

Reflections from the field

‘Living Life in the Meantime’: An arts-based coaching model offering an alternative method of managing personal and professional change

Yvette Ramos-Volz

The Glass Room, USA, yvettevolz@gmail.com

Abstract

Confronted by change, people may be afraid to explore and digest their current circumstance, thus missing opportunities. Individuals, coaches, supervisors, and facilitators can benefit from a personalised map to guide them through change transformations. ‘Living Life, in the Meantime’ (LLM) is an arts-based coaching model that encourages self-reflection and expression by the process of building a leaded stained-glass window. Through LLM, individuals create a personalised map to manage the effects of change and the accompanying emotions as well as to support new ways of looking at challenging situations.

Keywords: Change, arts-based coaching, stained glass, behaviour, emotions

Introduction

Informed by arts-based learning, ‘Living Life, in the Meantime’ (LLM) is an arts-based coaching model that helps individuals manage the space between old and new realities by developing a personalised map. A coach helps them develop this map by bringing them through the creative process of building a leaded stained glass window, which provides individuals with meaningful tools they can use to navigate professional and personal changes.

Arts-based Learning is an established field that has been used as an alternative to traditional learning methods in education, business, and health-care. Its focus is on new ways of learning, developing skills and competencies, and new ways of creating and innovating through the creative process of primarily group-based arts: visual, performing, and literary. As Van Velsor, McCauley & Ruderman (2010, p. 131) explain:

Reflecting on one’s own experiences is a powerful method for learning and allows the learner to leverage personal strengths and address critical development needs. The key element of [promoting sustainable learning from experience] is helping the coachee move from awareness to action in order to sustain learning. The process of reflection creates a developmental feedback loop to continually fuel a learning cycle.

Ultimately, this reflection and subsequent new behaviour can spread organically to groups, communities, and organisations. Society as a whole could benefit from having individuals understand the ways in which they process and navigate life’s many changes.



Having worked in corporate America for 30 years, most recently as a change manager who helped transform global operational business models, I have seen first-hand how the ways in which an organisation brings people through changes can create long-lasting effects, both positive and negative. During my tenure, I was involved in over 100 major organisational changes that upended the daily lives of everyone involved. It was a rare occasion when the people on the receiving end of the changes had time or space to truly process the meaning of these frequent changes.

In my experience, people are more receptive to a change process when they are brought through it in an inclusive way. When individuals are shown consideration, and given ample time and space to understand how the change will affect them directly, they feel more empowered and are subsequently more inclined to help the organization move through the change. Conversely, I observed that when individuals feel that change is being forced upon them by mandate, and that the change is happening quickly with minimal consideration for the individuals involved in the change, the result is an environment of confusion, mistrust, and paranoia, coupled with a lack of motivation and productivity for the individuals. Faced with both uncertainty and powerlessness, individuals can become paralysed or stuck in their old ways of doing things. This in turn creates a damaging subculture that can spread at record speed to other areas of the organisation. This did not mean that every individual who was given time and space was completely accepting of change. In my experience, even if individuals ultimately rejected the change, or felt that the new environment or process was not the right one for them, the inclusive nature of moving them through the change gave individuals both the willingness and tools to forge a new path towards their future. The key difference I observed was that adopting an inclusive approach to change management fostered empowerment and action; an exclusive approach fostered lethargy and discord.

During this time of repeated professional change, I developed inexplicable, chronic pain in my upper body. This daily pain was not the result of an injury, and eventually required surgery. Simultaneously, I developed insomnia and fatigue. Shortly after these symptoms began, I made the decision to leave my job. After my departure I began constructing a stained-glass window for a private commission. As I built the window, piece by piece, I found myself using those pieces as a roadmap to reflect on recent events in my life. I slowly began to connect my physical ailments with my emotional state. Soon I came to understand that even though I was the one in charge of moving people through mandated changes, my colleagues were not the only ones experiencing negative consequences. I, the helper, was experiencing classic signs of burnout; the constant change in my work environment, my proximity to the discord of my colleagues, and the lack of time and space to process and digest these changes, was wreaking havoc on my physical, emotional, and mental states.

Living, Life in the Meantime was created in response to managing both the physical and emotional components of all changes, positive or negative. LLM provides the participant and the practitioner a quiet, safe, space away from the day-to-day to move through the process of building a stained glass window. This in turn helps them build a personalised map that empowers them to understand and digest the change as well as their own responses to it. The map ultimately provides them with a framework to actively take the first step toward creating a path forward, rather than passively accepting a pre-determined path.

This paper stresses the importance of addressing emotions and feelings in change transitions, and clarifies how individuals experience change. It will explain the theory of arts-based learning that influenced the LLM arts-based coaching model; outline the role of the coach in change transformations; and illustrate how this experience can be facilitated through The Living Life, in the Meantime arts-based coaching model. It also briefly recounts a proof-of-concept that both demonstrates LLM's strengths and pinpoints opportunities for its future development.



