




*The Life Story We Really Want*  
*July 14, 2009*

GO! Network • 800 N Tucker Blvd. • St. Louis, MO 63101 • 314.802.5475 • [www.gonetworkstl.com](http://www.gonetworkstl.com)



*The Life Story We Really Want*

**Steve Ehrlich**  
**Associate Dean for Academics**  
**University College**  
**Washington University in St. Louis**

GO! Network • 800 N Tucker Blvd. • St. Louis, MO 63101 • 314.802.5475 • [www.gonetworkstl.com](http://www.gonetworkstl.com) 2

- Research Companies - Finding out general information will allow you to ask intelligent questions of the recruiter, and learn where you might fit in at the company
- Resume - It is essential to have a resume that reflects your current skills and experiences, as most companies will be forwarding copies of resumes to many departments within their organization. Typos, grammatical errors, and inaccurate information are out of the question. The second an employer sees any of these, he or she will instantly lose faith in you. Make sure that others have proofread your resume for accuracy; your program coordinator in the Office of Co-op & Career Services is available to check it over. And, of course, the resume itself must be well written and your accomplishments clearly stated. Be prepared to print many copies.



## Life Stories

- **Who we are**
- **What we do**
- **Satisfaction**
- **Accomplishment**
- **Relationships**



## My Story

***Reflection: What's my reference point?  
Think about and jot down at least two  
beliefs that have guided you, personally  
and professionally, to date.***



## Who Am I Now?

- **Teacher**
- **Advisor**
- **Counselor**
- **Adult Education**
- **Learning about Transitions Intentionally**
- **Making an Intellectual Exercise Real**



## Adult Development

- **Change in attitude, values, and behavior as a result of interactions with the social environment, occurring over time but not strictly as a result of time.**
- **Identity and Intimacy. Essence of adulthood is to work and to love.**
- **Internal/external challenge.**



## Adult Learning

- **Interaction between ways of knowing and the environment.**
- **Focus on transitions and disorienting dilemmas.**
- **Experience and critical reflection.**
- **Life stories, learning, and development.**



## Transformative Learning

- **Understanding, challenging, and changing assumptions and practices in order to become a more thoughtful, responsible adult.**
- **Learning occurs when assumptions that we take for granted are called into question.**
- **Central process of adult development.**



## Transformative Learning Phases

- **Disorienting dilemma**
- **Self-examination with genuine feelings**
- **Critical assessment of assumptions and sources**
- **Sense of shared transformation**
- **Exploration of new roles, relationships, actions**
- **Planning a course of action**
- **Acquiring knowledge and skills for implementing a plan**
- **Provisional trying new roles and ideas**
- **Building competence and confidence in new roles**
- **Reintegration based on new perspective**



## Critical Thinking and Transformative Learning

- **Logic**
- **Reasoning**
- **Analytical Thinking**
- **Evidence**
- **Identifying Contradictions in Arguments**
- **Empirical Validity of Conclusions**
- **Distinguishing Bias from Reason**
- **Distinguishing Fact from Opinion**
- **Free from influence of internal or external constraint or coercion**
- **Critically reflective, understanding internal and external assumptions**
- **Context**
- **Open to alternative perspectives**



- **The capacity to think critically can be seen as one of the chief markers by which we recognize adult qualities in an individual.**



## Reflection

- **Rate yourself as a transformative learner and critical thinker.**

✓ **Excellent**

✓ **Good**

✓ **Average**

✓ **Poor**



## Assumptions

- **Social and cultural norms; families; institutions**
- **Childhood assumptions that we examine critically in adulthood.**
- **Self-evident rules that we use to explain, judge, and make decisions.**
- **Unquestioned givens, self-evident truths.**
- **Rationale for cause and effect.**
- **Rationale for conduct in relationships.**
- **Explanations for human nature.**
- **Individual, as well as social, political, economic implications.**



**Roger Gould, *Transformations*  
Family and Childhood**

- **We'll always be our parent's child.**
- **They'll always be there when we can't succeed on our own.**
- **Their protected, simplified reality is correct.**
- **There is no conflict, pain, death in the world.**
- **Implications for decision making in adulthood**



**Parker Palmer, *Let Your Life Speak*  
Childhood clues and Shadow Casting Monsters**

- **Insecurity about identity and self-worth**
- **Universe is hostile and competitive**
- **Functional atheism, control, and order**
- **Fear of the natural chaos of life; need for rules and order**
- **Fear of failure, denial of death**
- **Reframing crisis as opportunity**
- **Outward Bound motto: “if you can’t get out of it, get into it.”**
- **We need to ride certain monsters all the way down, explore the shadows they create, and experience the transformation that comes as we get into our own spiritual lives.**



