

## **The Heroes Journey**

**Credit – Ben Crowe, Mojospesso Podcast June 2023**

There's three chapters in the heroes journey that we all gotta move through but, because we don't know this, for many of us we actually haven't moved past chapter one, which is effectively all about us (self, self, self!) creating this somewhat entitled generation, this 'cult of self' who believe we're the centre of our own universe. We don't understand the incredible life lessons we learn when we get into chapter two: that life is difficult but, once we accept that life is difficult, life is no longer that difficult. We also learn that our greatest growth comes from our darkest times. And then we would get out of chapter turn into chapter 3 we realise that life is not actually about you but rather the impact you can have on someone else's life. and That's ultimately in chapter 3 where we find our bliss.

Now unfortunately there's no such thing as 'human being school' where we can learn to be a human we can learn to separate what we do from who we are, right, to be a *human being* first and a *human doing* second.

OK. So what is the heroes journey?

Well it's a storytelling framework created by Joseph Campbell, a mythologist, to help us understand the stages of life that we all need to move through. and It's based on three chapters and understanding them not only helps us deal with adversity like pandemics but also helps us understand some of the realities and uncertainties of life that we may not be accepting today and therefore we're getting distracted in the worst possible way.

As an example, so many leaders today still operate in chapter one where they think leadership is all about them and, because they haven't got into chapter three, they don't actually realise that leadership has got nothing to do with them but rather the impact they can have on someone else's life, to serve

them, to care about them, to create an environment to help others realise their potential.

It's also the same with kids. If kids don't learn that there's more to life than chapter one, this focusing on ourself, we only encourage this cult of self, yeah, (this) generation will become self obsessed and self absorbed and we don't learn the brutal facts of our own reality; that while life is difficult there is a way through it. And that's where the growth lies to turn adversity into possibility.

OK So what are the three chapters?

Well, chapter one is called *separation* where the hero separates from their normal surroundings and goes on an adventure, which might be school or work or new relationships or dreams. Yeah? This stage is all about me. I'm focusing on myself. And while it's somewhat selfish, 'cause it's about achievement to make us feel significant, it's also about being curious to see what our strengths and passions are. So, it's an essential step but mainly all about me, yeah?

Chapter 2 is called the *initiation* where \* \* \* \* gets real and the hero goes through challenges and crucible moments. And we've got to get out of our comfort zone to overcome adversity in order to grow. Usually this is with the help of a guide or a mentor. It's in this chapter where we have these crucible moments, these life altering moments, which might be a pandemic and they're laced with meaning and we gotta make sense of them 'cause they're gonna hold us back, that kind of 'post-traumatic stress', or they can project us forward, 'post-traumatic growth', yeah? We're either buried or we're planted so we gotta make sense of the struggles and internal self-doubt in order to get into chapter 3.

chapter three is called 'the return'. This is where the hero returns home kind of transformed, yeah?, and shares their wisdom and learnings to inspire

others, to contribute to someone else's journey. In chapter three we move from *I* to *we* and gain a sense of contribution and fulfilment and meaning. And while on one lens the heroes journey could apply to our whole life it could also simply be a continuous cycle of mini hero journeys based on all the different things going on in our life right now. So I might be in chapter two in my professional life but chapter 3 in my personal life... and that's OK if these mini hero journeys... we're in different cycles 'cause we're applying learnings from one part of our life into another.

OK. As a storytelling framework the heroes journey is not only incredibly popular with psychologists but also Hollywood movies because we relate to the characters and can see ourselves in their hopes and their dreams and their mistakes and their falls and hopefully their hard fought victories as well. Life demands a heroic response and the heroes journey can actually show us how. To go out into the world in chapter one. To dealing with adversity in chapter 2. To finding meaning in chapter three.

So, a heroes journey is actually no different from Harry Potter's or Katniss Evergreen's or Frodos or Luke Skywalker's - we just have different versions of death eaters and orcs and stormtroopers - but let's just clarify for a minute what actually is a hero. As real heroes are very different from the classic Hollywood superhero where it's all about them. Joseph Campbell once said a hero is someone who has given his or her life to something bigger than oneself. If you believe life is all about you, you're probably still in chapter one of your heroes journey, but if we can reach chapter three humbler a picture of a hero emerges.

I heard a beautiful story recently about a guy who is trying to be a professional golfer but never quite made it and eventually became a teacher. He was lamenting to a fellow teacher how, I think it was Tiger Woods, who recently just finished way down the rankings but made millions of dollars as a consequence and he said to his colleague "I chose the wrong career". And his colleagues responded, "no you didn't, society chose the wrong heroes."

When you get into chapter three of your heroes journey, your definition of a hero dramatically changes, as does your vision of success. For me, heroes are people who had the courage to find themselves and then lose themselves and find someone else to love. They make sense of who they are and what they want and then they let go of ego and fear and they find this beautiful balance between courage and consideration. The courage to put themselves out of their comfort zone to realise their potential and then consideration that, at the end of the day, it's not about them but rather the impact they can have on someone else's life.

