

Rebecca Johns¹

On the Way to Internal Motivation. Exploring a Transformational Approach to Life & Work

I recently decided to go back through all my calendars from 1998–2016. I was curious about how I arrived at this place in my life and my career. What struck me the most is that I don't think I could have thought up what happened.

I have always been a planner and goal setter. At the same time, something in me has trusted that I was here for a specific purpose and that I should follow my instincts and trust my heart. I was born in 1949. As a young girl, I was told to be pretty, nice, and keep my thoughts to myself. If I did that, hopefully someday a nice man would marry me and take care of me. I knew when I was a young child that I didn't want that. I saw myself traveling, having adventures, and being in rooms standing in front of people as a teacher. I resisted the typical stereotype of being a 'nice' girl. I wasn't rebellious, I just chose my own path.

Along the way, I realized that my plans, goals, and choices weren't just me. I wasn't creating my life by myself. I did not grow up in a religious home, but I always knew there was something powerful that I was connected to that led me.

As I looked back on my career, it was the same way. I chose from my heart. As I developed my teaching skills, I also continued to explore, travel, and be endlessly curious about people. Again, I somehow trusted that I would end up where I belonged, doing what I was meant to do in this life.

The most powerful, life changing decisions I made along the way almost always didn't make sense at first. I believed I had a purpose, and part of that was to listen to my inner knowing. When I tried to make things happen through force and attachment to outcomes, it rarely worked. I would be frustrated and keep pushing. When I let go, and allowed my connection with that source to guide me, the results were always better than I could have imagined. I often say that if I had gotten what I thought I wanted, I would have made my life small and predictable.

Our purpose is not our job or career. Our purpose is about who we are here to be. We also have core lessons we are here to learn. Our biggest lesson is our

¹ www.RebeccaJohnsCoaching.com; e-mail: rjohns@aboutmontana.net.

most important offering to others. One of my lessons has been to be brave and confident enough to open, connect, and be willing to share my stories.

We must also create the structures that support the full expression of that offering. We must take action and create concrete ways for our work in the world to take form. I had to study, take jobs, change jobs, design and plan events, write, speak, travel, and teach.

A transformational approach

A transformational approach to life and work includes allowing ourselves to have a direct and meaningful relationship with our Source/God/the Universe... choose your name for it. It means a commitment to being still and quiet and allowing it to speak to us. We have access to guidance all the time and we often forget to tune in. We can become so focused on what we want to happen that we don't see what is trying to happen.

When I began my coach training, my intention was to take my new skills into the public school system where I had previously taught and consulted. I believed I only knew that arena, so that was where I belonged. I approached school systems consistently offering coaching as a new way to support teachers. The belief that it was the only place I could offer my skills stopped me from looking at other options and noticing that there were others interested in and willing to try coaching. I was not paying attention to the guidance that kept leading me to the business and leadership section of bookstores. After a year of not getting anywhere with the schools, the owner of a company contacted me asking me to coach her team in a mortgage company. My first reaction was, "I don't know anything about mortgage companies." I called my coach with this concern, her reply was, "They don't need to you know about mortgage companies, they need you to know people." I finally realized that my interest in leadership, and my growing book collection were trying to show me a much broader opportunity for my work. If I had insisted that my idea was right, I would still be knocking on the doors of schools. Clearly, the idea of leadership development would not leave me alone until I said yes!

It's not only what we do, it's who we are being

Several years ago, when my son was 12 years old, we stopped at the grocery store on our way home from school. I saw someone I knew and said, "Hi, how are

you?” 30 minutes later I was still in the fresh vegetable section listening to her tearful reply. My son had gone to the car to wait. When I came out, I apologized to him for his wait and his reply surprised me. He said, “That happens a lot with you.” I acknowledged that was true, saying; “I know, what is that about?” He said, “When you ask how someone is, they know you mean it, they know you care, so they tell you.” What I thought was a general greeting meant only to say hi and move on, often became hearing more than I expected. It was a message to me that some of what I am here to offer is my curiosity, an open heart, and empathy. My work was to learn ways to offer these qualities to serve others in the best possible way.

