

# Best Practices ...*the practice guaranteed to keep you small*

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One of the more powerful approaches to organizational change that has been pioneered by people like social psychologist Edie Seashore is 'Self as Instrument'. My interpretation of the Self as Instrument concept is that the most important vehicle each of us has in this world is ourSelf. When we take the time to know ourSelf, to tap into our power and to gain clarity about what we want to achieve in the world or a given situation, each of us carries the potential to create miracles. We don't need experts, high priced consultants, bosses, parents, and senior leaders to create the changes we seek: we simply need to be deeply connected to ourSelf and to believe that we have what it takes to create.

The metaphor of a "thought virus" is one which is ever present for me when I think of Self as an instrument of change in life. If I'm a thought virus moving through the world, I am contagious. That means I need to be very mindful of the specific contagion I'm being/carrying. I also need to know how contagious I am, how virulent a thought virus I am. I need to be awake to myself and to the world in which I move, aware of the impact I have not only related to my own on-going growth and evolution but the impact I'm having on those around me.

As a thought virus I am immediately confronted by distinctions I may have created between the professional me and the private me. I begin to discover that there are no such distinctions. Who I am being becomes more important than any role or position could possibly be. I begin to notice that I my contagiousness is directly proportional to my willingness to reveal myself to the world.

My on-going growth and evolution is critical in this process to continue to expand my capacity to be Self aware so that I increasingly know what strain of virus I'm carrying. Living with this degree of mindfulness, I can add, change or delete those things about me and my life which I want to take on, let go of or modify. As a thought virus I am increasingly drawn to consider questions such as:

- Who do I get to be/become if I do/don't do X
- By paying attention to X, what else is it that I get to not have to pay attention to?
- What is my intention in life such that engaging/not engaging X makes sense?
- Who else might I become if I consider X differently?

These sorts of questions are perpetual reminders that who I am is not a static, fixed thing. I am continually growing, evolving and unfolding based on the moment-by-moment choices I make as I engage my life.

How contagious I am relates to the intention I carry for how I use mySelf in this world. The more clarity and alignment I have about the following questions the greater is my potential impact in the world:

- What is my purpose?

- Are the places and people I hang out aligned with my intention and purpose?
- Do I engage in conversations that reflect my purpose?
- Does my work engage my purpose?
- Am I open to surprises and new learnings that can expand my intention?
- Am I having fun?
- Am I a living expression of what I hold to be important as I move through my day and my life?

I have discovered that I am most contagious as a thought virus when I am authentic and congruent within myself. I know that I am authentic and congruent when everything feels aligned: my mind is still; my words flow effortlessly and I am aware that I am speaking what is true for me in the moment, whether those around me share that truth or not; my body feels relaxed and open; I am open and curious about those around me without feeling the need to take on their opinions.

I have found that moving through life this way creates an 'attractor' state which helps draw to me those people who are looking for what I have to offer. In the same way I am attracted to others who resonate for me. Then we can engage the dance of discovery, sharing and creating change. Those who have a radically differing perspective (or no resonance) simply fade away, seeking out someone else who is the attractor for what they have to offer. Most of the grinding, disruptive, disagreeable interactions with others simply fade off somewhere else.

The magic that underlies the concept of Self as Instrument is that each of us has a life-long invitation for growth and evolution. Always exploring, always discovering, always inventing the next new Me. Life feels sublime now that I know that I never again have to be locked into an identity that is static and unchanging. Let's face it; the Me I was at 30 would be hard pressed to engage the daily challenges of who I have become as I approach 60. The question then becomes: how do I stay meaningfully connected to my own growth and unfolding?

My response has been to co-create an organization committed to helping others in their pursuit of life-long growth and evolution. My sense of Self, my consciousness, my sense of connectedness to something beyond Me is challenged daily by my interactions with my partners and my clients. In this nearly perfect world I have created, I have an on-going sense of mySelf as Instrument: a potent, virulent thought virus in the dance of awakening potential and creating change in individuals. And as individuals change, I know that teams and organizations are changed.

If you were to explore, connect to and claim the essential You in such a way that You moved forward in your life feeling alive, vibrant and aware of the impact you were having, I wonder what You might create?

*About Gwen McCauley: Coach, educator, writer and veteran of the 'employee to entrepreneur' transformation process. With wit, wisdom and worldly experience, Gwen invites her clients on a journey of self-discovery, gaining clarity of purpose and increasing self-awareness and resourcefulness. Gwen brings a strong background as a corporate executive with extensive*

management experience to her work. She founded Odysseys Unlimited Inc. (OUI) in 1997 and is a co-founder of the WEL-Systems® Institute. Gwen has an MA in Human Systems Intervention from Concordia University and a successful track record as a coach, program leader and businesswoman. In addition to being a WEL-Systems Educator™, CODE Model™ Coach and Quantum TLC™ Facilitator, Gwen has studied Open Space Technology, Myers Briggs, Appreciative Inquiry, Generative Leadership and Total Quality Management. Gwen published her first book *“The Alchemy of Energy: Exploring The CODE Model”* in 2004 and co-authored *“Sekhmet Rising: the restlessness of women’s genius”* with 17 other women in 2006. She is currently working on her third book.

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