How Individuals Experience Change

In the workplace, emotions are considered a hindrance to getting things done (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1995). Because they are seen as barriers to progress, emotions are not given the value they deserve and often go ignored, which can be detrimental to growth. The Center for Creative Leadership identified how “75% of careers are derailed for reasons related to emotional competencies, including inability to handle interpersonal problems; unsatisfactory team leadership during times of difficulty or conflict; or inability to adapt to change or elicit trust” (Aquinas, 2008, p. 421).

Ashford and Humphrey (1995) acknowledge that while there are examples of emotional situations — office romances, family dynamics — that have had negative professional consequences,

the variety and ubiquity of such examples appears to have helped foster a belief that emotion is the antithesis of rationality. This belief, in turn, may have contributed to a somewhat pejorative view of emotion and to frequent attempts to control the experience and expression of emotion in organizations (Ashforth and Humphrey, 1995, p. 98).

It would be unrealistic to expect the workplace to be free of emotion: in all human interactions, emotions and feelings play a central role. One could then conclude that emotions are especially present in situations where change is required. Change evokes feelings, which in turn evoke emotions that move people to action. Hill (2011, p.18) explains how:

thoughts, unlike emotions, aren't action-oriented. Feelings come first. Feelings precede conscious thought. The rational brain literally grew out of the emotional brain and remains intricately tied to it. Moreover, the emotional part of the brain is larger than the rational part, and the entire brain processes more emotive than cognitive activity.

Emotions are complex, ambiguous, and difficult to quantify, which creates significant challenges but also tremendous opportunity for growth. Goleman (1998) analysed competence models for 181 different positions drawn from 121 companies and organisations worldwide and found that “compared with distinguishing competencies for a given job, role, or field, 67 percent of the abilities thought to distinguish the best performers were emotional competencies” (p. 31). Understanding emotions and how to move through them in a professional setting creates a tangible Return on Investment (ROI) for both individuals and organisations. Goleman (1998) values emotional competence training and evaluation for lasting results. Those who are able to see this reality are capitalising on it as an alternative lens into human behaviour and the value it produces.

Human beings have different life experiences, perspectives, and worldviews, and by first understanding their own personal responses to change transition they then can acknowledge, assimilate, embrace, and adapt to change. Elizabeth Kubler-Ross (1969) describes this personal transition in four stages: status quo, disruption, exploration, and rebuilding. Each stage has its own reaction: shock/denial, anger/fear, acceptance, and commitment. The idea is that insights provided at each stage reduce the change impact and move individuals from negative to positive stages in an upward curve towards transformative sustainable change (Kubler-Ross, 1969).

By considering arts-based learning and the creative arts as pathways for tapping into emotional intelligence and nurturing the way individuals intrinsically process change, LLM provides an alternative model for moving through change transitions in a way that is more in tune with how people actually experience the emotions and reactions that come up in the face of change.



Arts-based Learning Theory

Arts-based learning methodology is in part informed by Heron's (1992) work on ways of knowing. Heron posits that the psyche has 4 modes of functioning: affective, imaginal, conceptual, and practical, and the 4 are cyclical. These are linked and interdependent and produce 4 different ways of knowing: experiential (that which is subconscious, derived from personal experiences); presentational (that which includes our grasp of imagined patterns expressed through art); propositional (that which conforms to the rules of logic and evidence); and practical (that which involves the interaction of our psyches and our skills).

Arts-based learning manifests itself during presentational knowing, which includes all arts, including movement arts, and "embraces all of the forms of myth, fable, allegory, story and drama" (Heron, 1992, p. 165-167). It is during this stage that individuals are "more inclusive, reflective socially aware and emotionally capable of change" (Yorks & Kasl, 2006, p. 48).

The application of Arts-based Learning is used in various settings: in leadership development, team building, strategy creation, and innovation. This approach has the potential to add texture and a consistent, richer perspective in solving day-to-day challenges. Arts-based learning aims to bring these core practices into situations that may not organically involve arts or the creative process, and aims to give people alternative ways of dealing with everyday situations. LLM is an Arts-based coaching intervention that incorporates Arts-based learning and focuses more on the feelings and the reactions to emotions that emerge when an individual is confronted with a challenging situation.

The Role of the Coach in Arts-Based Coaching (ABC)

The role of the coach as facilitator in Arts-based learning or Arts-based coaching interventions, such as LLM, is critical. Coaches create a safe space and develop an environment of trust and expansion by listening, creating room for experimentation, and allowing time for individuals to develop a new way of doing and behaving. Coaches also elicit and provide feedback throughout the process and evaluate final outcomes through guided instruction. They ensure that participants feel ownership of the issue/problem and encourage finding their own solutions and ways to move in new directions: "In a trusting relationship, coachees know that the coach understands them, takes their challenges seriously, and will maintain a safe environment for discovery while also challenging them for greater insight and more effective action. In a relationship that allows the coach to push when necessary, question as needed, and support or encourage when helpful, trust will grow" (Van Velsor et al, 2010, p. 127).

