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Wanting It All: Designing and Developing a Sustainable Life of Meaning and Purpose
Through Reflective Practice

By

Janell Burley Hofmann

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SYNTHESIS
MASTER OF ARTS
CRITICAL AND CREATIVE THINKING
UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS BOSTON

May 2018; Updated May 2019

Advisor: Jeremy Szteiter

Abstract: This synthesis presents an integration of the coursework in the Master of Arts in Critical and Creative Thinking at The University of Massachusetts Boston. Here the symptoms and realities of personal and professional burnout and exhaustion will be examined through the lens of well-being, while scaffolding the emergence of the higher ideal towards the sustainable cultivation of purpose and meaning. Tools, strategies and design structures are shared to promote and practice sustainability through Reflective Practice. This includes Reflective Questioning, Developing and Mapping of Value Components and Visual Tools to understand and apply Critical and Creative Thinking. The author's personal narrative expands into critical questioning and intentional reflection, encouraging personal development and cycles of continuous improvement within a strengths based framework. Ultimately, the work supports both self-exploration and solution finding through systems and designs for Reflective Practice, serving as methods for professional facilitation for groups (families, educators, youth), organizations and individuals working towards a sustainable life of well-being.*

* The Synthesis can take a variety of forms, from a position paper to curriculum or professional development workshop to an original contribution in the creative arts or writing. The expectation is that students use their Synthesis to show how they have integrated knowledge, tools, experience, and support gained in the program so as to prepare themselves to be constructive, reflective agents of change in work, education, social movements, science, creative arts, or other endeavors.

Janell Burley Hofmann
CCT694 Capstone

Governing Question: How Can the Development of Personal and Professional Reflective Practice Encourage Sustainability and Enhance Well-Being?

Audience: Solopreneurs, Entrepreneurs, Practitioners, Parents, Educators, Caregivers, Activists, Artists, Individuals, Organizations

Title: Wanting It All: Designing and Developing A Sustainable Life Of Meaning and Purpose Through Reflective Practice

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Glossary: Synthesis Buzz Words Defined

Solopreneur: “A solopreneur’s business is still one person and his/her clients, but national or international in scope. It is a business complete with marketing, advertising, and innovative technology with few geographical limits. Many career practitioners are, indeed, solopreneurs: people who single handedly start and run a business across all 50 states, and sometimes the world, right from their living room. What makes it possible? The Internet and its cornerstone, your website.” (Chapman, Dixon)

Burnout: “...coined in the 1970s by the American psychologist Herbert Freudenberger. He used it to describe the consequences of severe stress and high ideals experienced by people working in ‘helping’ professions...Nowadays, the term is not only used for these helping professions, or for the dark side of self-sacrifice. It seems it can affect anyone, from stressed-out careerists and celebrities to over-worked employees and homemakers.” (Depression)

Reflective Practice: “Reflection is key to new insights emerging—Revelation. Creating Change (in one’s concepts, practices, and products) involves Re-engagement with oneself and others as change agents.” (Taylor)

Well-Being: “Since it was founded in 1961, the OECD has helped governments design *better policies for better lives* for their citizens. More recently, the OECD has been keenly involved in the debate on measuring well-being. Based on this experience, these 11 topics reflect what the OECD has identified as essential to well-being in terms of *material living conditions* (housing, income, jobs) and *quality of life* (community, education, environment, governance, health, life satisfaction, safety and work-life balance).” (Burnout)

Compassion Fatigue: “Compassion fatigue is an occupational hazard. The American Institute of Stress describes it as ‘the emotional residue or strain of exposure to working with those from the consequences of traumatic events.’ Though they may sound similar, compassion fatigue is actually different from another occupational hazard known as burnout...It (burnout) does not have to do with traumatic experiences or witnessing traumatic experiences; instead burnout is related to the stress of work itself.” (Compassion)

UMass Boston Critical and Creative Thinking Courses That Contributed to this Synthesis:

Critical Thinking: Development of a Personal and Professional Reflective Practice and developing tools for the critical thinking for the needs of others.

Creative Thinking: Contributed to the introduction of systems and processes to support creativity. Valuable opportunities for valuable, engaged exploratory methodology.

Dialogue Processes: exploration of dialogue in presencing, listening, using the four fields in organizations, activism, relationships.

Creative Realization of Ideas: Rediscovering the value of passion projects - creativity with meaning - for personal growth, but also applicable professionally. Building community, feedback and engagement was a critical component.

Anti-Racism and Multiculturalism in Education: the opportunity to reflect on cultural, personal and societal behaviors around race, racism and multiculturalism in education using valuable models, discussion formats and engagement tools.

Processes of Research and Engagement: cycles of reflection, evaluation, and feedback as critical components of work and development. Introduction to methods for research and opportunities to build tools and self-development.

Action Research for Change: Allowed space to ask the questions like, how can I be present and engaged in my research? And how can I continuously refine the processes for research?

Metacognition: Provided an opportunity to understand processes that happen when we intentionally reflect or “think about our thinking”. Allowed for new developments in how I work personally and professionally and contributed to new systems and approaches.

Foundations of Philosophical Thought: Allowed for new ways and methods of questioning, reasoning and holding multiple perspectives at one time as well as deep listening.

Holistic and Transformative Teaching: A key opportunity to further develop the self, understand motivations, behaviors and experiences while reflecting on the interconnectedness of our own lives.

Section 1: Identifying and Addressing Burnout

A. Personal Narrative

I promised myself if I ever stopped feeling full gratitude after a day of work, I would notice. Pause. Slow down. Check in. Note, this gratitude usually reveals as weepiness. Not from pain or frustration, but joy, gratitude and the treasured tears of thrill. I usually feel so emptied out, so used up in the best way possible that my tears are for both exhaustion and exhilaration. On trains and in airports, in quiet hotels and on long, dark car rides, I release the reward of my work - meaning.

But then, in the middle of a regional speaking tour, it happened. One late night driving home this winter, I felt a burn rise inside me until it tasted like resentment. I was tired. I was taxed. I was out of words and methods and effort. I couldn't assess if I'd done well or if what I'd offered mattered. Tender, I called the people I trust. They reassured me the value of rest, recovery and my natural ability to keep going, to endure. Still, this night was different. It was defining. To ignore my own knowing would be betrayal, so I set out to assess both wants and needs, the past and present, and to welcome the emergence of new designs and directions. A road I am so grateful to explore and share here.

If I claim to want it all – a life begging to be lived fully – then I must be willing to address well-being and sustainability. This synthesis will be that address. Here, I will examine the feelings and experiences of burnout, stress and challenges, while practicing and developing tools, methods and designs to break the cycle of exhaustion and enhance sustainability. This commitment to assess well-being and build practices to support the

highest vision of a life well lived is both critical to my own journey, but also created as offerings to others.

The true discovery on my journey into Critical and Creative Thinking has been the opportunity for reflection despite being smack in the middle of living in every corner of my life. This synthesis is not a prescription. It is not a cautionary tale. It is not a gift of solutions tied with a bow for everyone to open and enjoy. Instead, it is a real time probe into which factors contribute to a life of meaning and purpose, while valuing and developing methods of sustainability through reflective practice. This synthesis exploration values process above clear solutions and invites the reader to make meaning determined by their own needs.

The goal of this synthesis is to bring light to the value of reflective practice through self-knowledge and personal development, mindfulness and well-being, design thinking and resource aggregation. I will use the lens of my own life, personally and professionally, to explore what I have studied and applied, to share where I have taken missteps and where I have found success on the path to finding both purpose and sustainability in solopreneurship - or sole entrepreneurship. The influence of family life and personal values are undoubtedly integrated and made visible. The educator and facilitator in me will want clear answers to emerge in this work. I will want to fix it for myself and for the reader. However, I will resist the urge to produce a “how to”, and instead help find the roads to walk for one’s self.

Point of Reflection:

Though I will not directly explore burnout prevention, it feels valuable to note that there were many contributing factors that lead me to this present point of questioning. In transparency, I can easily identify direct and indirect causes and circumstances on this journey that have lead me here. Some may be identified throughout the narrative. All of them will not.

Additionally, we each have our own realities and the reality of our time and place. There is a truth about our own lived experience that must be addressed and seen even if it isn't explored. Looking at my work, family and individual life, specifically, is valuable only if we acknowledge that some connections exist based on need and experience, society and circumstances. There is a larger web present in every insight that influences and impacts decisions and dynamics of one's life. So here, I cannot go forward without acknowledging that I am part of larger systems that include the influence, benefits, privileges, obstacles, opportunities and beliefs around race, socio-economics, marital status, sexual orientation, culture, family history, education and gender. Though this project will not include the examination of each, they are ever present in my existence, like they are for all of us.

B. So What Is This Work?

My undergraduate degree is in Communication Studies with a focus on public relations, media and gender. I spent my years after graduation parenting my five children and working in regional community (specifically with youth and family) programming. During a volunteer trip to work with children in red light districts in Calcutta, India in 2010, I was asked to blog for the non-profit, Her Future Coalition, who facilitated the

trip. Upon returning home, I felt a renewed sense of connection and purpose and began my own blog on parenting and family both on my own website, then a larger online platform. A moderate sized audience organically formed. I enjoyed my community work; leading grant funded parenting workshops, the opportunities for training and continued education, while writing to an audience about both my lived experiences and my observations.

It is here, in these years of service, community work and raising my young family that a sense of purpose and meaning took root, emerging as my highest lived values. I knew my parenting, career, relationships, goals and efforts would always be measured and held against these developing core values. They became the touchstones – places I would return again and again – as the foundation of my small world grew and expanded. *What is the purpose? Does it feel meaningful?* These questions remain even as life's purpose and meaning change shape through growth, need and evolution. As I look back, I can see the beginning of an informal reflective practice and perhaps the greatest set of tools for designing the life I desired.

