



# Preparing For Your Hero's Journey Immersion Weekend

*"In between living and dreaming there is a third thing: Waking Up."*

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# PREPARING FOR YOUR HERO'S JOURNEY® IMMERSION

“A vital person vitalizes the world.”

- Joseph Campbell



*The Hero's Journey Co-Ed Immersion Weekend* is inspired by our passion for ancient wisdom traditions, as well as the mythic teachings of Joseph Campbell. Our wilderness journey immersions are intended to provide you with deeply personal and vitally meaningful experiences of shifting your orientation towards the life you live.

Upon arrival, you will be welcomed into a way of being that is oriented around living myths – where what is true and what matters most can be found beyond any historical facts, and beyond who you may think you are.

Everyone has a past, but not everyone has a *lived history*, something that can inform them about who they have been, but also about who they could now become, once a lived history is better understood and reflected upon.



## **how to climb a mountain**

*Make no mistake. This will be an exercise in staying vertical.  
Yes, there will be a view, later, a wide swath of open sky,  
but in the meantime: tree and stone. If you're lucky, a hawk will  
coast overhead, scanning the forest floor. If you're lucky,  
a set of wildflowers will keep you cheerful. Mostly, though,  
a steady sweat, your heart fluttering indelicately, a solid ache  
perforating your calves. This is called work, what you will come to know,  
eventually and simply, as movement, as all the evidence you need to make  
your way. Forget where you were. That story is no longer true.  
Level your gaze to the trail you're on, and even the dark won't stop you.*

-Maya Stein

At certain times during your *Hero's Journey® Immersion*, we may look back what you have lived through, in order to both honor those experiences and to move beyond them. These stories of old, which have defined you, can be re-examined and re-told to others who are active listeners and witnesses. In the fresh telling of your lived story, you can be re-made, re-shaped, and perhaps re-born.

You will now decide what defines you.

Those of us who accompany you cannot know what story has been most true for you in the past. We can only know what new truth is emerging from what we experience and live through together. This is what we will do for four days and three nights.

You will have the opportunity to:

- *Examine a deeply fixed pattern in your life that limits you, or is self-destructive.*
- *Challenge that pattern by undoing what you usually do to preserve yourself.*
- *Open to new possibilities for thinking, speaking and acting in the presence of your working ally group.*

During your *Hero's Journey® Immersion*, you will be given the chance to stop running from whatever you typically avoid, and to stop listening to what you always tend to think or say. You will cross thresholds into the unknown, a territory that allows you the freedom to go beyond where you usually go. Entering the unknown, you may find out how an obstacle can become a doorway into a new path and renewed sense of vitality.

*In this high place  
It is as simple as this,  
Leave everything you know behind.*  
- David Whyte

Once you become capable of the unexpected, your journey will unfold in daunting and wondrous ways. We will do our best to keep a sense of adventure happening for you, even (or especially) during those moments when your adventure becomes an ordeal.

Our goal is for you to be able to do what it takes to find 'the boon' within you – a sense of meaningful aliveness, filled with humility, wonder, gratitude, awe and mystery. While we cannot ever guarantee this will happen for you, we will do our best to create the conditions that allow for such a self-discovery.

Time to begin your preparation.

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## Introduction To Your Hero's Journey® Immersion

The journey has already begun for you, even if it still lies beyond your conscious awareness. Our unconscious part of we are guide us, beckon to us, and nudge us forward. You will be joining a group of others also called to this particular journey.

You have responded to an inner call pulling you towards an adventure such as this, one that can provide you with a more meaningful orientation to your life. That is ultimately what has you signed on for this upcoming immersion. You will take leave of your home life, letting go of what is familiar and already known. You will cross a threshold into the adventure lying in wait within you.

You are likely to have both adventures and ordeals as you meet with both your inner vitality and your inner demons. You will have interesting and worthwhile encounters with allies, and you will discover resources within you, precisely when you most need support and encouragement.

You will be re-oriented towards the unexpected, becoming capable of being surprised by life-renewing adventures that are likely beyond your capacity to imagine right now. If you are open enough, you are likely to experience a felt sense aliveness awaken within you, tapping into a source of vitality and power capable of bringing new life and new action into fruition.

Finally, will return home to with the challenge to bring forth your boon to your home life and your people. This promises to be a substantial, memorable and inevitable passage into new territories within.



