



**HERO'S  
JOURNEY  
FOUNDATION**



**HERO'S JOURNEY**  

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**APPRENTICE TRAINING CURRICULUM**

*MICHAEL MERVOSH*



**HERO'S  
JOURNEY  
FOUNDATION**

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# **HERO'S JOURNEY**

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## **APPRENTICE TRAINING CURRICULUM**

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*MICHAEL MERVOSH*



# HERO'S JOURNEY<sup>®</sup>

## FOUNDATION

*"When apprenticing with soul,  
the need for a mystery is greater  
than the need for an answer."*

## HJAP Apprentice Training Curriculum

### INTRODUCTION

In its essence Apprentice training focuses on group work, and on a particular style and format for depth work and group learning. It reflects an ongoing commitment to explore the following:

- The practice of embodying our minds more consciously and fully, using ourselves as *'transformational instruments'* in both *'one-to-one'*

encounters, and in our encounters with a group as a whole.

- We continually grow our understanding of and appreciation for group processes. We work with the “Cauldron” metaphor to represent a group’s ability to contain, deepen and transform itself.
  
- We seek to enrich each group member through their lived experience of being active and present with one another in the group. Paradoxically, we do this by serving the best interests of the group as a whole.

Our group work will remain centered on the following themes and teachings:

- *Explore, claim and bring forth from within more of our own distinctive ‘soul’ gifts as facilitators.*
  
- *Deepen into the universal, living myth of the hero’s journey process.*
  
- *Regard the darker nature of soul work - going down into the dark waters of our own inner depths, in order to bring to the surface something worth looking into.*
  
- *Work with the elemental forces of earth, water, fire and air.*
  
- *Embrace what it takes to become a maverick of facilitation, a vital and useful disturbing force in service*

of life.

- *Develop skills as both a peer group member as well as a group facilitator. (Leadership is membership.)*
- *To further our 'apprenticeship with soul' by continuing to live into our own personal myths.*
- *Grow as a life-giving and soulful learning community, capable of holding and transmitting the Hero's Journey teachings through our lived encounters.*

In addition, we focus on the following themes:

- *Growing our tolerance for **Chaos, Paradox, Complexity & Uncertainty.***
- *Supporting the core values of **Collaboration, Compassion & Courage***



## NOTES ON MYTHIC GROUP WORK

Let's re-establish some fundamental values about our particular type of 'Apprentice' training work:

- This type of group work holds a deep understanding of *living into the myth* of the universal hero's journey cycle of **Separation – Initiation – Return.**
- This type of group work is facilitated with a particular *initiatory* style, preferably offered in a vast and mountainous *nature* setting. It is done as

succinctly and directly as possible, transmitted less with words and more with embodied transmission and intention.

- Group learning is embedded with specific, dynamic and **highly experiential** elements and rituals. It is communally supported by compassionate service-oriented people.
- *These particular features, in combination, have proved to be effective, unique, valuable, memorable, and highly worthwhile.*
- This particular type of group training allows self and others to be immersed in their interior experiences – in order to further their own competency, confidence and courage. This is needed in the world today, and worth all the effort it takes to do.
- *This type of in-depth and ‘in-the-field training’ can only be done gradually.* It takes time for this work to take root, to become established within one’s body and psyche.
- Once this work becomes rooted in our being, we become **transformative vessels**. We become able to transmit teachings and enter encounters that have a felt sense of animation and soul, touching those with whom we work. *This is the pearl-beyond-all-price.*

It goes without saying how challenging this work can be for all of us who live in a hectic, overloaded, and technologically driven times.

Yet it is precisely due to these current times that these 'timeless' ways need to be brought forth in new and life-giving ways.



For each upcoming training week, what you need to do is simply show up, expect nothing, and be ready for anything.

*During our HJAP training weeks, we balance ourselves between the richness of mystery, depth and soul work, while continuing to bring forth potent, in-depth facilitation processes in a group setting.*

- *The group's training container will be held by the metaphor of the 'Cauldron' – providing solidity, strength, spaciousness, and increasing depth.*
- *The group presence itself will serve as an entity and a structure that can both contain and transmit the 'heat' of an enlivening process, one that is capable of unbinding old patterns, and also establishing new possibilities that did not exist before.*

Group sessions unfold naturally, and will be adapted to whatever is currently happening within the whole group. Each day, you will have the option of a two-hour down time each late afternoon, prior to the evening meal.

