact they have on their surroundings. They are “doers”, who get things done. They influence others through their energy and passion. They are community builders. They are leaders in their fields. In their each small way, they are contributing to the whole of society, whether they see that or not. They are providing the “love” and positive resonance needed in our world. “A hero is someone who has given his or her life to something bigger than themselves” (Campbell, 1988, p. 151).

The work these people do, makes a difference. The cashier, she is the personalized balm for people’s loneliness. She, in her small way, has “job crafted” a meaning into a job that could potentially be boring or mundane. She makes people feel special and in that small act of caring, she changes humanity. She changes how people may interact once they leave that grocery store. The coach is impacting the players he will send out into the world. The life skills and caring they learn from him will ripple out into our society. The teacher, by asking kids questions and “seeing” them, he is creating “belonging” in this world. By saying hello to every kid that comes through the doors of the school and giving extra

attention to those kids he knows don't have anyone that "sees" them in their lives, he is impacting lives. Even the executive who tells the employee who is crying at their desk, go someplace else, she is making a difference. She is allowing that employee to move beyond disjuncture to find a place they will belong.

When we see the other *in* us, it creates a kinship, a connection or a "belonging". When we work toward community, belonging, loving and sharing this joyful world we live in, our world expands. It is seeing the good in others, allowing for the bad, but focusing on the good, to bring forward the light. It is allowing the "other" and us to make mistakes, to sit in the mud, and be in the "waiting" place to discover and transform into stronger and more "*Bildung*" individuals. It is sharing our experiences and being human. It is being in our skin, being in our world and being in "this" place, right here, right now.

"Understanding begins...when something addresses us" (Gadamer, 2004, p. 298). My process of "becoming experienced" has been in "playing", "tarrying" and "whiling" with "engagement" in work and life. "The discovery of the true meaning of text or a work of art is never finished" (Gadamer, 2004, p. 298). This is only the beginning.

Let's walk this path together.....

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## Appendix A - Interview Questions

Questions to be asked:

1. Do you consider yourself an “engaged” person?
2. Have you always been “engaged” in the workplace?
3. What experiences have you had that enable you to have a positive impact on others – even during uncertainty?
4. Tell me how you know when you are really “on” at work? How would you describe that experience?
5. What are three components you need to feel “on” in the workplace?
6. How do you “engage” people in the workplace? Or can you?
7. Whose responsibility is “engagement” – the individual or employer?
8. Robert Quinn, in his book *“Deep Change”*, talks about Slow Death in organizations – people consciously reject the option to engage in change and as a result “don’t rock the boat”.  
What are your thoughts on this?
9. Carol Dweck in her book *“Mindset”* talks about a growth mindset and a fixed mindset.  
What is your opinion on this?
10. Do you or did you have a role model or “mentor” for your work? How have they influenced your life? What were their key attributes?
11. How important are relationships or connections in your engagement?
12. Is this “work” something that you have always had a “passion” for?
13. Is it necessary for people to feel “engaged” in the workplace?
14. Do you have to make a conscious effort at work to be “engaged”?

## Appendix B – Letter of Consent



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**Name of Researcher, Faculty, Department, Telephone & Email:**

Laura Strachan, Masters Candidate in Educational Research, Adult Learning, Faculty of Education  
(403) 270-3123 or llstrach@ucalgary.ca

**Supervisor:** Dr. Sharon Friesen, Vice Dean, Associate Professor, President, Galileo Educational Network - Galileo Educational Network (GEN), Office of Administration (403)220-5625 or sfriesen@ucalgary.ca

**Title of Project:**

What did you do at work today? What “engages” people in the workplace and why?

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This consent form, a copy of which has been given to you, is only part of the process of informed consent. If you want more details about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

The University of Calgary Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board has approved this research study.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study is to explore the question of what engages people in the workplace and why. It will focus on key elements in society today - adapting to the 21st Century workplace, employers as mentors, individuals as learners, the importance of the workplace as a place of belonging and the impact of positive, adaptive, learning workplaces on our society.

