

Niching for Hippies

David Waugh Interview

Tad Hargrave: Hey everybody.

So welcome to the call. It's Tad from MarketingForHippies.com, and so this is one of the bonus calls in the Niching for Hippies program. I'm so excited to be doing this one in particular because we're joined by David Waugh, who I'll introduce in just a moment.

So when we talked about -- the more I thought about niching, the more it's become really clear that it's important that the niche is something that's authentic to us, and the whole idea of the seed came about, of looking at our own sort of wounds, struggles and journeys in our life and what that has prepared us for in our own life, and looking at what we've overcome as something that we can give back as a gift to the community.

Part of that too, I think, is looking at the center section of the gift that we have, how we can be weaving others into what we're offering, because that may also affect our niche and the fact of how we do our work. I'd come across David through a friend and colleague, Michael Talbot Kelly in Vancouver, lovely man. David and Michael worked together.

Years ago, I'd come across a friend of mine who did this work. It actually came out of the Catholic Church, I believe, called "Gifts of the Spirit," just looking at the gifts that people have, inherently and naturally. I heard David was involved in that work and did similar types of things. Something about it made me want to have David as a guest and he graciously volunteered to do that in support of you all and yeah. So here we are.

So David -- I was wondering if you could maybe give a bit about your story and how you came to be here, and what you do now and how you came to be here. Yeah.

David Waugh: Yeah, thanks Tad.

I work as a mentor and psychotherapist at Meaningful Life Design Center, and that's very much a new career in the second half of my life. The first half, I was more into the electrical field, and I had the proverbial mid-life crisis, and through that crisis I really started to dig deep and ask what was meaningful and purposeful for me to do.

It was quite a journey. Through one of my mentors suggested I keep a journal that he called a "Soul Journal" -- soul in the sense of in psychology, "psyche" is the Greek word for "soul."

So I started to keep a journey, or journal, and over time I started to see that there were certain patterns and it turned out, a kind of map, and by reflection I started to see that, wow, there were certain stages of the journey that I went through. You see this articulated in a lot of the great traditions like Joseph Campbell been a real master in his series, "The Power of Myth," how he shows many cultures and traditions had adventurers who mapped the inner and outer journey, and then kind of left something of a map for others to follow.

Of course, they had to go on their own journey, but the map and journey are archetypal expressions of this path to a deeper life where we started to really reflect on what our gifts are and orient them towards some sort of meaningful need that we see in the world, and that gives us a sense of passion and purpose.

Tad: I love it.

So, how did you get involved in, with the -- I know you don't call it the "Gifts of the Spirit," but how did you get involved and connected with that work?

David: Yeah, it started, oh, very early on. I would say one of the first mentors that I found when I was lost in my mid-life crisis, in that crisis all of my old identities didn't work anymore. I had been running a business, I left that. My marriage broke down, so I was no longer a husband and a father, a worker. All of those identities that I really thought -- when people would ask me who I am, I would describe myself in those terms.

When I left all of that, it was like the deep question: "Who am I?" It started to haunt me, and I had some time and I had some means so then I started to explore. One of the first mentors that I came across was a fellow named James Hillman, who just passed away last year. He has a wonderful book called "The Soul's Code," and that was my first hint that there's some sort of code, there's some sort of pattern and it's really unique to each person.

The metaphor that he used was -- just like the acorn that has the blueprint of the mighty oak tree, it's that specific. Each person has something of a unique pattern, and that's very different from a lot of how the culture represents us as more of a blank slate. I think the term is "tabula rasa."

It's actually echoed in many indigenous traditions around, and like you say, the Catholic mystics also discovered that people have these innate or inherent gifts of spirit, that's the way they articulated it. James Hillman called it "the soul's code."

Then I started in my research, I met an African shaman who really still -- he's quite modern in the sense that he has a couple of PhD's, but he went through a traditional initiation. His name is Malidoma Somé, and he says in their culture when the mother is pregnant with a new child, the medicine person or their shaman actually interviews the child when it's in the womb through a kind of hypnosis, I suppose. They find out that the child has a unique purpose, a unique destiny.

This is probably the oldest tradition on the face of the planet since modern research is showing that we all originated in Africa at one point, and this is an ancient idea that we're -- each person is unique and how to find that uniqueness and have it unfold.

A lot from our education system focuses on kind of standardized testing and there's a lot of mixed messages like "You can be anything you want to be." Well, that's kind of life telling the acorn that it could be a rose or a sunflower, where it's actually more precise in, you know, we're fortunate enough if we can be who we're meant to be. That's going to take some help, I think, some guidance.

Tad: Mm. So one thing that I've been sitting with -- like I said, I don't have a real clear sense of is. On one hand, we're sort of born with these, this matrix, this blueprint, these gifts, and on the other hand ... so, those gifts, in some ways, can define our destiny and where we're going.

On the other hand, what I've seen is the way that so many people find their work in the world is by looking back at their wounds, sort of what have they struggled to overcome in their own life, and that often becomes through the medicine: what can they give back to the community.

On a simple level, maybe they struggled with cancer and they end up either healing or trying to heal that, and that becomes a gift. They give back and are helping other people who struggled or are struggling with cancer. I'm curious how you see the connection between our gifts and our wounds and sort of how a hero's journey is peace.

David: Yeah, that's actually can be a very accurate way to discover it. In my work I now describe myself as a mentor and a psychotherapist. The psychotherapist part is we work with what we call "depth psychotherapy," and that's very much going into the direction of the wound. How I like to phrase it is if you go into the core of the wound, then after awhile that can become like a womb. That can birth something of your gifts.

Just like you described -- for me it was very much that. I had some wounds that I had to work through and they became barriers to knowing about my gifts. Then when I found some mentors it was a natural attraction to particular mentors who were storytellers. It has a real resonance now that I see the pattern with mentors who were storytellers.

Here I was an electrician with a four-wheel drive and a baseball cap. I felt so out of that milieu, but I kept following the impulse, the attraction and now I do the same work as my mentors. It was like I went so far into the wound that it became a womb and then started to birth the gifts. That's one direction.

There are other ways, and so one of the ways that I get at somebody's gifts is through a guided facilitation process that goes through different layers of, say, their ego personality into a deeper parts of them. Depending on your tradition and the language you're comfortable with, it could go into the soul, the spirit realms, and those deeper parts of us already know what our gifts are, what our desires and our leanings are.

If people are mostly identified with their ego-slash-personality, then it's kind of like the waves on the ocean. They're crashing around on the surface, but they haven't really had help to drive into the depths. One of the places to look is in our dreams, so an example of my own life -- at one point I dreamed of quite a wise old man who was very loving and compassionate towards me.