By remaining present, confident, and focused on the individual's needs, they realise the impact they're having through feedback and model what they coach while promoting sustainable learning from experience (Van Velsor et al, 2010). Goleman further points out that:

What makes coaching and mentoring work best is the nature of the relationship. Outstanding coaches and mentors get inside the heads of the people they are helping. They sense how to give effective feedback. They know when to push for better performance and when to hold back. In the way they motivate their protégés, they demonstrate empathy in action (Goleman, 1998, p. 90).

In addition, the arts help individuals tap into their emotions, which is a starting point for meaningful movement forward. As Davis-Manigaulte, Yorks and Kasl (2006) observed: "artwork provided a pathway for surfacing our underlying thinking...the resulting insights helped people act in new ways" (29). Harnessing the basis of Arts-based learning, building on the theories of Kubler-Ross's individual change transition and Heron's theory of personhood, LLM is also informed by Brene Brown's work on the importance of vulnerability (2012). All LLM participants, including the coach, should agree to experience and process their own vulnerability throughout the model in order for it



to succeed. It supports an individual's experience of new ways of looking at challenging situations, exercising their inner voice through self-reflection and expression—often lost in the day-to-day routine—by the process of building a leaded stained glass window.

In the LLM process, a coach needs to be fully invested in helping individuals use the arts and creative pursuits as valid and practical ways to confront challenges and understand their experiences. A coach can set the stage for this experience by inviting participants to come on this journey with a formal invitation, as well as a consultation that assesses the current state the individual is in and establishes a venue for this facilitation to take place. The invitation should also provide an itinerary detailing the events that will take place throughout with an intended outcome. Maintaining a schedule of daily activities ensures that each stage of the process is addressed and that attention is given to the amount of space required for individuals to process the emotions and feelings that may surface at each stage, given their current state of mind.

Ultimately, the coach methodically follows a model that walks individuals through the change process. The four stages of change in the LLM coaching model — identify, deconstruct, rebuild, and reinforce — illustrate the role of a coach. In this model, the coach begins to develop a relationship with individuals and creates a safe space for discovery and reflection. This space allows individuals to envision and manifest an alternative to the status quo.