At other times, usually once a day, we convene in smaller, peer-led working groups.





*Whenever possible and favorable, we will continue to offer group exposure to the initiatory elements we have available during our summer journey intensives.*

For each upcoming training week, one element in particular will be the focus of our exploration.



*"An eye is meant to see things.  
The soul is here for its own joy.  
A head has one use: For loving a true love.  
Feet: To chase after.*

*Love is for vanishing into the sky. The mind,  
for learning what people have done and tried to do  
Mysteries are not to be solved: The eye goes blind  
when it only wants to see why.*

*- Rumi*



Don't think of new things,  
don't think of achievement,

don't think of anything of the kind.  
Just think, "Where do I feel good?  
What is giving me joy?"  
I mean it. This is simply basic.  
Get those pressure ideas out of your system.

- Joseph Campbell



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**THE MINDSET OF THE  
HERO'S JOURNEY GROUP  
FACILITATOR**

*MICHAEL MERVOSH*



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*"When apprenticing with soul,  
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HJAP Apprentice Training

## HOLDING THE MINDSET OF THE HERO'S JOURNEY FACILITATOR

- 1 - The Metaphor of The Cauldron
- 2 - Living Into The Hero's Journey Myth
- 3 – Embracing A Profound Sense of Mystery
- 4 - Embodying A Vital Presence For Self and Other

One of the primary and fundamental questions that a group facilitator has when they are both ‘apprenticing with soul’ as well as working with a group, is this:

***“What needs to be happening here, that could and can happen here, that is not likely to happen anywhere else in our lives?”***

This is a question that serves as a compass heading something that has to constantly be kept in mind. It serves to support the forward moving direction that engages the aliveness of the group, confronts the deadness of the group, and keeps a sense of what is most important close at hand.

This posture will fluctuate between what would be most *supportive* and what would be most *challenging* (sometimes they are the same) for each the members of the group, as well as for the group itself.

It points insistently towards that which would maximize the potentiality of the group as a whole.



**1) THE CAULDRON METAPHOR** – *the group facilitator keeps in mind and makes use of the metaphor of the ‘cauldron’ to think about the group’s ability to both contain and deepen its own unfolding process.*

The facilitator understands and appreciates the cauldron as a *strong holding container* for whatever needs to come alive in the group, for the group.

The facilitator builds and then uses the strength of the holding container to *apply heat of interest* to the process, in order to

bring aliveness to the group. The heat is provided by the following methods:

- *Being embodied and present in the moment.*
- *Paying attention to exactly what is happening with others in the moment.*
- *Speaking directly to others in the group, calling them by name.*
- *Encouraging others to pay attention to what is happening in the group right now.*
- *Encouraging others to speak directly to one another.*
- *Looking at underlying internal tensions and conflicts within each of the group members, and naming them when the group doesn't.*
- *Addressing and supporting tensions and conflicts that arise between members in the group, so they become dynamic, pointing toward the possible.*
- *Making sure that all the group members are being actively engaged, and at any moment.*
- *To patiently, persistently and relentlessly come back to the present moment experience of the group.*

In this way, the facilitator is dedicated to *'keeping all the chickpeas in the cooking pot'* – by making sure that all are held

accountable to their presence and absence while they are active members in the group.



**2) THE HERO'S JOURNEY MYTH** - *the group facilitator keeps in mind and makes use of the activating agent of the 'living myth of the Hero's Journey', while engaging the unfolding process of the group.*

The facilitator looks for ways to bring alive the unfolding story of an individual's lived experience of the hero's journey.

This is done by referencing any of the defined stages of the hero's journey as they happen spontaneously in the moment - or by 're-framing' someone's story, situation, 'trouble' or life circumstance through the lens of one of the journey stages.

The facilitator notices opportunities to employ the following stages of the journey:

- ***The Call to Adventure*** – *actively reflect back to someone the sense of feeling called forward by their current circumstances, or when they are being called to go where they haven't gone before.*

***The facilitator's task is to provide ongoing invitations and opportunities for new possibilities for new life*** – through potential adventures and encounters that could take place, that may have never happened before, or have never been imagined as possibilities before.

