



Hello, I'm John Foster and I'm excited to be with you at the Ranch this week!

I describe my work as *playing at the intersection of individual and organization behavior*.

When I'm not here, I work with business leaders and companies to help them grow as individuals and build high performance organizations.

Over my career, I've worked with very large, multinational companies, non-profits, and schools and more recently I've focused more on early stage companies we refer to as "start-ups." I have undergraduate degrees in psychology and communication, a master's degree in experiential learning, and I'm an active student of all things that make people and organizations tick.

For my sessions here at Rancho LaPuerta I see my role as a facilitator and collaborator. I myself am on a personal growth journey and I struggle with all of the things we discuss. I find it a rewarding adventure and even better when I'm exploring along with other people. I don't have a lot of answers, but I have narrowed down a set of questions we can use to experiment and practice.



I'm not trying to torture you with promises of a dessert, but I love to use conventional wisdom to set up difficult concepts. So you've probably heard "easy as pie," what does that mean to you? For me, it's ironic. Pie is easy to eat, but hard to make! I learned this from my mom who was an excellent baker and obsessed over crusts and textures and flavors to get the optimal pie for our holiday celebrations.

Most pies have several layers... a fluffy topping, a dense, rich middle, and a crisp or flakey crust. Tonight we're going to spin through the top layer of my content this week, but until you dig in and get to the bottom you may not appreciate fully how it all hangs together. Any part on it's own is fine to taste, but not really satisfying unless you get a bit with all the parts blending together.

Ready? Bon appétit!



More conventional wisdom: “you can’t teach an old dog new tricks.” Why do you think is it hard for adults to learn new things? Turn to another person and have a quick chat about this idea. In your experience, what’s true about it, what not true about it?

So what do you think? (Show of hands) True, or False?

Life does have a way of getting us down at times, but the reality is that adults can grow and learn for their entire lives. It’s just that much of the time we don’t have the support, energy or desire to do the work.

Adult personal growth is not easy, but it’s really the key to fulfilling and rewarding life!



It's good that we can continually learn and grow, because we living in a hyperconnected and superfast world! I'm sure every generation has their own view of how the world has changed and things aren't like they used to be, but there is good evidence that currently we're experiencing unprecedented rates of technological change, global connectivity, and social evolution.

Author Alvin Toffler coined the term Future Shock decades ago to describe how the rate of change would overwhelm human traditions and cause people stress and struggle. The basic idea is that humans have been around for more than 10,000 years, (which is something like 800 generations) and our cultural wisdom never had to account for this kind of rapid, high-velocity change, so we get overwhelmed.



Author Peter Vaill has another way of describing *Future Shock* as *Permanent Whitewater*.

This is the feeling that we're out of control and being pushed through our lives with constant churning, ups and downs, twists and turns, and are just doing our best not to fall out of the boat.

Finally, the US Military has yet another way to describe this constant change experience as "VUCA" which is an acronym for Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, and Ambiguous.

All of this is to remind yourself that nothing is for certain and that things come and and things go. *C'est la vie!*

I see this in my work where many leaders attempt to get things to "settle down" or "put things into place" so we can get on with our real work. Then they get surprised and upset when their carefully made plans fall apart.

Expectations and attachments are often central to anxiety, worry, and rumination so we'll circle back to this often in the other sessions this week.

So what do you think about VUCA, Future Shock and Permanent Whitewater? Do these ideas resonate with you? Grab a few partners and share your initial reactions. Do you think Future Shock a recent thing or has it always been this way? (Show of hands)

Longevity

The Living Proof Challenge: 10 Truths (Simon Hill)

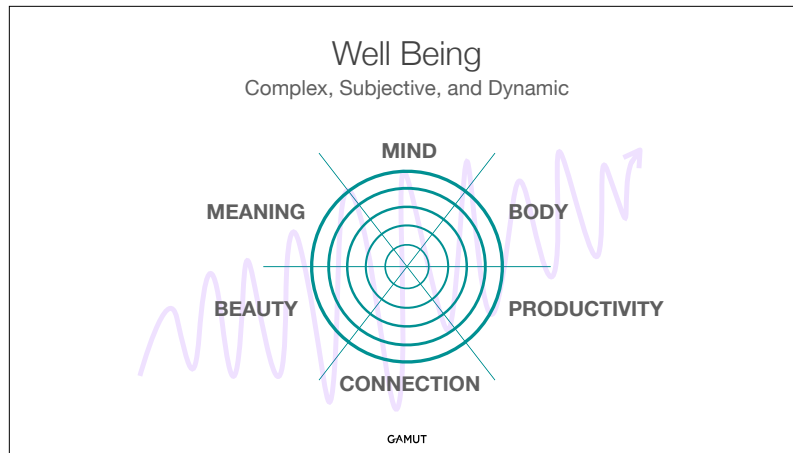
ApoB	Blood Test
VO2 Max	Labbeep
Blood Pressure	Blood Pressure Cuff
HbA1c	Blood Test
Fasting Blood Glucose	Blood Test
Triglycerides	Blood Test
Waist Circumference to Height Ratio	Tape Measure
Grip Strength	Dynamometer
Bone Mineral Density (BMD)	DEXA scan
Flourishing Scale	Questionnaire