I've had mentors who were like that, but to have somebody like that in my dream, and it was kind of a simple dream. I was like the typical seeker asking him all kinds of questions and then he, with infinite patience and love, just looked at me really kindly and said: "Dave, all you have to do is relax."

Tad: Hmm.

David: When he said that, in the middle of the dream I felt this deep relaxation and this incredible energy went through my body, which was so startling that it work me up and I thought: "Whoa, wait a second. This is more than a dream." Then I started to feel a bit, my mind started to race, it was three o'clock in the morning.

So then I kind of said to myself: "Just relax," just like the Elder had said, and sure enough, the energy just coursed through my body again. Having worked as an electrician I knew something about energy, and it just about lit up my dark bedroom. It kind of terrified me at the time, and many years later when I

learned to work with dreams, now I can dialogue with this Inner Elder that was trying to contact me through my dreams.

If I'm really stuck from a limited perspective then I have various ways I can try to dialogue and get that perspective that's much more loving than maybe my, the different parts of myself that are more crashing around the surface of the ocean.

Tad: And you feel like -- there's a Chinese proverb that came to mind that "Stress is who you think you should be. Relaxation is who you are." Yeah.

David: Yeah, I think that is right on, because what I think that this culture has so emphasized is doing, and that I am who or what I do, where when we really relax into being. Being is like the ground of being, it's like resting into our true nature, and I think a lot of people are afraid to stop. I certainly was, and I had to kind of crash in order to stop in my mid-life, and that mid-life crisis turned into what I like to call a "mid-life awakening process."

You probably see on my website, I use the metaphor or a map a lot, as mentor and psychotherapist spells "map." Meaning and purpose spells "map." I have a meditative awakening process -- I use "map" and "compass" a lot because what I've found is the culture really supported me as a man to be independent and kind of avoidant in my relationships, where what I'm learning is we're profoundly interdependent, and we really need relationships, we really need love.

This kind of emphasis on the individual has really gotten into, I think, a kind of narcissistic proportions, where discovering our gifts, where we find there's different levels. There's gifts that are for us if we rest into that true nature, into the ground of just being, then we can go into this vast spaciousness of, say, just pure awareness, and then it's a place of not-doing, it's just resting into being.

What I find out of that can emerge the first subtle gift to us, which can be, say, the quality of peace or compassion, or courage for example, to continue in the face of not knowing who you are. Those kinds of gifts in the traditions are called "essential qualities," and it's the most subtle form that emerges out of the formlessness.

Then out of that, the next level that emerges is our -- what I like to call, the "natural gifts."

Tad: Hmm.

David: It's natural to us to be born with these gifts. These gifts are not so much for us, they're for others, so I know you have this amazing gift of facilitation, just to name one of them. I would say another one is encouragement. These are two wonderful gifts that I see you really mentoring others to bring a playfulness and a down-to-earth-ness to your bring people home to marketing in a different way.

These two gifts are for the community, for the village. If you give these gifts to a meaningful need, and there's your niche, you know.

Tad: Hmm.

David: You've really found a niche for yourself, so if you identify these to the people that I serve with these gifts, now there's the accurate sense of purpose that's only open when you give those gifts. You'll really feel a sense of meaning and purpose. So those gifts are for the community, and so that starts to weave this great web of interdependence in everyone.

Now this comes, I've found, from the native traditions that they were really a gift culture. There's a wonderful book called "The Gift" by Lewis Hyde, where he really looks at many indigenous traditions where they really saw that each one of us were a gift from the Creator, so then -- like, even every animal has a gift.

Like the dog, for example, has the gift of loyalty and faithfulness and joy. Even the cedar tree has the gift of healing. The native tradition really saw this prosperity or this abundance of the creation as gifts from the Creator, so it wasn't a barter system. It was much more of a sense of mutual collaboration that, of course, if you have a gift you're meant to give it.

Everybody's participating on that level, so then there was a real prosperity of the gift, so there wasn't a sense of scorekeeping. There was just a sense of it feels good, it feels like you're a part of the community, as part of the village, too. It was very precise. There's certain gifts I have and certain gifts I really don't have--

Tad: Hmm.

David: --like marketing, so you've been really helpful to me.

It's like we really need each other, so if we get inflated with a sense of, "Oh, I have this gift," you know, then that's the wrong direction. It's more of, like,

“How can I serve with my gift, and there are some gifts I don’t have, so then I really need to network with others so then we start to form a tribe, a village, a place of, you know, community.” It’s really the antidote to all of this loneliness, I think, that people are feeling.

Tad: In that tradition that gifts work, how many gifts are there?

David: Well, the Christian mystics identified, I think -- well, it depends on who you read on this. Now they’re steeped in Christianity, so their gifts, they sound very Christian the way they talk about them, so like, for example, the gift of encouragement is everyone can relate to that, but the gift of speaking in tongues, or things like that.

Some people have said, “Well, you know, this tradition goes way back to the Africans and the native people.” I like to call them “natural gifts” because -- you know, we’re really entering this time of, I would say, kind of a universal spirituality. As soon as we landed a person on the moon, and we could look back and see the Earth as one being, really, this beautiful blue-green planet, then from that perspective you see no borders.

I think there was a tremendous shift in consciousness where we saw that, oh, even all the religions and governments were really operating like a tribalistic perspective that was acting, you know, in separation -- you know, the essence of the traditions, you find in the mystics of all the traditions, and they all speak the same language, you know, of it comes down to -- like the Dalai Lama says, “Religion is compassion and kindness.”

So, you know, some of the gifts I just finished starting with Michael, and some other friends in a non-profit society called The Natural Gifts Society. What we want to start is natural gift circles, so that people can start to create community around this idea, and then they can start to really discover their gifts.

I sometimes use a testing process for that, but what I’ve found is we all have kind of a test taker. Sometimes it’s kind of oriented towards doing well on the test and getting certain results, but in the guided facilitation process that I’ve developed, then I bypass -- first I honor and respect the person’s ego and voices, the parts of them that they’re familiar with, but then I invite them into a deeper discussion of talking to the parts of their psyche or soul that’s much deeper and more ancient.

When they get it from that direction off and it comes out then, sometimes in a poetic way or a way that really resonates with the person.

Tad: Mm-hmm.

David: So there's all kinds of different ways to come at it, but one is to really look for feedback from other people, to follow your desire. One of my mentors put it poetically: "If you meet somebody that you're really attracted to, they're like this wonderful tree that's standing in a glade in the forest, and somehow you're really attracted to this tree, so you take out your lasso and you throw it around this tree, and then you pull yourself up close to the tree."