## The Call to Adventure

*One day you finally knew what you had to do, and began,  
though the voices around you kept shouting their bad advice...*

*- Mary Oliver*

Joseph Campbell said that those of us living in the Western world have both the freedom and the obligation of finding out what our destiny is. So what do we do if we want to find out what the deeper meaning and purpose for our life is, while we are in the midst of living in our day-to-day worlds? And what seems to be stopping us?

Could it be as simple as this - we've become over-attached to the security of what is familiar, and how we are provided for? Have we become afraid to go out beyond what we have already learned or accomplished, or perhaps beyond what we have failed at over and over again? What keeps us from going into deep into the unknown-ness of our world?

In today's world, we may not ever have to really go for the true adventure of our lives, simply because we have not really answered call that came from *within* us. An inner call takes us out beyond the world we have always known, to begin the search for our own resources with the depths of ourselves, and to do the inner exploration to find what we have within us, and finally, to make use of these resources to be of service to life.

In the book *Pathways to Bliss*, Campbell poses questions such as this: *"What is the great thing for which you would sacrifice your life? What makes you do what you do? What is the call of your life to you – do you know it?"*

How can you align more with the beginning of an authentic journey, and answer a personal call to adventure? How can you learn the difference between your fantasies and childlike wishes, and a voice or a felt sense from within that awakens you to action? Bill Plotkin has this to say about what happens when you hear the inner call to new life:

1. *It is not an avoidance of responsibility, but rather a facing of something difficult, something unknown and frightening that summons you.*

Far from feeling to you like an opportunity for escape, a call feels more like a compelling need to face an important challenge, to walk out into the night and toward a storm. You have a profound sense that *something essential is waiting for you in the midst of a wilderness* and your one true life depends on your being willing and able to find it.

2. *It has paradoxical features – like déjà vu, where you know you belong to it, even though you have never before encountered it and can't really explain it.*

Joseph Campbell said the call feels “profoundly familiar to the unconscious – though unknown, surprising, and even frightening to the conscious personality”.

3. *You have the feeling that the chapter of your life that you had just been living is suddenly, somehow over, whether you wanted it to be or not, and usually, not. What was formerly meaningful becomes ‘strangely emptied of value’.*

4. *The call is almost always unexpected, and sometimes even unwanted. Yet you feel summoned by destiny, as if your own future has grabbed you by the collar and is tugging you forward. You feel summoned forth, pulled forward, in ways that feel un-asked for but compelling. It doesn't make sense to the ego, but to the soul there is a strong feeling of ‘yes’!*



## Crossing the Threshold

*Gamble everything for love,  
If you're a true human being.  
If not, leave this gathering.  
Half-heartedness doesn't reach into majesty.*

*-Rumi*

Meaningful adventure cannot be entered into through one's head. Those who try to approach journey worthy of the soul with their mental reasoning fail miserably and quickly. The gamble Rumi speaks of is really no gamble at all, but it does involve a sense of risking something worthwhile. In the end, seeking security becomes the final danger that lulls us back to the familiar things that don't really work.

Security seeking is on the low end of the evolutionary scale; it is often the contrary counter-force to a heroic endeavor. It goes without saying that there are definite places to play it safe in life, and there are times for being perfectly reasonable. But this will not be a high commodity in the mythic realm of a re-vitalizing adventure.

So another toll to be paid to the gatekeeper of your soul, as you cross the threshold towards a meaningful adventure, is a wholehearted, fiercely loving presence. Those without it turn back in the face of the cold threat of risking security, the heat of intensity, and of the depths in inner diving. The threshold guardians within say to us – ‘get behind your heart, get real, be a vital

human being living from your own experience and truth, or go back from where you came - go back home to the safe and familiar ways of thinking’.

When you are caught up in mental abstractions, conceptualizations or gymnastics, you can’t pass through to the depth of your own soul. You are simply someone confusing the menu with the meal.

For your *Hero’s Journey® Immersion*, you are being asked to leave behind the person you already know well. We will ask you to let go of certain details about your personal history that could limit you - what we refer to as ‘credit card information’ - upon your arrival on the mountaintop.

