



OVERVIEW OF THE TEEN HEROIC JOURNEY **teenheroicjourney.org**

The 10-Year Journey from Childhood to Young Adulthood



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"This is a very big site, so just be curious & poke around wherever you have an interest"

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Part One

Why the Heroic Journey?

"How Does it Tell My Story & Why do I Care?"

The Good News – Why You Would Care

1. **The heroic journey tells the story of being a teenager, so you can use it to:**
 - (a) **Know what to expect.** Make sense out of the experience over a ten-year journey
 - (b) **Know what to do.** Find guidance about how to manage your journey

Your teen heroic journey is a ten-year journey that requires:

- **Leaving** the known world of childhood, characterized by dependence on others
 - **Going forth** into the unknown (adolescence) to be tested and grow and develop as a result
 - **Becoming** a young adult who is responsible and self-reliant - much more the author of their life - and getting ready for the next journey
2. **The heroic journey is the basic story of change at any age.** You will find yourself on big and little heroic journeys throughout your life, so learning about how to manage a journey as a teenager will prepare you for success as an adult.
 3. **The only differences between the heroic myths and stories and our own personal heroic stories are the following:**
 - The heroic myths are grand, and our own heroism is usually, lived out in our daily lives and seems unremarkable in comparison.
 - The heroic myths tell about occasional journeys and our own journeys are surprisingly frequent and even overlapping at times. The big one is the teenage journey, but there will be others.
 - Most of the heroic figures in the myths are larger than life whereas we, with some exceptions, are normal people doing what we need to do to grow and succeed.

Note. Until recently most heroic stories have been told primarily from a masculine point of view, with men in most of the main roles. There is nothing, however, about the fundamental myth of the heroic journey that excludes women or a feminine viewpoint. It's just that men have been telling the stories and that is, thankfully, changing.

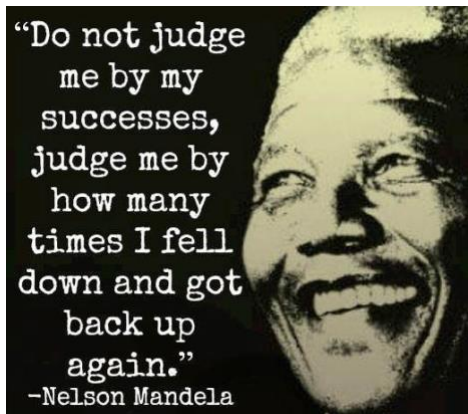
It's About Being Tested to Grow and Mature

There are three core challenges for you to take on:

1. Forming an identity as a young woman or man
2. Building mature relationships – with peers, parents and romantic partners
3. Developing a wide range of competencies required for independence

There are three types of test along the way:

1. Letting go of the old ways of childhood
2. Discovering and mastering the new ways of young adulthood
3. Dealing with being between letting go and discovery/mastery – “inbetweenity”



You will be tested and grow as a person on five levels:

1. You will be tested and develop **physically**
2. You will be tested and develop **intellectually**
3. You will be tested and develop **emotionally**
4. You will be tested and develop **socially**
5. You will be tested and develop **spiritually**

Different challenges will test you and spur your growth on different levels.

Challenges are what make
life interesting; overcoming
them is what makes life
meaningful.

-Joshua J. Marine

Some things to remember:

- It will be a rollercoaster ride with lots of emotional ups and downs as well as successes and setbacks
- While you will encounter people that will try to undermine you or ignore you, there will be people, groups and organizations that can support you – and you must find them
- Your perseverance and resilience will grow as you take on the challenges and tests and overcome hardships
- There are strategies you can use to manage your journey

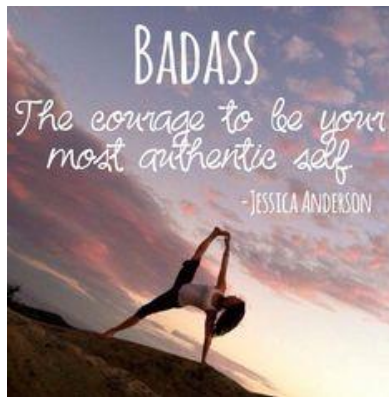
Part Two

The Three Core Challenges

Core Challenge #1: Forming an Identity as a Young Adult

"I Am No Longer a Child - Who Am I as a Young Man or Young Woman?"

- It's a puzzle with lots of pieces
- You have a physical & a digital identity
- It involves exploring & committing
- There are pitfalls to avoid



The Personal Challenge - Putting the Identity Puzzle Together

A big part of the teen heroic journey is leaving your identity as a child behind and discovering who you are becoming – your gifts, your values, what matters to you, what you like about yourself and what you want to change or develop. Who am I in the world? Who am I in my relationships with family, friends, romantic partners, my community, etc.?

To complicate things – you have a physical and a digital identity

In terms of identity, we now live in a physical world and increasingly in a digital world (internet/social media), so this identity challenge is now more complicated than it used to be. You form your physical identity, which is the most important identity – and it will evolve slowly and be pretty consistent. You create your digital identity and that can change quite a bit.

**It really is a journey**

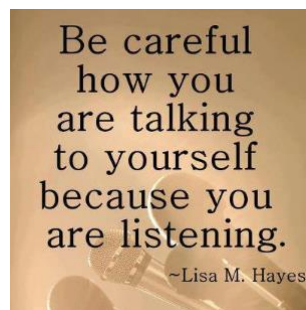
It takes time and every teenager is on the journey. It is not a race and your identity will evolve – and change as it evolves. You are tested in three ways – you have to let go of your childhood identity, discover your young adult identity and deal with the long period of “inbetweenity” as you explore and form your identity.

There are two perspectives on your identity

You will have a view of your identity and others will also. It’s your perspective that matters the most.

Your own inner voices will also be at play

The positive self-talk and the negative self-talk. “I can do this vs. I’ll never do this” or “People won’t really like me vs. I am pretty likeable.” It matters which voice you pay attention to.

**Elements That Combine to Form
Your Identity Puzzle**

There are a surprising number of elements that go into forming your identity. They will vary in importance from person to person. They will also fall into place at different times for different people.

1. Your Significance – “Yes, now as a teenager”

You are already more significant than you think, particularly in many small ways that add up. You are a significant person and you matter – now.

