

PRINCIPLE #1: CREATIVE EXPRESSION

“Nature does not hurry, yet everything is accomplished.”

– Lao Tzu



Summary: The entire universe is sustained by a singular energy—the *process of creative expression*, each element expressing its innate essence. This suggests that life isn’t a *destination* or result to be attained, but rather a *journey* to be experienced. The creative process is the wellspring from

which all possibility unfolds, energy that drives meaningful lives and thriving workplaces. *What if you could design your entire life around that deep personal truth to which you are continually drawn?*

Nature’s Principle: To create is to bring into existence, to transform “what isn’t” into “what is”—building bridges between possibility and reality. Our vast universe is sustained by a singular energy, the energy of creative expression. This idea introduces the first principle of life, creative process as purpose. From the instant of the Big Bang some 14 billion years ago, the universe has been *always becoming*. Never has anything been static, nor will it ever be. Things are always being created, whether stars, galaxies, trees, canyons, snowflakes or humans. Things are always passing, whether stars, galaxies, trees, canyons, snowflakes or humans. The products of creation come and go, yet the process that creates them is sustained. The universe is a process—of creation and re-creation.

Nature also tells us that each thing, animate or inanimate, creates according to its own unique essence. Essence is that part of a thing it can’t *not* be. A maple tree springs from a tiny seed, then branches toward the sky. Stars coalesce out of dust

and gas in space and burn for eons from the accumulated mass and pressure. A polar bear has embedded in its DNA all it needs to be the ultimate Arctic marine hunter. Nothing *but* a polar bear could express itself in this unique way. Maple seeds can't grow up to become polar bears. Polar bears can't decide to go to college so as to get a better job. Each is uniquely suited for its own essence. Creative expression drives the universe. Stars, trees and bears come and go; the process that creates them goes on.

The Opening Offered: As creatures of nature, we humans are also here for the purpose of creative expression. Creativity isn't just *part* of who we are; it's the *essence* of who we are. Often, we refer to as *soul*, or essence, that specific part of each of us that's unique, an individual creative energy so deep and strong that it drives our lives, whether we consciously believe it, see it, honor it ... or not. It's the energy that pulls at us throughout life. When we come to know and honor it consciously, we can align our lives with this, our authentic truth. For a window into essence, observe a young child; we see wonder, curiosity, creativity. Expressing those traits throughout life is how we learn and grow; it's who we're meant to be. The source of meaning is in the creativity that fuels soul journeys. Sadly, this uniqueness is often squeezed aside as we grow up, a price we pay to learn the "ways of the world." What we "knew without knowing" as children, we now must re-learn as adults.

Prevailing Wisdom: If these ideas sound strange, it's because we've been taught to see them as such. We've learned that if we're being creative, we're not "working." Because we've also learned that hard work is key to our success, we come to deny our creative spirit, our deepest essence, and with that, the source of the true meaning and happiness we long for in our lives. We've been lured away from our belief in authentic truth by a false promise of something bigger from the external world.

The Opportunity/Promise: What if life were about the experience of our creative essence, not about results or

destination? What if we're here as human "beings," not "doings?" When we regain our connection with our essence, we'll discover that creative expression is not just *a* force, but the *driving* force, in a life of meaning and purpose—and results! When we become co-creators in this process of always becoming, we can use our uniqueness to illuminate the path ahead, experiencing the depth and meaning life has to offer. In designing our lives around the messages of our own inner truth, we can open up possibilities we'd never even have envisioned while we were out there trying to control things. This is not about giving up on achievement. It's about seeing that we can achieve more by *being* more, not trying so hard *doing* more.

Nature's Story: The Grand Canyon: a mile deep, up to 15 miles wide, almost 300 miles long. A plaster cast of it would make an impressive mountain range. It has taken the Colorado River about 5 million years to carve the canyon we see today. The river is old, yet it's a child compared to the 2 *billion*-year-old rocks it bisects. The Grand Canyon offers lessons in patience, uncertainty, acceptance, and of course, process rather than outcome. While we "strut and fret our hour upon the stage," nature is quietly doing what she has done for eons. No plan, no agenda, no goal; just a focus on process, the essence; in this case, a river being a river. There was never a plan to create the Grand Canyon. There still isn't. The canyon isn't even an *outcome*. It's just the current state of the continual *process* of creation. "River" is a verb. There is no struggle to achieve. The river isn't *trying* to wear down the rocks; rocks don't fight back. Nature *holds* water without holding *onto* water. Water changes the shape of all it touches yet competes with nothing.