You will be asked to refrain from immediately revealing your age, your occupation, your home place, or other usual identifying information that labels you in any way to yourself or to another. You will be asked to leave your cell phones with us, as it will only distract you, and detract from the larger dimension of time and space that we will be entering. You can go by whatever name you choose.

We will focus on being attentive only to the moment that unfolds before us, and between us. We do our best to leave everything else behind.

What is required of you here is to enter into the spirit of the unknown-- the great mystery of life and living beyond the usual -- and surrender to the potent uncertainty that is to be found there. It is a symbolic gesture of letting go that are required of the anyone who undertakes a hero’s journey. You may even begin to feel how tight your stranglehold is on controlling your environment in order to feel comfortable and ‘secure’.

Yet when you have a clear awareness that you are literally stepping ‘off the paved road’ – quite literally - and going where there is no clear path, you can allow a certain immediacy to enter your present moment existence that can bring you alive. Without crossing this threshold, without this relaxing of our ego state of mind, we tend to live "lives of quiet desperation", says Thoreau.

Crossing the threshold from our everyday world into the non-ordinary time and space of the *Hero's Journey® Immersion* is to enter the arena of uncertainty that comes with any true adventure. By doing this, we can discover new possibility and new meaning, and we can risk a new way of being that is far more life giving and sustaining.

New life is an inevitable outcome from such courageous acts of surrender. Don Juan said it well to Carlos Castenada:

*"The path of the heart requires a full gesture, a degree of abandon that can be terrifying. (But) only then is it possible to achieve a sparkling metamorphosis... and there is just one simple thing wrong with you - you think you have plenty of time."*



In order to prepare you for your threshold crossing into the living myth of the *Hero's Journey*® *Immersion*, we ask you now to reflect on six questions. Spend some time thinking and wondering about them, listen to your heart (and not your head), and then put together at least two type written pages summarizing your reflections.

Your most authentic responses to *The Six Questions* needs to be emailed to us at least two days prior to your upcoming Journey. Your responses are essential. They provide the working material for your journey, and it will help us connect with you more quickly and more effectively.

Use each question as an arrow that points the way to some of the more obscure truths that lie within the depths of your heart. You may also want to write more about these in the *Personal Journal* we are asking you to bring to the Journey Immersion.



## The Six Questions

### 1. What Brings Me To This Particular Journey At This Exact Time In My Life?

- *What events of significance are presently taking place in your life?*

What kind of transitions are you facing right now? What specific details of your lived experience feels important for us to know, and important for you to be talking about? What is it that makes taking this type of journey feel important or necessary for you?

### 2. What Is It Within Me That I Need To Understand or Know Better?

- *What are you seeking to discover, change or heal within yourself?*

What particular aspect of your humanity still feels small, broken, foreign or alienated to you? What do you long to know better about yourself? What kind of passage do you feel in need of right now?

### 3. What Is the Greatest Obstacle Or Threat That I Am Currently Facing In My Life?

- *What is it within you that is holding you back most from living the life you know you need to be living?*

What is the specific obstacle – or what is the particular fear that keeps you from getting more



into life, or that makes you avoid your life? What particular desire do you have for your life that you resist or run from the most? What is a specific example of an insurmountable challenge that you are currently facing in your life, if that indeed is the case?

#### 4. What Is My Greatest Strength & How I Am Willing To Bring It To This Journey?

- *Pinpoint and name one character strength that you know you have in you.*

Speak to a strength or character trait within yourself that you know you and others can draw from and rely on when life becomes difficult. Can you give a specific example of how you are presently making use of this strength in your life? How would you be willing to use this strength to be of service to your fellow journeyers?

#### 5. How Do I Need To Be Supported During My Hero's Journey Intensive?

- *Tell us honestly how you feel about receiving opportunities to get direct support from others.*

In what ways are you open to being supported, and in what ways do you have difficulty being supported? Does support feel foreign or untrustworthy to you? Do you feel in any way unworthy of being supported? Is there a specific way that you would like us to support you during your journey?

#### 6. How Do I Need To Be Challenged On My Hero's Journey Intensive?

- *Tell us honestly how you feel about being encouraged and challenged to go where you haven't gone before.*

In what ways are you open to being given challenges to grow by others? In what ways do you have difficulty with perceiving being challenged? In what specific way would you like us to consider challenging you during your upcoming journey?