The day after Christmas in 2012 I shared on both my blog on my website and my blog on The Huffington Post a tech contract I had created for my oldest son. (See Appendix A.) I had just given him his first smartphone the day before. It outlined my expectations for his use, but it also took the shape of a love letter to a child who was growing up and becoming more independent. I was inspired to create this tech contract as an opportunity to apply what I had learned from so many of the youth and families I had been working with and challenges they had managing the chronic, heightened use of high speed, portable internet in the form of tablets and smartphones. Additionally, this felt like

a beautiful opportunity to deepen the message beyond the tech. Naturally, the contract was designed to be applied practically to my young teenager's use by identifying specific components and rules. But it was also a chance to say much more to him: *"Keep your eyes up. See the world happening around you. Stare out a window. Go for a walk. Talk to a stranger. Wonder without Googling."* The contract was rooted in ideas, beliefs and reflections of the person he had grown into and the person he was becoming. It was built on a foundation of values and principles that had been developed over his life and over my journey as a parent.

Initially, I didn't plan to share it. We discussed it, we modified it and he agreed to it. It hung nicely on our refrigerator for a day. As I began to reflect on the families I was working with and connecting with through my writing, I felt that perhaps it might provide a nice read or an example of how I was managing the heightened concerns around raising "Generation Tech". But instead, publishing this contract online changed my life.

Overnight it went viral and for the next two months I was being interviewed daily by national and international media outlets. I received incredible opportunities to continue the conversation through a book deal, speaking opportunities, weekly national radio spots and a variety of professional exposure. With the partnership of my newly acquired literary agent, the vision of taking the contract and expanding the platform into a career grew. Even with the mass media attention, I had assumed the blog post was a final act. But my agent saw a future for the work and helped me design and develop what I could not have imagined this post would become: a business.

I left my role as a community program coordinator to fully dedicate myself to unpacking what actually lived inside the contract. For months I reverse engineered the

document, reflecting on the considerations, messages and principles that were present, so that I could develop it into tools, methods and offerings for other families. What I realized during these months was that this contract was not about technology. It was about parenting through relationships, connection and meaning. The root cause of the contract was about how we lived on *and* away from the screens. It asked me to reflect on what I really wanted out of family life and I was thrilled to ask other families this question too. This is the critical point of universal connection.

Within that first year, I had a published book, a thriving website and many topical speaking opportunities. I had a full time business. Along the way, I was creating and adapting. I was absorbing best practices based on what worked or didn't on the road. Initially, I built a platform off of lived experience sharing my specific experience as a mother of five and from the families I worked and lived with in my community. But my views and insights grew stronger and more adept with every child, teenager, educator, developer, researcher, mental health professional, law enforcement official, policy maker and citizen I worked with. Soon, I was working across ages, genders, needs, cultures, socio-economics, languages, religions and belief systems and these conversations and interactions were happening by the thousands. For me, Palmer summarizes the development and personal value of my career, "Vocation does not come from willfulness. It comes from listening. I must listen to my life and try to understand what it is truly about – quite apart from what I would like it to be about – or my life will never represent anything real in the world, no matter how earnest my intentions." (p. 4)

Though this scenario may not be the most common path in one's career development, I think it's worthy to address that without my foundational values – or

amateur reflective practice - this abrupt and unusual change may have been more challenging. When I felt overwhelmed or uncertain, I returned to the questions around purpose and meaning to be certain they aligned with every “yes” or “no” I needed. This practice of grounding, especially as a beginner, was critical. Especially when every opportunity contained deep excitement and fear: *Can I handle this? Will this be the last chance I get?* The trust I built with myself during this time, the deep self-listening, still serves as invaluable.

As the years progressed and the work took a more formal shape, I began to develop materials, workshops, lessons, activities and talking points that were useful and practical based on the needs I observed. All the while, constantly processing new content, making this emerging field digestible and supporting (primarily) educators, parents and students as we walked together into the uncharted course of the digital revolution. During these chaotic years of accelerated growth I was grateful for many opportunities to check back in and reflect, though I began to sense with urgency my need for the development and design of a formal reflective practice. In the rapidly paced days of doing every aspect of this work on my own, it is even more imperative that I build in opportunities and systems to serve the humanness behind my business.

C. Project Description

Recently, after six years running a business in this capacity, I have felt a shift in the work. I have begun to notice that moments or experiences that were once energy giving, have become depleting, challenging or ordinary. While the quantity and depth of opportunities continue to increase, it has also become more demanding. Client needs and

long-term partnerships have required new methodology and delivery of content. My travel schedule - bringing me both away from home and away from my desk - has multiplied. The space has grown crowded with many voices, activists and commentary on the subject, requiring varied methods of reach and delivery. The demands of running a seven-person household and my sacred and critical role as mother to five growing children ages 10 – 18 are ever-present. Additionally, I have been on the fast track of the Critical and Creative Thinking Graduate Program and completed a 200 yoga teacher certification and began teaching classes in my community. These add-ons – intended to regenerate and invigorate personal interests and goals - have taxed the precious space on my calendar.

Here, through my own personal and professional lens, I will investigate ways to identify and recover from what began as the examination of burnout as both a solopreneur and as a person, but evolved into a reflective practice for well-being and sustainability. “As a reflective educator in search of self-knowledge...ask yourself, ‘What am I doing now? How am I acting? How am I living my values? Are my current actions congruent with my cherished beliefs? Am I practicing what I preach? Does my current behavior offer a standard for my students to imitate?’” (Schmuck 5). Broken down into steps and phases, we’ll begin to examine burnout, but also, questioning, fatigue and reflection that may contribute to and benefit a sustainable life of well-being. We connect on the premise that our journeys through life will not match precisely, but that we will all be faced with times when we are overwhelmed, unsure or need to navigate change. Through this belief, we’ll set out to design a life of sustainability and well-being through our own empowered self knowledge, development and reflection.

Section 2

Sustainability Strategies: Reflective Questions, Components and Values, Practices for Well-Being

A. Phase 1: Reflective Questions

Because of my work in Critical and Creative Thinking, I knew that my first step in building a formal reflective practice was questioning. When I began to recognize the feelings of exhaustion in my daily journaling and a resistance to my normal meditation practice and exercise routine, I knew it was vital to intentionally step out of the doing and begin to assess the circumstances, behaviors and feelings that had emerged. Going to work, parenting my children, nurturing my most meaningful relationships are not optional actions, so these other areas (often omitted from my life when I'm under stress) are clues filled with information about my highest vision of well-being. The beginning reflection was about identifying which questions might help crystalize specific action steps towards developing strategies for sustainability. When too fatigued or unsure where to start, I reflect on the prompt, "What's working and what isn't working?" This allows me to respond even if it's in free writing (Elbow 13-19), list form or drawings. It can be simple, exhaustive or frequent as needed. The versatility of this prompt allows for verbal or reflective thought practice in addition to any written components.

Reflective questioning is important to sustainability because it encourages the practice of deliberate time and space for reflection. It is the foundation for the development of future sustainability strategies such as mapping, assessing value components and design. After my foundational questioning of what's working and what isn't, new, deeper reflective questions emerged. Listing them during a topical free writing

session (“questioning work”) - suspending judgment - was an opportunity to visibly collect essential areas of need or focus

Because they were written down, I could revisit them later and assess their role, change and need going forward. “A reflective journal also provides a record of the outcomes of the reflection process and, over time, provides a rich source of material to use in identifying patterns of behavior that reveal one’s dispositional nature and performance issues to deal with.” (Nesbit 212) The list could also be built upon as new reflections emerged.

Sample Reflective Questions that revealed:

- Is my work as accessible to as it can be?
- Which design systems can help me replicate my work?
- Have I determined multi-faceted methodology and delivery of content in my business plan to help me to continue to sustain and grow as a solopreneur?
- How can I leave space for emerging concepts, ideas and thoughts as a facilitator?
- How can I create space for preparing, reviewing and processing my work?
- What might I need personally to prevent burnout and nurture sustainability as a solopreneur?
- How can I build a community that values and shares the work?
- Which parts of my work could be outsourced?
- Is preventing burnout not about doing less, but about new ways of thinking?
- How has the internet and a hyper-connected culture impacted solopreneurs?
- How does my personal life impact my work and inform the shape of my business?

B. Phase 2 – Assessing and Evaluating Personal and Professional Components and Values

Reflective Questioning is a foundation and practice we build as we work towards a more specific point of view with actions, values and needs in Phase 2. Reflective Questioning is a chance to cast a wide net, ask big questions as we then begin to tweeze out components towards identification, action and change.

Before I could begin to address the seeds of burnout (or fatigue) that had been planted in my work throughout the years, I had to actually see it. In order to design (or redesign), I had to map it. Mapping in this instance is what Taylor and Szteiter refer to as a “Sense of Place Map.” This is defined in “Taking Yourself Seriously” as “a picture in whatever form occurs to you that address three questions: Where am I? Where have I come from? Where am I going?” (139). This visual gathering of my work allowed me to know it in a very clear, identifiable way. Once it was seen and labeled, I was able to assess what I needed, what I wanted, what was working and what was not working. In Figure A, mapping my personal and professional life provided clarity, a vision of needs for sustainability and actual knowledge necessary for Reflective Design.

At first it took a list form. I identified that a typical work week requires administrative work, client emails and calls, travel, speaking/facilitating, engaging on social media, contracting, invoicing, banking, interviews or commentary for other sources, reading research, op-eds and topical pieces while writing original content and digesting the work of others. Then I bundled some of those categories or highlighted featured aspects of the work like “speaking, facilitating and consulting”, because that is primarily how the business earns money. Another example is the group of “press, media interview or guest commentary” because that is how I spend a lot of my scheduled time and creates new paid opportunities through exposure.