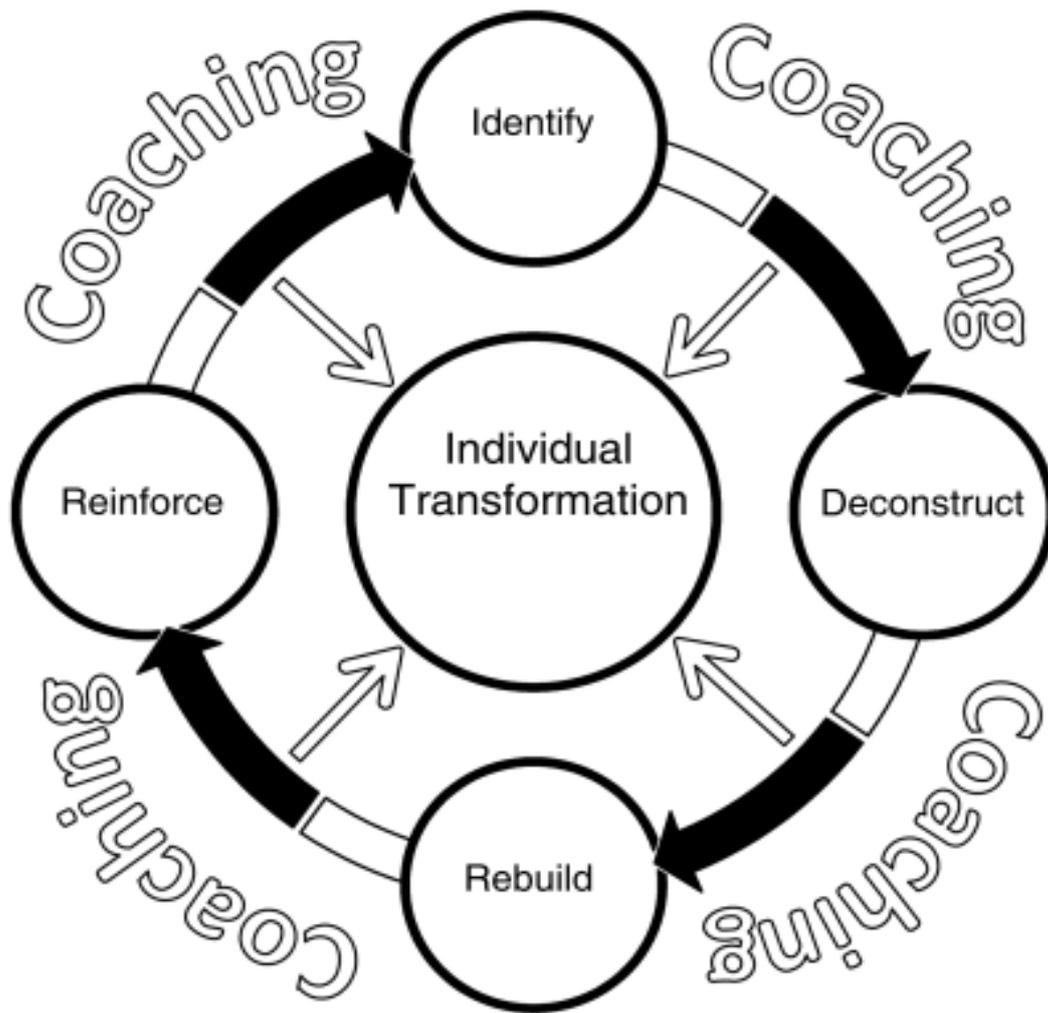
Process

In the Living Life, in the Meantime process, an individual deconstructs something and builds it back up again. This unique approach is what allows them to see value in change and transition. Constructing a leaded stained glass window involves starting with an image of interconnected pieces in the form of a pattern; deconstructing the pattern into smaller pieces; creating glass replicas from the smaller pieces; cutting and rounding off the rough edges of the glass; rebuilding the window by connecting the glass pieces with strips of lead; soldering intersecting joints; and reinforcing the piece with cement.

This process is similar to how individuals, too, benefit from deconstructing old patterns of behaviour to ultimately rebuild anew when navigating change transitions. The power of the process is in meeting individuals where they are and in helping them identify their current state, break out of old ways, and create a path forward in a four-stage process:

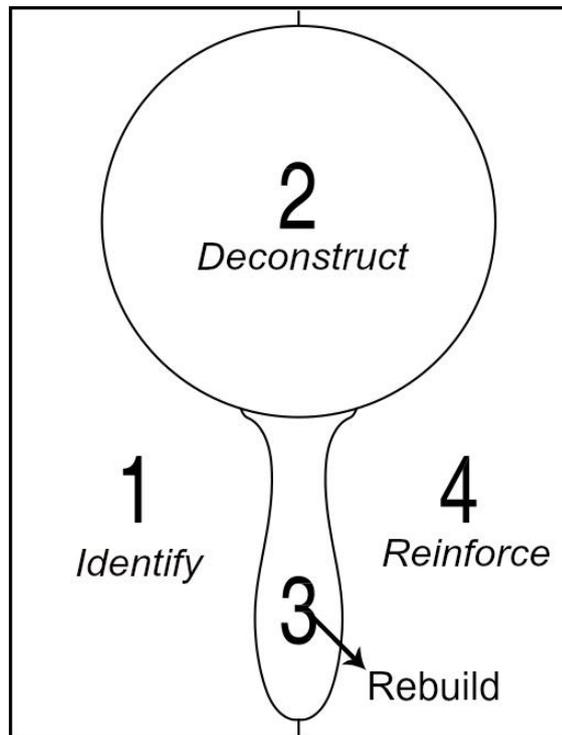


Fig. 1: The 4-stage process of the LLM model



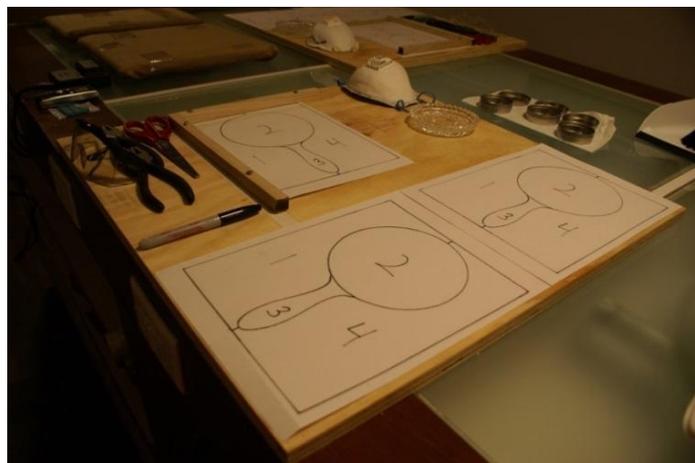
The stained glass pattern used in this process also has 4 corresponding pieces for identifying each of the stages in the model, which makes up a hand-held mirror. The mirror is a metaphor for inward exploration as a bridge to an envisioned future.

Fig. 2: The 4 pattern pieces of the LLM model make a mirror. The four stages of the LLM model correspond to different parts of the mirror.



When constructing the leaded stained glass panel in the LLM model, three copies of the pattern are used:

Fig. 3: The 3 copies of the LLM pattern



Pattern number 1 is used to cut its individual pieces, with special lead pattern sheers (these have a well in one of the blades to capture the black line of the pattern accommodating for the lead). These pieces are used as templates for glass cutting.