- *The possibility of aliveness is balanced with the possibility of risk.*

Sometimes, it will be enough of a shift to simply offer a group member a new imagining or possibility to be considered – and

sitting in a togetherness about this possibility; then perhaps another group member may actually respond and take it up for themselves, if one individual is not yet ready.

Consider this task to be like **planting seeds** of possibility for each of your group members.

- ***The Crossing of a Threshold*** – notice when there is a distinct and palpable difference in mood or behavior in the group, or notice a point where a sense of danger or risk is emerging, or where a distinct change is just about to take place. The facilitator directly names the threshold being crossed, or about to be crossed, when possible.

The threshold crossing can be for any individual, or for the group as a whole.

***It has the distinct feeling of moving past all that which has previously been known or familiar, and entering a point of no return***, when one or all are likely to no longer be the same again, once the threshold has been crossed.

The threshold may be crossed in mind only, *through a drastic change in one's felt sense of awareness*. Of course, it can also be literal - something embodied and acted on, *that provides a drastic change in one's perception or lived experience*.

- ***Entering the Dark Forest of the Psyche*** – notice and reflect whenever an individual or a group enters into the profundity of the unknown in their present moment circumstances, or enters an unfamiliar territory deep within their own interior lives. Whenever possible, make use of the external



*landscape to mirror going into dark, interior encounters with the unknown in nature.*

***The facilitator is always looking for ways to keep the unknown as part of the lived experience as a group;*** he or she encourages a positive relationship towards the 'as-yet-unknown', and frames it as an essential ingredient for a worthwhile adventure.

The facilitator also encourages exploration of *shadow* sides of an individual's personality - places that have been darkened, demonized, repressed, disowned, shamed, or diminished.

Group members need to be provided with ongoing opportunities to go where they would not go on their own, and encouraged to do so for the benefit of the group as a whole.

➤ ***Adventures and Ordeals*** - notice and reflect whenever an individual or a group enters into something beyond whatever one's individual ego would tend to prefer or choose. Keep in mind a balance of yin/yang between adventures and ordeals, remembering that one aspect is always held within the other.

The facilitator encourages new opportunities for exploration, and sees to it that group members are provided with the additional resources and supports needed ***for a new sense of the possible to be found in the adventure***, whenever going into the unknown.

The facilitator also recognizes when group members are facing or resisting the inevitability of an ego ordeal, and names this for the group.

The facilitator demonstrates a lighthearted embrace of the inevitability of an ordeal, and helps provide support to balance the sense of challenge being faced by a group.

***It is important that the facilitator speak about how at times only an ordeal will bring forth a boon,*** and how it can be part of the essential conditions needed to bring forth a disowned, un-lived or unrealized potential in both the individual and in the group.

- ***Allies & Synchronicities*** - notice and reflect the difference between doing something for oneself, vs. doing something by oneself. Point out how a challenge can be made easier when one grows capable of being supported by others.

The facilitator recognizes and is sensitive to the fact that receiving interest and attention from the presence of the group may ultimately be an individual's greatest challenge.

***The facilitator makes individuals aware of when they are thinking or being 'by themselves', especially when they are in front of their group.*** Then group members can more consciously make a choice to enter or not enter the field of the group.

It is essential that the facilitator provide regular and ongoing opportunities for '***doing the do-able***' through the active giving and receiving of essential support and worthwhile challenge, person to person, group to person, throughout the life of the group.

In addition, the facilitator pays attention to and actively reflects upon the nature of serendipity, synchronicity, and the peculiarity of unfolding circumstances, as they become relevant to the group's unfolding journey.

These synchronicities are often self-evident to many group members as they occur, and they uplift a sense of adventure and mystery in the life of the group.

- ***The Belly of the Beast*** – notice when an individual is deep in a process, and cannot yet see their way through it. Holds the space for the person to arrive on the other side of their darkness, with more of their authentic self than before they were swallowed by what troubles them most.

The facilitator holds an appreciation for both the need for and the resistance to surrendering one's ego fully over – to the group, to the process, to their feelings – to anything beyond their personal wish or will.

