

# Coaching at the Generative Crossroads of Deep Caring

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Let us set the stage: We are watching the final scene from the *Godfather* cinematic trilogy. Michael Corleone (as portrayed by Al Pacino) is staring out over Lake Tahoe in deep despair. By many standards Michael is a very successful man; he has led numerous “organizations,” and he is wealthy. He is also a very powerful and influential man in some ways – but is alone and estranged from all that is important in life. Michael just had his brother killed and has virtually no contact with other members of his family.

He is aging before our eyes—so very different from the youthful Michael Corleone in the first *Godfather* movie who, straight out of the military after WWII, was to be the future of the Corleone family by forming a legitimate and respectable business. We see this future in the eyes of his father, Vito Corleone (played by Marlon Brando). Sitting in front of his beautiful home on the edge of Lake Tahoe, Michael envisions no future in terms of his own organizations or his enduring contributions to society. He is “burned out,” soulless and stagnant; a rotting, even lifeless entity who is without purpose or direction.

Michael Corleone has become alienated from four different deep caring roles, the roles which we have defined as *generative*. He is alienated from his family (the first role), from people he could be mentoring and organizations he could be building for the long-term after he is no longer around (the second role), from the traditions and culture he could sustain (the third role) and from the communities he could potentially serve and enhance (the fourth role). In this set of essays we focus on these four deep caring roles and the choices that each of us makes in seeking to achieve a fulfilling life of generativity – or like Michael Corleone, falling into a life of stagnation.

There are many choices available to each of us during a lifetime. These choices can lead us to a self-renewing life or to stagnation and decline. Many of these decisions concern the way and the extent to which we care about other people, our heritage, and our community. Michael Corleone, the second-generation Godfather, made choices throughout his life that were concerned with what he should care about and how he should engage this caring. And his choices led to stagnation and despair for Michael as he sat at the end of the third Godfather movie beside the still waters of Lake Tahoe.

We make choices. We may suffer from the wounds of betrayal and alienation—in some ways the violation of our life covenant—but we still have a chance to turn toward new purposes. We can shift from the wounded leader to the generative teacher. We can be transformed from the person who was left behind to the person who is helping a new generation lead the way into the future.

Though we may have lost the opportunity to play an active role as parent to our children, a second form of parenting is available in abundance during late midlife. We can be parents to our organizations, to people for whom we serve as mentors, and to young people in our community. We can savor the joys of caring for our grandchildren and can become valuable volunteers in nonprofit organizations. Just as life

seems to take away opportunities for active leadership, public recognition, and parenting, it offers a second opportunity for new forms of parenting.

Many ways in which to be a “parent” are available at all points in our life. We can be a parent not only to children and other people but also to ideas, subordinates, people we mentor, institutions, communities, and even cultures. Erik Erikson (Erikson, Erikson and Kivnick, 1986, p. 37) describes this expanding notion of generativity as “a vital strength of care [and as] a widening concern for what has been generated by love, necessity, or accident; it overcomes the ambivalence arising from irreversible obligation. Thus, [it] attends to the needs of all that has been generated.”

## Coaching and the Two Faces of Generativity

At this point we wish to introduce yet another character in our dramatic enactments of Generativity. This character is the professional Coach. What if Michael Corleone had a coach to help him sort out his priorities. Such a scenarios seems unlikely—yet the lead figure in *The Sopranos* had a therapist—so why not a coach for another (fictitious) mafioso leader? Could Michael have benefited from someone to talk with about priorities and actions to be taken on behalf of his father and his family. As portrayed in many other televised series (such as *Breaking Bad*) there are often many small steps being taken that lead us to a hellish state of unethical behavior. What about when Michael returned from Sicily? Was there still time and space for a shift in his life and career pathway?

Perhaps there was no viable pathway for Michael Corleone other than embracing the life his father had led. Predestination is a common theme in theater. Yet, each of us is likely to be free enough to benefit from the guidance and support of a professional coach when making hard, thoughtful decisions regarding our own generative pathway to deep caring. We intend in this set of essays to provide some insights and guidelines regarding a generative pathway. These insights and guidelines are intended not just for professional coaches but also for those who are making the tough decisions regarding their own pathway—including the coaches who must grapple with the direction of their own personal pathway as not only a coach, but also a parent, mentor, partner and contributing member of an organization and community.

As a first step in providing insight and guidance, we identify two primary needs regarding generativity. We then introduce the four ways in which we engage generative, deep caring actions. First, we turn to the two needs

### Extending Ourselves

First, generativity is about extending our presence and influence with our own children, with the next generation, with our heritage, and with our community. We become gardeners who tend the garden. We want the flowers, trees and plants to live long after we do and to represent, in some important and tangible way, the manner in which we make an appearance on this earth. We want the garden to reassure us and the world that we made a difference. This point was tenderly and melodramatically conveyed in both Lerner and Lowe’s *Camelot* and Frank Capra’s *It’s a Wonderful Life*.