“I want to live my life in such a way that when I get out of bed in the morning, the devil says, “aw shit, he’s up!”

Steve Mariboli, Unapologetically You

2. Your Personal Qualities

Discovering your personal qualities – and acting on them – is another piece in building the jigsaw puzzle or tapestry of your identity.

3. Your Values

You will come to your teenage years with beliefs and values, but the natural challenge on the teenage journey is to explore them given your new mental capabilities, awareness of the world around you and your drive to become your own person

4. Your Purpose – Life Purpose or Purpose as a Teenager

“What is my purpose? This is a big question and the answer may not be clear as a teenager, but that’s when the question starts to come into play.



5. Ten Other Key Identity Factors

There is a set of other elements that can play a large or small role for you in defining your identity. The importance of these elements varies from person to person.

The Big Five

1. Gender & Sexual Orientation
2. Race and Ethnicity
3. Activities, affiliations (sports, the arts, community service...) and social standing/connections
4. Physical appearance
5. Capabilities

Five More Key Elements

6. Culture
7. Religion

- 8. Socio-economic status
- 9. Nation/Region
- 10. Politics

Part Three: Explore and Commit



1. On the Journey – Exploring & Committing

The first set of actions is to explore different aspects of your identity. The second is to make decisions about who you are and who you might be. These decisions may change as you continue to explore and grow.

2. Where Am I on the Journey? My Trajectory

It's your trajectory that matters. Are you exploring, discovering and developing the different aspects of "you"? Remember, it's a journey and you are "becoming." It's not a race and it's not about "finishing."

Do not ask yourself what the
world needs. Ask yourself
what makes you come alive,
because what the world
needs is people who have
come alive.

- Howard Thurman

Put the Picture Together

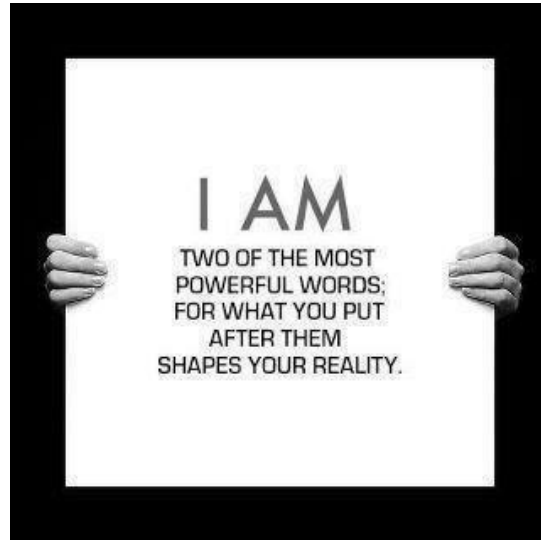
So, how do all these pieces fit together to form an identity?

1. **Your Identity Puzzle**

There are obviously lots of pieces that can go into creating your identity. One way to put those pieces together is to think of them as puzzle pieces that fit together to create the picture of “you.”

2. **Your Personal Brand**

Thinking of your personal “brand” is another – and simpler – way to pull the various elements of your identity together. What words come to mind when you think of yourself? What words come to mind for others?



Pitfalls to Avoid

Failing to Explore Your Identity

You can ignore the challenge and drift for a while, but as you get older, it becomes more and more important for you to take on the identity challenge directly.

False Identities

There are a bunch of ways that you can take on an identity that is easily available, but not authentically you. “I am who I know or am in a relationship with.” “My status symbols or the money I have define me.” “I’m defined by a mistake I’ve made or something I’ve failed at.”

These factors may have an impact on your identity, but they shouldn’t be allowed to form it.

**All or Nothing**

This is the pitfall where you believe that if you aren't perfect or as smart/attractive/tough/street-smart/talented as another, then you are nothing or "just..."

Basing Your Identity on One or Two Elements

You can over-identify with being a star athlete or performer, an excellent student, being very attractive, being rich, etc. You can also over-identify with being unattractive, a poor student, not a star at any particular activities, being in a racial or ethnic minority, having a sexual orientation that is not the norm, etc. Authentic healthy identities are made up of a bunch of elements, not just a few.

Giving Up Yourself to Be in a Relationship

This is the big one that everyone struggles with. It's really easy to try too hard to fit with someone or a group and give up too much of yourself. During the teenage years, with all the changing and developing going on with everyone, this is a major pitfall.

*"Don't let the noise of others' opinions drown out your own inner voice."
Steven Jobs, Stanford Commencement speech*

Core Challenge #2: Building Relationships

- Relationships with Parents
- Relationships with Peers
- Romantic Relationships
- Sexual Relationships
- Emotional Intelligence (EQ) and Three Relationship Competencies
- Networking and Building a Web of Relationships
- Relationship Pitfalls

“The Weird Challenge – Finding the fit with others when everyone is changing”

This is often the toughest of the three core challenges because it can just get so weird and confusing - and involve such strong emotions and so many people. The relationship challenge is definitely a rollercoaster experience with lots of ups and downs. The downs can be confusing, disheartening and depressing. But, the ups can be wonderful and exciting.

The Big Complicating Factors

There are two big complicating issues that make this challenge particularly difficult.

- 1. Moving Targets.** You’re changing. Your friends are changing. Your parents are changing how they relate to you. Relationships are about “fit” and sometimes, because of all the changing going on, it is tough to find a good fit with others – and keep the fit.
- 2. Skills & Experience.** The other big problem is that these new more mature teenage relationships require skills and experience that almost no one has when they first become a teenager. The skills have to be developed and experience has to be gained along the way.

Relationships with Parents

1. Makeovers and Moving Targets

This is always a tricky relationship as it requires major changes from a *young child/parent* relationship to a *young adult/parent* relationship. You have to separate from your parents as a child and develop a new relationship – and they have to do the same from their perspective.

The old young child/parent relationship no longer fits, and it takes quite a while to find the new young adult/parent relationship – and get used to it.

“Inbetweenity” in this regard can be frustrating and awkward as everyone tries to find the new fit.



2. The Central Challenge

Parents have to let go of control and you have to take on responsibility. This is a dance that is often not very graceful because it is just tough to get the timing right and for each party to take the risks and learn and change.