*Practicing Allowing & Holding Together* - The facilitator balances tenderness and humility with an insistence that the person stay with their process, knowing that the boon is nearby, if they can only let go more fully into what wants to take them.

Often, the work here is with a person's intense fear of relinquishing control, and the emerging fear can become very contagious for the group – everyone begins to feel it intensely.

***When emotional intensity emerges, the facilitator must be able to slow the process down, remaining calm, deliberate and responsive to what is happening, as he or she cannot afford to become too passive.***

The facilitator often may have to act on the frightened person's behalf, or get the group to do so, until they can respond accordingly for themselves.

- ***The Discovery Of The Boon*** – notice what is opening, highlight the newly arriving insight, the vibrant sense of new possibility, or the newly

*emerging and enlivening behavior – singularly, or in any combination, for any of the group members.*

*Share in the joy for the individual, but do not provide more energy for their boon than the individual (or the group) have for themselves.*

The facilitator affirms the sense of wonder, joy and expansion for any group member as it arrives, and pays attention to the impact of this on the other group members.

Can all the group members join in, or do some withdraw, or go silent and distant? Does the 'rising tide' of the boon lift all the boats in the sea? This can happen when all of the group members are well connected the group, and in tune with one another.

**NOTE:** *The facilitator looks for any opportunities to take the group member's experience of expansion further than they might choose to go on their own.*

They also make sure that the individual remains grounded in their lived experience, and avoids any tendencies towards grandiose fantasies instead, due to their expanded state of awareness.

The facilitator begins to point those who have discovered or recovered their boon towards their next task – how to bring it home, and anchor it in the ordinary.

➤ **The Return Home** – *Look past the moment at hand, towards the time beyond the here and now on the journey, while still staying very present in the here and now. Create a bridge between this world, and the world to which each person will return upon completion of their journey.*

The facilitator offers ways of thinking about the challenges ahead for each man, while staying rooted in their journey in the moment, and while being connected to the profound sense of support experienced within the group.

The facilitator is emphatic about the need for support each individual will have for their *Return Home*.

Help each person to identify the specifics of what they have gained, what they will be leaving behind, and what they now have that they did not have upon arrival.



**3) THE MYSTERY** – *keeping in mind the sense of mystery in the air, and having one’s presence emanating a sense of mystery, is an essential and intangible ingredient for the group’s process.*

For the facilitator, the ability to embody the sense of an unfolding mystery is the ‘secret sauce’ that spices up the life of group.

Ultimately, the lived experience of a mystery is the primary compass heading for all that is to transpire for the group’s adventures and ordeals.

The ability to accept the unknown, to wonder about it, to marvel at it, and to even accept that many things will remain unknowable to us - keeping us humble and awake - is a fundamental capacity for the facilitator to model and demonstrate.



**4) BEING A VITAL & EMBODIED PRESENCE** – *recognizes the fact that having a vitalized presence for the group and each*

*of its members is an element unto itself. The facilitator models a way to be awake, aware, enlivened and engaged with the group's process, and with each member's unfolding process.*

The facilitator does whatever is necessary to keep his or her energy engaged and connected to something larger than the group itself. He or she uses nature as an ally to their own sense of aliveness, and as a support the journey process for each group member.

The facilitator uses their own sense of aliveness to stay both attuned to and differentiated from each of the group members, as well as with the group's process.

The facilitator is aware that he or her own aliveness helps to evoke the aliveness that lives within the interior of each of the group members.

The facilitator keeps in mind that they are primarily to be of service to their group as a whole, and to the mystery of the journey, and not to the ego wishes, desires or demands of any one group member in particular.

When feeling personally challenged, the facilitator will turn to other facilitators or personal allies for support and encouragement for their own personal journey.



*“There’s nothing you can do that’s  
more important than being fulfilled.  
You become a sign, you become a signal,  
transparent to transcendence;  
in this way, you will find, live, and become*

*a realization of your own personal myth.”*  
- *Joseph Campbell*



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**THE ROLES & FUNCTIONS  
OF THE HERO'S JOURNEY  
GROUP FACILITATOR**

*MICHAEL MERVOSH*





## HERO'S JOURNEY<sup>®</sup> FOUNDATION

*"This thing we speak of can never be found by seeking, but only seekers find it."*

- Bayazid Bistami

### THE ROLES AND FUNCTIONS OF THE HERO'S JOURNEY FACILITATOR

1) **THE STORY KEEPER** - the response-ability of the group facilitator is to track, flesh out, name and keep alive the shared stories for each group member.

