

## PARTNER SECTION



### Welcome

**T**hank you for agreeing to help someone discover and begin to articulate their WHY—the purpose, cause or belief that drives them. For us (Peter and David), helping someone find their WHY is one of the most inspiring things we do in our jobs. We love the opportunity to partner with someone and see them light up when they are finally able to put their WHY into clear terms. Even though we’ve done hundreds of these, it is always inspiring. Now you get to be the partner (we’d be lying if we said we weren’t a little jealous). So have fun and enjoy the gift you are about to give someone.

At the end of your time together, the goal is to have a draft version of their Why Statement in hand. This will serve as a filter for the decisions they make so that they can find as much joy and fulfillment in their work and career as possible.

This section is designed to give you the tips and tools you need to support them. Don’t worry—you don’t need to be a therapist or coach to be a great partner. You just need to have a desire to help your companion find their WHY. We’ll be here to guide you step-by-step through the process. In Appendix 2 of this book on page 227, we’ve also included a summary of all the tips and questions you’ll

need so that you don't have to refer back to this chapter during the Why Discovery process.

At its core, the WHY is an origin story. Who we are is the sum total of all the experiences we've had growing up—the lessons we learned, the teachers we had and the things we did. In order to help your companion discover their WHY, you'll need to listen to stories from their past. Their WHY represents who they are at their natural best and will be revealed through specific stories and experiences that affected their life and shaped who they are.

## Your Role

Your main role is to listen to the stories then ask thoughtful questions that will help them dig deeper to find the underlying meaning of each memory. As you listen, you'll take notes, identifying themes, ideas, words or phrases that recur in the stories; these themes will weave together into a golden thread to define who they are at their natural best.

During this process, it's essential that you put aside your own biases. Don't allow what you know about the person, or even what you think you may know, to cloud your objectivity. What's most important is that you be fully present, meaning you will avoid distractions and stay completely focused on the task at hand. The Why Discov-

ery process is not a therapy session or a mentoring moment; it's not a time for you to offer your opinions and advice or to solve problems. Your job is to be an active listener.

## How to Be an Active Listener

Active listening is about hearing more than the words that are said. It's about understanding the meaning, motivation or emotion behind those words. Some of the techniques of active listening are simple: Make eye contact; acknowledge verbally and nonverbally what the other person says (e.g., offer affirmation like, "go on," or nod your head as you understand things); invite them to say more about what happened or how they feel about it. Pay particular attention to *non-verbal* cues. Facial expressions, body language and even long pauses all serve as clues as to how the story makes them feel.

The stories you will hear are some of the most meaningful of their life, and they may evoke strong feelings. Pride, love, fulfillment, fear, belonging, loneliness—all these and more might show up in different ways. Some people get more animated—use their hands more, sit on the edge of their seats, raise their voices—others may get choked up or become soft-spoken and reflective. You won't be able to write down everything they say. However, be sure to take notes of what they are saying when you see a visual or emotional cue—these may be important details as you start to find the common thread later on.

## How to Dig Deeper

We often find that people begin their stories with straightforward facts—what happened, when it happened and who was there. It's what we naturally do when we tell stories. While these details are important to set context to what will be shared next, they won't help you get to the WHY, because the WHY is connected to feelings. Sharing feelings is a very important part of the process. The goal is to help them express the feelings and emotions they felt at the time. It's really hard to connect with a feeling when we speak in generalities. We can't stress enough that the stories your companion shares need to be *very specific*. For example, they might at first say, "I used to visit my grandparents every summer during school break. It was a lot of fun." As a partner, you won't get much juice from that. You want the person to connect with a specific summer, a specific event or interaction. If the first pass at the story is unemotional, try digging deeper with something like, "Of all the summers you spent with your grandparents, tell me about the *one* that stands out the most." The goal is that they then actually get specific, which might sound something like, "I remember the summer when I was thirteen. I just had my birthday and I was officially a teenager. I felt really grown-up and wanted to do grown-up things. I remember working in the yard with my grandpa. He let me use the lawn mower and I felt like he trusted me with something important. It gave me a sense of confidence." There's a lot more to explore in that version of the story.

**PARTNER TIP**

If you notice that your companion starts speaking in generalities or responds with a general story when you ask for something specific, don't let them off the hook just to be nice. It will make it more difficult to find their WHY and much more difficult to tie their themes back to their stories, which is really important. Remember, the WHY is not who we aspire to be, it's who we truly are. The stories are tangible proof of who they truly are.

If they tell you right off the bat how the experience made them feel, don't take what they say at face value; ask clarifying questions. Often, the expression of feelings indicates an underlying and significant lesson or a particular relationship that embodies who they truly are today. If emotions are the proverbial smoke, the underlying meaning is the fire. And where there is smoke, there is fire.

It's your job to ask follow-up questions until you uncover the reason this specific story is significant. Here are a few questions that may come in handy (you can find a summary of all the tips and questions in Appendix 2 on page 227).