Next, I included some value components. These are the less tangible or measurable parts of the work, but of incredible value. They are the meaning and purpose of my work, the foundation on which it stands. These components include opportunities for storytelling and questioning, connection, community, relationships and self-

knowledge. It brings the humanity – the fuel - to the work. Once the listing, grouping and mapping is complete there is a critical moment of feeling. This is part of reflective practice. When I see the completed map, I sit with it. *Does it feel like me? Does it connect to who I am? Is it in line with how I want to live and work?* If I can connect to the map, then I can start to identify needs that emerge to support the design and sustainability. Sample questions that showed up for me upon doing this exercise included: *Which part of the work do I need to do myself? Is there anything I can outsource? Which parts of the work happen naturally? Which parts of the work need to be scheduled? Am I utilizing the components to their best potential? Are there new opportunities for any components that I haven't considered before or a place I can maximize use or needs where I currently am not?*

After completing the cycle for work, I followed the same process of “List, Group, Map, Feel, Question” for my personal and family “Components and Values” collection demonstrated in Figure B. While a similar series of questions revealed, what was most helpful was a final step I didn't anticipate – reflecting on how the two connect and relate. I call it “Linking”. In the final step of Linking, I was able to identify patterns of behaviors, needs and clearly see values that matter to my overall well-being. The outcomes of Linking continue on to the next phase of Reflective Practice and Design as I create a Personal Well-Being Map derived from the two components and values maps seen in Figure C.

Activity: Steps to Mapping:

Create a three-part list. Divide the list into the categories: 1. Action 2. Value 3. Desires. **Action Items** equal your “to do” or “must do” lists. Imagine these components as tasks – responding to emails, meetings, errands, scheduling, etc. **Value Items** are your practices

that make meaning. Examples would include learning, connection, listening and reading. **Desired Items** are known best practices for well-being, but often get “pinched” or abandoned. These may include themes or ideas around play, time in nature, rest or mindfulness practices.

Once the list is created, the period of grouping common themes and connections helps us to bundle into categories. This can be done in a journal, on our computers or with post it notes. (Taylor) Then we can begin to make our components and values maps as seen in Figure A and Figure B. Once we have our components and values map, we can link for a full scope personal well-being map seen in Figure C.

Figure A

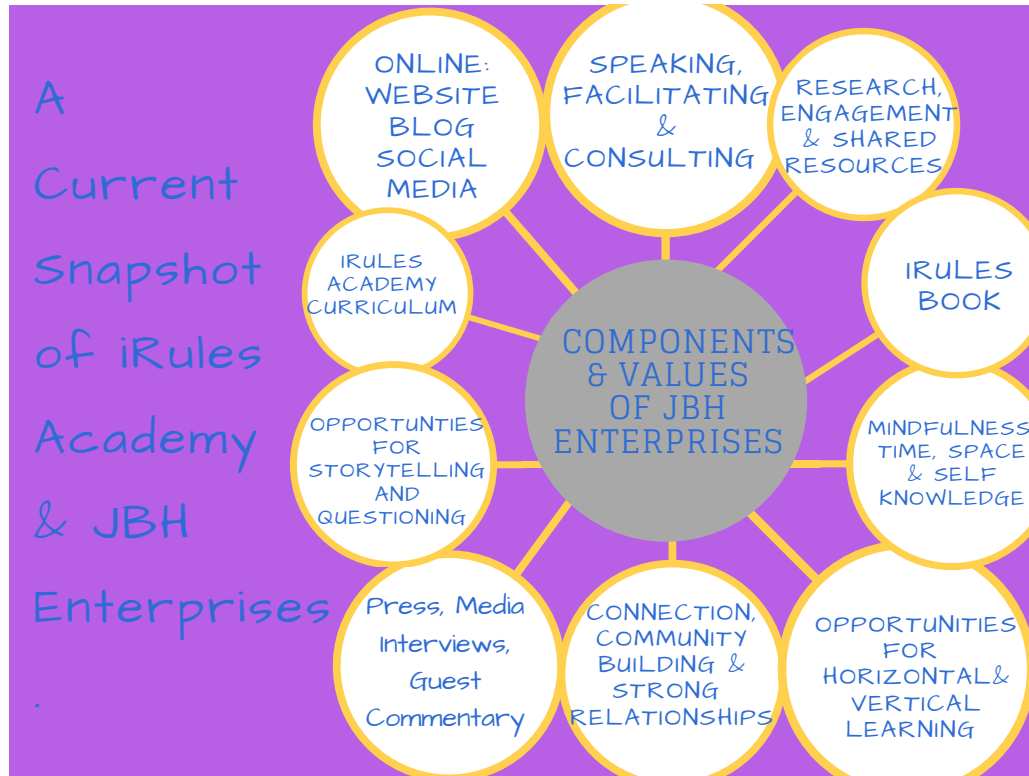


Figure B

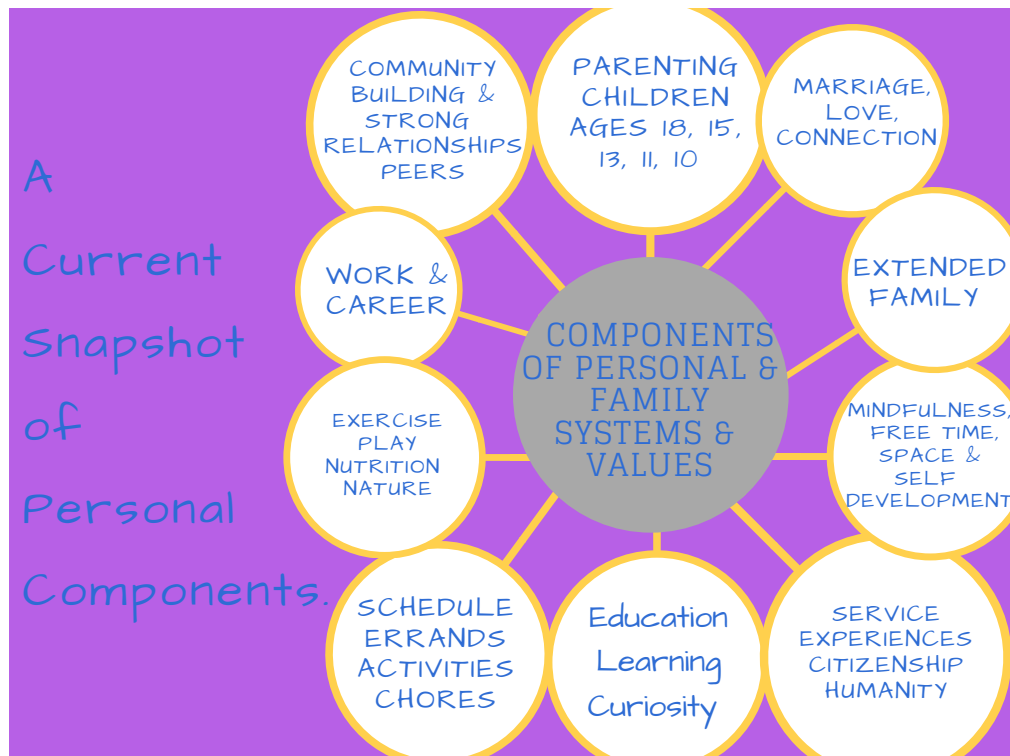


Figure C



C. Phase 3: Nurturing Personal Practices for Well-Being

What do we need to create our own well-being maps?

As I first explored burnout and its symptoms, it became clear there was not one definition. The Institute for Quality and Efficiency in Health Care (IQWiG) includes exhaustion, alienation from activities and reduced performance as burnout symptoms. But then further states that these qualities could also be aspects of anxiety and depression as well. (U.S. National Library of Medicine, 2017) This helped me move away from burnout research, prevention and recovery and focus more on developing practices towards both sustainability and well-being.

The first step to creating our own personal well-being map or linking our maps is to define well-being. “The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) has identified as essential to well-being in terms of material living conditions (housing, income, jobs) and quality of life (community, education, environment, governance, health, life satisfaction, safety and work-life balance).” In Figure D, we see the OECD’s application of well-being for Massachusetts. How can we consider these aspects of well-being applied to our own lives? What else do we want or need to be contributing factors? Simple steps to developing your own evaluation of well-being is to consider, note or discuss what you need to feel good, to feel emotionally and physically stable and cared for (provided by self or others). In response to this prompt, my list includes:

Play (or playfulness, joy)

Creativity (or passion projects, writing, problem solving)

Service (to community, others)

Sleep (rest, recovery)

Exercise (often includes nature and social groups)

Connection (relational, family, professional)

Mindfulness (practice of attention, awareness, mediation)

Figure C takes this list and creates a map or visual of these needs. Here I am able to see how well-being needs show up, overlap or intersect. In the process of creating this map, my needs emerge and what is important or imperative to my values and high level, quality functioning. This enhances sustainability as it limits self-doubt and inconsistencies. The connection that our lives are serving our highest ideals through a commitment to self-improvement and development give way to confidence and self-assurance in our daily rounds and ultimately our lives as a whole. If the well-being map feels misaligned to the lived experience, it signals to reassess processes and practices. In the midst of burnout, uncertainty and exhaustion, mapping personal well-being is especially critical. It is a touch point to living well and having the important and critical components of life identified.

Figure D



Section 3: Reflective Practice Design Thinking For Sustainability

A. Enhancing Sustainability with Systems & Design

After free writing and journaling towards a self-assessment through personal narrative, symptoms of burnout and compassion fatigue reveal. Accepting that reality, allowed me to move towards solution finding through Reflective Questioning, Component and Values grouping and Personal Well-Being mapping. Understanding how well-being informs sustainability allowed me to seek the knowledge of others for consideration and application. Then new ideas and designs emerged. Part of my work that is most valuable is how I choose to apply it to myself first and then share it with others. With that, I developed the Reflective Design Program as a series of questions to problem solving, solution finding and critical thinking.