At the beginning and ending of *Camelot*, we see King Arthur preparing for battle against Lancelot, his dearest friend. In many ways, King Arthur looks a bit like Michael Corleone. He is beaten down and has lost any sense of purpose or meaning in life. With despair Arthur, like Michael, is reflecting on the

broken state of his kingdom and, in particular, his round table and code of chivalry: “Right makes might. Not might makes right!” It is only when a young boy is discovered by Arthur and displays his own fervent commitment to the roundtable and code that Arthur breaks out of his depression.

Arthur commands the boy to return home: “Run boy run.” He sends the boy away so that the tales of Camelot “might not be forgot.” The abundant garden that Arthur has tended can now be restored by this representative of the next generation and other young men and women who witnessed this “one, brief shining moment of glory that was known as Camelot!” We can only wish that someone could have redeemed Michael Corleone, for there is very little that is noble or good about his adult life; the deeds he has already done are probably damning him to eternal stagnation.

In the case of Capra’s *Wonderful Life*, George had sacrificed a fulfilling life to serve his family and community. George never was given a chance to get out into the world. He wasn’t even sure if the other half of his covenant—making a difference to his family and community—was fulfilled. As in the story of King Arthur and many other Capra movies, (e.g., *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* and *Meet John Doe*), the principal character in *Wonderful Life* is a former idealist who is now burned-out and disillusioned.

Like Arthur and perhaps Michael, George was on the edge of turning into a grumpy, discontented and alienated human being. He was becoming of little value to anyone as a parent, spouse, business owner or community leader. Erik Erikson (1963) would suggest that George was about to move toward the opposite pole—*away from generativity to stagnation and despair*. Clarence, the angel-in-training, rescued George at the last minute—just as the little boy rescued Arthur. Clarence showed George that he had made a profound difference, that the lives of people around him in Bedford Falls would not be the same without his sacrifices.

### **Setting Priorities**

There is a second primary factor in understanding the path to generativity. *Generativity is about caring for that about which one truly cares*. We can’t attend equally to every flower in the garden; we must determine which of the flowers we care about most and then devote deep, caring attention to them. So, in life, we must identify those few things about which we truly care when we reach our Autumnal years. This is what generativity is all about. Like George in *A Wonderful Life*, we want to touch the important people in our lives and accomplish things as men and women of Autumn that leave a lasting impression. And like King Arthur, we want to know that in some way we have secured our immortality.

There is the need not only say “Yes” when setting priorities, but also to say “No.” George had to say “No” about leaving Bedford Falls and finding a new, expanded life elsewhere. His pathway to deep caring evolved around his loyalties to loved ones “at home.” What about King Arthur? Could he have said “No” about going to war against his close friend, Lancelot? Perhaps not. Like Michael Corleone, Arthur might have had no choice.

It is indeed ironic (and often tragic) that those people who have the most power also have the least amount of freedom regarding choices to make in their life. George Orwell (2009) portrays this loss of freedom in his short story about the British officer who was the only person in their Indian community who had sufficient status and authority to kill an elephant who had done damage in his small village. While walking down the road to shoot the elephant, our leader pondered about his own “predestined” role as someone who must kill in order to preserve his status – does this remind us of Michael Corleone

or King Arthur? We would suggest that professional coaching is of particular value for leaders of an organization or community precisely because they often not only face difficult decisions and must be clear about priorities, but also live with the seeming loss of personal freedom. The loss of “No” often attends the acquisition of power and status.

Given the generative drive to extend oneself and to establish important priorities, it is important for each of us to identify the areas in which we want to engage this extension and to enact cherished priorities. While Erik Erikson focused on one form of generativity (mentoring), we would suggest that there are at least four options and that each of these ways of being generative tends to come to the fore at different times in our life.

## **Four Ways to Be Generative**

We express and experience generativity through the enactment of four different, though interrelated, deep caring roles.

### **Generativity One**

First, there is the generativity that we experience as parents— even when our children are grown up and we are no longer their primary caretakers. Indeed, caring about our children does not fade away as we grow older; rather, it takes on a new form and is accompanied by the delight that comes with seeing our children succeed in their own lives and finding their own distinctive identity.

The expression of this first mode of generativity need not be limited to the care for children we have raised from birth. We all know of extraordinary men and women who have taken care of children via foster-care, adoption, or serving as a nurturing uncle or grandparent. One of our dear friends joined with his gay partner to raise a boy from a broken home—a dramatic example of this first type of generativity.

### **Generativity Two**

Second, there is the generativity that comes with caring about young men and women who are not part of our immediate or extended family. This was the focus of Erik Erikson’s work. This type of generativity often is engaged when we are older and in a position of some power or influence in an organization. We care for the next generation of leaders or the next generation of craftsmen and artisans in our field. We often are generative in this second way through our role as mentors.