GAMUT

There always seems to be a trend to help us deal with life's challenges. The ancients apparently had a firm grasp on plant-based medicine and that evolved into snake oil and supplements and all kinds of physical exercise fads (including this place!).

A current trend, longevity, is about living longer by paying attention to our bodies earlier. Longevity is the new Step Aerobics! The science of being human is getting better and better and with the advent of smart trackers and the rise of the “quantified self” (Oura ring, etc.) we see that physical health is a major factor in longevity and we can gather so much data to guide our lifestyle decisions.

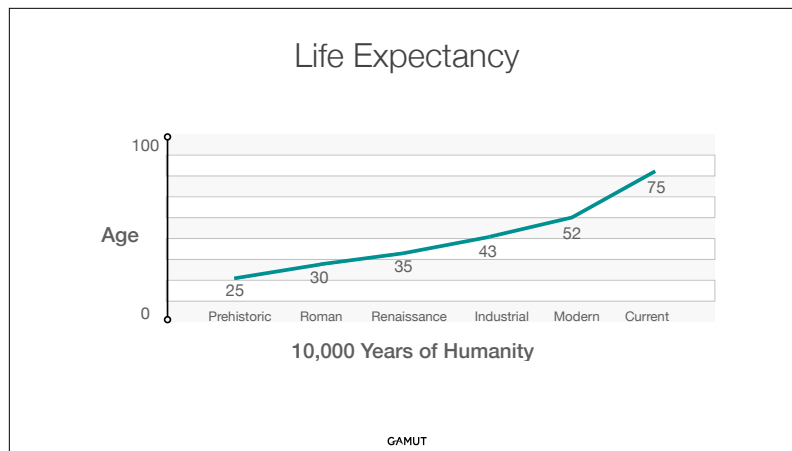
But living well is more complex than physical health. I recently tried Simon Hill's *Living Proof Challenge*, and I recommend you check it out. I am intrigued that they included only 1 Truth to encapsulate all that it means to *be well* beyond having a body that works. At least they included that one! There is a ton of ancient wisdom and modern science that tells us well being is a complex, dynamic, and subjective state. Let's take a closer look...



Here is a more complete view of the compound factors of well being. In this view, we flip the script and the physical/body element is one of 6 “thrive factors” you can measure individually and add up to an overall better assessment of how you’re doing. Measuring is difficult because of the subjective and dynamic aspect of “feeling well”. Sometimes a single element can outweigh all of the others and bring you totally down; other times you feel in sync and on top of everything. The take away is that you should do a self-check on a regular basis or check the full dashboard if you are feeling off, but not sure why.

This more wholistic view is confirmed by many modern and ancient views of what it means to be fully human and flourish.

From Aristotle to the YMCA to Self-Determination Theory (SDT), The Job Demands-Resources (JDR) model, and the Ryff Scale.

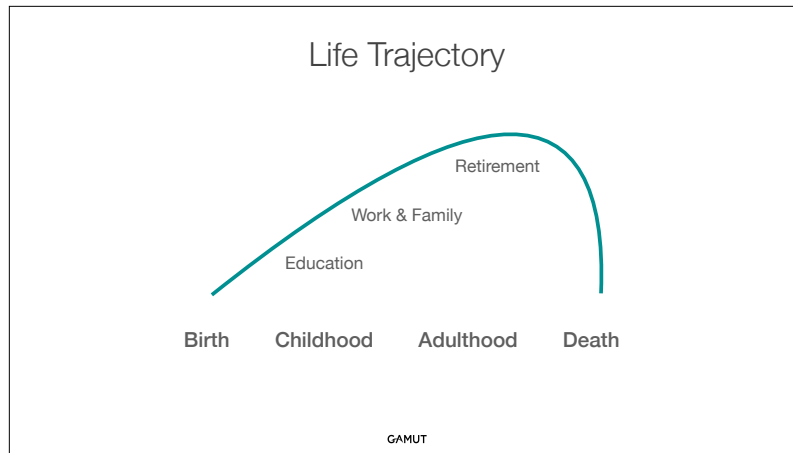


We seem to be getting healthier across the board and humans are living longer lives today versus any time in history. It seems we've always had the POTENTIAL to be Centenarians, but that few people ever make it for various reasons. Life Expectancy as a population average is most affected by infant mortality and disease. Both of these factors have been limited substantially by modern hygiene and medical practices.