In Figure E and F, I introduce a design for families to better understand critical thinking. In an effort to understand that critical thinking is done intentionally and with balance helps us to prevent cycles of exhaustion. As stated by Paul and Elder, "...few people realize the powerful role that thinking plays in their lives, few gain significant command of their thinking. Therefore, most people are in many ways 'victims' of their own thinking – harmed rather than helped by it. Most people are their own worst enemy. Their thinking is a continual source of problems, preventing them from recognizing opportunities, keeping them from exerting energy where it will do the most good, poisoning relationships and leading them down blind alleys." (xv) The understanding of what critical thinking is and is not supports a sustainable life.

Figure E

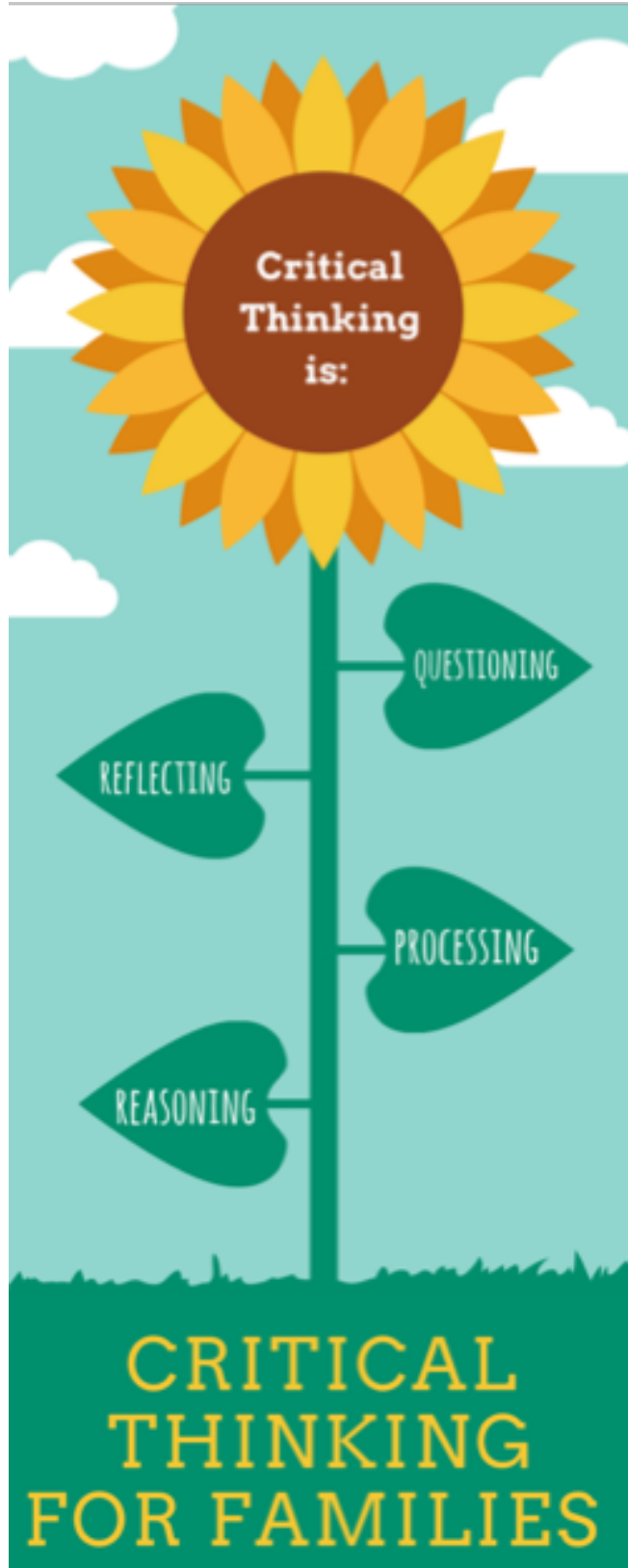


Figure F



B. Engagement with Others: Reflective Practice Designs

The future application of the following designs will be applied directly to my work. It is through my own processing and experiences that I am able to then take what I've learned to share and model for others. This is my ultimate goal of the synthesis – to include my own personal narrative and reflections on exhaustion and feeling overwhelmed and then take the systems and designs that improved those experiences as an offering to others. Below I outline some components that will be integrated or created into my future work.

Programming Overview: Figure G & H are easily integrated into workshops and private sessions that I currently offer for families, educators and individuals. They can be applied to issues related to the digital world as well as new or unknown challenges. The goal in introducing these models is to allow for replicable tools that participants can take away and use even without facilitation. Additionally, Figures E and F are visual tools used to introduce concepts around critical thinking and differentiating energy giving themes instead of depleting practices or associations to support sustainability and well-being.

Further development of these designs would allow for workshops, sessions, writings and talks to be dedicated to the more macro or general view of thinking, practices and design for families. Content can be delivered over multiple sessions or all together. My highest vision is that all families, educators, caregivers and individuals create a personal and professional reflective practice that supports their goals, needs and well-being.

Modifications and Adaptations:

One feature of the Reflective Design is the intentionality towards adaptability. I recognize that families have all levels of needs and these designs have been created to meet people where they are. Sometimes a participant is attending their first ever parenting class or reflecting on family life for the first time. We can start by just simply being present in our needs as we begin to identify what we might need. Reflective Practice can be developed in participants through scaffolding and process. We can begin slowly through connection and build in the design methodology.

Additionally, the following cycle of questions and prompts in the Reflective Design Program, shown in Figure G, serves to focus on solution finding, needs, changes and continuous self-improvement. This spring, I applied this cycle to added commitments for my children, professional opportunities and lifestyle changes to give system and design to issues, challenges and opportunities that I faced. After experiencing it myself, I then offered it to multiple participants. Two sample profiles are shown here. *Names and identifying features have been withheld for privacy.*

Figure G

Reflective Design FOR FAMILY NEEDS



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C. Reflective Design Program Profiles

Profile 1

Note: Without a lot of prompting or explanation of the process, I asked a mentee to join me for a consulting session, using the process of my Reflective Design Process (Figure G). The only preparation required was to think of an issue that is on her mind that she'd like to investigate further and work towards the development of a solution.

Bio: Young Professional, 29 years old, mentee. She has worked in the corporate field of recruiting and sales for eight years. She has recently been laid off from her job. With her severance package, she has the benefit of a few months to explore a career pivot she has long craved. She is hesitant and unsure about the steps to take. Below is a summary of the process and feedback over a one-hour session.

1. Choose A Specific Issue to Explore or Question to Ask: Should I leave the corporate world for more meaningful work at a non-profit?

2. Engage Stakeholders (a). Schedule a Time to Discuss (b):

(a1) Known Stakeholders:

- Mother and sisters for emotional support and processing.
- Life partner who also works in corporate finance, therefore a personal stakeholder and provides professional guidance with expertise in budgeting and money.
- Mental Health Counselor

(a2) Unknown Stakeholders:

- A connection to someone who has made the shift from a corporate to non-profit career.
- A professional career counselor

(b) Time to Discuss:

- Arrange topical appointment with life partner to talk about finances.
- Ask for direct support from mothers and sisters as need. Example: "Can I talk to you for a few minutes about this frustrating process of job hunting?"
- Reach out to networks for leads to unknown stakeholders.

3. Take Inventory on What's Working and What Isn't:

Started with "not much has been working" so a focus on what isn't in list form.

What isn't working right now:

- Career dissatisfaction
- Lack of available or desired mobility
- Direct connection and impact on the lives of others
- Sense of “Is this all there is?”
- Giving and not receiving
- Long commute, long days
- Managing or motivating people who are "passion neutral”

4. Assess What is Needed:

- A job starting in the next three months.
- Knowledge of what it is like to work in a non-profit
- Answer the question “Is a non-profit the same job (essentially) for less money and more time?”
- New opportunities – especially ones that may be currently unknown: “What else is there?”

5. Consider Alternatives:

*Identifies that there is more than just corporate versus non-profit. Open to exploring the alternatives or grey areas in between the two ends of the spectrum.

- Stay in the corporate world, but find a better value match in a company.
- Discover a new position or role (instead of recruiting or sales) in a corporate company.
- Explore new professional opportunities and interests like education, facilitation, coaching, mentoring.
- Go to graduate school and work part time as a fitness instructor, waitress or other part time and/or flexible hourly job.

6. Decide on Action. Revisit. Revise:

- Pinpoint existing jobs that are of interest – not just jobs currently qualified for or have experience with.
- Explore educational programs, degrees, certifications that may enhance meaning of work and/or well-being for a career pivot or personal fulfillment.

Post Process Feedback: (One day after the original session)

“Some questions and thoughts that revealed in doing this process include ‘What can I do today?’ and ‘Where can I be in ninety days?’ I feel clear that I want to work with people directly and people who are in need of education, tools or are in a state of question or curiosity. I value collaboration and a mission to achieve common goals on a consistent basis. I want to be fulfilled by the work and make a direct impact.” (Profile 1)

What else did you need from the Reflective Design Process that it did not provide?

“I would really have benefited from a process before the RDP began. I wasn’t exactly clear when we began on what my ‘situation’ to explore would be. I would love to have teased out some of the problems to clarify my question. I also felt like there were a lot of paths I could take off of each prompt. I could see many new issues come up to put through the process.” (Profile 1)

Note: From here, the initiation for the development of Figure H was created. It became a model or cycle of questions and prompts to help users crystalize and clarify some issues that can feel large and overwhelming. Precisely, “Where Do I Begin?” In the process of asking the questions, users tweeze out and identify what some of the issues and challenges they are really facing. This model comes prior to the Reflective Design Process and serves as a vetting tool for some main ideas and themes to put through the Reflective Design Model.