Pattern number 2 is the template to arrange the cut glass pieces ensuring a perfect fit between the glass pieces and maintaining the size of the original panel. It also serves as the participant's private pattern to record their responses to guided questions asked by the coach along each stage

of the model. This private space is for the participant only and is not shared with the coach or other participants.

Pattern number 3 is used to build the window. After the panel is built, the participant's private pattern can be placed behind the finished glass panel as a personal map that will help manage current and future changes. This serves as a reminder of where the participants began, where they are today, and where they are headed. The map also reminds them of steps they can take to help them get where they want to go. At this point, the coach uses the four phases of the model to guide participants through a series of reflective questions:

Stage One - Identify – Current State

The coach guides participants to identify the nature of the current situation they are facing. This is the coach's first opportunity to build an atmosphere of trust and a safe space for the participants. The coach's role is to provide guided exploration opportunities, tools, and creative materials to allow freedom of expression without judgement. The participant's role is to visualise their current state — their starting point — and begin to take inventory of what has worked for them in the past and what no longer serves them. Participants are asked to begin identifying the nature of the challenge they are facing. They are then asked to give it a name by writing it at the top of their private pattern template. Participants then jot down their perceptions of this challenge on pattern template number 2, piece #1: "Identity."

Guided by the coach, participants refer back to the questions they answered on the pre-session survey:

1. What situation are you currently facing, that brings you to this retreat?
 - a. Opportunity
 - b. Loss
 - c. Change
2. In what stage of your situation are you in now?
 - a. Beginning
 - b. Meantime (i.e., in the midst of the change)
 - c. Near the end
3. What is your current reaction to this situation?
 - a. Acceptance
 - b. Fear
 - c. Sadness
 - d. Anger
 - e. Withdrawal
 - f. Denial

During this stage the coach provides further guidance through a series of questions:

1. What are the things that have worked for you in the past when faced with a similar type of challenge (loss, change or opportunity)?
2. When was the last time you felt confident in yourself without fear?
3. When was the last time you felt most fulfilled?

Stage Two – Deconstruct – Old Patterns

Participants are asked to think about their reactions, actions or inactions that affect their present and future. With the guidance from the coach, they are asked to reflect on their past behaviour and their outcomes and write them on their private pattern template number 2, piece 2: "Deconstruct." They then begin to cut the pattern pieces.



Guided by the coach, participants refer back to the questions they answered on the pre-session survey:

1. What reaction has come naturally in the past when faced with a similar situation?
2. What is your first course of action?
 - a. Plan
 - b. Fix
 - c. Run
 - d. Blame
 - e. Stand still
3. How can things be better for you?

During this stage the coach provides further guidance through a series of questions:

1. If you can go back and revisit your initial reaction to the situation what would it be in hindsight?
2. How can you reconcile your initial reaction with your desired one, if you feel you need to?

Stage Three – Rebuild – New Possibilities

Participants are then asked to envision what a new or different desired state looks like for them. In a single word or short phrase, participants write down their answer on their private pattern template number 2, piece 3: “Rebuild.”

At this point participants have identified old ways of doing things and begin to experiment, practice, and make new connections between the status quo and the envisioned future. During this stage, coaches provide ample guidance and time for imagery to develop, intuition to take flight and a new picture to emerge.

Guided by the coach, participants refer back to the questions they answered on the pre-session survey:

1. What can you do differently?
2. What stands in your way?
3. What support do you need?
 - a. Family
 - b. Friend
 - c. Coach
 - d. Professional

During this stage the coach provides further guidance through a series of questions:

1. What is the expected outcome?
2. How will you get there, what activities need to happen?
3. What does it look like when you get there?

Stage Four – Reinforce – New Reality

Participants are asked to reflect on the skills learned during this journey and how these could be used to help them fortify their present state and support them in the future. They record their responses on the private pattern template number 2, piece 4: “Reinforce.” Now that participants are ready to experiment with new opportunities and new ways of doing things they can begin the evaluation process by reflecting on what is working for them and what additional improvements need to be made along the way. Here the coach provides room for further reflection facilitated by inquiry of the journey and further guidance.

At this stage there are no pre-session survey questions as these are asked before the start of the session when reinforcement is not yet foreseen by the participant.



During this stage the coach provides further guidance through a series of inquiry questions:

1. What new skills were learned during this journey?
2. Is the process of identification, deconstruction, rebuilding and reinforcement useful to you?
How so?
3. Was the experience what you expected? Yes/no
4. If the answer is no, how was it different?

This four-step process emphasises the importance of the coach in facilitating and encouraging individual's inward exploration through the creative process for transformative change. This model seeks to show individuals the power they can harness from identifying, acknowledging and reflecting on their own experiences, feelings and emotions and getting in touch with the tools they can use to build upon and help them through the meantime, while exploring the possibilities of both managing their current state and forging a better future.