- The facilitator functions as the *group's historian*, one who remembers, renames, and revisits the stories being told by each person.
- The facilitator also tracks the collective story of the group, the one that unfolds and reveals itself, over the group's lifespan.

2) **THE MAVERICK** – the response-ability is to be alert to as well as capable of the unexpected; it requires the ability to be spontaneous and to notice the un-anticipated. The facilitator becomes the *group's fire-starter* in this way.

- The facilitator must be willing and able to both provide and receive the *unexpected*, in relationship to the group members.
- The facilitator is always on the lookout for what isn't yet being said, being demonstrated or being considered or thought about.
- The facilitator learns to *look sideways*, seeking a new perspective or viewpoint into what is happening in the moment, especially in situations that are baffling, peculiar or riddled with dilemma.

3) **THE SHAPE SHIFTER** – the response-ability is to being and staying *differentiated* from the group enough to have new frames or lens of perceptions, beyond what is currently being seen or focused on.

- The facilitator must be willing and able to *change the lens of perception* on what is taking place in the group, at any given time. He or she must be willing to *shift the tide* from where things are headed.
- This is a particularly important skill to have when the group is mired in trouble or conflict; one *provides a re-framing* of the current circumstance, in order to move something from being an obstacle to a potential passageway.

4) **THE SPELL BREAKER** – the response-ability is bringing forth the knife blade of clarity, or stark awareness, offering the potential for a kind of precision that cuts through deadness, stillness or dullness in an individual's or in the group's process.

- The facilitator embraces the alchemical process of ***sensing into the particular or peculiar entrancement of someone caught up in the spell of their own limited belief or world view***, as well as the consequential looping effect of the sameness of their experience. Remember that wherever a person becomes spellbound, they will inevitably begin to cast the same spell on others.
- The facilitator must be curious and interested enough in the spell itself, in order to see into it and through it enough to begin breaking it. One provides a sharp or penetrating reflection or observation to explore ways to break through and get beyond to anything that is new in one's interior or mind.

5) **THE SPACE MAKER** – the response-ability is creating enough openness or spaciousness for something new to happen, that is meaningful or substantial, to take place. They support an empty space that is unknown, not allowing it to be filled by the anxieties of the group members.

- The facilitator must ***be able to slow things down*** enough in a group for the possibility of self-reflection to begin to happen, about what is happening either in one's own interior, or with the group itself.

- The facilitator ***addresses those things that foreclose the making of space*** in a group's process: excessive use of words, an over-focus on the content of what is being said; increasingly rapid responses or reactions by group members, etc.

**6) THE HERE & NOW KEEPER** – the response-ability is dedicated to tracking *the aliveness of the moment*; this requires the capacity to keep primarily to the ***immediacy*** of what is happening - right now - in the interior lives of the group members.

- The facilitator must be able to discern the difference between ***speaking about*** an experience that happened somewhere else, ***vs. speaking from*** an experience that can come alive once more, in the moment.
- The facilitator tracks the stories being shared in the group, and pays attention to when someone is simply being *referential* to another point in time, where no one else can actually join with them.

This is very different from the inner feeling one has when someone is able to *embody and transmit* their experience directly to the group. *The former saps the group of life; the latter feeds the group with life.*



**NOTE:** All of these roles, as well as the functions they serve, require of the group facilitator:

- To be both *receptively and sensitively attuned* to what is taking place in the group, while also being *actively and fiercely differentiated* from it, at the same time.
- To be continuously thinking about, and looking for opportunities to engage and cultivate, the group's capacities for *paradox, complexity, and uncertainty*.
- This is fundamental to the group's developmental process, seeing these inevitabilities not as obstacles, but as *doorways* and thresholds through which *enlivenment* can spontaneously emerge.
- To support the group's capacity to allow - and at times, insist upon - all individuals in the group to go where they would not typically choose to go on their own - ways that are new, life-giving, and generative to self and others. (The Cauldron Effect)



## ON THE ART OF BECOMING RUTHLESSS AS A GROUP FACILITATOR

### BEING IN SERVICE OF LIFE

- *To be ruthlessly wholehearted on behalf of each group member's best interest, and utilizing all of one's life force energy and capabilities for this aim.*

The facilitator tenaciously demonstrates and mirrors, in the here and now of the group's process, and in a tangibly felt way, something fundamental that has been missing within the repertoire of a particular group member's own embodiment, and way of thinking.