Profile 2

Note: A peer offered to put the RDP to the test. He is familiar with the project and the process and has used it “unofficially” in some context before. It is clear his most pressing issue is work related stress. However, for this specific instance he opted to take a challenge in his personal life to focus on in hoping it improves larger and more complicated stressors.

Bio: Male, 41-year-old business owner, father, husband. He has used fitness as a tool for stress management, tempering anxiety and as part of a healthy lifestyle for over a decade. He has reached many fitness based accomplishments and goals in the past, thrives on challenges and enjoys working out outdoors. But he due to new demands professionally in the past two years his commitment to fitness has been inconsistent – “all in or all out”.

1. Choose A Specific Issue to Explore or Question to Ask: Recommitting to a consistent fitness routine – ideally four times per week of running and the gym.

2. Engage Stakeholders (a). Schedule a Time to Discuss (b):

(a1) Known Stakeholders:

- Wife
- Trainer (Designs Fitness Plans)
- Work life and colleagues

(a2) Unknown Stakeholders:

- New workout group or partner

(b) Schedule Time to Discuss

- Develop an “appointment based” workout schedule that fits family schedule with his wife.
- Reach out to workout partners from the past for reconnection and start with a weekly meet up.

3. Take Inventory on What’s Working and What Isn’t:

Feels not much has been working recently but has old habits that have been strong.
Knows it’s possible.

What isn’t working right now:

- No motivation
- Tired from work demands and challenges (recent spike)
- Family demands
- Starting again is challenging
- Consistency
- Misses outdoor workouts
- Craves different style workouts
- No fitness group or partner

4. Assess What is Needed:

- Schedule and Design
- Routine and mapped plan for each week
- New Headphones
- Ideally a partner for accountability and motivation
- Stop overthinking
- Just start moving and build the habit
- Leave running gear in car or office to make exercise accessible more often.
- Mindset shift

5. Consider Alternatives:

- Start gently without a big goal “just start moving”
- Adopt the “Do what you can, when you can do it” philosophy
- Assess burnout and other areas of life (sleep, nutrition, relationships, stressors)
- Let go of exercise as a goal right now during a time of peak stress.
- Just go on easy and accessible neighborhood runs instead of formal fitness program.

6. Decide on Action. Revisit. Revise:

- Put on running clothes and go outside.

- Make weekly schedule
- Revisit “What Worked and What Didn’t” Step each week.

Post Process Feedback: (One day after the original session)

“It’s interesting that I didn’t discover any new knowledge about myself and my behaviors, however if I didn’t work the RDP I would just have this concept in the back of my mind. I would feel bad about it, know it’s something I need to address, but I would bring it to the surface for examination and change. It brought up a lot of feelings as well as renewed motivation and vision of what is possible with slight changes. I feel like I have clear direct steps now.” (Profile 2)

What else did you need from the Reflective Design Process that it did not provide?

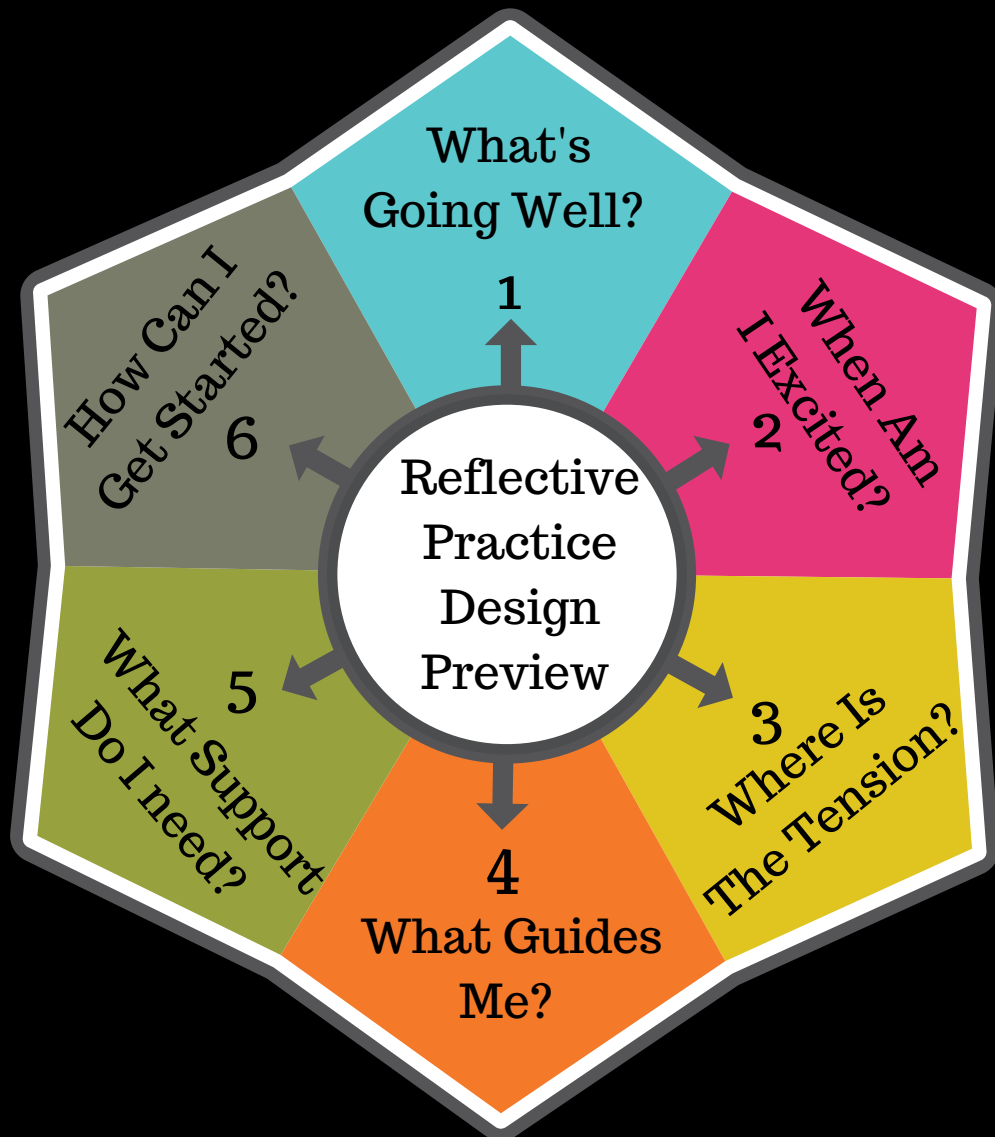
“It became obvious how one area of life is interconnected to all areas. It helped to have a specific focus, because I could see how it might be overwhelming to take on ‘stress’ or ‘health’ in a more broad sense.” (Profile 2)

Figure H Developed Based on User Feedback. I’ve identified it as a “Preview to Reflective Practice Design” or Where Do I Begin?

1. **What Guides Me? Identify Values, Principles and What’s Important.**
2. **What’s Going Well for Me Right Now? (Strengths Based Approach)**
3. **What Have I Been Excited About in the past week? (What made me laugh, lean in, what have I shared or talked about with others?)**
4. **Name & Tame: Where is there stress and tension in my life right now? Can I identify fear in my life?**
5. **If I could ask for help or support in one area of my life that I can control right now, what would it be?**

Figure H

Where Do I Begin Right Now?



Throughout this synthesis, I've explored the processes of reflective practice through my own burnout and the experiences that led to it. From there, I adopted processes to assess my needs through questioning, mapping and design thinking. In cycling through all of the tools, resources and systems, I have not found a cure or absolute for addressing burnout. But that was never the goal. However, both well-being and sustainability are more concrete, defined by what is needed for a desired life, including its challenges and uncertainties, goals and dreams.

Continued Learning and Development:

Essentially, throughout the semester I imagined myself taking this synthesis for walk through my feelings, experiences and life. In this way, I could serve my own need for Reflective Practice and reassessment of well-being and also live the material enough to be able to offer it to others. If I did my work on this project correctly it would feel like there were endless possibilities for new avenues and estuaries off of the major themes of a sustainable life of well-being through Reflective Practice.

In the final weeks of work this semester, I was revising and revisiting the content based on new and emerging lived experiences or the experiences of others with whom I engaged personally and professionally. Ideas and reflective questions that I will continue to explore and develop include the role of gender in well-being, the impact of inadequate basic needs and sustainability, activism and well-being as well as the role of qualities and characteristics like adaptability, resilience and perfectionism on the topic. This synthesis was designed to feel that there are practical steps we can take towards reflection and development, but also that it will be forever developing and lived into, just like every one of us.

2019 Synthesis: Additional Course Reflections and Integrations

Included in the outlined sections below are the additional courses I took to complete the Critical and Creative Thinking program after the completion of my synthesis project in Spring 2018. I have taken my core learnings, reflections and projects from these courses to describe their integration into this synthesis as it relates to personal and professional sustainability and well-being. The courses examined in this section are Metacognition, Foundations of Philosophical Thought and Holistic and Transformative Teaching.

Course 1: Metacognition & The Family System

In my work as an author, speaker, facilitator and consultant, working across varied socio-economics, cultures, regions, religions and ages and stages, there is a particular focus on the family system. The family system includes parents, stepparents, caregivers, relatives, siblings and anyone involved in the regular care, support and development of the family in one or more homes. Parenting and raising children can be practiced and enhanced, just like a muscle. Parenting methods, approaches and strategies can be improved. We often associate metacognition – or thinking about thinking – with learners. We imagine students in a classroom setting working to improve their study habits or reflecting on memory strategies for cognitive efficiency and effectiveness. However, these methods and concepts can work in home and family life too. Parents and caregivers can benefit from thinking about their own behaviors, actions, strategies and approaches to raising a family, problem solving, intentional communication and the functional design of everyday life. With this knowledge, it becomes clear why reflective

practice and metacognition are valuable skills to establish in our parenting and caregiving foundations, practices and philosophies.