Proof of Concept

During a proof of concept exercise for LLM, I attempted to walk a small group through the model's stages. Participants were asked to focus on a challenge they were experiencing and given the pattern of a handheld mirror, a framework that both helped them identify their challenges and served as a metaphor for introspection. The proof of concept participants were able to deconstruct the pattern and were taught how to create glass replicas based on their individual pieces. However, over the course of the proof of concept exercise, the participants were unable to physically progress further than a part of stage three in the model; they were unable to get to stage four's "reinforcement." As we progressed through the first three stages of the model, I was still able to see how the majority of LLM's concepts played out for the participants.

During stage 1, when the participants were practising cutting their shared pattern into individual pieces, feelings of frustration, fear, and anger took hold as they realised they were unable to execute the tasks "perfectly." Participants were not used to cutting paper with pattern shears, so the paper kept getting stuck in the scissors when they moved their shears more slowly or would stop cutting through the pattern mid stride. They continued encountering this challenge repeatedly and began connecting this with their real life reactions when doing something new as well as juxtaposing their reactions.

During this stage, one participant noticed her anxiety about doing something wrong and her fear of not getting things right, while another reacted with anger. The other participant, referring to her own and the other participant's reactions, said "[She] reacts with anger and I react with fear. I'm afraid of making a mistake and I'm afraid of what the expectation is of the people around me when I make a mistake whereas [she's] like (crap) why can't I get this."

Shortly thereafter, they moved on to cut their individual patterns, and I noticed they stopped cutting at almost exactly the same place in their individual patterns, on the second piece. When I asked them why they stopped, they said they realised they both stopped at this point because when they were originally sharing the pattern in the practice run: one cut one half of the mirror and handed the pattern over for the other to cut the second half. They realised they had stopped at the same spot in cutting their own pattern, as well, because that's what they had done before. Neither one of them had yet experienced cutting around the full circle of the mirror. At this point, I observed how quickly they had formed a new behavioural pattern relying on what they had done previously.

One participant commented: "We're creatures of habit. We got into the habit of stopping [at this point] and so we did." They then moved on and completed cutting all pattern pieces.



Circling back to the earlier participant's feelings of fear I asked: "Now that you have completed cutting the pattern, are you still afraid," to which she replied:

No. I did it, it's not perfect, but that does not really matter. My fear wasn't real... I don't even really know what I was afraid was going to happen, but it felt like the end of the world and I'm fine. You know...even if it had not turned out well, so okay it did not turn out so well, none of you said you're stupid or you're this. [you all said] It's okay, you're new at this.

Fear came up again when we moved onto glass cutting — a stage 3 activity that was new to the participants. One participant appeared apprehensive in scoring and breaking off the glass. I asked her if she was afraid of the glass and she said yes "I'm afraid of it." Once again like cutting the pattern, cutting glass was a new experience and fear and frustration surfaced. I paused the session for a moment to provide them one-on-one instruction until they felt a greater comfort level before moving on.

As they renewed cutting and gained more confidence, the pieces started breaking off nicely and they shared their excitement with me and with each other. The excitement of cutting a good piece slowly overcame the frustration of cutting glass in general and the need for perfecting the technique by working through it. On their own, they made adjustments: experimenting with their glass scoring pressure, listening for the sound of the score, adjusting hand and body position trying new things until they got it right.

We completed practising cutting straight strips of glass and moved on to cutting curved lines. As I was doing this demo the participant afraid of getting hurt commented, "This is apropos, me being so afraid of getting hurt and cutting glass."

I probed for more details about how her slowly increasing comfort working with glass was informing the current challenge she was facing as well as the feelings it brought up for her.

I think the message that it's reinforcing for me is that just because I may not know how to do something when I started and I can't see how I'm going to get there, does not mean I'm not going to get there. Even if I try it over and over it's not working and then also maybe the problem I may be trying to fix, may not be the only problem, or may not be the actual problem. I was like, so why can't I break this damn thing! And it was partly [because] I wasn't cutting deep enough and I was ignoring that... I needed to change my behaviour to cut the glass deeper instead of doing the same thing over and over again. I did not want to deal with that...[thinking] there is another reason [why it's not working].

Over the course of our debriefing sessions, one participant asked why was the answer list for question one on the pre-survey had more negative answers than positive answers. After some thought, I let her know that it was because most of the time, our reactions to change or to something new are negative. After the weekend, while reading Hill (2011), my assertion was supported:

The Facial Action Coding System (FACS)...[is] for gauging emotional effectiveness in human facial expressions. It detects seven core emotions: one is neutral (surprise), five are negative (fear, anger, sadness, disgust and contempt) and only one is positive (happiness)...that's because in evolutionary terms survival is job number one, and we don't need happiness to survive (p.31).



One participant connected how learning a new skill and working through frustrations could serve as a model for how she might approach other challenges in her life. As she gained more confidence working with glass, she remarked:

I'm getting braver, I'm getting braver. Just before, I thought I needed the pliers [to help me snap the class] it went poof [and broke off nicely.] I need to reframe how I look at challenges. Instead of being like freaking out that I'm not going to be able to do it, or it's going to prove that I'm not capable, it's more how can I use this to prove that I'm capable, as reinforcement and, even if I don't get it, it's still reframing it. Okay, well, what did I learn from it?