My Story: For 40 years of adult life, I unconsciously lived society's "prevailing wisdom." I placed a premium on the idea that by knowing more, trying harder and staying busy, I'd make money and achieve happiness. It didn't work. I made money, yet I had been doing life, not being Brad. When the stress caught up with me, I realized there was more to life, and to me. I'd lost two marriages and missed a lot of my two sons' childhoods. I began

to see in a new way. For the first time, I began looking inside, where I found real answers, instead of outside, where I'd been taught to look. Through the practices offered here, I discovered that my life had always been offering clues to my true essence, but I'd been unaware of their messages. The way I've now come to know my essence is this: *I help enhance perspective and clarity so as to evoke new possibility.* In tracing my life experiences as far back as I could, I found I was always pulled to drawing bigger frames around a subject so as to find deeper truth, awareness, or possibility. I even recalled my parents saying my sixth-grade math teacher had to go home and study at night because she was afraid of questions I might ask.

Despite my innate love for math and the sciences, I recall the dichotomy of education's preoccupation with "using formulas" over a deeper and richer way of knowing and learning. As a manager in the software world, I avoided software, business and computers, focusing instead on reframing our work so managers on my team could do a better job. At age 50, I realized this was the essence of coaching, helping others reframe their lives so more is possible. I became a coach, to help others live lives they love. This is a coaching book; I'm here to help you reframe how you see and think so more is possible for you, too.

Even though it took me until age 50 to discover this inner truth, it has become an amazing, as well as unexpected, source of both clarity and freedom for me. *Clarity* because I run every choice and every thought through the filter of that one truth—how it fits with the unity of all I "know." If it passes, I know it's right; if it fails, I don't do it. *Freedom* because knowing what matters allows me to commit to that, fully aware that it will serve me in a meaningful way. I am grateful for the process.

An Invitation: What do you care about so deeply that you'd devote your life to its fulfillment? What if you could see just a bit further or bigger than today; what possibility might you find just beyond the edge of your current perception? What if mistakes are about learning, not about being wrong? What if

you didn't have to have so much, want so much, need so much, or achieve so much, and could allow yourself to simply *be* more?

Practice: *Discovering your own personal truth.* Until you know what matters most to you, your energy is *unconsciously* devoted to upholding outdated beliefs about how life “should be,” (which you eventually discover is what matters least!) Your innate creative essence has always been part of you. It's who you *really* are, and it wants to express itself through how you live—your soul's purpose, life mission, your unique truth. You feel its energy many times a day, pointing to your truth, asking you to listen. You discover it by *noticing!* This practice is a life-long inquiry into what matters to you. It creates a beacon illuminating your life's path. Later practices offer help in learning to trust, and follow, the light of your inner truth; this one is aimed at discovering it and making it your own. Every day—and it may take weeks, even months, of doing this to gain the depth and clarity needed to sustain it—sit quietly; absorb the *you* you've come to know. Instead of taking a linear view of life, from childhood forward, review *aspects* of your life. Possibilities include education, family, transitions, jobs, hobbies, relationships. Overlap is OK. Now, as a replay, look *inside each aspect*, one at a time, separate from the others, asking yourself: Who was I always being? What was I always drawn to? What did I wonder or imagine? What did I do whether I gained approval or not? Look for places in your “always” stories that ran against convention. One of mine from school: “I don't care about formulas; tell me how it works and I'll give *you* the formula.” Not popular, but it was me. After considering each aspect of your life this way, review notes and find what's *common* in your lists. As you discover who you can't *not* be/do, you're guided to that piece of yourself that is so naturally you that you may have missed your unique essence (soul, purpose). Absorb the energy of this!