**"THE GREATEST GIFTS
YOU CAN GIVE YOUR CHILDREN ARE
THE ROOTS OF RESPONSIBILITY AND
THE WINGS OF INDEPENDENCE."**

- Denis Waitley

3. Separating and Staying Connected

You have to stay connected as your relationship changes. Sounds weird to stay connected while you separate, but that's how it goes. You separate from your old parent/child relationship to evolve to a parent/young adult relationship.

Peer Relationships

1. More Moving Targets – And they are moving faster

These relationships are usually the relationships that are the most important – but tough because everyone is experimenting with who they are and what they want in a relationship - as well as what they might be bringing to the relationship. It is not easy to find and keep the right fit.

2. Relationships and the Heroic Journey

With peer relationships, almost every element of the heroic journey comes into play, which is why the heroic journey is so important. You leave the known world of relatively simple childhood relationships and go forth into all the unknown and tests of the world of young adult relationships.

You have all three of the different types of test to deal with – letting go of old childhood types of relationships, discovering how to form deeper relationships and dealing with that feeling of “inbetweenity” for a long time.

It’s a roller coaster and along the way you will need to take risks to connect with others. You will also have successes and breakthroughs as well as setbacks and disappointments.

You will develop relationship skills and get better at relationships with experience. This is where resilience and the ability to persevere comes into play.

Note. If You’re Struggling with Relationships

If you are struggling with relationships, you are a member of the largest club in the world. “Struggling” does not mean “failing.” Whether it’s a relationship with parents, peers or a romantic partner, there will be periods of struggle. It’s just the way it works and it’s inevitable.



Romantic Relationships

1. Strange New World

Romantic relationships are new in the teenage years and unlike any relationship before. They can be wonderful, intense, scary, frustrating, mysterious. And like the other relationships, they are a matter of fit, with everyone trying to figure it out.



There are so many questions – What do I want? What does he or she want? What do I have to offer? How do we make decisions? Is arguing OK? How do we communicate? How do I end a romantic relationship and what do I do if he or she ends it? What do we do about sex? And more.

2. The Benefits

Benefits of romantic relationships range from feeling connected and not alone, receiving affection, and feeling accepted to increased self-esteem, a more developed sense of sexual identity and increased autonomy from parents.



3. Endings

Most romantic relationships in the teenage years end – mostly because everyone is changing so much and relationships are about a good fit and there is just a lot of experimenting going on. Sometimes there is a great fit

– and then there isn't. And sometimes the required relationship skills haven't developed.

The key in ending a romantic relationship is to avoid diminishing your partner or being diminished. And to learn and grow as much as possible from the relationship and the ending.

Characteristics of Healthy & Unhealthy Relationships

1. Characteristics of Healthy Relationships

There are a number of characteristics that can tell you if you are in a good relationship. For example:

- Respect
- Honesty
- Equality
- Appreciation
- Safety
- Communication
- Enjoyment/fun

2. Characteristics of Unhealthy Relationships

There are also characteristics that can tell you when you are in a bad relationship. For example:

- Pressuring to act
- Dishonesty
- Put-downs
- Restricting other relationships
- Scary behavior or big mood swings
- Resentment

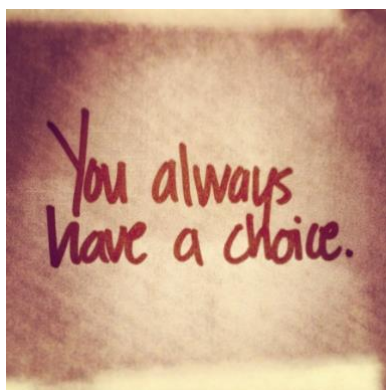
The key questions are, "What kind of a relationship are you in? What are you bringing to the relationship? How can you improve the relationship? Do you need to leave the relationship?"

Sexual Relationships

1. Be the Author – Your Choices – Your Responsibility

Whether or not to have sex – and when – is your choice. You have the power and the responsibility – unless you give it away. Don't give it away.

There are good things about sex – it’s exciting, it can bring you closer and it can help you mature. There are also dangers, such as causing problems in the relationship, feeling used or abused or out of control, unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), conflicting values, etc.



2. Guiding Questions for Making Good Choices

The central question is, “Are you prepared and is it the right time with the right person for the right reasons?” This is a key example of the challenge to be the author of your life.

Some questions you want to answer “yes.” For example, “Do we really trust each other and can we be open and honest with each other?” There are also questions where the answer needs to be “no.” For example, “Am I thinking of having sex just to keep my partner?” And there are some traps, for example a partner saying, “If you loved me, you would have sex with me.”

3. Why Wait?

There are lots of good reasons to wait to have sex, for example just not feeling ready, wanting to avoid the risk of pregnancy or STDs, feeling that sex would violate family or religious values, being unsure of the relationship, etc. In 2015 41% of high school students had had sexual intercourse and 58% of seniors had been sexually active, so “not everyone does it.”

Emotional Intelligence & Relationship Competencies

1. Emotional Intelligence or Quotient (EQ)

EQ is about understanding your own emotions, managing those emotions, understanding the emotions of those around you and determining how to respond. EQ affects how you feel, what you think and how you act.

2. Relationship Competencies – The Big Three

As with most things, developing good relationships relies on having some competencies. The big three relationship competencies are:

- 1) Communicating out to people – sharing and disclosing
- 2) Effectively listening to others
- 3) Conflict resolution and problem solving

These competencies develop over time. However, committing to developing them can rapidly develop them and make a big difference in your relationships.

Connections – Webs – Networks

1. Webs of Relationships

There are a surprising number of relationships that you can have, although a few will probably dominate your thinking. It's important, however, to see the whole picture of this web of relationships because it can enrich your life and provide a sense of connection that can weather the storms of teenage relationships. Relationships can be with individuals, groups and teams, organizations or communities. Some relationships will be long-lasting. Others will come and go (that's OK).