What seemed to make a difference for participants was not just experiencing something different, but “physically doing something with our bodies, while we’re mentally processing and emotionally processing,” which participants felt helped them find new pathways to process their challenges. As one participant reflected:

There was something about being physically uncomfortable, emotionally uncomfortable. Something about having to keep moving [throughout this process], so I think in having to keep physically moving, you had to keep moving...emotionally, pushing through.

The participants also saw the value in pushing through and working out their emotions, and reflected on how their emotions may have been connected to their expectations:

All of my expectations were end results and what I got out of [LLM] was a process to get to those end results. I now have a personalised path for how it would be best for me to get there. And you did not give it to me. You gave me the tools for me to find it [through this process]. You taught me how to fish!

This participant perfectly articulated the end goal of the LLM model: giving people the skills, tools, and awareness they need to help themselves.

While we were unable to progress through the entire model, the proof of concept participants were able to glean many of LLM’s benefits during the first three stages. The participants were able to see that the process had as much value as the end result:

I've noticed there are several [techniques to learn] in this whole process, where you have to go slow and you have to be patient, and that's important because that can be very uncomfortable for people, but you can't [take] any shortcuts. You have to go through that process in order for it to work out.

The deviation from our plans also presented an opportunity for me to see that LLM’s logic, philosophy, and foundation are sound and on point. Participants found tremendous value in the process even when they were not “successful” as per their initial expectations. Taylor and Ladkin (2009) distinguish between two camps of art therapy: “one that focuses on the art process independent of any art product that is produced and the other which focuses on the art product as a window into the subconscious” (62). The importance and value of the LLM process mimics the overall value of the process as defined by Taylor and Ladkin (2009): “making is focused on the individual’s unique experience and the personal growth and enrichment that occur during the process of making art” (62).

As the facilitator, I witnessed participants process their initial challenges and emerge with new understandings of themselves, when faced with something new, while also re-orienting myself to the nature of the model and its potential. Even though I had to complete the window for them, it



did give me an opportunity to meet with them after the retreat. This was an unexpected forum where we were able to check in and share reflections about the experience.

Strengths

LLM is a straightforward, four-step, cyclical, change model that is closely linked to how individuals naturally experience change. The model can be adapted to any individual change intervention, tapping into areas not generally employed in other change processes. It also facilitates individual change exploration through the arts, encouraging deep inward reflection. A glass mirror is a reminder that self-reflection and inward exploration is required in order for outward change to occur.

The role of emotions, feelings and one's reactions to them make the difference between the time spent in the meantime and moving forward. Experiencing the frustration that change brings about and working through it, as well as working through the subsequent feelings that surface, are at the heart of the LLM model.

For coaches, it is helpful to be able to read the room and guide the discussion accordingly, while honing in on the non-verbal reactions from participants. As participants experience moments of frustration with the physical action of creating this window, they may express those feelings in their facial expressions and body movements, rather than with words.

In ambiguous situations (like change), most communication is non-verbal...: 55 percent of communication comes through facial expressions. 30 percent of communication is through tone of voice. Only seven percent of communication is through verbal exchange (Hill, 2011, p.20).

Based on the coach's feedback to these reactions, participants can begin making connections between their physical and emotional challenges and the coach can help them move forward.

Because two-thirds of all stimuli reaching the brain are visual (Zaltman, 1996), the value of the model is in the process of using our hands to create something visual and tangible, not in the end product of creating the leaded stained-glass window itself. The way that participants manage and attach meaning to the frustration, discomfort, and other emotions that emerge helps them create new patterns from their own discoveries.

The power of LLM is in showing up, taking the first step forward, and trying to do your best with intention and without judgement. Working with one's hands and in a fragile medium like glass helps us realise how fragile we are and how easily we can break at any given time. Identifying what makes us uncomfortable, reflecting on how we react to that discomfort, by deconstructing old patterns of behaviour and rebuilding ourselves back up again, helps us reinforce and strengthen our inner being, so that we can go back out into our daily lives renewed and prepared to better manage what may come our way.

LLM is portable and can be hosted in a variety of venues. Hosting LLM in a retreat format is an ideal component of the model. It allows individuals to step out of their typical world and provides a respite from the day-to-day routine and distractions. Taking a break from the familiar helps create headspace, which in turn makes room for awareness, new ideas, and opportunities to come into view.