I thought it was a poetic way of saying if you meet an Elder -- and I've been so blessed to meet so many wonderful Elders that I've been attracted to, so it's kind of like -- one of my teachers says it's like the rosebud meeting the road. You can't wait to be around that person because somehow it sheds some light on your bud and there's a quickening and all of a sudden it cracks open. It might be painful in that womb stage, but then it starts to shoot forth and take root and start to unfold into becoming the rose, just like -- and give off the fragrance of that teacher in your own unique way.

Tad: Let me--

David: It's hard to talk about these things except in metaphor, but it's really beautiful to be a part of, you know, the transformational process and usually -- like, nature is such a great guide and that's why I like to call them "natural gifts." You see it in the transformation of the caterpillar to the butterfly. There's no way from one to the other except to go through the cocooning process.

Tad: Hmm.

David: That process is a place where the caterpillar consciousness really has to break down. It could be incredibly scary if you don't have the right kind of support when you're going through that wound, that breaking down process and that dissolving, but if the cocoon is tight enough, if you've got your circle of support and you've got mentors and elders, allies -- that can even come from dreams -- if that cocoon is tight enough, then they say, you've probably heard the metaphor a lot, but then the imaginal cells, which are the first inclinations of the butterfly emerging, that's the dream for your new life.

So what we encourage people to do when they're, they really commit to that cocooning process. The dreams start to come, and we invite them to create a collage or something that really represents that dream for their new life, but just to know that the old consciousness, the caterpillar is going to probably

test that. That comes from the individual, but it also comes from the family and friends and, you know, people that are afraid if we change too much.

There's a kind of caterpillar consciousness in the culture that really resists a lot of change.

Tad: Hmm.

David: We really need some support, but maybe not from the people we're used to, but from people that can be really allies for our transformational process, and can really celebrate that, you know, if we go really deeply into the cocoon that we can emerge with these gifts that'll really give us a passionate orientation for the rest of our life.

Tad: It strikes me, too, how that's not just true as far as we need, but how each of us can be that support for other people going through their own cocooning process, and when people take their time to clarify what their wounds are and what are those gifts that they want to give to the community, how they become that for others.

One thing I was curious about was if you could give some more examples as gifts, because I think sometimes when people think about, "Okay, we all have natural gifts, some people are good at public speaking, some people are good at cooking or whatever." I wonder if you can give examples of what these types of gifts might be. You've mentioned encouragement, facilitation...

David: Yeah. A simple one that -- one idea that I like very much is that there's a deep democracy in the gifts. If they all come from the source, from the Creator, from the spirit, whatever, use whatever word that resonates for you -- I think all of the words fall short of describing this mystery. If we describe it too much it starts to lack the mystery.

There's a democracy of the gifts, because they all emerge from that source. One that I really love is -- I kind of like to hunt for gifts. It's become quite a passionate art for my wife and I. We were in a restaurant recently, and it was a Thai restaurant, and you could tell most of the people that were working there were, they really didn't want to be there. It was just a job to them.

But there was a young woman there who really had the gift of service.

Tad: Hmm.

David: She completely just made our night. You could tell there was a young apprentice too, that really had her eye on her. So for me, in that moment it was like -- here's a simple but direct experience with the divine or the source, and her spirit of service, she was in her joy serving people.

Tad: Hmm.

David: For her, the job was not a drudgery, it was an in-between place. It was like she has the gift of service.

Another example is a friend of mine that -- she really has the gift of administration.

Tad: Hmm.

David: Just incredible with organizing documents and having great logical thinking for planning. Well, she was working for an organization that she wasn't too happy working for, so she assumed that, "Oh, maybe this isn't my gift."

Tad: Hah.

David: So it's important then to master the gift with a meaningful need that you see in the world. Anyways, she's come over and is part of our non-profit foundation now, and her gifts of administration were so appreciative for this gift, because none of the rest of us had it. Not like her, anyways.

So now it's matched with a meaningful need, and she just has so much joy because we're all really confirming that it's such a gift. But we have a group of gifts. Like, she's also a healer, and so -- maybe I should send her to you because with some marketing help, you know, if she can marry her gift of healing with her gift of administration, then she could really start to, you know, make a living doing what she loves to do.

Now, you know, there's a job, there's work, which can pay the bills, but the old term "vocation" or "calling" I think really applies when we can give our gifts to a meaningful need and then we're paid for doing so, like you with your vocation.

Or if you don't need the money, or you do have a job that pays the bills, you can do it, give your gifts as an avocation. You know, there's so much volunteer work, so this same friend, she has also the gift of service so we go to -- we both love music, so there's a wonderful, the rogue folk love, where she volunteers to set up chairs.

Again, a meaningful need, so she's happy to go and greet people at the door and give her gift of service because she gets a free admission for one thing, but she's also giving her gift by serving in the community and serving something that she wants to promote more of, which is music.

Tad: That brings up another gift -- you recall hearing it from my other friend, who says it's the gift of hosting, that some people just have this wonderful gift of creating spaces for people and making people feel welcome, and that just comes naturally to them. If somebody came over, they'd just automatically serve them tea and sit down, and they have this incredible gift of creating a safe space.

Other people may just not have that, that's just not in them. They don't naturally move in that way.

David: That's so true. We often call it the gift of hospitality.

Tad: Yes.

David: Remember when you came to town and you just called up Michael and I and said, "I want to gather some friends and bring some music. Where would be a warm place to do that?" Michael's really got that gift of hospitality. In fact, his whole family does. So we met at his house, and then you brought some friends and played some great music, and Michael organizes so many gatherings at his home.

Tad: Hmm.

David: So, it's really ... one thing about the gifts is that sometimes it comes so naturally to you that you take it for granted, so it takes, really, other people to feed it back to you, saying, "Hey, we're going to have a gathering. I want you as the person who's going to greet people and really make them feel welcome and at home.

Yeah, this idea of starting natural gifts circles is our hope is to have, create community by people really witnessing each other's gifts and into celebrating that so they can, if they have a gift that they're taking for granted, they can really get that feedback from others that, "Wow, gee, I struggle with that and this comes easily to you."

For some people it can be really dormant. It's not in -- say, they have resistance to even looking at that. For example, somebody who's say a lawyer

or something, who has been, their whole family has said “This is the direction you need to fall in. Join Father’s firm,” or that’s been his instructions that “this is what a man should do,” or something.

Tad: Uh-huh.

David: Then he finds out just through maybe his wife that he has a real gift of touch. She loves it when he gives her a massage, and then, she encourages him to take a little workshop on massage and turns out he has, he does have this major gift of healing through his hands. So at mid-life, he decides to go get training to be a massage therapist, and he has so much more joy focused on that as a sense of purpose and calling.

Tad: I’m curious if you can think of any other examples of people who felt -- they were like, they didn’t realize they had a gift and it was so obvious to everyone else around the, but they really didn’t feel it. They just discounted it, or it just came so naturally so they didn’t see it as a gift. Any stories of that, or any other stories of people who were like this lawyer, who were maybe resistant to it because it seemed so out of their identity, or so out of what they did or what they’d been told they should be recognized for who they should be.

David: Yeah. In my practice for a long time, I saw mostly people in mid-life because it was kind of my niche, but I’m getting more and more young people coming to me now. An example of that I see with them is a lot of them have the gift of wisdom -- they were born with this gift, but it’s been really hard for them at times because, you know, they were young so people didn’t take them seriously. But they knew. They just had this gift that comes from the source.

Sometimes it takes them awhile in order to get the confidence and get the feedback from others to say that, “Hey, if we need to know a practical route to go, we’re going to ask Jane.” She just always comes up with the wise choice and the direction we need to go in. So that’s an example of they could really kind of take that for granted because it’s just who they are and it’s always been that way, but they could run into some roadblocks, especially in adults not taking them seriously until they really get the confidence to say that, “Okay this is a gift that I have.”

They may have to be a little discerning about who they offer it to.

Tad: Right, which seems like another gift, the gift of discernment.

David: Exactly.

Tad: So, the gift of facilitation, encouragement, service, administration, healing, hospitality, the gift of touch, the gift of wisdom. Are there are others that sort of come up for you?

David: Yeah. I mean, some people have the gift of, say, a spiritual guidance or spiritual sensitivity, so they can really act as a bridge between different states of consciousness, so in our natural gift circles we always start with a meditation. That's partly so that people can let go of their days, so they can really arrive and be present to each other, but it's also part of the formula that we use, that I think the only way we can discover our gifts and to remember our gifts, because we're constantly forgetting, we operate predominantly from an ego based culture, and that's the reinforcing we get.

We need some sort of remembrance practice, so there are certain people that really have the gift of, because they either naturally have that or they've developed it and some gift, as they say, can be in a seed form, but it doesn't emerge until later in life and then we start to meet a teacher and we start to really train.

So, for example, I've been in meditating for over 20 years, so I just can't imagine starting a day without it, and even before and in-between clients. I always do a little meditation, so if I'm going to try to help them to access different dimensions of themselves, then I need to be constantly doing that work with myself, to be aware that there's different levels of consciousness that I can access and help other people do that as well.

That's what I think is really essential in discovering gifts because it comes from that deep source, and once you discover that deeper dimension of yourself dropping into the stillness of the ocean, it's incredibly restorative. The resources that come from the source are just like the gifts. They're -- they keep on giving, sort of like love can't be diminished.

Tad: Hmm.

David: You know, the gift of facilitation, the more you use it, it's a gift for, you know, you keep giving it and it keeps on giving. It's a real counter to this depletion of the natural resources on the planet, is to start really honoring and cultivating a sense of our innate gifts.

Tad: Hmm. I love that.

One other thing that's striking to me is we were talking about the ... our niche or the need that we're here to serve in the world, that we can serve them. The

gift that we have can sometimes show up in different streams in our life. Like you're saying this woman might have this gift of administration and then she is naturally drawn to it, she's good at it, she does all of these administrator jobs, but because of who she is working for in the bigger cause, there's a way she could translate that as, "Oh, this isn't my gift. This isn't my thing, this isn't what makes me happy."

But when she pairs that with something meaningful, maybe that's because she's helping people who struggled in the same way she did or something else. There's a way that work becomes meaningful.

I remember my friend Alex Baisley was talking about this one mechanic, no, electrician that he was working with. He told them the story about how he was kind of getting sick of the work, and then one day, this poster came across his desk and it was for -- they needed an electrician for a community in Africa. They had a school they were building, but they needed somebody who could wire it up.

His initial thought was his heart kind of leapt, and he was like, "Oh, that would be so wonderful, but I'm so busy, and money, and I can't." So he ... I think he just crumpled it up and he just threw it away. Then later, somehow it came back on his desk, a different version of it, and then -- it came up three times in really synchronistic ways.

He was talking to his wife about it and she said, "Well do you really want to do it?" And he said, "Man, more than anything. That would be so wonderful." And he talked about money and all of that. His wife just said, "You know--" I uess she had the real gift of encouragement, she was just like "--you do this. We'll figure this out, but you need to do this."

And so he went to Africa and he wired up this school, and he was describing this moment of -- it was all wired up, and he flipped the switch and all of the lights went on in the school, or the hospital, it might have been. All of the lights go on and the whole village burst into song in that moment. He just welled up with tears, and it struck him that it was the exact same gift, the exact same skill that he's done in all of these jobs, but who was he was doing it for and the need he was serving the world was so different, and that was the only thing that was different, but how profound that was for him to be giving those gifts in a way that felt more meaningful to him.

David:

What a beautiful story. I mean, that's so accurate. A lot of people try to discover their purpose, and then they go to a workshop and they go, "Okay, that's my purpose." But then they lose it again, and I think part of the trouble

is what you're describing in this story is discovering the purpose, discovering the gifts, then they have to be given.

So it's like more about being on purpose, and so every day what I've developed is a little practice that I call the "I-C-Map," but it's like an inner compass meditative awareness practice so that every morning I'm starting the day with resting into the source, into the mystery, the best I'm able to let go of me and get away and just rest into being, then out of that, really calling on what's the need that I have for today, the calling to the deep part of the source of what resource so I need to serve as best I can today.

Maybe what emerges is some deep sense of peace.

Tad: Hmm.

David: Then, again, it's like, "Okay, how do I orient my day today towards my purpose? What gift do I have?" That's the priority for my day is to be able to -- at the Meaningful Life Design Center, we try to focus on three pillars as really giving your gifts for more purpose, for more vocation in the world, and then also really showing up in our relationships, so our relationships really have depth and intimacy, and then finally the vitality of body, mind and spirit, so you really have the energy and sense of playfulness that you can bring to those parts of your life.

That part of finding the meaningful need like you described in that story, it really lights up your life.

Tad: Hmm.

David: One of the measurements is a sense of joy, a deep sense of joy and contentment. I like to call myself a practitioner of meaning and purpose, so it's like never arriving -- every day you're reorienting your compass towards, okay, we're always going to be off a little bit like the musician who loves their music, so they practice every day. We become practitioners, and every morning you might need to tune up the violin to be able to play the best kind of music you can for that day.