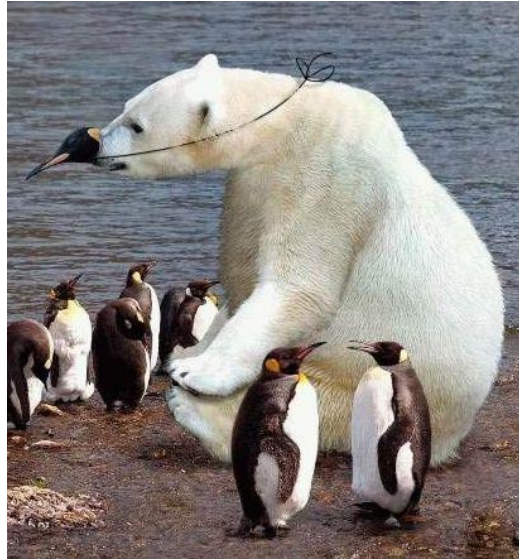
2. “Networking”

Networking is essentially about taking the initiative to make connections with people and maintain them. What is important, however, is to reach out and connect to a bunch of people and join groups and organizations. The key is to take the initiative to make the connections and take care of them – and not be discouraged if some don't work out.

Relationship Pitfalls

Giving up Your Identity to Fit in

Giving up part of your identity or taking on a false identity to fit into a relationship. That's the tough one.



Too Small of a Network

Relying too much on too small a network of relationships, particularly a best friend or a boy/girlfriend.

Moving Targets & Lack of Fit

The nature of teenage relationships where everyone is changing at the same time – the moving target problem. The danger is feeling like an undesirable friend or girl/boyfriend when the problem is others experimenting and moving in different directions that are right for them, but not for the relationship.

Lack of Relationship Capabilities

Failing to develop emotional intelligence (EQ) or the key relationship competencies

Bad Endings

Being diminished (or diminishing another) in the breakup of a relationship – or failing to learn from it.

Unsafe Sexual Relationships

Failing to be safe in a sexual relationship, for example emotionally by having sex when you don't want to or physically by engaging in unsafe sex.

Core Challenge #3: Developing the Competencies of a Young Adult

This is the third core challenge to go with discovering a young adult identity and building relationships.

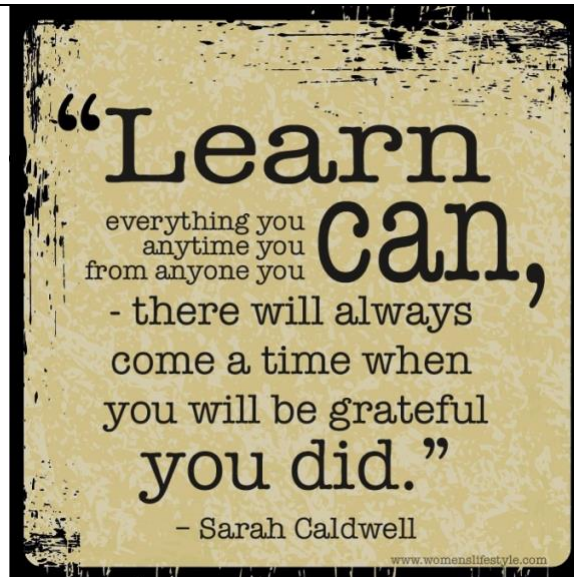
- What do I need to be able to do to succeed as a teenager and as an adult?
- What knowledge must I gain, what skills must I develop, what attitude or approach to life must I develop?
- How do I do that?
- Who can help me?

The Foundation for Adulthood

1. There are Twelve Types of Competencies to be Built

And they go beyond school. It's exciting to see all the competencies you can develop and think about what you might be able to do in life. It can also be intimidating at times because there are so many competencies to develop.

- 1) Social competencies
- 2) Intellectual/academic competencies
- 3) Emotional competencies
- 4) Physical competencies
- 5) Cultural competencies
- 6) Social media competencies
- 7) Competencies for resilience
- 8) Competencies for living independently
- 9) Self-management competencies
- 10) Competencies for group, team and community life
- 11) Competencies for spiritual development
- 12) Competencies for skilled trades



2. **You Don't Have to Master All the Competencies**

Some of these competencies you just have to be OK at. Some you will want to be good at. A few will be competencies that you really want to master. These competencies also develop over time, so once again the important thing is the trajectory you are on – remember, it's a ten-year journey.

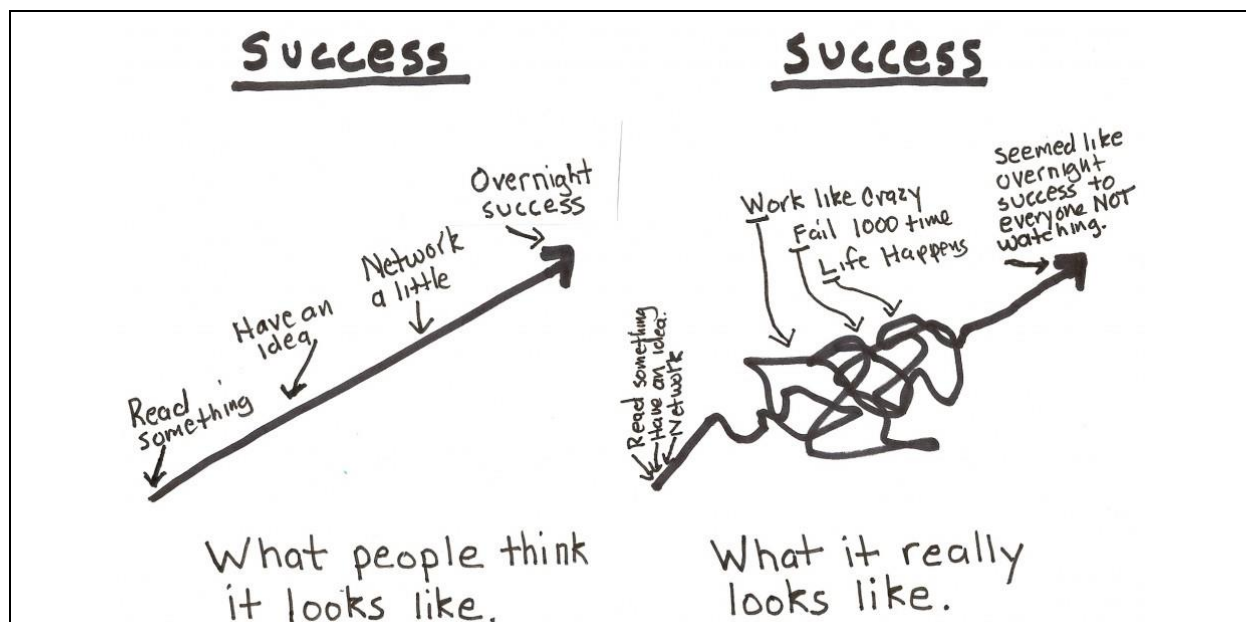
It's a Journey – It Takes Time

3. **Be the Author – Take Charge of Your Competency Development**

You will need to be the author of the experience in two ways. One is taking advantage of the opportunities that are naturally presented to you vs. just getting by, for example in school or in your family. The other is taking the initiative to develop competencies where you have to be more active in making it happen. Many of these competencies have to be developed outside of school or family.