**What Will I Be Asked To Do?**

You have been identified as an “engaged” employee by the researcher. The participants of this research study are individuals who have been identified as engaged in their work. To be engaged is to be interested, involved and engrossed. This is similar to the concept of Flow termed by Mihayl Csikszentmihalyi in his book, *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience* (1990). Flow is to be totally engrossed losing all self-consciousness, concept of time and experiencing joy and pleasure in the task at hand. This has also been called Intellectual Engagement by Dr. Sharon Friesen from the University of Calgary (Friesen, 2007). In this study, engaged is to be in flow, actively involved in meaningful and purposeful work that provides the individual with a sense of fulfillment and joy. Engagement in these individuals is a consistent, externally observed pleasure in their work, excellent customer service, positive interactions with their clients and a sense of focus and intensity in providing quality

workmanship. Your participation involves one face to face interview that will take about one hour of your time. You will be asked questions about your engagement in the workplace, role models and life experiences that made you who you are today.

With your permission, your interview will be audiotaped and transcribed. You will have an opportunity to review the portions of the transcribed narrative to be used in the research. All information will be confidential and there will be no identifying names or locations in the transcripts.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary and you may choose to withdraw from the study at any time.

### **What Type of Personal Information Will Be Collected?**

No personal identifying information will be collected in this study, and all participants shall remain anonymous. No names or identifying features will be used in the thesis. A generic title for your occupation and may reference your approximate age but will not use any identifying information.

Your interview will be audiotaped and the only people that will have access to the recordings will be the researcher and her supervisor. The recordings will not ever be shown in public.

There are several options for you to consider if you decide to take part in this research. You can choose all, some, or none of them. Please review each of these options and choose Yes or No:"

I grant permission to be audio taped: Yes: \_\_\_\_ No: \_\_\_\_

I grant permission to use non-identifying quotations from the interviews in your research Yes: \_\_\_\_ No: \_\_\_\_

### **Are there Risks or Benefits if I Participate?**

The interview questions will ask you about some transformational periods in your life. This may bring up some minor distress. All information will be treated with the utmost confidentiality and respect.

In discussing some of these experiences it may clarify for you some of the reasons that you are so engaged and may bring some self-awareness. By sharing your experiences, it may help other people in the workplace find their place of "engagement".

I will be verifying the information that I transcribe from our interview and you have an opportunity to omit or correct any of the information. All information is confidential.

### **What Happens to the Information I Provide?**

Participation is completely voluntary, anonymous and confidential. You are free to discontinue participation at any time during the study. No one except the researcher and her supervisor will be allowed to see or hear any of the answers to the interview tape. The audio tape will be kept on a secure computer and transcripts will be kept in a locked cabinet only accessible by the researcher and her



supervisor. The anonymous data will be stored for five years on a computer disk, at which time, it will be permanently erased.

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## Signatures

Your signature on this form indicates that 1) you understand to your satisfaction the information provided to you about your participation in this research project, and 2) you agree to participate in the research project.

In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the investigators, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from this research project at any time. You should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

Participant's Name: (please print) \_\_\_\_\_

Participant's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's Name: (please print) \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Questions/Concerns

If you have any further questions or want clarification regarding this research and/or your participation, please contact:

Laura Strachan, Masters Candidate in Adult Learning, Faculty of Education (403) 270-3123 or [lstrach@ucalgary.ca](mailto:lstrach@ucalgary.ca) or Supervisor: Dr. Sharon Friesen, Vice Dean, Associate Professor, President, Galileo Educational Network - Galileo Educational Network (GEN), Office of Administration (403)220-5625 or [sfriesen@ucalgary.ca](mailto:sfriesen@ucalgary.ca)

If you have any concerns about the way you've been treated as a participant, please contact an Ethics Resource Officer, Research Services Office, University of Calgary at (403) 210-9863; email [cfreb@ucalgary.ca](mailto:cfreb@ucalgary.ca).

A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference. The investigator has kept a copy of the consent form.