Some days, you know, you just haven't had a good night's sleep, so what comes out is kind of like crocodile music.

Tad: Yeah.

David: Another example of the gifts of getting clear on the meaningful need. Somebody could have the gift of compassion, and many people can be compassionate people, but at least in Christian monastic tradition they see the gift of compassion as acts of compassion, so doing deeds of service, serving in a homeless shelter, or bathing lepers or feeding hungry people.

Tad: Yeah.

David: So you're really bringing your acts of compassion to meet a very specific practical need. Somebody could have that gift of compassion, but maybe for them it's not people, it's animals.

Tad: Hmm.

David: When they bring that gift of compassion to animals, that's when they really find the joy. So they start by volunteering, perhaps, at a bird rescue center or something like that, and they just find, "Wow, okay, I have my job but I go volunteer here and the day just flies by. I feel recharged at the end of the day and all of this passion. I can't wait to go back until next Saturday."

Then they start looking into, "Gee, maybe there's a way I could train in this, I could do more of it."

Tad: One of the -- the fact that it was coming up too -- you were talking about the need and the world, and realizing that sometimes when I'll talk about "niche," there's this idea of you've got some person, and they're on Island A, and they're struggling on Island A because they've got some problems, some symptoms that they don't like, and they want to be on Island B where things are better.

It just strikes me too how it feels a lot more meaningful when it's nice to add that layer, to know that Island A is not just one person. There's a whole community of people, there's a whole need in the world of people struggling with that issue, and then how we bring our gifts to that.

It strikes me too how many people I think really never get any support in identifying what their gifts are, and so they're kind of left on their own to try to identify what their gifts are. It seems like one of the ways that people could sort of get in touch with their gifts and their dreams or reflections from others -- really just looking at what are they good at, what are they actually drawn to. Are there any sort of home study versions of how people can connect with their gifts and identify those?

David: Let's see. Where I wanted to go to is how people traditionally start to enter into this process--with a Vision Quest.

Tad: Hm.

David: Michael and I are both trained in Wilderness Leadership as well, and have studied deeply with that side of native African shaman, and the native traditions, and there are different ones, but for example, what is classical through the hundreds and hundreds of years is to find a place in nature and to create a circle of stones. And the idea is not to do it just solo, but to really bring your tribe together. I did this on my 40th birthday. I got some people who are really close to me and really wanted to go deeper in my life, so I took some time and really set an intention and then had some witnessing by my little village, and then headed out and sat on a mountain, and just sat all night and watched the sun rise the next morning. Really hoped for the initiative to the hope of a big dream.

Often they would dream of, you know, in the native tradition say, an animal that would come. And often when I work with people, I will work with their inner animal. Quite often, say, a single mom comes, and she is really stressed because she not only has to be mom 24 hours per day, but now she also has to be taking care of the expenses and stuff. She's really stressed, but she cannot afford to be sick, so she is really holding it all together. But gradually, she is getting really exhausted.

So, she will have a dream of, say, a bear; that's really common. Or an owl. I can facilitate a process for her where she can access the part of her in the dream that is afraid of the bear. That is not all of who she is, but there is a part of her that is really getting afraid because she is actually in danger of collapsing. And then, the bear is actually--the native would call it—her gift or medicine. So bear medicine or bear energy is trying to come in as a resource for her, but she is afraid of it because it looks, in this animal form, wild; it's instinctual.

One of the processes that I use is that I can have the women step into her bear. I really love it when it happens, because often all of a sudden this small woman becomes a huge presence in the room. I get to dialogue with the bear, and the bear has a lot of wisdom for her. It's part of her instinctual nature. So, the bear has come to teach her a lot of things.

And the gift can really come out of that. The bear really knows how to forage for food, so knows healthy food, and also knows how to hibernate. So, the woman is really in danger. I see this a lot these days with women a lot these

days because the mother part of them is off and on 24/7, and so sometimes I will ask that part of them, “If you were a major appliance, what appliance would you be?”

Usually they say something like a washing machine, or a blender. So, I will say, “Well, do you realize that you are running your washing machine 24 hours per day? No wonder you are burning out your adrenals.”

Tad: Yes.

David: So that’s often the case that they end up having some adrenal fatigue or chronic fatigue. Then the bear comes in as this incredible ally. That’s why I like to call this the natural gifts. The bear is part of their true nature. We are not so separate from nature, but our culture has led us to believe that. So, in the wilderness of her dreams has come this incredible ally and resource for her. And the bear is also very powerful, so if she taps into this like any mother whose child is threatened, they have the power to lift a car up. So, she has these inner resources.

In my office I get to talk to a businessman’s owl, and just like you can imagine, the owl is really wise. It just lays out the wisdom of what the gift this man is carrying, and also tells me exactly what the psychological prognosis is, which is kind of astounding, but I love the notion that we each carry our own wisdom and just have some help to have them uncover that.

Tad: It strikes me, too, how freeing it is when people can really get clear what these gifts are. I think there are a lot of life coaches and healers and service providers, and that kind of thing, and I think there is a way that people can kind of get a sense of what they are supposed to be like as a healer. They are supposed to be gentle, and they are supposed to speak in very soft tones all the time.

But it strikes me that we try to fit ourselves into this mold and yet, maybe their gift is a very strong logical mind, and they have a real problem-solving capacity, and they can still operate in the same domain, but be bringing very different gifts and a very different tone, a different vibe, a different way of doing the same thing. That could really actually appeal to people who are turned off by all the other stuff.

David: It is really true that all of a sudden we can get a notion of what a healer should look like, or a therapist should look like, then it’s easy to get trapped thinking “Oh, I should always be patient and kind and gentle and compassionate.” And the truth is, we are really multifaceted beings. So, looking at nature, at the

model, it's like, "Okay, at this moment I really need the gentleness of the deer."

It has its own power in this moment if the gentleness is what is needed. And I know my mentor, when I had experienced so many teachers who really were powerful and I thought as a man I had to break through this and that. It was when I met the power of gentleness that just wafted right through my armor, that it just touched my heart and I just started to sob.

So in that moment it was the power of gentleness that was needed. To be able to really discover, okay, what's needed in this moment, and to have that kind of matching for the two people who are on a journey together of discovery, it's not so linear of client and therapist; both are affecting each other. I say mentor, but I think of it more as a mentoring moment. Both people are astounded by what the third presence that is breathing them both reveals. You know what I mean?

Tad: Right.