4. **Your Trajectory on the Journey is the Key**

Because there are so many competencies and they develop over a long journey, the key is to look at your trajectory – not how many competencies are left to be developed.



5. Create Your Plan – It's About What You Want

A plan for building competencies is important, but the greatest value comes in the process of thinking through your goals and how to reach them. A plan is actually a commitment to yourself and a commitment to a set of actions. And, you can assume that you will refine your plan as you go down the path because we always learn as we go.

Planning is bringing the future into the present so that you can do something about it now.

Alan Lakein,

How to Get Control of Your Time and Your Life

Putting a plan together is a pretty good sign that you are moving down the path on a good trajectory to young adulthood – and that you are taking yourself seriously.

6. Find the Support You Need - Heroes Never Go Alone

You have to find your teachers, coaches, trainers, mentors, and companions. Don't wait for them to find you. This is particularly true outside of school when you need to find support in the larger community, extended family, etc.

The Keys to Developing Your Competencies

7. "Learning to Love the Plateau" – Where Development and Mastery Happen

Developing competencies, particularly getting to the mastery level, does not happen in a straight line with constant improvement. It usually happens in a rhythm of improvement spurts followed by extended periods on a plateau where improvement doesn't seem to happen very much – despite a lot of effort.

Note. Competencies actually develop on the plateaus. They then show up in the spurts of performance. You don't usually see the development happening – but it does and then it shows up.

Essential to “learning to love the plateaus” is dealing with the inevitable frustrations, setbacks and disappointments that are part of developing competencies. These experiences are a natural – and inescapable – part of the process, so the key is learning from them and getting stronger vs. being discouraged or diminished.



Adapted from the book "Mastery" by George Leonard.

8. Habits and Practice are Key – “Oh, No”

This is one of those good news/bad news things. The good news is that habits and practice are within your control. The bad news is that you have to develop them with some dedicated practice as the good ones don't form themselves and the bad ones sneak in easily.

*“First we develop our habits and then our habits develop us.”
Multiple Authors*

Pitfalls in Developing Competencies

Failing to “Be the Author”

Waiting for others to provide the opportunities to develop many of these competencies or failing to take full advantage of learning opportunities in school or in your family.

Focusing on Outcomes vs. the Journey

It takes time to build competencies and it takes a long time to build all the competencies you will need. It's a journey with ups and downs, successes and failures, excitement and frustration.

Failing to Plan Well – “Over-doing it or Under-doing it”

“Failing to plan is planning to fail.” But over-planning can be a pain and discourage planning. Keep it simple and don't worry about having the perfect plan.

Failing to Find Support

Always develop support, ask for help, find others to develop competencies with, etc.

Failing to Persevere or Build on Setbacks/Failures

Setbacks, disappointments, frustration and failures are simply part of the journey. Learning how to deal with them and learning from them are essential skills.

Failing to Build Habits

Unfortunately, habits take time and discipline – they don't form themselves and they don't form quickly. But they are essential.

Part Three

What to Expect

The Top 10 Things to Know About Your Journey as a Teenager

The Heart of Your Journey

The heroic journey tells the truth about the basic experience of being a teenager and provides common ground for conversations with peers and adults – the conversations that help you become the author of your life and deal with the challenges and tests on the journey.

The underlying pattern of the journey provides a common understanding of the territory, but each person will experience the journey in their own way.

#1 Yes, You Really are on a Heroic Journey

The dominant perception of teenagers is often that they are no longer children, but not yet young adults – a deficit model of what's missing. But, the reality is that you are on a heroic journey that is an extraordinary experience and a noble undertaking.

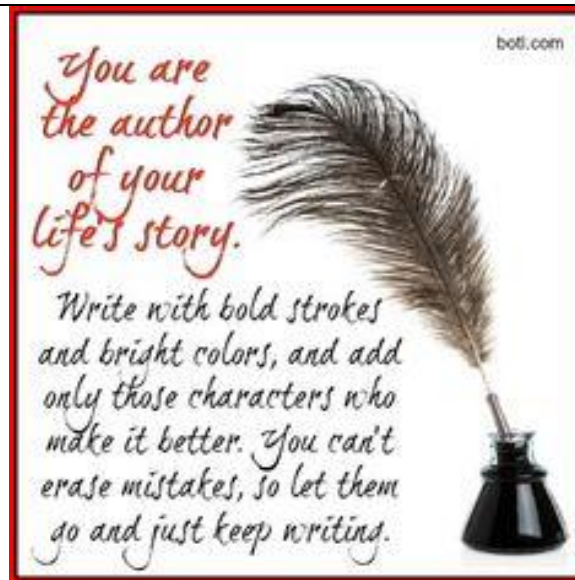
You are naturally thrown from the known of childhood into the unknown of being a teenager. This is a noble journey because, it is a time where courage, perseverance and resilience are required. It is a time when teenagers discover their better selves and often help each other in doing so. It is sometimes a time of survival against great odds. It is frequently a time that requires the ability to take risks and recover from setbacks and injuries.

Teenagers have to leave a known world and let go of old identities as children and develop identities as young adults – let go of the more superficial relationships of childhood and develop more mature relationships – and teenagers have to develop a surprising number of competencies to be successful young adults.

#2 It's about figuring out how to be the author of your life

The heart of the journey is becoming the author of your life – taking charge & taking responsibility. You can't control the journey, but you can have a surprising amount of influence over the experience. This is the fundamental shift from childhood dependence to young adult independence

Some teenagers take on the author role early in their journey. Others take it on slowly in the beginning and then seem to blossom. Some really resist taking on that responsibility and drag it out to painful degrees. "The sooner the better" is a good principle to follow.



#3 You will encounter two types of heroic journey

Every teenager's developmental journey ("adolescence") is a given. There will also be some specific journeys of change triggered by specific events or experiences.