Life Span is the potential for remaining alive... and has become a modern obsession for some wealthy and high tech individuals. Science is showing us how to live and beat the common factors that limit lifespan. Many are genetic, but many are based on life-style... individual choices.

Whatever will we do with all of this extra time? The good news is that some ancient people did live long lives and developed insights on adult maturity that can help us keep growing even when were old. Modern psychology has contributed knowledge as well, and both concur that this occurs in stages, but it takes focus and energy to move from one stage to another.

Personal growth is not automatic, it requires intention and investment. And it's kind of expensive!



It's pretty common for us to think about life over time as some kind of journey, path, or road measured by time, with a beginning and an end. We have common phases like childhood and adulthood, and maybe you throw in teens, but then you have to add tweens and it gets pretty complicated if you keep slicing it down. In addition to phases we might think in terms of accomplishments or milestones like Education (remember how we just wanted school to end?), building a career, starting a family, and ultimately retirement when we're just too tired to do much and want everyone to take care of us.

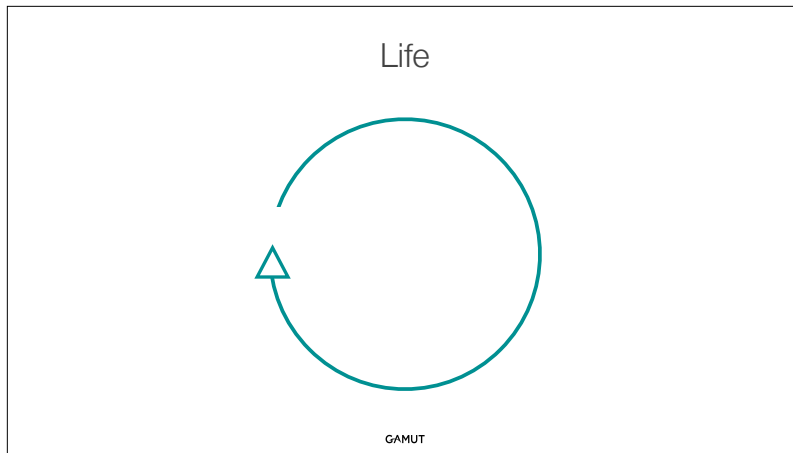
None of this is right or wrong, but it's important to notice how you think of your life as it affects your self talk and might mask or muddle your ability to choose your path.

One other thing to point out is that in this framework we often refer to things with *before*, *during* and *after* storylines.

REFLECTION ACTIVITY:

Take a moment to draw your life trajectory... use whatever form you want but try to represent 5-10 "points" along the way that have shaped you into the person you are today.

Now share the gist of your story with a small group around you. You don't have to include all of the elements because they might be too personal.



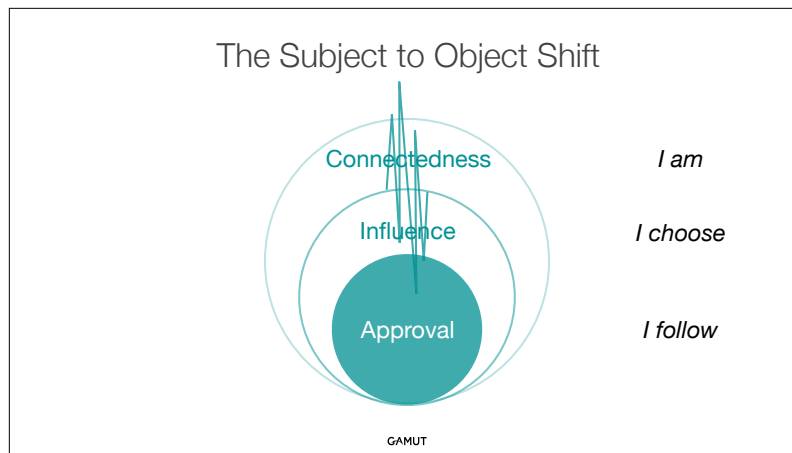
Did anyone draw a trajectory like this? What if you did that now? Would you change the labels? Would the points you chose be the same? What would you add or delete to explain your life in this way? Anyone have a reaction? Care to share your initial thoughts?