Being in Service for Others

*I don't know what your destiny will be, but one thing I know:
the only ones among you who will be really happy
are those who will have sought and found how to serve.*

Albert Schweitzer

We often don't see that we are always in service of something, we are serving by being who we are, not only by doing what we do.

Clients, colleagues, and friends complain about being frustrated in their lives and work because they believe they can't be who they really are. Two questions I offer for them to play with are: What do people come to you for, and what do people thank you for? Look and listen beyond the surface. They may come for information, to be shown how to do something, perhaps for directions. And, they are also coming to you because you are helpful, supportive, generous, willing to listen, and safe. You are already being who you are here to be. If they thank you, you can ask, “What are you thanking me for?” They will likely say, “For being a good listener, for being willing to help, for being open.”

Notice the ways you are already being shown and told your purpose. Try not to dismiss these ways of being as unimportant. They are the most important aspects of your journey, to be taken to heart and fully expressed.

As coaches, we have the privilege of being with clients in a very intimate way. I remember wishing I could be with clients all day every day because I loved the energy of deep listening. I found myself tuning in to listen to their soul. Between coaching calls and meetings, I would miss that energy, believing that I could only access it when I was coaching. It finally came to my awareness that I can do that

any time. Therefore, we can be in the energy of the depth and meaning of what we do as coaches any time we are willing to be fully present, open, receptive, and curious. There is guidance available to us all the time. We need only to say yes to noticing it and receiving it.

Intuition is the language of the heart

We are often being given signs, signals, and messages about where to go and what to do, but we can miss them. Synchronistic events are happening almost daily. As I read through my calendars, I noticed how what I thought at the time was a coincidence was very purposeful in my life journey.

Our life is a journey to wholeness. The purpose of life is life itself. The nature of life is growth. Being aware of and taking conscious action to support our physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being creates that wholeness. We are here to express our souls. We can listen to our souls. Our inner voice is our heart's knowing. Being still allows us to hear the voice of our truth, our soul's knowing.

I have many examples in my life of decisions I had already said yes to in my heart, without having any idea how it would happen. The answer to 'how' is 'yes'. I knew that something powerful was happening and it was not just me creating what happened. Trusting and having faith in what I call my unseen support is the key. It takes courage and practice to say yes without knowing how.

We are meant to be co-creative partners with our source which speaks to us through our intuition; the language of the soul.

Why leadership and who we are in the workplace matters

Our model of 50–60 hour work week is unhealthy and outdated. We are learning from the next generations that work life balance is the key to productivity. Many of our next generation workforce have a very different approach to their work and their lives. Being with their families, taking time off to restore and regenerate, and being creative are very important to them.

Two years ago, my coach and mentor Alan Seale of the Center for Transformational Presence came to Montana to lead a 3-day workshop on leadership and coaching in a rapidly changing world. Half of our group of 25 were in their 30's. None of them were there to become coaches. They were attending to learn a coaching approach to the work they were currently doing and hoped to do in

the future. They already knew that asking powerful questions, being explorers and discovering potential were the skills of the 21st century. They intuitively understood that the skills they needed were much more about ways of being than the things they would do.

What, so what, now what?

*A visionary is not someone who sees the future,
a visionary is someone who sees deeply into the present moment.*

Bill Moyers

As we explore the big life questions: Who am I? Why am I here? What is my purpose? How do I serve? We have an opportunity to explore and discover. When are you most alive? What are your strengths, values, and callings? What are the signs and clues that continue to show up and get your attention? If you reviewed your calendars for the past 10–15 years, what are the themes that have guided your choices? What matters most now? Who are you here to be? What would it look like if you were truly authentic and that led you to what you are here to do?

When I taught kindergarten, people often asked the children, “What do you want to be when you grow up?” I remember thinking that was two questions; “Who are you in your essence, and what are you going to do with that?”

As coaches, we are called forth to become more of who we are here to be. We must walk our talk and live in alignment with our own truth. As we continually commit to doing our own personal growth, our professional development becomes an expression of that growth. We owe it to ourselves, those we love, and our clients to make that commitment.

His Holiness Dalai Lama says we have a precious human life to grow, evolve, and make a positive difference in the world. He also says never give up.