Through these active demonstrations that hold potential for lively encounters, we always look to **show** (rather than talk about) **what is possible** - on behalf of the aliveness of the others - in ways that may have never before been considered as workable or livable realities.

***The facilitator models for the others a type of emotional fortitude and a basic trust in the process of life.*** We do this by venturing forward with our own life force energy, taking action by doing what is needed, in ways that can be perceived as wholeheartedly tender and/or wholeheartedly fierce.



- ***TO 'NOT KNOW' TOGETHER*** – to demonstrate a ruthless kind of devoted accompaniment, a 'being there no matter what' – by entering into the kind of shared encounters that can happen when it is less important to be comfortable and knowledgeable, and more important to be available and interested.

When we, as the facilitator, insist on our own presence being able to exist alongside another's, we show how 'staying through the midst of all that happens' is an essential skill, as well as a tool for transforming a person's narrative. (Active Witnessing)

As the facilitator, we cannot afford to take this skill for granted. We must appreciate that many people have been deprived of this level of accompaniment, and will resist it to the exact degree that they desire and long for it.



- *To place importance on relentlessly holding your focus of attention on two things: 1) the dynamic tension needed in a group for going forward, and 2) the concrete, forward moving activities happening in each group member's process.*

The facilitator understands and respects that he or she must hold to the work of ***facing the inevitable and life-giving anxieties*** that arise whenever we are more fully present with one another, beyond roles and responsibilities to fulfill – whenever we must move beyond doing or fixing.

The facilitator understands and regards that he or she must hold to ***the real work of change***, and with learning how to move our lives forward in actual and doable ways, towards something worthwhile.

In this regard, it is important that the facilitator not get distracted by any group member's particular fascinations with their insight or interior lives only, or by their substitution of wishes, longings and fantasies and for an actual life.

NOTE: The facilitator is always discerning when safety is being established that allows individuals enough space and relaxation to then gather and mobilize their energy on behalf of life - and when safety is being used defensively to

avoid, retreat or regress away from the necessary challenges and risks required in the realities of the lives they are living.



"Whatever you have in your mind -- forget it;  
whatever you have in your hand -- give it;  
whatever is to be your fate -- face it."

- Abu Sa'id

"All of those for whom authentic transformation has deeply unseated their souls must, I believe, wrestle with the profound moral obligation to shout from the heart—perhaps quietly and gently, with tears of reluctance; perhaps with fierce fire and angry wisdom; perhaps with slow and careful analysis; perhaps by unshakable public example—but authenticity always and absolutely carries a demand and duty: you must speak out, to the best of your ability, and shake the spiritual tree, and shine your headlights into the eyes of the complacent. You must let that radical realization rumble through your veins and rattle those around you."

- Ken Wilber

Don't think of new things, don't think of achievement, don't think of anything of the kind. Just think, "Where do I feel good? What is giving me joy?" I mean it. This is simply basic. Get those pressure ideas out of your system.

Joseph Campbell



*Follow your bliss.  
If you do follow your bliss,  
you put yourself on a kind of track  
that has been there all the while waiting for you,*



*and the life you ought to be living  
is the one you are living.  
When you can see that,  
you begin to meet people  
who are in the field of your bliss,  
and they open the 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.  
If you follow your bliss,  
doors will open for you that wouldn't  
have opened for anyone else.*

- Joseph Campbell

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## RECOMMENDED BOOKS

To Supplement The Apprentice Training Content

1. HERO WITH A THOUSAND FACES – Joseph Campbell.
2. PATHWAYS TO BLISS – Joseph Campbell.
3. THE GROUP THERAPY EXPERIENCE – Louis Ormont.
4. FINDING OUR WAY – Margaret Wheatley.
5. GROUPS: STUDYING OURSELVES IN COLLECTIVE LIFE  
– Mick Landaiche.

## NOTES