Throughout my presentation I will incorporate many references to songs because I listen to music as a form of reflection and my favorite artists are the ones that captivate my thinking and help me wonder. They often reflect greater wisdom about people and life. Here's a few for this concept:

Circle, Harry Chapin
Circle Game, Joni Mitchell
Circle Dream, 10,000 Maniacs
Turn, Turn, Turn, The Byrds
Circle of Life, Elton John (Lion King)

Can anybody think of other songs, poems, stories, or other forms of art that remind us of this idea?

REFLECTION ACTIVITY: Take this "How's my life a circle?" question with you as a reflection this week and perhaps use it as an intention in the muse or on a hike. Maybe it's a topic of discussion at a meal. It's food for thought and could impact how you think about your personal growth.



Psychologists Robert Kegan and Lisa Lahey identify stages of human development based on cognitive complexity. Let's look at typical adults in their study and what they found:

- +**Socialized:** *I comply with the rules because that's how society works (60%)*
- +**Self Authoring:** *I help create society with my identity and agenda (35%)*
- +**Self Transforming:** *I recognize many possible identities and embrace paradox (1%)*

It's interesting to me that is very consistent with the ancient Hindu concept life stages: or "asrama"

1. *Student (to age 25)*
2. *Householder (to age 50)*
3. *Retiree: Forest walker/dweller (to age 75)*
4. *Renounced: detachment from material and focus on peace/spiritual life*

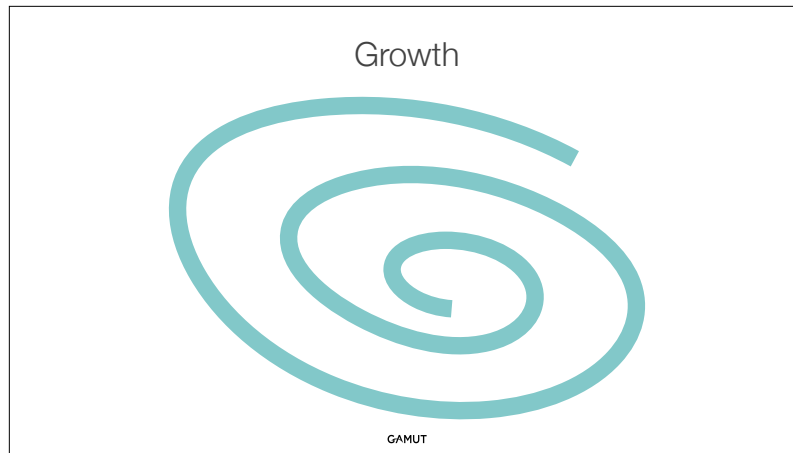
There is a big shift in identity paradigm when someone moves from the Socialized Mind to the Self Authoring mind. It's called the subject to object shift. It means you move from feeling like you are a subject of the world to viewing the world as an object. This is a radical change in perspective and opens your life to new kinds of power. It's not always good either!

It's hard not to think of the bigger stages as "better" but be clear that the transitions aren't a journey of bliss and peacefulness it takes dedicated effort. Moving into a new stage is lumpy, bumpy, and jaggedy. It often takes years of mucking around between stages to feel like you've grown. Sometimes these transitions affect your relationships deeply and there are conflicting signals on if you are moving forward, backwards, or just taking another lap around a circular track.

REFLECTION ACTIVITY:

Take a few moments to reflect on this whole model and try to locate yourself in one of these stages. You can sit where you are stand up and stretch, wander around the room as you mull this over. Wonder if you have energy to think about a next stage or does it feel just fine where you are? Plenty of learning and growth still happen within each stage, it's not only about

transformation.



Put another way, the expansion from one stage to the next is a spiraling path. Spirals have a symbolic meaning in ancient cultures all over the world. It is one of the oldest geometric shapes found in ancient artwork and is universally found across various ancient cultures, including Neolithic societies in Europe, Middle East, the Americas, China and Polynesia. Its widespread use is likely due to the natural occurrence of spirals in nature. In culture it carries a variety of meanings, but often centers around growth, evolution, transformation, and cosmic energy.