## Entering the Forest

*Stand still, the trees ahead and bushes beside you are not lost.  
Wherever you are is called 'here', and you must treat it like a powerful stranger...*

*- David Wagoner*

Now that you are preparing yourself for this upcoming journey immersion, you will start to cross various thresholds that take you to a feeling of arriving at a 'point of no return' within your psyche – and the un-doing process begins.

You will find yourself experiencing an inner sense of shedding or letting go taking place. In this state of mind, you may have various mis-adventures, misplacements and distractions, and you can be easily led astray by old fears. If you start to feel lost (or lose things), this is due to a sense of disorientation that happens as you begin to go beyond what you are most familiar with.

When old fears surface, keep in mind that they are like the gargoyles that sit above the entrances to all the ancient holy shrines and gothic churches. You have to pass by them in order to enter holy or sacred territory within.

These are fears that can cause self-doubt, and they can question our judgment and our courage, and urge us to "turn back"! We can feel stalked by our oldest fears, as they cling most desperately to our old identities, and they will show up in various forms of familiar resistances.

Remember that these fears and resistances are an inevitable and integral part of the hero's journey adventure. Thoreau again says that *"it is not until we are genuinely lost that we finally have the opportunity to find and understand ourselves."*

Be easy on yourself as you face any undoing, disorientation and resistances in the days ahead. If your nervousness or anxiousness speaks loudly to you about this journey, make sure that you say them out loud – this is important to do. What is speakable becomes more manageable. Deep resistance is often is a strange kind of confirmation that you are on your true, life-affirming path.

What the inner gargoyles are really saying is 'bring your fears with you'. Know that compassion, attention and support will be there for you each step of the way—perhaps beyond your ability to fathom- as you go forward toward the new life awaiting you.



## Allies and Synchronicity

*"You know, the jackass doesn't have much sensibility. But even he gains spirit from the company of his own kind. But when the jackass crosses the desert alone, how many more blows it takes to get him there. Now this is what this poem says to you - if you're not a jackass, don't cross the desert alone!"*

- Rumi

*"If you follow your bliss you put yourself on a kind of track that has been there all the while, waiting for you, and the life that you ought to be living is the one you are living. When you can*

*see that, you begin to meet people who are in your field of bliss, and they open doors to you. I say, follow your bliss and don't be afraid, and doors will open where you didn't know they were going to be."*

*- Joseph Campbell*

Because the shadow side of the self believes that it has to do everything by itself, you may not factor into the equation the impact of allies and helpers that you will meet along your journey through life. You may also fail to consider receiving the synchronistic support and alliance of the spirit world.

When you are true to the pursuit of our own calling, the universe will at times provide you with numerous sequences of coincidental events that open up doors and opportunities that previously weren't available to you. Such is the surreptitious nature of synchronicity. It requires you to get current and pay attention in the *now*, and not dwell on stories or wounds from the past that limit us and stop you.

Even now, you may suddenly happen upon a particular awe-inspiring event with peculiar circumstances that to surprisingly emerges from an earlier chaos and confusion in your life. Watch for this occurring in your life now that you have committed to your journey.

During the *Hero's Journey® Immersion*, you will also have direct opportunities to examine your way of relating to the support of allies. You will have the chance to experience the power and life sustaining ways of mutuality among kindred people -- the strongly felt sense of a mutually desired connection and support. These will be the building blocks for a sense of belonging and worth.

Of course, you can experience how directly helping others, and not only seeking the help of others, also keeps you from a spiral of self-preoccupation that feeds inadequacies and fears of failure whenever you are tested on your journey (or in your life).



## **The Belly of the Beast (Initiation & Surrender)**

*There is an unknown territory, a mysterious area where  
the presence of death does not equal the end of life....*

*The point is to be able to undergo a little death  
in order to find the genuine thread of one's life.*

*- Michael Meade*

*"All things of Beauty are birthed from the Darkness into the Light"*  
- Caroline Joy Adams

Any initiation experience is a life-altering event that transforms you, as you go through a kind of metamorphosis. You will feel a profound letting go taking place beyond our will, and you may feel like you are losing something that you have been deeply attached to. But you will also simultaneously feel like you are finding yourself entering into a wondrously new and more highly integrated way of being.

You can be propelled into new experiences by an overwhelming force of desire, or you may have come to the place in your life where you simply have had enough of the old ways, and you are determined and ready to make a shift out of an old way of being. This is how we bring ourselves towards a surrendering into new life.