The first type, the developmental journey of all teenagers, is taking on the three big challenges of Identity, Relationships and Competencies. That is the normal "developmental journey" that is going to happen to everyone as part of the transition from child to young adult.

The second type of heroic journey is a "situational journey", which is triggered by a significant change. Those changes can range from moving to a new school or community to having a serious illness or breaking up with a girlfriend or boyfriend. The changes can also be more positive, such as becoming a team captain or president of a club or getting into an honors program.

The Challenges & Tests Encountered on Your Journey

Whether as a teenager or an adult, we develop and mature by being tested in various ways. The learning and development often happens outside of our comfort zone, which can be uncomfortable as well as exciting. But, it doesn't need to be destructive.

The tests encountered as a teenager aren't there because the world wants to torture you. You will learn through these tests how to be the author of your life, how to manage yourself and how to persevere and develop resilience. You will get a better and better understanding of who you are and you will develop a surprising range of competencies

#4 There are Three Big Core Challenges for Teenagers

There are three core challenges for teenagers and almost everything you encounter will relate to one or more of these challenges. Not everything, but pretty close.

- Forming an identity as a young adult
- Developing new more mature relationships

- Building the competencies required for success as a young adult

Sometimes you will find yourself succeeding with one or two of the core challenges and struggling with the other(s). It is your trajectory – are you on the path and taking on the challenges – that matters most, not just “finishing.” AND everyone is dealing with these core challenges – so help each other.



#5 There are Three Different Types of Test Encountered

In most changes throughout life – large or small – there are three things that have to happen. You have to let go of old ways, discover and master new ways and deal with being in-between (“Inbetweenity”). Sometimes one or two will be tougher, but they will all be in play. For you as a teenager these tests show up as:

- Letting Go of childhood
- Discovering and mastering the ways of adulthood
- Dealing with “Inbetweenity” (being in-between childhood and young adulthood)

#6 The Tests & Challenges Come on Five Levels – and You Will Grow on Each Levels

This is one reason that being a teenager can be so difficult. It is in engaging these challenges that you grow and mature in each of these areas. At different times, you will be tested and grow on different levels as you take on the challenges and tests. And at different times different levels will be important to different people.

- Physical tests and growth
- Intellectual tests and growth
- Emotional tests and growth
- Social tests and growth
- Spiritual tests and growth

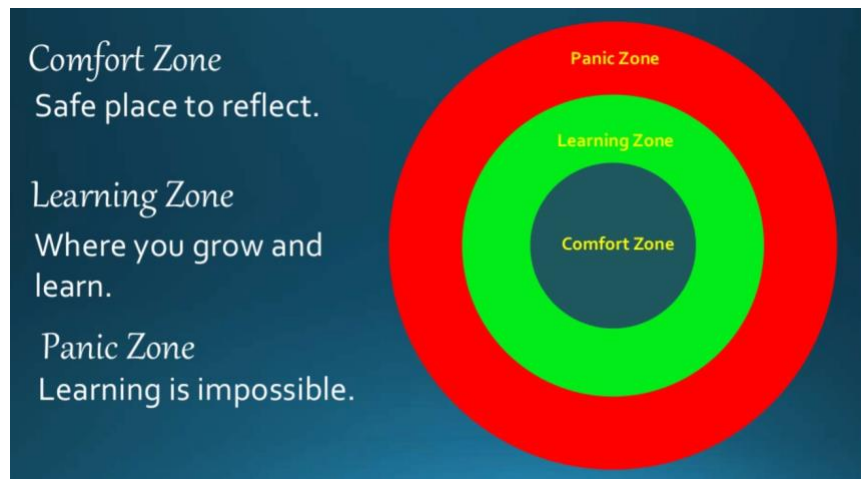


Managing Your Comfort, Learning and Panic Zones

Most of the teenage years are spent going back and forth between the comfort and learning zones.

Occasionally, you might hit the panic zone, which is not a good place to be, so get help if you find yourself

spending too much time there. But remember, that it's normal to be outside your comfort zone a good deal of the time – and it's not a bad place to be – just some discomfort. That's where most of the growth happens.



So, how do these challenges and tests look in real life?

There are four good examples of how the three different types of test play out in the main section on the journey:

- **Changing Relationships with Parents** (a developmental journey)
- **Moving to a New School** (a situational journey)
- **Recovering from Addiction** (a situational journey)
- **Changing Relationships with Friends or Girl/Boyfriends** (both a developmental and situational journey)

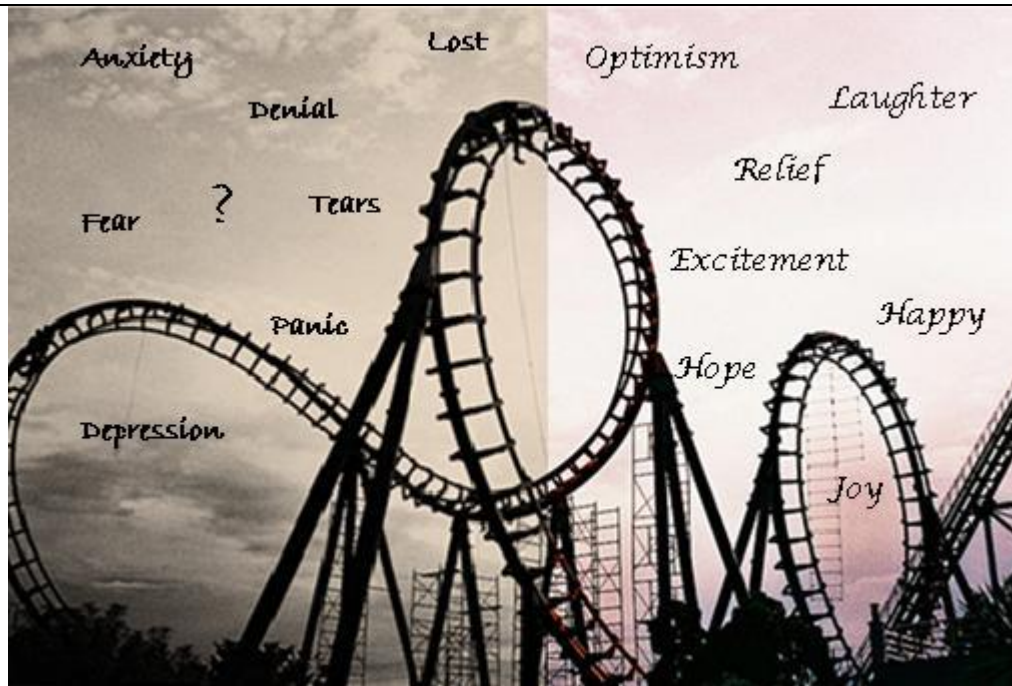
The Experiences on Your Journey

#7 It's often a rollercoaster

You can expect to experience lots of ups and downs. Sometimes you will experience an “up” in one part of your life and a “down” in another. Understanding that these ups and downs are normal and natural is important. It is also important to get increasingly good at managing them.

