



HERO'S JOURNEY®
FOUNDATION

Ensemble Hero **Journey With An Online Community**

CROSSING THE THRESHOLD
New Ways of Facing the Unknown
With Michael Mervosh



"Do exactly what you would do if you felt most secure."
- **Meister Eckhart**

Threshold: *defined* - the magnitude or intensity that must be exceeded for a certain reaction, phenomenon, result, or condition to occur or be manifested.

*"The breeze at dawn has secrets to tell you,
don't go back to sleep.*

*You must ask for what you really want.
Don't go back to sleep.*

*People are going back and forth across the doorsill
where the two worlds touch.*

*The door is round and open.
Don't go back to sleep."*

- *Rumi*

Thresholds are important markers in the territory of both our interior regions and our external landscapes. They create a distinct borderline. In doing so, they define and distinguish the territory on either side of the marking. Thresholds create contrast, say something important is happening as we cross this threshold, and the crossing is a ritual of sorts.

One distinct feature of threshold crossings is that you pay more attention than you were paying before you approached the threshold point.

Crossing the threshold always involves going from the conscious world to the unconscious world, from what you know to what you don't (yet) know.

Threshold Guardians

Threshold guardians appear at the boundary point of the unknown in the form of long-held and familiar fears. *They are the watchers of the established bounds.*

Threshold guardians are personifications that represent the limitations created by our old fears, wounds, beliefs, and worldviews.

They are the powers of the psyche 'that keep watch at the boundary and are often viewed as dangerous. To confront them feels risky; yet for anyone with competence and courage, the danger fades', as Joseph Campbell said.

They show us 'the ambiguities of this perplexing passage'; they also show us how the fears will "recede before a genuine psychological readiness. But the over-confident adventurer, in over his or her head, may be shamelessly undone.



"If the call is heeded, the individual is invoked to engage in a dangerous adventure. It's always a dangerous adventure because you're moving out of the familiar sphere of your community...I call this crossing the threshold. This is the crossing from the conscious into the unconscious world, but the unconscious world is represented in many, many different images...It may be a plunge into the ocean, it may be a passage into the desert, it may be getting lost in a dark forest, it may be finding yourself in a strange city...but this is the adventure – it's always the path into the unknown, through the gateway or the cave or the clashing rocks...The idea in the hero adventure is to walk bodily through the door into the world where the dualistic rules don't apply."

Joseph Campbell



Hero Tasks for Crossing the Threshold:

1. Letting Go of the Familiar Bounds

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

*Step toward the cold surface,
Say the old prayer of rough love
And open both arms.*

*Those who come with empty hands
Will stare into the lake astonished,
There, in the cold light
Reflecting pure snow*

The true shape of your own face.

- David Whyte

2. Letting Go of Half-Heartedness & Embracing Whole-Heartedness

The hero must align him or herself in a way that moves past contradictions and opposing internal forces that create stalemates, blocks, and hesitations; one must give one's full attention to one's heart's desire.

We do this by literally feeling one's own heart space in the chest, and breathing into it, while reflecting more deeply and intently one what one loves or desires most for this life, in this life. The hero keeps their attention right here, at this threshold edge, and bears the inevitable tensions that build, as we move closer to what we really want.

*Gamble everything for love,
If you're a true human being.
If not, leave this gathering.*

Half-heartedness doesn't reach into majesty.

*You set out to find God,
But then you keep stopping for long periods
At mean-spirit roadhouses.*

- Rumi



3. Facing the Shadow – Opening To Unconscious Depths

The hero now must go into all the unconscious material in the psyche. This is the internal regions of the unknown, the inner wilderness. It is in the blank and uncharted spaces of one's mind, where one comes across all the open fields for the projection of one's own unconscious content. The hero must face these projections, all the "not me" spaces, and realize that the projection is coming from within us, and being put out onto the world. What a heroic task this is...there may be no more challenging task for the soul journeyer, than this one!



4. Going Beyond Duality – Spanning The Polarity of Opposing Forces

Here is where the hero literally begins the crossing of the threshold from an old and familiar state of consciousness to a new, more expanded, less identified-with state of consciousness.

Right here is where we learn to stay present, and tolerate ambiguity, uncertainty, insecurity, until the inevitable excitement, wonder, and deep curiosity arrives to pull us all the way across the span, the bridge, the threshold crossing from one end of a polarity to another.