An initiation or 'belly' experience may occur at any point in your *Hero's Journey® Immersion*. It may happen during one of during of your experiential elements such as the climb we will do, or during one our evening councils, or during a moment of deep solitude. It may occur during an important conversation or encounter within your group, or even through a rich and meaningful dream during your journey.

This can especially happen in any random moment when you are caught off guard, but through your acquired discipline of 'living in the now point', you may be able to remain fully present, and more deeply attentive to its transformative potential.

An initiatory experience is likely to be intimately linked to an encounter where you feel yourself being swallowed or enveloped by an inner or outward challenge-- the belly of the beast. The "beast" represents a part of the hero's psyche that is coming forward to be awakened, digested and transformed.

Yet sometimes, it is only through this type of ordeal that the 'boon' can come – a treasure beyond all price that must be paid.



## Discovery of Your Boon

*"Ah, dear friend, need I say, but to the brim my heart was full! I made not vows, but vows were then made for me. Bond unknown to me was given, that I should be singing greatly, a dedicated spirit. And on I walked in blessedness which even yet remains."*

- William Wordsworth

The *boon* is the 'pearl beyond all price' bestowed upon the journeyer - is the discovery of an embodied sense of vital life force energy, often co-arising with penetrating insight, awareness and irony. This will be accompanied by a sense of surprise, wonder and awe, combined with a sense of place, right timing and a peace beyond all human comprehension.

This inner experience is very intimate. It is like that of a deeply personal visit from a universal presence that cannot ever be described and could not in any way be ignored. It is the felt sense of 'the eternal bending down to enter us', as Campbell says, in the field of time. This can only be found here and now, in this present moment. This is how eternity awaits us all. This is not something to wish for only once, when you die. It is something to journey for while you are living. It becomes apparent to us only with a journeyer's awareness.

What brings forth the boon? Genuinely and wholeheartedly going through all the prior stages of the journey. It is inevitable, and it is unknowable in advance. It is always a surprise when it arrives, and it is always a joy to experience. Through the gradual surrendering and letting go of your ego's hold on your experience of living, soul shines forth – not on your terms, but according to the call of the soul to you, and the experience of deep mystery unfolding through you.

We can't ever guarantee how or even if this will take place for you on your immersion, but we can assure you that the less you strive to make it happen, the more likely it is that it will come for you, in just the right time and way to be deeply rewarding and meaningful to *you*. You don't have to believe this; you just have to be available to experience it.

The poet R.S. Thomas can bring this notion forth better than we can:

*I have seen the sun break through  
to illuminate a small field  
for a while, and gone my way  
and forgotten it. But that was the pearl  
of great price, the one field that had  
treasure in it. I realize now  
that I must give all that I have  
to possess it. Life is not hurrying  
on to a receding future, nor hankering after  
an imagined past. It is the turning  
aside like Moses to the miracle  
of the lit bush, to a brightness  
that seemed as transitory as your youth  
once, but is the eternity that awaits you.*

- R.S. Thomas



## The Return Home

*“In loving the spiritual,  
you cannot despise the earthly.  
The purpose of the journey is compassion.  
When you have come past the pairs of opposites,  
you have reached compassion.  
The goal is to bring the jewel back to the world,  
to join the two things together.  
We are not there until we  
can say “yea” to it all.”*

- Joseph Campbell

The return home is likely to be the most challenging part of the journey for you. You will be presented with the opportunity and the challenge to bring back something of significant value to your family, friends, community, work and life-style. The fundamental gift of your return is the larger and more numinous *presence* that you will have discovered or reclaimed through the passage through the adventures and ordeals of your journey.

This presence will naturally seek to uplift all conditions of your life at home, and it will initially orient your heart more fully toward what it is that you have to offer to the world around you at large.

This dynamic meeting between the enlarged world of the presence cultivated within the sacred time and space of the hero's journey, and the ordinary world and the life that you left behind, must be given considerable attention and care upon your return.

After all is said and done, the uplifting of the everyday world is the ultimate purpose of the Hero's Journey. This phase of the journey requires your attention in order to reap the full harvest of your efforts. Otherwise, the rewards and benefits of your Immersion Journey can quickly recede out of your awareness.