- How did that make you feel?
- What is it about this experience that you absolutely loved?
- You've probably felt this same feeling before. What is it about this story that makes it special? (E.g., if they say they "felt proud," you

can ask them what about this pride was different from other times they felt it.)

- How did this experience affect you and who you've become?
- What was the lesson from that experience that you still carry with you today?
- Of all the stories you could have shared with me, what makes this specific one so special that you chose to tell it?
- If someone else features prominently in the story, ask them how that person made a difference in their lives or what they love or admire about that person.

You'll know you're getting somewhere when they begin talking less about what happened and more about how they felt about what happened. It might sound something like, "It just really filled me up to be a part of that," or "It was pretty disappointing to know that I let my parents down." Statements like these are where you want to start digging. For example, what do they mean by "filled up" or "disappointed"? You may assume you know, but their definition may be different from yours. So ask a question that will elicit more specifics, such as:

- Tell me what you meant when you said, "It really filled me up."

- You've probably felt disappointed before. Describe how this particular feeling of disappointment was so different that it still comes to mind all these years later.

You may hear stories that are not particularly warm or happy. That's normal. There is lots to learn about someone from their positive *and* negative experiences. Your job as the partner is to help "see" the lessons or even the silver linings in those difficult moments too. For example, we did a Why Discovery with someone who, when asked about a happy experience from her childhood replied that she had a horrible childhood. She then went on to recount stories of an extremely physically abusive father. What we heard, however, was that in every story, she always mentioned how she protected her sister from her father. She never realized that pattern existed. As soon as we pointed out the silver lining, the positive glimmer in such a dark experience, she immediately started crying. She is who she is today because she's learned to protect those who could not protect themselves. Happy memories and sad memories, tales of opportunity and hardship, all offer a chance to learn about who someone is and how they became who they are. All roads lead to WHY.

The better you capture the themes of how they felt, the easier it will be to put together the Why Statement that feels really authentic to them.

In addition to the recurring themes that you'll listen for in each story, there are two other main components to look for: contribution and

impact. These are the building blocks of the final Why Statement—the contribution the person makes to the lives of others and the impact of that contribution over time. We write it in this format:

**TO** \_\_\_\_\_ **SO THAT** \_\_\_\_\_ .

The contribution is the first blank and the impact is the second blank. For example, Simon Sinek, the author of *Start with Why*, expresses his own WHY in these words: *To inspire people to do the things that inspire them so that, together, we can change our world.* Simon's contribution is what he actively does for others (seeking to inspire them) and the impact is what happens when that contribution is made (a lot of people working together to change our world).

With that in mind, do what you can to find out what your companion is giving someone else or receiving in each story (the contribution) and what difference it may have made to them or others (the impact). You'll begin to see a pattern that will help you understand the contribution and impact of their WHY. There is almost always some sort of emotional cue, verbal or nonverbal, when they touch on one or both of these themes.

## Some Tips for Asking Great Questions:

- **Ask open-ended questions.** The best questions are those that can't be answered with a yes or no. They require the person to give more information. Often in our workshops we hear people ask questions like "That made you angry, didn't it?" This question is unhelpful for three reasons: it can be answered with yes or no, it assumes you know how the person will respond and it "leads the witness." They may agree with you, though they may have answered differently if left to answer an open-ended question without your help. Remember, this process relies on getting to the heart of who they are, not who you think they are. Instead of leading the witness, try something like, "Help me understand how that made you feel."
- **Avoid questions that start with "why."** This may sound counterintuitive, since you are doing a Why Discovery. But there's a problem with questions that start with "why." Ironically, they are actually harder to answer. "Why does that story matter to you?" for example, triggers the part of our brain that is not responsible for language. It's easier to answer a question that starts with "what." For example, "What is it about that story that really matters to you?" It's basically the same question but framed in a way that is easier for someone to answer. It answers the "why" question by allowing the person to talk more specifically about the compo-

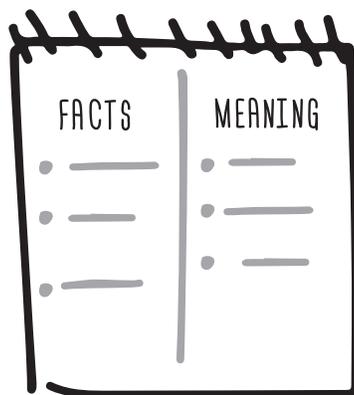
nents of the story that were meaningful. Try both; you'll see what we mean in practice.

- **Sit in silence.** If you ask a question and feel they are struggling to answer, let them struggle. Though your inclination may be to help fill in the silence, don't. Resist the temptation to fill the silence with another question or a suggested answer. Instead, just wait. Emotions are difficult to articulate and it may take the person a little time to formulate the right words. Sometimes silence is the best tool you have to get them to tell you more. Master it.