Often in metacognition we think about classroom learners and academic improvement, evaluation or performance. But we do know that metacognitive strategies can be applied in many areas like health, business, leadership and even the family system. In *The Conscious Parent*, Tsabary implores parents to develop consciousness in their interactions, expectations and experiences with their children. Tsabary sees the value of consciousness (mindful awareness) as an opportunity for relational connection, trust and understanding. “The beauty of the conscious approach to bringing up a child is that, rather than trying to apply a technique and hoping it’s the right one for a particular situation, consciousness informs us moment-by-moment how best to go about the task of parenting...The parent-child dynamic then becomes a transcendent experience, replete with soulful exchanges...” (Tsabary 2014) Conscious parenting is not just used for better ultimate outcomes, but to deepen and improve even the most everyday aspects of family life. What Tsabary defines in her work is a metacognitive perspective on raising a family, including both metacognitive practices for the parent and as well as parent-child relationship.

Myla and Jon Kabat-Zinn also approach this concept of applying metacognition to family life in their book, *“Everyday Blessings: The Inner Work of Mindful Parenting”*. This work is through the lens of mindful-awareness and intentionality in family life – not unlike Tsabary’s use of “consciousness” - as it explicitly speaks to the value of present moment awareness, emotional regulation, empathy, communication and practice. It is in the awareness and practice where metacognition starts to reveal. “So practice simply

means intentionally remembering to be fully present with whatever comes up so that you are not on automatic pilot or acting mechanically.” (Kabat-Zinn , Kabat-Zinn 2014) A challenge in bringing metacognition to family life is not just the tools for practice, but also the time for the development of it. The following workshops are intentionally designed to create the space, so one can carve out the opportunity for meaningful reflection, awareness and growth. “Mindful parenting calls us to acknowledge and name the challenges we face daily in trying to parent with awareness. For awareness has to be inclusive. It has to include recognizing our own frustrations, insecurities, and shortcomings, our limits and limitations, even our darkest and most destructive feelings, and the ways we may feel overwhelmed or pulled apart. It challenges us to ‘work with’ these very energies consciously and systematically.” (Kabat-Zinn, Kabat-Zinn 2014)

In the programs and workshops, systems for mindful and conscious parenting can be achieved through mediation, guidance and support. The facilitator, the community of participants and the monitoring one’s own development, can provide this. In Kroesch’s piece (2015) he speaks to the value of opportunities to reflect outside of classroom settings that work towards improvement. If students, athletes and educators can benefit from reflective practice, certainly parents and caregivers can. He uses prompts like “What did you learn from this assignment? What challenges did you encounter and how did you overcome those challenges? What would you do differently? What did you find most interesting or surprising about this project?” (Kroesch 2015)

In Goulston’s interview with Dr. Pally, psychologist and cofounder for the Center For Reflective Parenting, she furthers the point about the value of learning reflection and metacognition. “Another point I want to emphasize is that reflective function is a natural

capacity that helps people in all types of situations be less reactive and also cope better with stress. But even though it is natural it still needs to be learned. Just like language...It's the same thing with reflective function. Kids learn how to be reflective by being taken care of by people who are reflective. So if we teach parents how to be more reflective, they will naturally pass this onto their children.” (Pally 2011) If we look at the scope and value of intentional, conscious, mindful parenting paired with practice, reflection, mediation, strategies and opportunities for learning, we see that parenting can be metacognitive. In addition to being able to think about thinking in family life, when practiced and applied, it can be incredibly powerful for the growth and development of the family systems, relationships, functions and experiences.

Key Development: A workshop series giving families the opportunity for thinking about their own beliefs, behaviors and thinking. These opportunities provide foundational thinking to support strategies for use in family life, situational experiences and our motivations.

Workshop 1

Purpose: To encourage parents (and caregivers) to understand and adopt metacognitive strategies in their family life.

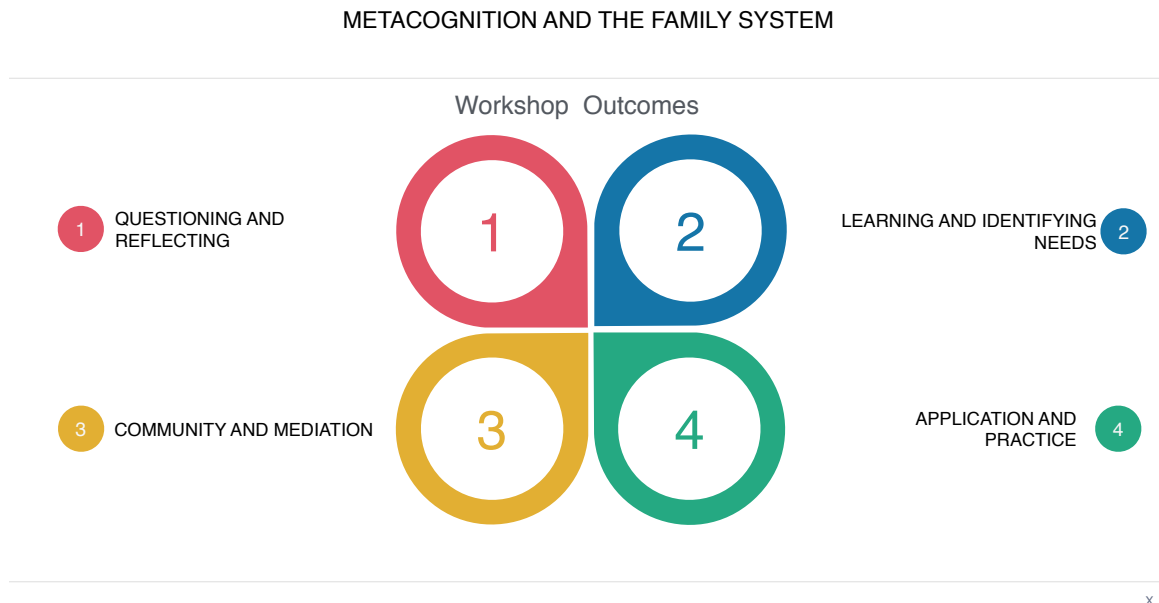
Workshop 2

Purpose: To encourage parents (and caregivers) to use metacognition as it relates to the practical design of functionality and family systems.

Workshop 3

Purpose: To learn strategies for improved and deepened communication among parents (and caregivers) and their children using reflective practice.

Figure I



The three parenting workshops can function as a series or they can support metacognitive learning for families who attend only one. The idea is that each session is rooted in both conceptual and practical metacognitive strategies, serving beginners on the subject and those looking to refine their metacognitive skills. Each individual participant through journaling, family dialogue and reflective practice will monitor metacognitive practices and strategies for the intentional development of family functions. Additionally, online communities and support groups will form after the workshops so that participants have the opportunity to stay connected, share ideas and addresses challenges they may face as they adopt metacognitive methods in the family system. Participants also have the opportunity to follow up with the facilitator through online communications like social media, newsletters, shared resources and private coaching sessions as needed. A key component of sustaining metacognitive practices in family life is a commitment to practice and not perfection. But instead, strengthening strategies over time.

Course 2: Foundations of Philosophical Thought

A primary focus of my work is to develop individual, community and societal best practices and solutions around technology and human relationships. Couple this with my own parenting of children ages eleven to nineteen years old, I feel I am at the center of raising Generation Tech. I am deeply invested as I live with the challenges and benefits of technology in my home as well as in my profession. I also see the way we collectively address this conversation and the practices around tech as an obvious example of an opportunity for use of sustainable family practices. How are we thinking critically about the topic? How are we finding meaningful and reflective strategies? How can we approach inquiry in a way that gets us closer to a true answer and not just a prescription?

While I love being a part of this global conversation, I find there is often not enough time or emphasis to examine the questions that we ask about screens and technology in my particular genre. Often philosophical questions about tech come up in reference to topics like Artificial Intelligence, innovation in the workplace, virtual reality and futuristic theory. But, the user experience in the here and now is often omitted from the conversation around philosophy. Since we've collectively adopted technology like smart phones, social media, high speed, hyper-connected Internet access, both quickly and suddenly, we don't always take (or have) the opportunity for questioning or reflection. We don't slow down the process enough to consider or develop a philosophical approach to our tech use. In my work, I'd like to develop a more systematic approach to creating opportunities for philosophical development of ideas and beliefs for

families around tech. I feel these opportunities can deepen how and why a family adopts and uses tech in the home, making it safer, smart and a more balanced experience for all.

Here, the role and impact of the Internet on the family system through a philosophical lens. Current common practice in evaluating the Internet's impact on our youth is often through a fear based, negative approach. Headlines grab bits and pieces of ever-emerging research and call out the problems or we hear reports of worst-case scenarios – the exceptions, not the everyday use. Because of societal pressure, families, caregivers and educators resist or resent it, or they surrender to it. Allowing the machines to determine family life. In this exploration we'll consider if we are using the correct questions and applications of our beliefs and interactions with technology. If so, how have those been developed? If not, how can we improve them? Each user can apply philosophy to their beliefs and behavior online for a deeper, more meaningful understanding and experience.

