Soul-Searching Life-Planning: Refreshing Your Professing
Pathways to Embedding Professional Resilience

Part 1 of 4: Absencing and Presencing – Soul-Tapping

The upcoming CIP 2018 National Conference in Winnipeg, on the theme of Soul, provides an opportunity to revisit some related aspects of the CIP 2017 Conference in Calgary, when the theme was Building Resilience. The College of Fellows contribution then focused on ‘Building a Resilient Career’ - on the possibility of ‘built-in resilience’. As a panelist I was inspired to explore the connection between ‘life-planning’ and ‘professional-self design’. The life-planning foundation developed three themes rooted in ‘soul-searching’ - to refresh one’s professing. As Neil Seligman observes in ‘The Conscious Professional’ “You are always at choice as to how you respond to any situation, event or person. It is a skill that can be taught, practiced and learnt. That skill is Professional Resilience”. Resilience may be regarded here as the ability to find the inner strength to bounce back from a set-back or challenge.

The overall framing of my 2017 panel offering reflected an interest in insights from the application of Theory U, an awareness-based social learning technology, associated particularly with the work of Peter Senge (et al) (2004) on ‘presence’, and Otto Scharmer (2009) on Theory U, and (2013) with Katrin Kaufer (on ‘leading from the emerging future’). The ‘U’ symbolizes a learning journey, beginning with a consideration of what might be being ‘absenced’, en route to a focus on what one might more consciously ‘presence’ (See Figure 1). This includes enacting open mind, open heart, and open will; the latter – at the ‘bottom’ of the U, at the core of ‘you’ – can be regarded as soul-territory… ‘connecting to source’ (See Figure 2).

Touring the U may be regarded as a form of soul-searching, to refresh your professing. Taking this tour for myself (for my Self) I was motivated to give particular attention to what I may be ‘absencing’ – to then better discern the ‘presencing’ I might wish to call forth. In the context of a professional conference on building resilience, this crystallized in an interest in the presencing as ‘prof-essencing’ - as a ‘rub’ for resilience, potentially ‘oiling’ the often necessary transformation, automatically making the best of any problematic situation. And coming to better terms with certain ‘voices’ – judgment,
cynicism and fear – that might lead to undue absencing, unless consciously noticed. Going ‘down’ (the left-hand side of) the U entails a conscious ‘suspending’ of the voice of judgment, ‘redirecting’ the voice of cynicism, and ‘letting go’ of the voice of fear.

Figure 1: Absencing and Presencing - Applying U-Theory

Figure 2: Theory U: Who is my Self? What is my Work?

[NB: Voj Voice of Judgment ; VofC Voice of Cynicism ; VofF Voice of Fear]
From a ‘life-planning’ perspective, certain arenas of potentially unconscious ‘absencing’ seem to merit contemplation in terms of a conscious, counter-pointing, ‘presencing’. These have been rendered as a series of aphorisms – telling tag-lines for some soul-tapping resilient life-planning:

- an **unexamined** life is not worth living;
- an **undivided** life is to be valued above all; and
- an **unlived** life is to be avoided at all costs.

The appropriate **prof-essencing** response seems to involve attention to a set of professional ‘**makings**’ that – together – **‘make’ a professional a professional**. These may be viewed as the foundational elements of ‘**professional-self design**’.

- a personal **praxis**, reflecting exquisite life-examination, ranging across one’s thinking (knowing), doing and being – transforming… ‘me’ to ‘I’;

- an interpersonal **ethos**, uniting otherwise problematic divisions (between soul and role especially, but also between self and service, and spirit and purpose) – transforming from ‘I’ to ‘We’; and

- a propensity for a transcending (trans-personal, trans-disciplinary, trans-professional) **poiesis**, manifested in the living of one’s life to the full, as a whole, to the end – transforming from ‘We’ to ‘the All of Us’.

**Figure 3: Praxis – The Primary Making of a Professional**

Praxis is ‘first base’ in soul-searching life-planning – an integration of not simply theory and practice, but also one’s personal values and beliefs, distilling one’s ‘prof-essence’. It can be summarized as the intersection of your knowing, doing and being; it is also the place of your becoming, where you engage with your willing of the future you seek to emerge – your ‘open will’ at work at the bottom of the U.
Praxis is the most ‘personal’ making of a professional, but it can be viewed as the template of sorts for more complex ‘makings’. Ethos is more ‘inter-personal’, a making with others in your professional milieu; poiesis is more ‘trans-personal’, a making with another level of ‘others’ - from other, diverse, professional contexts. Each may be considered a form of soul-work, ‘presencing’ a meshing of your ‘minding, hearting and souling’ - in the course of a series of transformations. Envisage this as a ‘refreshing’ of your professing, and an embedding of professional resilience.

As indicated earlier, from a life-planning perspective, some potentially unconscious ‘absencing’ may merit attention via a conscious, counter-pointing, ‘presencing’. Three lines of consideration, and self-questioning. Each will be considered in turn:

Part 2 of 4: An unexamined life is not worth living
(Have you deeply examined your life lately?)
Part 3 of 4: An undivided life is to be valued above all
(Are you feeling conflicted, torn, out-of-alignment?); and
Part 4 of 4: An unlived life is to be avoided at all costs
(Are you living your life to the full, with gusto?)
References:


