



PUT YOUR SPIRITUALITY TO WORK

Conversation Starters for the Workplace

2.17 A SAFE LANDING

The “Creative Journey” is a discipline that enables our creativity. Upon completion of our journey, celebration provides a safe landing that revitalises our spirit and prepares us for our next challenge.

IN OUR PREVIOUS article about the “Creative Journey”, we described four stages to creatively respond to the challenges we face at work. At this point you may be wondering, “Isn’t creativity a spontaneous experience? Won’t it suppress creativity to follow some prescribed process?”

To the contrary. In his 20 years in the field of innovation and creativity, William has observed that, ironically, *discipline enables our creativity*. For example, highly artistic dancers or musicians spend years in training to be able to express their creativity in ways that few people can even dream of.

A very dramatic example of taking a four-stage Creative Journey is that of Edgar Mitchell – an American astronaut who, in 1971, had the rare privilege of walking on the moon’s surface. He once related his adventure to William, and the creative discipline it took throughout the four stages:

How Edgar Mitchell defined his twofold challenge:

The opportunity to go to the moon was virtually an irresistible challenge. I characterize the space flight—of getting off the planet—as being an event as significant as when the first sea creatures crawled out onto land. Early on, I found disagreement between my scientific training and my religious training. I have been pursuing a resolution to the conflicts in cosmology ever since.

How he focused on his mission:

I recognized very early in life that fear is to be overcome: If it is physical danger, by being skilful; if it’s a psychological fear, by getting into yourself and rooting it out. Preparation for the Apollo flight involved many skills. All the knowledge and skill had to be practiced to a point where it was automatic. To deal with unexpected events, however, our judgment would come into play.

How he creatively solved a crisis:

There was always an opportunity for creativity, because almost never did the spacecraft fail in the ways that we had trained for. The problem that posed the most potential for creativity was before we went down to the lunar surface. The automatic abort system had somehow failed. We finally reprogrammed the computer, with just a few moments to spare, so that the engines could be ignited to descend to the moon's surface.

How he completed his journey:

This powerful experience of seeing Earth and our whole solar system against the background of the cosmos had a very profound effect . . . an overwhelming sense of being connected with the universe, of feeling connected to all things, to the most distant galaxies, to Earth, to self, to sun.

One of the most important aspects of completing the Creative Journey is *celebration*, which allows us to assess not only what we've achieved, but also what we've learned, to take forward into the future. For example, Edgar described how his experience of "being connected with the universe" spiritualised his personal values:

What came out of that experience was an enormous sense of responsibility that goes with the power of creativity. The word responsibility means to accept one's choices and the consequences of those choices, and that means letting go of fear. Automatically that brings a deeper sense of love and responsibility for one's self, surroundings, environment, and planet.

Celebration provides the moment to gain a deep sense of satisfaction and gratitude, and therefore provides a "safe landing" for the Creative Journey. It also revitalises our human spirit and prepares us for our next round of challenges. Edgar Mitchell celebrated his transformation, and that of many fellow space travellers, by declaring:

We went to the moon as technicians. We returned as humanitarians.

Every one of us, from clerical worker to executive, has personal stories of taking on challenges we've never faced before and finding ways to meet them. Not every story is as dramatic as Edgar's, but each can be something to celebrate and learn from.

While Edgar Mitchell's story was about the *past*, in the next article we'll explore how, with a work challenge, the Creative Journey can become the means for writing a story about the *future*.

So, ask yourself: *How have I gone through these same four stages in handling a creative challenge in my work? How have I celebrated my achievements and learning?*

This article is an excerpt from the book, *Put Your Spirituality to Work: Book 2 – Work as a Spiritual Practice*. To download the full book of articles, as well as additional book chapters, articles, workbooks, and research on the subject of “spirituality and human values for leadership and work”, visit our website: www.globaldharma.org