## How to Take Notes

**(PS: This is the last section—you're almost done!)**

Surprisingly enough, the format you use to jot down your notes can be really helpful when it comes time to help your companion tie



everything together. You can take notes however you'd like, of course, but we've found this format especially useful; maybe you will too.

Draw a vertical line from the top of your notes page to the bottom (an example has been included for you in the appendix). On the left side of the line

jot down the factual details of the story (e.g., college graduation). On the right side focus on their feelings, emotions or interpretations of the meaning of the story (e.g., cared that he made his grandfather proud). On the right side you can also write down any words, phrases, verbal or nonverbal cues that come up more than once. Separating your notes in this way makes it easier to review them at the end and identify the elements that are most important to the Why Discovery process (hint: all the essential stuff will be in the right-hand column).

As you take notes on multiple stories, you'll begin to notice which themes, words, phrases or ideas recur most often. Underline, circle, highlight or put a check mark next to each of those words or phrases. This can help you quickly identify the themes that will lead to the WHY later on. Also, for each story write "contribution" and/or "impact" in the right-hand column to remind you not to move on to the next story until you are clear on what they gave or received (the contribution) and what effect it had on them or others (the impact).

We've given you a lot of details that we hope will help you be the best partner possible. Remember, this really matters to your companion and they asked *you* to help them. That's an honor. What matters most is that you show up with a genuine curiosity as well as a desire to help the person you're working with. Who knows—maybe, when it's all over, you'll be inspired to look for your own WHY.

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## APPENDIX 2

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# Partner Tips for Individual Why Discovery

Anyone who's decided to serve as a partner in a friend or coworker's Individual Why Discovery will want to read chapter 3 of this book for instructions on how to manage the process—and they'll also want this appendix as a cheat sheet. Here is a quick summary of the best tips and questions for being an effective partner.

- **Your role:** Active listener and note taker. As the person going through the discovery tells their stories, you will jot down any recurring ideas, words, phrases and themes. These will eventually constitute a golden thread that defines who the WHY seeker is at their natural best. **Not your role:** therapist, mentor, advice giver, problem solver.

- **How to “listen actively”:** Make eye contact; show acknowledgment, verbal and nonverbal, of what the other person says; invite them to say more about what happened or how they felt about it. Pay particular attention to facial expressions, body language, long pauses, changes in tone of voice and emotional state (getting excited; getting choked up). Jot these down if you can.
- **Three ways to ask good questions:**
  - **Ask open-ended questions** (i.e., the kind that can’t be answered with a “yes” or a “no”). Open-ended questions let the other person lead you.
  - **Avoid questions that start with “why.”** It’s easier to answer a question that starts with “what.” Ask “what is it about that story that really matters to you?”
  - **Sit in silence.** If someone is struggling to answer your question, don’t fill the silence with another question or a suggested answer. Just wait. Emotions are hard to articulate and it may take the person a little time to find the right words.
- **Look for silver linings.** A story you hear may be sad or even horrible—but it can still shed light on who someone is and what their WHY might be. Use your outsider perspective to see the lesson that the storyteller may not.
- **Focus on the person’s *contribution* and *impact* in each of the stories they tell.** In every story you hear, note

*what* the person was giving to someone else and the *impact* of what they gave on the recipient. If the person isn't volunteering that information, ask questions to bring it out.

- **Focus on feelings.** In the stories, *what* happened is less important than how the person *felt* about what happened.
- **Ask questions to dig deeper and uncover feelings.** Here are some effective questions:
  - When that happened, how did it make you feel?
  - Who else was involved in this story and how did they make a difference to you?
  - What is it about this experience that you absolutely loved?
  - You've probably felt this same feeling before. What is it about this particular story that makes it special?
  - How did this experience affect you and who you've become?
  - What was the lesson you learned from that experience that you still carry with you today?
  - Tell me what you meant when you said, "It really filled me up." (Or whatever general statement the storyteller might make.)

- You say what happened made you feel disappointed (or sad or joyful or suspicious). But you've probably felt that way before. Describe how this particular feeling was so different that it still comes to mind all these years later.
- Of all the stories you could have shared with me, what makes this one so special that you chose to tell it as part of your Why Discovery?

## EXAMPLE NOTES

### Facts

- In 2010, facilitated a team off-site in Aspen
- Responsible for hiring most of the team over seven years
- She knew them all very well, but CEO was there and a lot of the team (remote) hadn't met him yet
- Wasn't sure how it was going to go—nervous
- Wanted it to be an experience that brought everyone together

### Meaning

- Unity
- Everyone came together
- Meant a lot to her that everyone felt like they were in a safe place
- Team/family feel
- Joy (everyone was being themselves)
- Felt a lot of responsibility to the team
- Loved seeing relationships build naturally
- Mattered because she truly cared about each person individually