David: It's like all of a sudden you have an encounter with a mystery and it's like, if we are going to try to access depth and keep an eye on that, there is my perspective, your perspective, but, and I think you mentioned that there are other people on the call, so thank you to whoever is listening and holding the space for us. Even though they haven't spoken, maybe they are really helping us go deeper together and that there is some other presence that is the space between the notes if we only allow our attention to also notice that, then the whole conversation may just drop into some other mysterious dimension of where the gifts arise from.

Tad: I'm curious about your sense that sometimes people get good at something because it's a compensating mechanism, so they develop a certain hardness on their life. Which in one way is a skill and a gift, but in another way it is compensating to protect themselves. I'm curious in how you would help people differentiate between what has come up as compensation to protect, to deal with their life, and what is their real natural, authentic gift for them?

David: Yes, working with somebody's protection is one of the most important parts of any kind of depth work. All of us, I think, have some sort of what some psychologists call "compensatory identity."

"Personality" comes from the Greek word "persona" which means mask. It is compensating; it is protecting us, and we need it for social interaction. So, we really need to have a safe container to investigate deeper than that. What I

have learned the hard way, believe me, is not to trash that. Even in some of the mystical traditions they say you have to kill your ego, and I don't believe that at all. It's much more like a metaphor. The caterpillar has to die to that perspective, but it does re-emerge as the center of the butterfly. The wings of the butterfly represent the whole creator consciousness. The caterpillar is more referenced outwardly, constantly consuming: eating and eating and eating, but later that's really detrimental to the environment as we know, and to our finite planet here. Constant growth is not sustainable. Not only individuals, but couples, groups, and even countries really have to look at, the ones who are starting to awaken to deeper levels of consciousness, that we are terribly interdependent as a planet. How do we make the shift to greater consciousness where we can have the wings of the butterfly that represent the color and the beauty of something that we really hold precious? I think that is part of the gifts is that there is a kind of astonishing beauty of the gifts that really resonates deeply with nature. So the butterfly in depth psychology is seen as the symbol of the soul. Now the person that has more of that full sensory consciousness like the butterfly, their purpose is now pollination. They are going around spreading the nectar.

They are out propagating; pollinating; bringing their gifts and really inspiring people and coming together in their little tribes to try to strengthen the imaginal cells so that we create some type of tipping point to overwhelm the caterpillar consciousness that is thinking in too small a perspective in us individually, or in a couple, or as, say, some countries.

I believe the United States is going through that process right now. They are going through an incredible shift of culture to shift out of that. The majority is more in that caterpillar stage of consciousness.

There is a collective there, a small group, but a very determined group, who want to come together and try to shift the whole country into a greater shift of consciousness. But they may have to go into a very humble place of that, closer to the ground, to really deal with some of the grief. There are incredible elders like **Melodomus Somme** [58:51] or others who are helping us to honor both directions, not just the upwardly direction up into more and more and more light and more and more spirit, but into the direction down into the dark, into the wound, the tomb, the cocoon, the fecund, moist, feminine place. We need both of those directions and some sort of center where we can embrace it all.

Tad:

Yes. Something came up as you were sharing. There was a client that I was working with one day and we had a phone call scheduled. Somehow she had not gotten the phone number for it, and so I wasn't on checking my email, but

she sent me an email an hour before saying that, “You know that phone number...” and then five minutes before I got it she was on the phone, she was clearly upset, so I called her and we got on the phone, and she was kind of annoyed by that but she relaxed, and she was okay. Then her phone started dying, and she said, “Shit, now I have to go to the pay phone outside.”

So she went outside and called me back from the pay phone and she was clearly kind of upset. And so I was looking at her web site] and I said, “You know, what’s interesting is that your web site is like all these blue, soft, gentle colors, with waterfalls and rain, but, you know, it’s all about relaxation and stuff; she’s a hypnotherapist. I said, “But your photo on the web site is really intense, and really fierce. It’s like the vibe I get from you right now is really intense and fierce.”

She all of a sudden she went from being really pissed to, “I know, but it just gets me in trouble all the time.”

And I was just like, “Wow. I think it’s beautiful. Let’s see more of that fierceness.”

Even though I wasn’t wording it that way, I felt it was a real gift. It was like I bet she would have no trouble saying no to people.

David: It sounds like you are intuitive to pick that up. You know there is so much research right now in brain science and neurobiology that I was looking at. I was looking at left brain / right brain. And so much of our culture is oriented more toward left brain, logic, linear, linguistic. But your intuitive sense of “wait a second,”--I think that takes more of the right brain to notice that something is incongruent here. And then to take that right brain and into the body and going, “Wait a second. I sense a lot of passion.” And we need both; we need the blue and the red.

Tad: Right, right.

David: And you trusting that, I think, is what makes you such a wonderful, intuitive guide; just to be real. People love your down-to-earth-ness. It gives them permission to also, you know, allow that part of them that really likes to relax and be themselves.

Tad: I think you’re right. It was interesting because I just thought, I picture that there are so many women who could use more fierceness in their life who are very soft and very gentle and obedient and are just kind of following the rules

that society has given them, and it's like, "I would love to see you supporting those women."

But she didn't feel quite ready to do that in her life. I think it was still a wound. But it just struck me so clearly how this thing that she was most ashamed of actually was this incredible gift she could be giving the world. And it just strikes me how often that must happen where people have a gift that they just, for whatever reason, they have been shamed for it, and they haven't been able to come into a right relationship with it or known where to put it, even though it is so clearly there.

David:

That's why midlife is really appealing to me, and I find that midlife is not just an age, but it's like a psychological state. It's sort of like when you reach the end of a certain way of being, and then you reach a crisis in identity.

Really generalizing, women have been very socialized to be caretakers and be nice and sweet, and if they get in touch with that fiery, passionate side, then there have been all kinds of labels--not just by men, but by other women--just to kind of imprison them in some kind of caricature. And then, conversely, men, too, I found--as I say, I found in my own midlife--were being really trained to go in a certain direction: to work in construction, to have a four wheel drive. And I think that the only color I was allowed was blue or brown. So, in midlife I remember in my first retreat with my mentor, he brought out the crayons, and he did this exercise around looking at the caricature that our parents wanted us to be. He got a sheet of paper, and we all had some crayons, and I sat there with my arms folded looking at crayons, thinking, "Are you kidding. There is no way I am going to touch crayons." I hadn't looked at them since I was five or something.

But I saw everybody else going at it, and I didn't want to be left behind, but I was boiling inside. I finally grabbed a blue crayon and just made a mark on the page so I could finish the exercise. Well, this woman beside me looked over and cracked up. She said, "Your parents wanted you to be a blue drill bit?"

It was like she almost summarized the whole bloody character that I was; you know, I was an electrician,. And, anyways, we had to put this on as a mask and put eye holes in it, and then go around and socialize as if we were networking at some sort of cocktail party. I don't even know what that is, but it felt so painful to walk around in this limiting identity; this one small fragment of who we were.

So, I jokingly tell people now, that I used to work as an electrician and a lot of that I worked with transformers, and now in my tool kit I have a little bag with a box of Kleenex and a bunch of crayons. And I think that there is subtle energy in that transformation. With my own father and the other males in my own family, they really represented a certain kind of masculinity. I have been really blessed in my midlife to find mentors who were much more whole, and they weren't afraid to really show their emotions, if they were really moved by someone. And especially me, if I had the courage to show my vulnerability, they would show that they were touched by that, and they would cry. So I find myself in that now.

I've really composted a lot of my grief, and so when I sit with people and if they are really moved, sometimes I am really moved. Sometimes I am moved to tears. So, like that woman, to allow some of her passion to come through, I am allowing some of that tenderness, some of that real vulnerability to be present, even in the session. I find that it really gives permission to others to bring that part of themselves, too.

Tad: I just had a thought I was going to share. [I was curious for you] because you were an electrician and then you had this mentorship, this healing work, I'm curious for you if you look at [] minds. What do you see in the gifts that you had as an electrician. Do you see the same gifts being applied here in the work that you are doing now?

David: Yeah, actually. It's been really interesting to reflect because an electrician was just one of my jobs, but I eventually had my own electrical company and I had 14 employees training them to be electronic technicians, basically, but we installed background music, alarm systems, closed circuit television, and things like that. So we were in that specialty. Anyway, one of the things that I found really meaningful back then, and then I have to reflect on it now, was that when somebody's house would be broken into by a burglar, and they'd made a mess-- sometimes they would do some really nasty things—I would get called out at night to give an estimate for a security system.

So, I saw a lot of my gifts even back then when I reflect on it. Here is this couple. Say that this was a typical couple in the suburbs. They worked hard, and now they finally had their ideal home in the suburbs and they have some stuff, and she is looking after the kids and is working part time, maybe. And he is kind of the caricature in the family where he is working full time and a lot to pay for the house and they would be broken into. I would come out and also I noticed that he would minimize.

He would say, “Well, we have insurance. What’s the big deal? We can just get new stuff.” And that would make his wife really mad. She would start getting quite upset and could get quite critical of him and say, “He’s so useless with his hands. He can’t do anything. I even asked him to put in a deadbolt and he didn’t. And that’s why we were broken into.” And they would almost get into a fight.

Then, they haven’t seen their kids all day, and the kids would start bouncing around and I would be sitting in the middle of this thinking, “Holy shit. What do I do?” There is no way I am going to talk about alarm systems right now. I would start playing with the kids first, and first I like playing with kids, so I start playing with the kids a bit and they got a bit of attention, and then I would just start intuitively power balancing between this couple, just like I did with my parents, Sometimes, successfully, but mostly unsuccessfully.

But, anyway, I would try to acknowledge him because I was a technician, and I would try to say, “You are an accountant. It’s probably taken a lot of training to be an accountant. Gee, I don’t have those skills,” and try to acknowledge him. And then I would try to acknowledge her. And this is what I found, thanks to my mom, I think, was that I really intuitively knew that her house wasn’t a house. It was a home. And it was an extension of her womb. This is the place where she births her children. And this is the place that should be safe. You know, when the news is portraying all this danger and crime, and brutality, and murders, and this is the one place where there should be some safety. She wants her guy to be able to be her protector. He has been so socialized like I was to be in his left brain in his head and the way that he shows his love is to go and work a lot and try to pay of all this stuff that they think will give them a happy life. But they are not happy. They are estranged from their neighbors. If it wasn’t for the kids meeting each other, they might not ever even meet each other. So, what I realized was that I needed to really honor her fear, and that this house was a home. So, I was doing some basic mediation in that, and really trying to not play on their fears. I was a technician. I was not a sales person. At least, I didn’t see myself that way. So I was not looking to say, “Okay, they are in fear,” so I could really sell them an extensive alarm system. I would just try to calm everything down and say, “What do you really need that’s going to work? What are you really going to use? If it’s complicated, you won’t even use it, so it should be simple like red for stop and green for go.” Whereas a lot of my technicians would get so complicated because they liked techno-speak that people wouldn’t even understand, so they would even bother using it. So I think I brought a lot of that to my training in psychology and spirituality.

First off, I tried to go the degree route, and I found it really too heavy. Then I thought, “No, I’m going to go the apprenticeship route,” and I found some really good basis for that, so I found what I considered some of the best elders in the field. So I thought, “Okay, I’m going to roll up my sleeves, and I’m going to do my work and really try to heal as much as I can and by doing it as an apprentice I will learn as much as I can through studying with teachers in the field.”

What I learned is that if you love it, it’s like playing music; it’s a lifelong journey. First off, my association requires that I do get continuing education credits every year, but I love it. My wife is just as passionate, so we are often going to retreats and workshops and constantly learning and applying it to our relationship. And a lot of our friends are into it, too.

So seeing as an apprenticeship really helped because I was a tradesman, and I see that there are competent tradesmen, and once you get competent, you get paid for your work. But up to that point, you may be an apprentice, and then if you become a master or tradesperson, then you can teach others. I like that kind of trajectory. It takes time to really learn the craft of healing, and there is really no other way but to do your own work.

Tad: I know there are some people who are listening over the phone right now, and someone is going to invite you, if you are listening. There are two things actually, that I’d be curious to get from you.

One is if there are any questions you have for David, but also if there are any gifts that you feel like we haven’t named; gifts that you are gifts that people might inherently have; something that they are born with; something that somebody could be really good at; something that people might really be able to bring to the world and haven’t found a space for. Maybe this is a gift that you have, or gifts that you’ve witnessed in others.