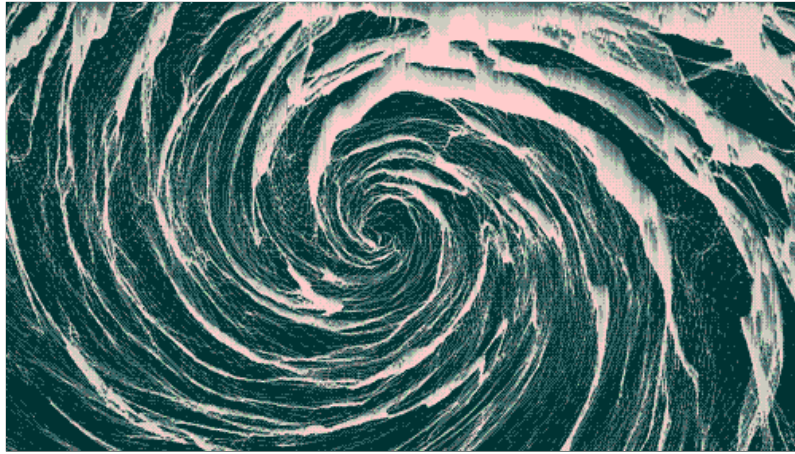
Celtic Culture: Spirals are prominent in Celtic art, representing the journey of life, balance, and cycles. The triple spiral or triskelion is associated with motion and the lunar cycle, and later with the Holy Trinity.

Native American Culture: For tribes like the Zuni and Puebloans, spirals symbolize water, wind, and creatures like snails and serpents. They also represent spiritual journeys and planting methods.

Ancient China: Spirals in calligraphy symbolize eternity, reflecting the continuous cycle of life.

QUESTION: When you look at a spiral do you see it taking you inward or outward? What is the difference? Is there a difference?

The idea of circular motion is found in another common mythology about coming of age...



What do you say? Do spirals go in or out? Can it be both? Check this out... in any case, growth is usually not comfortable either way. So you have to be ready and strong to manage it well.



Spiral's aside, growth is entirely human and something we can all do. We find growth and transformation at the center of so many of our modern stories and ancient myths. Let's just name a few examples. Dorothy, Catniss, Ricky Bobby, Luke, and Diana are familiar hero's who walk the transformation path.

Can you name any more? (Lord of the Rings, Toy Story, Tank Girl, Station II, The Matrix, etc.)

This common story framework is called the Hero's Journey by Joseph Campbell in his book "The Hero with a Thousand Faces." It outlines a common storytelling pattern found in myths, stories, and legends across cultures and time periods. These stories teach "the way" to live a life of purpose and meaning.

We'll work this framework deeply in a later session, but here's a quick overview:

The Hero's Journey (A story with 3 acts)

1. Departure

The hero's normal life occurs in an ordinary world before the adventure begins. The hero is presented with a challenge or quest that disrupts their ordinary world and initially hesitates or refuses the call due to fear or uncertainty. The hero encounters a mentor who provides guidance, tools, or inspiration to embark on the journey and commits to the adventure and leaves their familiar world behind.

2. Initiation

The hero faces challenges that test their abilities and encounters allies and adversaries. As the hero prepares for a significant challenge or confrontation often involving a life-or-death situation that forces the hero to confront their fears. After overcoming the ordeal, the hero gains a reward or insight that aids them in their journey.

3. Return

The hero begins their return journey to the ordinary world but may face additional challenges, including a final test that represents a transformation for the hero, often involving sacrifice or rebirth. The hero then returns home with newfound wisdom, skills, or treasures

that benefit their community.



The journey is a common human experience and it's arduous but rewarding. It tells us that we are all called to greatness and have a choice to embark or not. Success in the journey requires being well prepared and to learn special (magical?) techniques from others who have traveled the path. In the case of Luke, Diana, and Dorothy, they obtain special artifacts to protect them from adversity. I recommend you endow an object and carry it with you as a reminder to take care of yourself and practice your growth craft. HERE'S MINE.

Having a special talisman is a good thing but it also pays to be in good shape and develop strength for managing difficult things. To help you succeed in your hero's journey I have developed a technique I call the Personal Growth Posutre.



Physically, a posture is a systematic, integrated, and balanced stance. It helps you “be ready” for action. The Personal Growth Posture is a whole person rather than a whole body stance that gives you strength and leverage to explore growth in your life.

The Personal Growth Posture has three positions, and they all work in unison to prepare you for learning and growth. Growth requires intention and effort, and this stance is the best way to get you through it. Just like you train your body for a race or practice an instrument for a concert, the posture trains you for personal growth.