Recently, in a parent workshop, I had a mother state that every day she wakes up “at war with screens.” This has stayed with me. Why are we at war with screens? How can we build a peaceful relationship with the technology in our lives? What might we need to change our thoughts, beliefs and experiences with screens? While we can acknowledge that prescriptive support is helpful to the family system, it cannot be the only approach. An opportunity for reflection is critical for decision making in modern families. The value of introducing intentional Reflective Practice is present again in Tsabary's work “The Conscious Parent.” Here, she works to debunk the idea that parenting is fixed or cannot be improved upon. “We hold beliefs, values and assumptions we have never examined. Many of us don't even see a reason to question our ideas

because we believe we are ‘right’ and have nothing to rethink.” (3) Instead, she asks the reader series of reflective questions throughout the text to bring their own ideas, develop their own mission for parenting and to attune to each individual child – and the self - with loving awareness and acceptance. Often, we do not associate tech use (high speed, hyper-connected) and attunement. But what happens if we do? What improvements emerge to support children in their digital habits and behaviors? It is worthy to investigate and development that connection in addressing our needs as a family.

When offering best practices as a process, reflective and intentional should be offered instead of just an answer. Take the series of questions below from a typical parent engagement and see how they have been deepened and enhanced to continue the development of one’s own philosophy around technology.

Figure J - Parent Engagement Sample Common Questions:

What Is Currently Asked:

- What’s the right age to buy a smartphone for my child?
- How much screen time is too much?
- When should my child be allowed to go on social media?
- Which parental controls are best?
- How can I stop my child from always being on screens?
- How do I know if my child is addicted to screens?

There is value in getting our specific needs met through the advice and experience of others, updated research and expert point of view. However, we can often come to our own conclusions if we deepen or expand our questioning. Asking questions is such a vital part of philosophy. Moving through a series of frequently asked questions will always be

a part of forming conclusions, but making space for alternative or deeper questioning to emerge is vital to developing a family philosophy. Myla and Jon Kabat-Zinn also approach this concept of applying metacognition to family life in their book, *“Everyday Blessings: The Inner Work of Mindful Parenting”*. This work is through the lens of mindful-awareness and intentionality in family life – not unlike Tsabury’s use of “consciousness” - as it explicitly speaks to the value of present moment awareness, emotional regulation, empathy, communication and practice (Kabat-Zinn, Kabat-Zinn 2014).

Figure K - How Can We Philosophically Reframe Our Questions:

- Why do I feel afraid of the technology? What am I specifically worried about?
- What do I want from my technology? What is currently working and where do we need to improve?
- How can we balance our lives to embrace both life online and life away from the screens?
- What (if anything) are we giving up to enjoy the Internet?
- How can we integrate use of technology into the life we wish to design for our families and ourselves?
- What is our family’s philosophy around tech? What is the value in developing one?

Here we can also see that the Reflective Practice Design Preview (Figure H) combines solution-based questions for families to ask, while also integrating questions from a philosophical approach instead of just a prescriptive question from participant and answer from expert. This allows guidance, but also space for individualism. It allows for a macro lens, but also works towards an action step. If we put one of the commonly asked seminar question through a cycle we can see a belief system emerge as well as practical

family planning. This works with mediation and facilitation in a group setting but can also be a tool for coaching or a private one on one setting, serving families to deepen their thinking.

Key Development: Reframing questions and concerns for greater impact.

Figure J

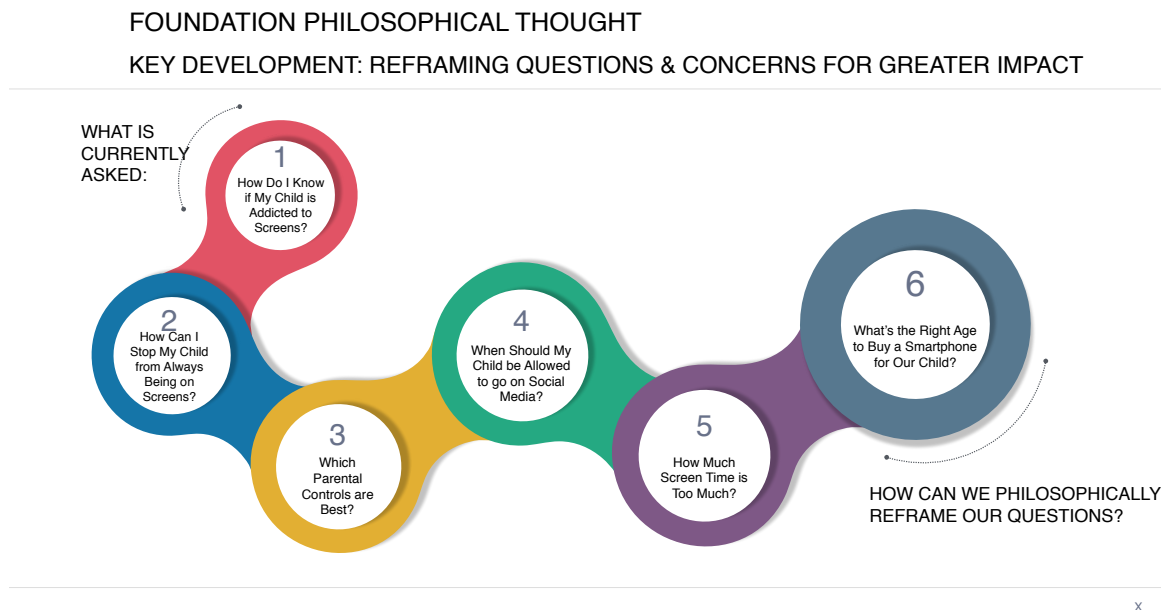
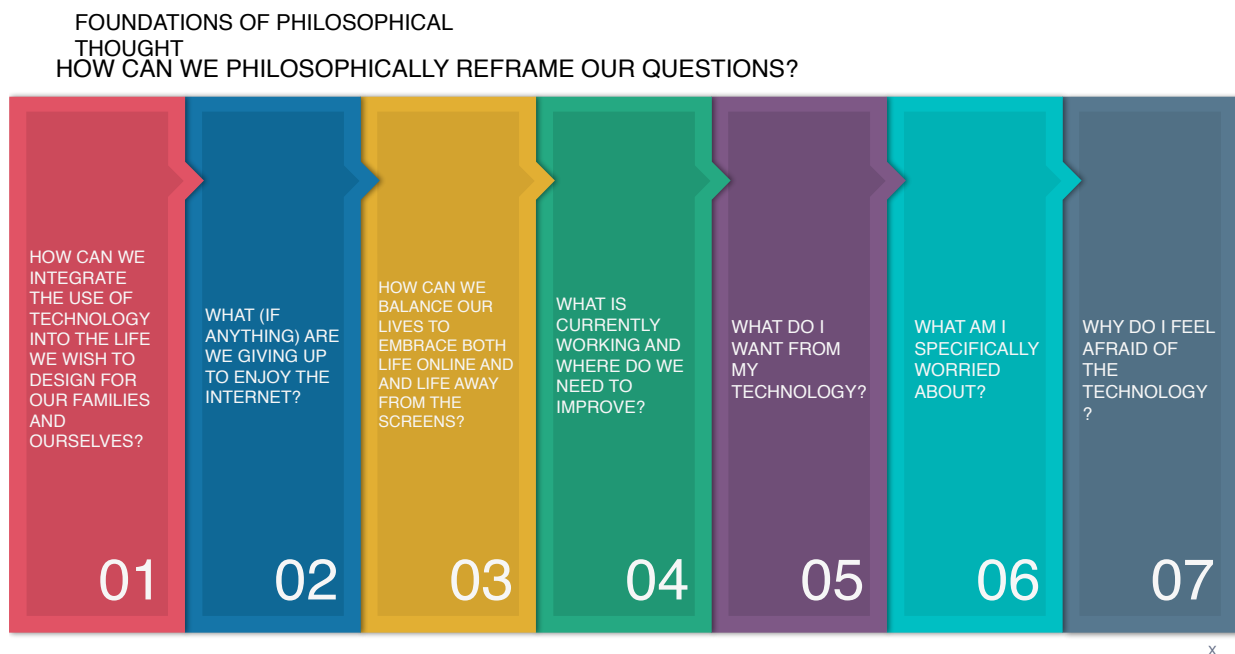


Figure K



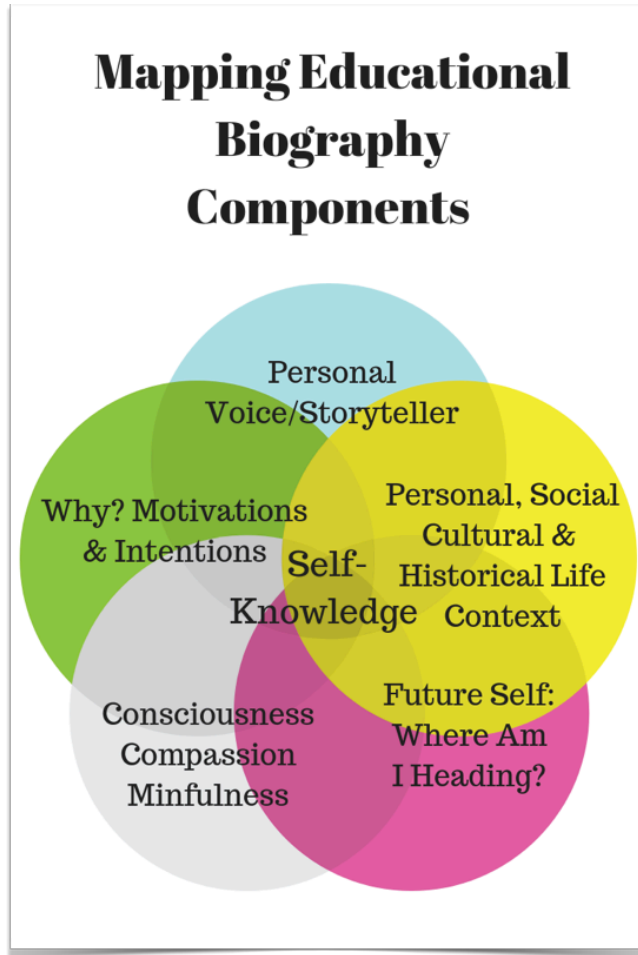
Course 3: Holistic and Transformative Teaching:

Key Development: The Educational Biography Model For Family Biographies

We are the voices of our own lives. Accepting the role of storyteller allows us to insert meaning to the personal, social, cultural and historic context of our individual and familial journeys. In my work, I've observed that families do not make the time or space for reflective practice. This is partly because of the demands on the modern family, but also because there is no model on how to design and engage in the process. But I believe it is critical to examine our family systems for deeper understanding of ourselves, but also to identify values, goals and create our own intentional design for our family life.

Dominice explains Educational Biographies in his book "Learning From Our Lives" as, "...its main purpose is to help adults deepen their understanding of their own ways of learning and of their existing knowledge. It is a narrative research method that helps people identify their learning processes in adulthood." (xv) As I broke down the core concepts I was seeing in the Educational Biography, I started to think about how it might apply to families. But also, how it might support the self-development of an individual who is likely part of a family system as a parent, grandparent, child or caregiver. When I mapped the concepts (Figure L), I began to see a replicable frame that could apply to families.

Figure L



So, the educational biography thinks of the learner. What happens when we replace “learning” with “parenting” in this definition? We can apply our generational history, behaviors, psychology and lived experiences to our current family practices and belief systems. We can begin to explore our motivations and philosophies in parenting. We can grow in new ways and strengthen our skills. When we have this understanding of the self, we begin to move through the world with an understanding, empathy and knowledge that can serve us instead of unconsciously holding us back.

In the process of using an educational biography as a model for familial biographies, what are the transformational outcomes I hope participants achieve?

- To understand our own family history.
- To understand our social/cultural/historical context.
- To raise consciousness about personal parenting styles & philosophies.
- To improve - with intention & awareness - our parenting practices.
- A tangible process for self-knowledge.
- A shareable aspect of one's family history.
- An opportunity to identify the "whys" in our own family life.
- An opportunity to reflect on what we want from family life now, what might need change & where we're headed.
- A community building process with others through shared experience.

When I look at this list, I see the long term, high quality value of engaging in this process. In the course, I looked to develop tools and opportunities to bring this to life for participants. Using mapping techniques, mission and value statements and reflective practice for critical incidents both in personal, in journaling and virtually. This multi-faceted approach allows for accessibility and reach for all families.

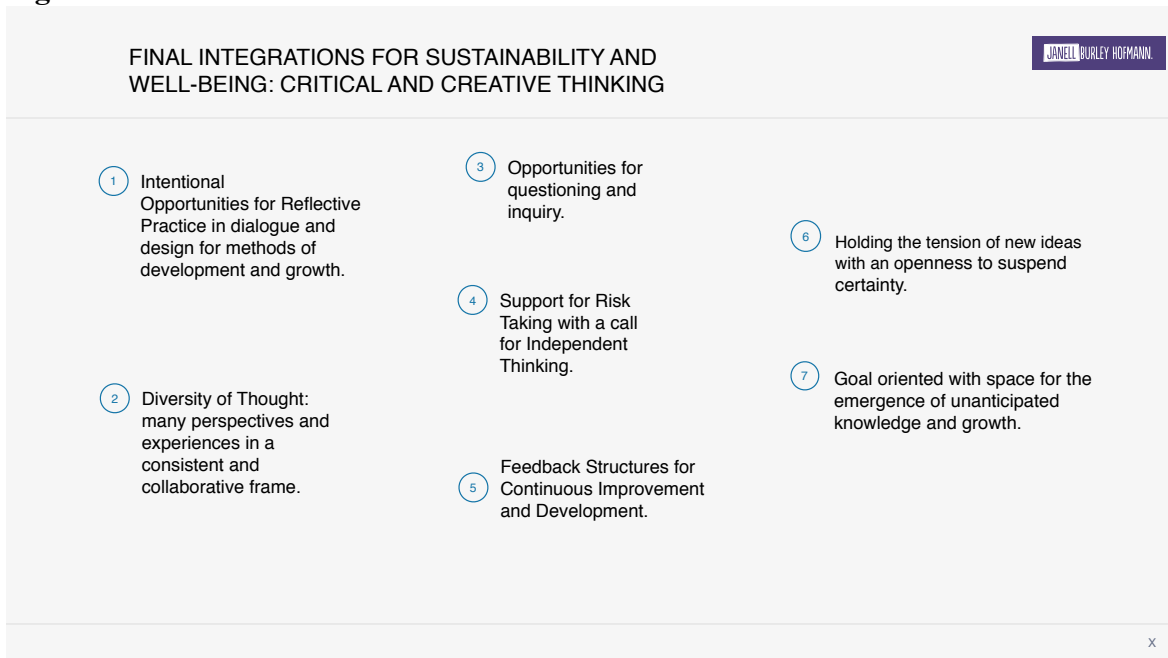
Each of these additional classes, supports the synthesis so truly, that I can't imagine how I designed the synthesis without them last year. They prove to be so critical to my work and what I set out to examine, that I see them as foundational in the principles, systems and exercises previously created. Taking this extended view of the synthesis through the lens of these three additional courses has allowed for reverse engineering in the designs and intentions of the work. These courses allowed for the impact to deepen, the concepts to strengthen and the practical application in the form of workshops, inquiry and programming. It has become crystal clear through this update, that helping families build connection and create opportunities for self-knowledge, inquiry and education is the focus of my energy and goals. That output of information has served my own

sustainability, as I continue to clarify and mold my professional goals. Here is where I see the work come full circle. I entered into this project seeking support and solutions around sustainability and well-being so that I could address it for myself in real time, assess needs and experience the process with a bigger goal of also being able to offer it to others. This is similar to how I set out in my profession. My son's contract was a solution I used to support parenting in the modern world. It grew – along with my work - to serve others out of societal need. I hope the synthesis can carry on in the same way.

Final Integrations for Sustainability and Well-Being in Critical and Creative Thinking

The thread that weaves throughout my personal and professional life, the Critical and Creative Thinking Graduate Program and this synthesis is the opportunity for reflection, self-development, community and a commitment continuous learning and improvement. These are at the very core of necessary components for a sustainable life of meaning and purpose. Regardless of our fields of study and work, our family life or our individual journey, when we have these touchpoints, we can build up and out from a foundation that will only support our goals and intentions.

Figure M



Appendix A: Gregory's iPhone Contract

Dear Gregory

Merry Christmas! You are now the proud owner of an iPhone. Hot Damn! You are a good & responsible 13-year-old boy and you deserve this gift. But with the acceptance of this present comes rules and regulations. Please read through the following contract. I hope that you understand it is my job to raise you into a well-rounded, healthy young man that can function in the world and coexist with technology, not be ruled by it. Failure to comply with the following list will result in termination of your iPhone ownership.

I love you madly & look forward to sharing several million text messages with you in the days to come.

1. It is my phone. I bought it. I pay for it. I am loaning it to you. Aren't I the greatest?
2. I will always know the password.
3. If it rings, answer it. It is a phone. Say hello, use your manners. Do not ever ignore a phone call if the screen reads "Mom" or "Dad". Not ever.
4. Hand the phone to one of your parents promptly at 7:30pm every school night & every weekend night at 9:00pm. It will be shut off for the night and turned on again at 7:30am. If you would not make a call to someone's land line, wherein their parents may answer first, then do not call or text. Listen to those instincts and respect other families like we would like to be respected.
5. It does not go to school with you. Have a conversation with the people you text in person. It's a life skill. *Half days, field trips and after school activities will require special consideration.
6. If it falls into the toilet, smashes on the ground, or vanishes into thin air, you are responsible for the replacement costs or repairs. Mow a lawn, babysit, stash some birthday money. It will happen, you should be prepared.
7. Do not use this technology to lie, fool, or deceive another human being. Do not involve yourself in conversations that are hurtful to others. Be a good friend first or stay the hell out of the crossfire.
8. Do not text, email, or say anything through this device you would not say in person.
9. Do not text, email, or say anything to someone that you would not say out loud with their parents in the room. Censor yourself.

10. No porn. Search the web for information you would openly share with me. If you have a question about anything, ask a person – preferably me or your father.
11. Turn it off, silence it, put it away in public. Especially in a restaurant, at the movies, or while speaking with another human being. You are not a rude person; do not allow the iPhone to change that.
12. Do not send or receive pictures of your private parts or anyone else's private parts. Don't laugh. Someday you will be tempted to do this despite your high intelligence. It is risky and could ruin your teenage/college/adult life. It is always a bad idea. Cyberspace is vast and more powerful than you. And it is hard to make anything of this magnitude disappear – including a bad reputation.
13. Don't take a zillion pictures and videos. There is no need to document everything. Live your experiences. They will be stored in your memory for eternity.
14. Leave your phone home sometimes and feel safe and secure in that decision. It is not alive or an extension of you. Learn to live without it. Be bigger and more powerful than FOMO – fear of missing out.
15. Download music that is new or classic or different than the millions of your peers that listen to the same exact stuff. Your generation has access to music like never before in history. Take advantage of that gift. Expand your horizons.
16. Play a game with words or puzzles or brain teasers every now and then.
17. Keep your eyes up. See the world happening around you. Stare out a window. Listen to the birds. Take a walk. Talk to a stranger. Wonder without googling.
18. You will mess up. I will take away your phone. We will sit down and talk about it. We will start over again. You & I, we are always learning. I am on your team. We are in this together. It is my hope that you can agree to these terms. Most of the lessons listed here do not just apply to the iPhone, but to life. You are growing up in a fast and ever-changing world. It is exciting and enticing. Keep it simple every chance you get. Trust your powerful mind and giant heart above any machine. I love you. I hope you enjoy your awesome new iPhone. Merry Christmas!

xoxoxoxo
Mom

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