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# The Hero's Journey

The universal change journey for coaches

By Brian Gorman, CPC



**As coaches, we work** with our clients to help them find the answers that empower them to move from the present to their desired future. What we often don't recognize is that while their journeys may vary widely, there is an underlying pattern to the path that can assist us in our coaching role.

I have spent almost five decades engaged with change at the social, organizational and personal levels. The most important lesson I have learned is that there is a "universal change journey" based not on the catalyst for change or

the nature of the change, but on the underlying patterns of how we as human beings respond to disruption in our lives. Joseph Campbell refers to it as "The Hero's Journey."

In this article I want to share with you an overview of that journey through the lens of a coach. It is a journey we have each taken ourselves, and with our clients, many times. There are five key elements of that journey that allow you to help your client address the question, "*Who do I have to be and what do I have to pay attention to in order to significantly*

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## impact

*increase my chances of successfully  
achieving my intentions?"*

### 1. Be a Storyteller

We tell ourselves (and others) stories all the time. They reflect our aspirations, our inspirations, and our frustrations. They are shaped by our experiences, our hopes and our beliefs.

Effectively guide your clients as they craft their intent story. Neuroscience has taught us that a powerful story is experienced in the brain in the same way as actually living the events. Work with your clients to make their story powerful. Invite them to write from the future as though what they want has already happened. "When I get to Costa Rica..." does not have the same affect as "I did it. Here I am in my new home in Costa Rica!"

The story should touch as many of the client's senses as possible. It should come from their heart, as well as their brain. Encourage them to tell their story over and over to themselves; to embody it. Invite them to share their story with others who will be supporting them along the way.

### 2. Be Prepared

Before your clients plan how they are going to go from their current life to their intended life, they need to know what to plan for. What are their anchors, those things that are holding them in place? Which of these should they continue to hold onto? Which do they have to plan to let go of, or change their relationship to? Will they need new anchors?

If the client's intent is to live in Costa Rica, they may need to plan to hold onto family, but perhaps in different ways. They may need to let go of many of the social and professional networks that support them. They may need to develop a new Spanish language anchor. Perhaps they need to be more of a risk-taker, or less attached to their income.

What does the client have to change, and what will provide them with stability during the turbulence?

### 3. Be a Planner

As the client begins to identify the anchor changes they need to make, they can start planning. Invite them to plan for what they don't want to happen, as well as what they do. For example, if they don't want their adult children to feel they are being abandoned, plan for the conversations the client will have with the children, and when. Ensure the client is planning not only to put things in place, but also to achieve the intent they are seeking. All too often, we plan for what we need to do, but fail to plan for the changes we need to make in who we need to become.

### 4. Be Present on the Journey

Work with the client to stay present on their journey, to pass by those shiny objects that can pull them off course. Invite them to continue telling their story. Balancing the story with the journey with who they are and who they are becoming requires your coaching art and science. Invite them to grant themselves permission. It may be permission to revise the story; permission to make mistakes; permission to celebrate victories and lessons learned; or permission to rest along the way.

### 5. Be Your Desired Future

When the client achieves their intent, invite them to celebrate and also to reflect. What lessons have they learned that they can bring to their next change journey? What have they learned about themselves, and what have they learned about succeeding at change?

Whatever journey your client is on, you can strengthen the power of your coaching and the client's chances of success by applying the lessons of the universal change journey. ●