What's really important to acknowledge here is that each of us are on our own journey, and we've got to accept that so that we don't compare ourselves with someone else's journey, which throws us off or distracts us or interferes as well. Don't let others interfere in your journey telling you you can't do something \*\*\*\*\* \*\* what do they know? It's not their journey! We're all on different journeys and in different stages. The only person you should compare yourself with, is who you were yesterday and aim to be that little bit better today. And if we're intrinsically motivated, we don't have to wait to be successful because we are motivated by the journey not this external destination. So, there's no finish line but that's what kind of makes it exciting at the same time.

Now a key principle of the heroes journey is we can't do it alone. When Joseph Campbell created the heroes journey he spelled out that to get through chapter two we need a guide, we need a team, we need an Advisory Board. So the question is *who is your guide*, yeah, *who is on your team*. Just like Harry had Dumbledore as a guide and Hermione and Ron as his mates or Frodo had Gandalf and the fellowship who said, 'yeah we've got your back,' we all need mentors and mates and teammates to help get us through. So get rid of this \*\*\*\*\* alpha male loner mentality and make your life one big giant cafe latte of mentors and mates with coffee and curiosity to seek the answers and help get you through.

We literally built the mojo app and mindset calls to be that quasi guide to give you at least one mentor in your life to stay close to you along the way

but for me the key to all of this right now especially where the world's at is understanding chapter two; that it's a struggle and these crucible moments, these times when life sucks, is actually a normal part of life, almost a necessary part of life, 'cause that's where we do our most growing and learning. And it's when we realise it's not what happens to us it's important, it's how we respond to what's happening to us.

So there's only ever the response from whatever \* \* \* \* life throws our way. And so where we turn adversity into possibility, or cortisol into dopamine, where humility and curiosity and dialling up our core values become our superpowers, to get through all the different chapter 2's we're going through right now. Which might be losing a job or losing a loved one, losing a home, a career change, a divorce or a health scare. Chapter 2 is where we understand that life is difficult. We either accept that or we suffer.

And just so you know, passing through chapter 2 into chapter 3 isn't something that we conquer once. We're human, right, so we're imperfect, so we will often go backwards and need to tread back over old ground in order to move forward again, yeah? We're human, and this is where I think we need to be honest with each other and be honest with your kids, 'cause we haven't been honest for quite awhile. This \* \* \* \* \* \* \* \* 'men don't cry' or its weak to show our emotions has made the world think that vulnerability is a weakness when it's gotta be the most courageous freaking strength there is. We have a duty to share our authentic stories with those who look up to us, to help others realise *'it's not like everyone else has their \* \* \* \* together and I'm the only one struggling here.'* The goal is to share our heroes journey not for others to feel sorry for us but to pass on our wisdom and to normalise that \* \* \* \* happens but there is a way through.

'Cause here's the thing - the outside world doesn't want you to know the realities of chapter two. The advertising world just wants you to buy their product instead, or your social world just distorts your reality with highlight reels, and the media world just wants you to be passively outraged rather than proactively kind to someone else. The brutal fact of our reality is life is not perfect and we don't have everything we want and the heroes journey isn't easy it's just necessary. But on the other side of it, is beautiful but we sometimes forget that the journey is part of the struggle.

One of the most powerful ways to move through chapter 2 into chapter three is to quite simply redefine what success is and focus on an inner scorecard which you control rather than external one that you don't. The way to do this is to focus on what motivates you intrinsically and develop a belief system that says '*no matter what do I achieve or don't achieve I am worthy to go on my heroes journey, and the fact that I'm still on it, that I'm persevering, is in itself success, but I'm deciding to be in the arena with my face marred by dust and blood and sweat*'. And that way you no longer have to wait to be successful you no longer have to wait to be happy.

And this brings us to chapter 3, *the return*, and what the hero brings back when they return is a story. And the giving of that story is this circle that never ends yeah? The imparting of wisdom with someone else to then go on their heroes journey. That's the most important part of the heroes journey - to give something back - and that's the ultimate goal; to get into chapter 3 where we realise why we do what we do and we move from *I* to *we*.

This is where we find our purpose - from achievement to fulfilment, from pain to perspective. But, as you can see now, we gotta work our bloody \*\*\*\* off to get there. To follow our dreams. And if we motivated by realising our potential we'll actually want to do the work.

Joseph Campbell said that when we're in chapter three we find our bliss but he forgot to mention that we first need to find out blisters before we find our bliss.

We need to do the work. And when you've made sense of it, please share it. It's our imperfections that connect humans, so please please please share your imperfect story with friends and colleagues and family members, because that's how we learn. As the great Deepak Chopra once said, *'when you speak to somebody at the level of their mind you will speak to their mind. If you speak from your heart, you will speak to their heart. But if you speak through your life story you will change lives.'*