There are so many emotions at play in the teenage years – and often at intense levels – that it can feel pretty chaotic at times. You can experience excitement and anxiety, clarity and confusion, feeling connected and feeling disconnected, happiness and sadness, hope and despair, affection and anger, etc. Adults experience the same emotions, but usually not in such a changeable fashion.

There are also lots of ups & downs with successes and setbacks. AND you will be pulled in different directions – between childhood & adulthood. Just like a rollercoaster it can be exciting and scary. And, just like a rollercoaster, even when it's scary it's pretty safe – unless you do something really foolish.



#8 “Heroes don’t go alone” – A Support Network is Key

“How do I stay healthy on a long journey with so many challenges and tests and so many ups and downs?” Everyone has to figure this out for themselves, but there are three areas to pay attention to in taking care of yourself:

- Creating a support network
- Dealing with the inevitable energy traps
- Taking advantage of the natural sources of life energy

Building Connections and Support Networks – “Heroes Don’t Go Alone”

It might seem like a lone quest, but we all need others in various ways to successfully navigate a journey – as a teenager or as an adult. You can also expect to find that you can help others just as others can help you.

One of the most important parts of a heroic journey is the creation of a support network to help you on the journey. That can include people (in large or small roles), activities and habits, places of rest or renewal, meaningful symbols or objects, etc.

- Support networks are made up of individuals, groups and organizations
- The more elements in a support network, the better
- Some parts of the network will stay, and some will come and go
- You have to build your support network – they don’t come to you
- Let people know how to support you (in large or small ways) – “help them help you”
- One key question is, “How am I supporting others?”



AND don't feel guilty about asking for support. We all need support and most people like supporting others. Others help you. You help others. That's the way it's supposed to work. It's how leaders can lead – with support. It's how people do exceptional things – with support. Sometimes it's how we survive – with support.

Dealing with Energy Traps on the Path

- Some traps are feelings: doubt, anxiety, fear, confusion, feeling overwhelmed, lacking connections
- Some traps are experiences: setbacks, injuries, illnesses, failures, disappointments
- Spend 30% of your time and attention dealing with the energy traps

Finding Sources of Life Energy

- Focus 70% of your time and energy on sources of life energy
- There are a surprising number of sources
- Some sources are relatively passive: listening to music, finding a quiet place to just relax, sleeping...
- Some sources are more active: exercise, creating/building something, eating well, celebrating small successes, writing in a journal or meditating, going to music events or movies...
- Spending time with loved ones

Heroes don't go alone on their journeys in the myths and movies. Neither do teenagers. Support networks, whether large or small are important.

#9 Perseverance and Resilience Build as You Go

The heroic journey of teenagers is a very long journey and it requires the ability to persevere and become increasingly resilient. These capabilities that you build will be important for the rest of your life.

- Perseverance is refusing to quit, refusing to give up in the face of setbacks, disappointments or losses. It is refusing to be a victim. There are times when anyone can be hurt, discouraged, depressed, scared or anxious, tired or worn out. You just can't quit. You persevere.
- Resilience is the ability to successfully adapt to life - dealing with the inevitable stresses, traumas, threats and setbacks. Life comes with relationship problems, family problems, health problems, school and work problems. That's just the way it works, and our resilience helps us "bounce back" – becoming increasingly strong, wise and flexible.
- Resilience is not a characteristic that people are simply born with – or without. The good news is that research has shown that resilience is ordinary, not extraordinary. And it can be developed.

- Developing support networks and managing energy traps and energy sources are key to being able to build resilience and persevere.



#10 The Heroic Journey is a Play in Three Acts – and You Have the Lead Role

Whether your journey is the long teen developmental journey that everyone experiences or a situational journey (moving to a new school/town, ending an important relationship, leaving for college or a job) – it can be seen as a play in three acts. Each act has characteristics that are important to pay attention to.



Act 1: Beginnings

Beginnings matter a lot. As a teenager you can feel like you got thrown into the journey without asking for it (“Hey, I didn’t ask for this journey”). Other situational journeys, like taking on a leadership role in high school or choosing a job, begin by “heeding a call” – making the decision yourself to go forth. You can also blunder into a journey by failing at something that then requires change, getting into trouble with the law, etc.

However the journey begins, the key is getting into the posture of “being the author” of the experience vs. feeling like a victim.

Act 2: On the Path

Most of the action is “on the path” and that’s a long time for the natural developmental journey of you being a teenager. This is where you encounter the core challenges of Identity, Relationships and Competencies, become more and more mature and complete and find ways to take care of yourself on the journey.

This is where resilience, finding support, and taking care of yourself becomes critical.

Act 3: Completion

Completion brings its own surprising challenges. “Completion” doesn’t happen all at once because you will keep growing and developing as you progress toward adulthood. You will grow and complete lots of changes over time.

The main challenge is called the “ripple effect” and that is what happens to others as you change. This is particularly important in relationships, for instance with parents or friends. Relationships are like puzzle pieces that fit together (in healthy or unhealthy ways). As you complete changes, that affects the “fit” of your relationships and others either change to adapt to your growth or the relationship doesn’t work as it once did.

You will need to pay attention to how your changes & growth affect others - & sometimes help them adapt to your changes

AND
Nine Natural Pitfalls to Deal with on Your Journey



There are natural pitfalls on the journey and many of them are unavoidable. It's good to avoid as many as possible, but it's even more important to be able to get out of them when you fall into one.