**Howard Gardner**  
*Creativity and Early Years*

- **Adulthood is the time to mine the early years of childhood.**
- **Intersection of the childlike and the mature.**



## Reflection

- ***Identify at least one important childhood clue that you have integrated into your adult life, perhaps even work, and one that you have neglected as an adult. Why?***



## Life Stories

Frank McCourt, *Angela's Ashes*

- **Never encouraged to look inward.**
- **I simply didn't know that my own experiences were of any value. I had no self-knowledge at all.**
- **I learned to drop the mask.**



## Life Stories

Henry Louis Gates, Jr., *Colored People*

- **When I started writing, it turned out to be a window on my past. I was peeling away all these layers of memory.**
- **Dealing with something buried so deep.**
- **Being honest about pain and fear.**
- **Unfolding of your ego.**



## Life Stories

Jill Ker Conway, *The Road from Coorain*

- **Why did it happen that way? What was really going on?**
- **All of us live with a life history in our mind and very few of us subject it to critical analysis. But we are all storytelling creatures . So it's very important to examine your own story and make sure that the plot is the one you really want.**



## My Life Story Applying Transformative Learning

- **Disorienting dilemma.**
- **Self-examination with genuine feelings (fear, anger, shame).**
- **Critical assessment of assumptions and sources.**
- **Sense of shared transformation.**
- **Exploration of options for new roles, relationships, actions.**
- **Planning a course of action.**
- **Acquiring knowledge and skills for implementing a plan.**
- **Provisional trying new roles and ideas.**
- **Building competence and confidence in new roles.**
- **Reintegration based on new perspective.**
- **Continuing Education and Lifelong Learning**



## Continuing Education and Transformative Learning

- Lifelong learning, rather than short-term fix.
- Liberal and practical education.
- Identifying and challenging assumptions.
- Revisiting childhood interests.
- Exploring new roles, alternatives, resources.
- Discovering new relationships.
- Implications for adult development--identity, intimacy.
- Opportunity for creativity through critical self-assessment.



## Continuing Education

- **Quality, Affordability, Accessibility**
- **Interests/Skills/Values**
- **Whole person**
- **Context**
- **Courses for specific skills or industries: e.g. CRM**
- **Liberal education**
- **Opportunity for giving back, e.g. Encore**
- **Strong industries**
- **Networking**
- **Intellectual stimulation during transition.**
- **Credit and noncredit.**
- **Different forms: Lectures, symposia, museums, reading, travel.**
- **Teaching.**
- **UCEA-[www.ucea.edu](http://www.ucea.edu)**



## Closing Thoughts

- **More like a river than a map**
- **The Human Equation**
- **Life Stories: Identity, Integrity, Heart**



*Thank you!*

**Steve Ehrlich**  
**Associate Dean for Academics**  
**University College**  
**Washington University in St. Louis**  
[ehrllich@wustl.edu](mailto:ehrllich@wustl.edu)  
**(314) 935-4320**



## Selected Resources

- Brookfield, Stephen, *Developing Critical Thinkers: Challenging Adults to Explore Alternative Ways of Thinking and Acting*, Jossey-Bass, 1987.
- Cranton, Patricia, *Understanding and Promoting Transformative Learning*, Jossey-Bass, 2006.
- Gardner, Howard, *Creating Minds: An Anatomy of Creativity Seen Through the Lives of Freud, Einstein, Picasso, Stravinsky, Eliot, Graham, and Ghandi*, Basic Books, 1993.
- Maclean, Norman, "A River Runs Through It," in *A River Runs Through It and Other Stories*, University of Chicago Press, 1976, pp. 1-104.
- Merriam, Sharan B., Rosemary S. Caffarella and Lisa M. Baumgartner, *Learning in Adulthood: A Comprehensive Guide*, Third Edition, Jossey-Bass, 2007.
- Mezirow, Jack and Associates, *Learning as Transformation: Critical Perspectives on a Theory in Progress*, Jossey-Bass, 2000.
- Palmer, Parker J., *Let Your Life Speak: Listening for the Voice of Vocation*, Jossey-Bass, 2000.
- Palmer, Parker, "The Heart of a Teacher." In *Change*, November/December 1997, pp. 15-21.
- Zinsser, William, *Inventing the Truth: The Art and Craft of Memoir*, Houghton Mifflin, 1987.