But either if there are any questions that you have, or gifts that you feel are important to name and to honor and to bring on the table, I’d love to be able to invite you to share that. I wanted to reflect on some of the gifts that I’ve heard, that have come up to me in conversation: the gift of facilitation I heard, the gift of encouragement—which is so interesting to me to think of that as a gift, because I think for most people it wouldn’t even occur to them that some people are naturally good at that, and some people aren’t. I think that we’ve all had the experience of being around people who were terrible at encouragement and others that were really good. There is the gift of service, the gift of administration for organizing things, the gift of healing, the gift of hospitality, the gift of touch--which is also another interesting one that I hadn’t

really thought of as a gift, but it is clearly so true that some people are so good at that. There is the gift of wisdom, the gift of spiritual guidance and sensitivity to those things, the gift of compassion, the gift of fierceness and protection, the gift of intuition, the gift of humor, of gentleness, playfulness and fun, the gift of listening, the gift of performing and entertaining, also the gift of design and decoration—some people are just so good at setting up a space and other people just have no idea how to do that. Also there is the gift of conflict resolution, and the gift of logical thinking and problem solving in that way. But those were all things that sort of came up for me as we were listening. It's refreshing to note how many of them there are, and it's so amazing also how some of us are so naturally gifted in one area and just not in another. We can learn, but it's a learned thing. It's not one that comes so easily and naturally to us.

Let's see if anyone has posted anything. Somebody just copied what I said, great. Somebody was saying that this brings Gardner's multiple intelligences to mind. Are you familiar with that, David?

David: Yes.

Tad: Does that seem like a similar thing to you, then, the gifts and the multiple intelligences?

David: Yes, very much so. I don't know about when you went to school, but when I did they just really only measured IQ, which is only one way of measuring intelligence. It's really in the schools as a theory, but sometimes it doesn't filter down on into the individual teacher's practice.

For example, somebody has a kinesthetic intelligence, so there is a real gift, and somebody who is a natural athlete or dancer, somebody could have the gift of leadership, so a small child is instantly leading the group. But maybe they aren't doing so well at spelling, but if that is missed, there are people like Einstein and Carl Jung some of whom failed high school.

So multiple intelligence is another way in to be able to talk about this stuff. Another way to talk about it with typology, like, for example, there is the Enneagram if you've ever heard of that. That is a wonderful resource that I use quite a bit, because it can also show what compensatory identity somebody has. Here's the personality structure that is kind of like a defense system, but behind that is an essential gift. So you can get at that through that kind of work if you go deeper. Like a lot of these things, sometimes it is presented more along the lines of pop psychology, which can be helpful, but

sometimes people use it to kind of pigeonhole people, so that's not very useful. But the Enneagram is a really deep, mystical study.

In fact, they use it in Christian monastic tradition now. They have been closely guarded about that secret, because it actually comes from the Sufi mystics, they say. For a long time Christianity did not want to acknowledge any kind of influences from Islam or anywhere else.

But the Enneagram is a very deep, mystical study when somebody goes quite into it. And universal intelligences, too. There is Howard Gardner, the researcher from Harvard, who first brought that forward. I think he's even added several on since. There is some pre-online testing that you can find to determine what your multiple intelligences are. There is a lot of great, free online testing that you can do to help support this kind of stuff.

Tad: I wanted to give a wrap-up. It doesn't look like there are any immediate questions. So, a few things: first of all, David, I would love to, and I think people listening would just love, love, love to see you do a six-week online course where they could learn from you at a distance if they don't live in Vancouver. So, let me just plant that seed. But I think that would be a great response, and I'd want to promote it.

David: That seed is there, and thanks for shedding some light on it because it is bursting at the seams.

Tad: Oh, I want to see that happen. I think that would just be wonderful. And the other one is that I can imagine some people listening to this or reading the transcript later might want to work with you or just feel they are drawn to this, really connecting with someone who could mentor them and really connecting with what their gifts are and how they can best be sharing those in the world. I am curious how they could reach you. How could they find you?

David: Yes, on our web site www.meaningfullifedesign.com. There is a blurb about me on there, and there are some videos with my partner, Michael, and me. There is some free stuff on there: a little meditation if somebody wants to begin in that direction. There is a rebalancing practice there that can be helpful to balance between too much doing and accessing our being. We see people one-on-one, we offer a free ½ hour consultation either by phone, or by Skype, or in person, because it's really important when you choose somebody to do deeper work that there's a real resonance. So, you'll feel that, and you can pick up some of that from the written word, but it's good to fling out some of your questions, and so we offer a free half hour for that. Our most popular thing is a ten-session package where we try to guide people into this deeper

cocoon, and there is a discount if they sign up for the package. Then there is what I call my Meaning and Purpose Process that I do over three sessions with somebody. It's six hours so it's quite intense and quite a journey: an hour and a half the first session, three hours for the second one, and an hour and one-half to wrap up. We go into a deep discovery process around their unique journey around the gifts.

Like you just said, I'm just putting that together in a day long workshop for local folks to reduce the cost and create community around it, then we will probably put together a six-week or eight-week online class around it, again, just trying to learn from you and others how to do that in a way that is skillful.

Then, finally, it's really in its beginning stages, and it's all volunteer-driven, but we have a Natural Gift Society. We just got our incorporation as a non-profit society, and I am just about to put on instructions for starting your own Gift Circle...

Tad: Oh, I love that!

David: ...in the community. You can borrow me or one of us to help you get started if you are local, or even over the phone or Skype. It's something of an outreach. Our society has big dreams to try to access people who usually cannot afford to go for counseling or mentoring services. We especially reach young people and older people. I just did some story-telling at a school with seven- and eight-year-olds helping them to discover their gifts. I had just a blast. I got to bring in an African drum and a candle and had them all sit on the floor like we were sitting around a campfire. I told them native initiation stories, and it was just mind blowing. At seven, eight years old, they totally get it. You know, they're not indoctrinated yet, so I had them all identifying what their power animal was, and it was so cute. I suggested that they could use alternate hand journaling to dialogue with their animal. And one little girl asked her polar bear if she had a gift, and her polar bear says, "Yes, you have the gift of wisdom, and you'll share this gift with many people in your lifetime." Eight years old.

And I have a gig with a senior center in September to bring this to older people. A lot of the seniors have, unfortunately, become "olders," as my mentor has said; they're olders and not elders. And so, unfortunately, they were never taught that they had gifts, so they're just, you know, so lonely sitting in a senior's home, and there's this incredible resource of older people, so I'd love to start a band of mischievous story tellers. We go in and we really awaken some of these seniors to their gifts, so that the young people will have elders that they can look to for helping them to go on a vision quest; so they

have some elders that are not so busy with the middle of their life doing, you know, that they can really be a meaningful presence to witness their journey.

Tad: That sounds so amazing. Well, David, thank you so much for taking the time to do this. I will get you a copy of the transcript and recording of the calls so you can share that if it's useful. Yes, thank you. I know everyone enjoyed it. There have been some comments on the wall with people saying, "What a great speaker; I might hire him," "Inspiring," "Great choice to have," and people really loved it, so thank you so much for taking the time.

David: Wonderful. Always a pleasure, Tad. I look forward to when we meet again.

Tad: Take care.

David: Yes, you too.