Feeling ourselves as willing and able to move beyond a long-held boundary or barrier, and to begin to actually cross, move beyond or transcend it, is a profound moment of opening and mysticism for the ordinary state of mind, for the ego self. It is unforgettable, and it takes us where we never thought we would go.

*As once the winged energy of delight
carried you over many chasms early on,
now beyond your own life build the great
arch of unimagined bridges.*

*Wonders happen if we can succeed
in passing through the harshest danger;
but only in a bright and purely granted
achievement can we realize the wonder.*

*To work with things when building the association
beyond words is not too hard for us;
the pattern grows more intricate and subtle,*

and being swept along is not enough.

*Take your practiced powers and stretch them out
until they span the abyss between two
opposing poles. Because inside human beings
is where God learns.*

- Rainer Maria Rilke



We will become more accustomed to seeing thresholds before us, from now on. We will learn to see them now as more of *a gateway* to and from each phase of our journey, and not only a doorway from the ordinary to the non-ordinary.

Once again - the passage across the threshold is moving **from** the perception of a wall, an obstacle, **to** a door, a window, an opening to something beyond what is, past the stalemate, dilemma, the 'no way through', past the LIMIT – to a zone unknown, and a place not traveled before.

5. Arriving At The 'Point of No Return'

Saying “*yes to it all*”, entering the realm of adventure with a wholeheartedness, letting go of the dualistic, right/wrong, good/bad thinking that creates immobilizing self-judgment, we are now free to cross over into a state of giving ourselves fully to the journey that wants to take us. This becomes an affirming state of surrender.

“Come what may” is the mantra of the hero. It is one of acceptance, one that brings an open mind and heart, as well as a supportive lighthearted, playful spirit to the journey.

6. Entering the Spirit and Play of Adventure

This is an essential quality of the hero, to be explored further in the next session.



Up until this point, you are still somewhat in charge, still in control of the outcome. But now:

The Journey Now Takes You...



UNTIL ONE IS COMMITTED

Until one is committed, there is hesitancy, the chance to draw back, always ineffectiveness. Concerning all acts of initiative (and creation) there is one elementary truth, the ignorance of which kills countless ideas and splendid plans: that the moment one definitely commits oneself, then Providence moves too. All sorts of things occur to help one that would never otherwise have occurred. A whole stream of events issues from the decision, raising in one's favor all manner of unforeseen incidents and meetings and material assistance, which no man could have dreamed would have come his way.

*Whatever you can do,
Or dream you can, begin it.
Boldness has genius,
Power and magic in it.*

- Goethe



~ Reflections On Crossing A Threshold ~

By Joseph Jastrab

Our stepping over the ritual threshold puts us on notice that we must re-assess the rules by which we orient ourselves, interpret our experience, and create life.

We cross over into a world where the dualistic rules and conditioned behaviors that normally govern our lives were no longer held as the highest authority.

In this new orientation or way, we step off the path of society's well-worn definition of manhood or womanhood, and invite ourselves to go somewhere we haven't been before - within our self and between our self and others. Rather than monitoring our experience in conventional terms as either 'good' or 'bad', we welcome everything that happens to us as essential to our journey.

We practice saying Yes to everything.

Rather than dividing our lives and ourselves into categories of 'important or unimportant', 'saintly or sinful', we declare everything as important, all of us as valuable, and the whole of life as sacred.

This is essentially a crossing over the threshold into a world governed by unity consciousness and best described by paradox. In fact, the world of unity consciousness can *only* be described by paradox. This is the realm that the hero is looking to make contact with - and return with - to the everyday world.

This consciousness offers a potency of response that enables us to learn and grow from *everything that happens*. To be forgiving and compassionate toward everything that happens. To be able to make 'sweet honey from my old failures', as the poet Antonio Machado put it.

This is the realm of consciousness from which a 'heroic response' to life becomes possible. And, it is radically forgiving.



*I have a feeling that my boat has struck,
down there in the depths,
against a great thing.*

And nothing happens!

*Nothing...Silence...Waves...
Nothing happens? Or has everything happened,
and are we standing now, quietly, in the new life?*

- Juan Jimenez

-
1. ***Hero With A Thousand Faces*** – Joseph Campbell; 3rd Edition - 2008; New World Library, Novato, CA.
 2. ***A Joseph Campbell Companion: Reflections On The Art of Living*** – Diane Osbon; 1991. The Joseph Campbell Foundation; HarperCollins Publishers, NY, NY.