Opportunities

During the proof of concept, I asked participants for feedback on their experience through this journey and how the model may be strengthened for future retreats and their own observations. They reiterated there is value in the level of frustration encountered at every stage



of the model and in having to push through the fatigue. They also valued the coach's role in maintaining a balance between pushing them past their frustration and backing off when appropriate. Another suggestion was for the coach to assess participants' emotional states before they began moving through the model:

Ask people if they had anything traumatic that might come up, because one of the things that I wrote [in my private pattern piece] was that while this process helped me reconnect with my creativity, I was not prepared for the energy that it brought to the surface. And so, [my challenge] was an easy one, because it was connected to a very specific example, it was connected to [loss of my mother] anger about this situation [about the Real Estate contact not moving forward], not being able to reconcile what was the delay [so I could move on]. Knowing in advance that if someone has something that's really traumatic that this work might trigger, it might help [the coach] be prepared for it.

The participants also found value in the follow up questions asked by the coach. While the prompted questions were important to start the discussion, the follow-up questions were where participants felt they gained the most insight into themselves and the way they process and move through change.

Participants also responded positively to the unexpected opportunity for a post-retreat check-in conversation, since they were unable to finish the window and had to arrange to meet with me again to pick up their completed piece.

The mirrored pattern also proved to be a key piece of the process for participants. The mirror encouraged inward exploration and was a constant in the midst of the flux they often felt while learning how to create a stained glass art piece.

Participants felt they would have benefitted from the coach pre-disclosing that the value of the model is in the experiencing the process of making a leaded stained glass window and that they may not leave with a final product. This was an unexpected development for me, as the coach, and I think there is an opportunity in exploring how to manage expectations while letting events naturally unfold. Every group of participants will be different, and some may progress further than others. Is there value in letting the events unfold without telling participants at the outset that they may not finish? Will simply saying they may not finish mean that no group ever will finish?

One definitive opportunity is to ensure that I let participants know explicitly that they will acquire tools that they can apply and reutilise in every area of their lives. The post-proof-of-concept feedback indicated that the participants were unaware of this, and knowing it made them value their experience even more.

In synthesising the feedback from participants, I believe that the biggest opportunity for exploration is the importance of a finished product for both the participants and the coach. Refining the model to optimise the opportunity for completion will help me examine how important it is that the participants complete the stained glass piece or if the process itself — regardless of the end goal — will continue to have value for helping participants navigate change.

Conclusion

Change in an individual's personal or professional life does not have to be paralysing. If provided the space, time, and tools to help navigate the process, individuals can feel empowered to develop and move forward on a new path. In professional environments particularly, traditional methods of dealing with change focus on the quickest, most logical way to move someone through change, but



they often do not yield sustainable positive results, opening the door for alternative approaches such as arts-based coaching models.

Art thrives outside of one's comfort zone. It relishes in ambiguity, chaos, and what is different (Nissley, 2010). It engages the whole person by eliciting the imagination and intuition, through both pre-linguistic and often subconscious forms of expression that engage a learner's imaginative and intuitive processes, emotions, empathy, and felt resonance (Yorks & Kasl, 2002). Arts-based coaching can provide the creative outlet individuals need to break down their emotional barriers and false pretenses, providing the room, time, and opportunity to grow. This is in direct contrast to traditional ways of solving problems by quantifying and analysing situations in rigidly structured ways that have not typically provided sustainable transformative change. Living Life, in the Meantime provides an alternative way to see and make lasting meaning of our complex world and the changes individuals will inevitably encounter. Using the arts as a catalyst, LLM provides the space for individuals to identify their challenges, as well as time to reflect on and understand and process their behaviours toward change. Most importantly, LLM offers a framework for individuals to begin rebuilding and reinforcing a new reality, with support and guidance from a coach along the way.

As the awareness of Arts-based coaching grows, new artistic lenses should be explored, providing alternative languages for expression and ways to measure their results. Managers, leaders, facilitators, and Human Resources practitioners can employ LLM in their human capital developmental programs, providing a different lens to better understand the elements that move individuals to change and the triggers that prevent them from progressing forward. LLM can serve organisations in team building, problem solving, and transformational strategic processing, providing a safe space for people to express themselves freely and creatively, allowing them time to step out of their comfort zones, away from day-to-day distractions. Community organisers may find LLM useful in bridging the gaps among individual divergent opinions that ultimately need to unite around a common goal. Moving through the creative process together may serve as a template for how the community can make decisions that support their shared goals.

Primary and secondary schools could also benefit from introducing LLM as the "A" in their STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics) programs. Students' exploration of how glass, metals, and building tools interact in the LLM process can connect back to science, technology, and engineering instruction. In addition, childhood and adolescence are marked by emotional and physical changes; individuals would inevitably benefit from creating LLM's personalised maps that could help them process and understand how to move productively and proactively through these changes.

Rehabilitation, bereavement, and youth support centers may also find that LLM can be a tool that provides a creative outlet by which people can begin processing their pain and gain the courage and support needed to take the first step in a new direction.

The value of LLM is that it recognises that change starts with the individual. Just as a stained glass window transforms when new pieces of color are introduced, individuals can reinvent themselves when they change their patterns of behaviour. LLM is built upon the premise that to change the larger system, we must recognise the value of attending to and nurturing individual change and the emotions that arise during transitions.

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