1. Just letting life happen to you – failing to become the author
2. Holding on to childhood ways – staying dependent on adults – failing to take on responsibility
3. Failing to commit to discover and learn the new ways of being a young adult – giving up too soon
4. Letting the goofiness of “inbetweenity” get you down or wear you out
5. Failing to persevere & build resilience while being tested
6. Not taking the actions to connect with others – individuals, groups, organizations
7. Not taking care of yourself on the journey
8. Forgetting to enjoy the good times and the successes
9. Failing to pay attention to the ripple effects of your changes

Part Four

How to Manage Your Journey

Power & Influence – Taking Charge

“OK, I have to form an identity as a young woman or man; develop a new relationship with my parents, new friendships and maybe romantic relationships; and build a whole bunch of competencies.

How do I do that?

This is a ten-year journey, full of unknowns and new stuff, with lots of ups and downs along the way.

I’m supposed to leave the dependence of childhood behind and take on the responsibility of being the author of my life as a young adult.”

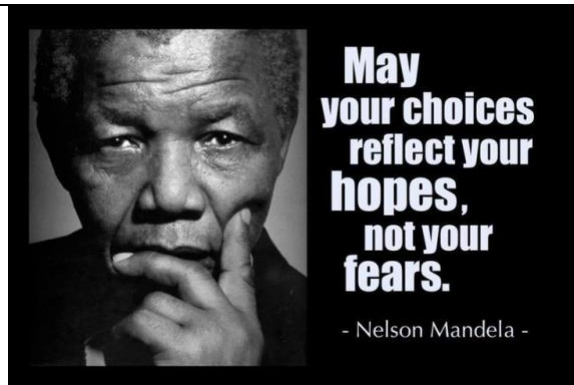
How do I manage that?



Being the Author

At the heart of the heroic journey – your journey as a teenager – is the challenge to be the author of your life. It’s the journey from the dependency of childhood to the independence of young adulthood. And it is a long journey that plays out differently for everyone.

- It’s about having as much influence as possible in how your life evolves, not control
- It’s about taking responsibility and making good choices
- It’s about taking charge vs. letting life happen to you

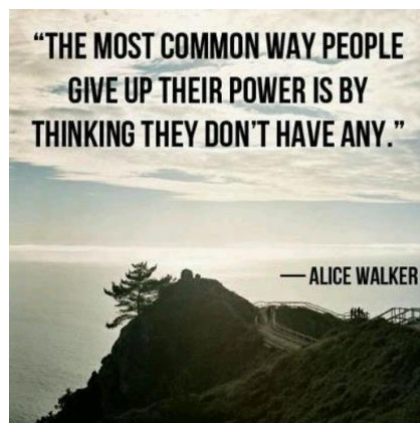


Six Strategies for Managing Your Journey

There are six strategies that can help you become the author and find your way through the challenges of the journey. Each strategy brings benefits and together they can dramatically increase the amount of power and influence you have in creating the life you want.

Strategy #1: Understand and Face the Challenges Directly (Courage to see the truth)

1. Taking on Three Core Challenges
 - Forming an identity
 - Building more mature relationships
 - Developing the competencies of a young adult
2. Dealing with the three types of test – letting go, discovery/mastery and “inbetweenity”
3. Being tested on physical, intellectual, emotional, social and spiritual levels



Strategy #2: Put an Action Plan in Place

- Plans focus attention and action increasing your power to manage your experience

- The process of planning is often as important (or more important) as the resulting plan(s)
- Plans include goals, actions to achieve the goals, timing, support, etc.
- Simple is good and an OK plan now is better than a perfect plan later
- Plans can be large or small – long-term or short-term



Strategy #3: Connect with the Right People – Build a Web of Support

- Build a web of connections with individuals, groups and organizations
- Coach people in how to support you
- Don't wait for others – actively network and keep at it

Strategy #4: Build Capability - Mastery & Habits

- Some competencies you only need to be OK at; some you need to be good at; and a few competencies you will need to master?
- There are natural steps in mastery - "Learning to love the plateau"
- We create our habits and then our habits create us

Strategy #5: Persevere - "Hold the Course" (Courage to Persevere)

- Sometimes it just comes down to persevering – putting one foot in front of the other
- There are strategies for developing the resilience required
- There are energy traps to avoid – challenges to the heart
- There are possible sources of life energy & renewal

"Courage is more exhilarating than fear and in the long run it is easier. We do not have to become heroes over-night. Just a step at a time, meeting each thing that comes up, seeing it is not as dreadful as it appeared, discovering we have the strength to stare it down."
Eleanor Roosevelt

Strategy #6: Create Your Heroic Code

- Heroic codes are surprisingly important

- A code draws out your best
- A code says, “I matter and I’m committed.”

“Each person has inside a basic decency and goodness. If he listens to it and acts on it, he is giving a great deal of what the world needs most. It is not complicated, but it takes courage.”

Pablo Casals

There is Some Seriously Good News:

- These are the same strategies that you can use throughout your adult life, so any practice you get as a teenager, sets you up for success as an adult
- These strategies may be new to you, but they are very practical, well within your abilities – and they work.

Natural Barriers & Pitfalls

“I’m just a teenager. How much of an author can I really be?”

It’s natural to question, but it’s surprising how much influence (authorship) you can have over your experience.

“Who am I to have a heroic code or plan for my life as a teenager?”

A code is simply making a commitment to what matters to you, what you value in yourself, how you can be and become your best.

“Will people really support me? Am I worthy of their support?”

You are absolutely worthy of support as you take on the challenges of the journey. Let people know how they can support you.

“I’m just not mastering all this stuff. I’m falling behind. I’m tired.”

There will be times of disappointment, low energy, injuries, etc. Those times don’t last forever. Sometimes you just “hold the course” and put one foot in front of the other.

“I’m poor and have no resources. I live in a dangerous neighborhood/family. People are pulling me down.”

These factors make the journey tougher – sometimes much tougher – but the journey is the same. And the strategies for managing the journey are the same. They may, however, require much more faith, effort and resilience.



"We find a model for learning how to live in stories about heroism. The heroic quest is about saying yes to yourself and, in doing so, becoming more fully alive and more effective in the world."

For the hero's journey is first about taking a journey to find the treasure of your true self, and then about returning home to give your gift to help transform the kingdom - and, in the process, your own life.

The quest itself is replete with dangers and pitfalls, but it offers great rewards: the capacity to be successful in the world, knowledge of the mysteries of the human soul, the opportunity to find and express your unique gifts in the world, and to live in loving community with other people."

Carol Pearson

Awakening the Heroes Within



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