We run interference for younger people or for those who look up to us. We collaborate with them on projects, such as writing a book together with a newcomer in the field. We serve as role models that new people in our company emulate through job performance, personal values, and even lifestyle. We serve as mentors when we listen carefully to younger people talk about their problems and accomplishments. We serve as mentors when we encourage our protégés to take risks or to push beyond initial achievements. We sponsor younger people by inviting them into our world, our exclusive club or inner group.

There are innovative ways in which this second way of generativity is expressed. For example, we know several insightful leaders in American higher education who make effective use of senior level executives who are on a leave-of-absence from their corporations. They teach for a term or two in the college’s business school or liberal arts program, and many of these executives are in late midlife. They thrive in educational and training settings that allow them to teach and reflect on learning they have

accumulated over the years. (Bland and Bergquist, 1998) In a way, they are “saved” by the college or university by serving as counterparts to King Arthur’s young boy or George’s angel-in training.

Often our generative interests in collaboration and teaching are melded into a single plan. We co-teach with someone who is younger or less experienced. We invite a younger colleague to join with us in consulting another organization or within our own organization. These can be some of the most enjoyable and gratifying encounters that we will experience. It doesn’t matter if it’s teaching about woodwork with a younger colleague at a local community center, coaching boys and girls on a little league team, coordinating a technical training program for line supervisors in a company, or conducting weekly case conferences with new associates in a law firm. It’s all about generativity.

When in a state of stagnation, we tend to isolate the younger generation, often viewing young people as rivals and potential usurpers of the throne. When in a state of generativity, we welcome the younger generation and help to prepare them for new leadership. We are reminded of a trip we took to the French Quarter in New Orleans many years ago. We went to *Maison Bourbon* to hear Wallace Davenport, a legendary jazz musician. While Davenport was playing, “racket” (hard rock music) from across the street was invading the beautiful soulful sounds of his quartet.

We went up to Davenport after his set was finished and commented negatively about the quality of music coming from across the street. Davenport cut us off and declared with considerable passion that hard rock music was the future and he was very glad it was there, across the street. Davenport could have resented the intrusion and competition. Instead, he chose to be generative and embrace and support the new music. *We* were curmudgeons—not Davenport! We find much of the same attitude among the musicians portrayed in the remarkable post-Katrina TV series called *Treme*.

### **Generativity Three**

There is a third way in which generativity is expressed, what George Vaillant (2012, p. 155) identifies as guardianship: “Guardians are caretakers. They take responsibility for the cultural values and riches from which we all benefit, offering their concern beyond specific individuals to their culture as a whole; they engage a social radius that extends beyond their immediate personal surroundings.” Their domain of concern is no longer just their family, their organization, or even their community.

They now care about the more fundamental legacies in their life and engage this caring through their wisdom and integration of soul and spirit. While this third way to express generativity can be identified as a form of resistance to change, or as an overdose of nostalgia, it also can be seen as an expression of deep caring for that which remains valid in contemporary times and which continues as a source of wisdom regardless of its date of origin or the quaint way in which it is stated, painted, or sung.

### **Generativity Four**

Generativity is to be found in yet a fourth way. We witnessed this when we conducted a two-year research project on Community Sage Leadership in Western Nevada County, California. Fifty men and women (ages 25-55) were identified as emerging sage leaders and interviewed in-depth on the same set of key life questions. Another fifty men and women (ages 56-90) from the same communities (Grass Valley and Nevada City, CA) were identified as senior sage community leaders and also were interviewed on these questions.

In writing the project book (*The Sages Among Us: Harnessing the Power of Civic Engagement*), we identified a very powerful, unifying theme—especially among the retired senior sage leaders. These men

and women were generative in their care for the community in which they lived. Unlike many other retirees who had retreated into gated retirement communities and often stagnated there, the fifty senior sage leaders found enormous gratification in their involvement with local arts councils, environmental action groups, hospitality organizations, and many other initiatives that enhanced community development.

When we are generative in late midlife we establish, support, or help to expand networking in our community. We move beyond our own family and the organizations in which we have worked. We are particularly suited at this time in our life to such roles as teacher, trainer or coach to the leaders or managers of nonprofit organizations or community action forums. In many cases, as we noted in *The Sages Among Us*, the role of community-based generativity is not necessarily to start something new, but rather to support and build on that which other people have begun—and it is contagious (Quehl and Bergquist, 2012, p. 90):

. . . as part of their generativity, many senior sages report that their “job” in working as a volunteer is to build on the accomplishments of their predecessors. Rather than starting something new, which might bring personal recognition and ego gratification, these dedicated seniors value continuity and honoring past contributions. Their passion is contagious, as is their appreciation for work already done. This enables them to generate new energy as well as re-kindled old passions. They re-interpret the existing vision of their organization so community members can see the often -unacknowledged value inherent in work already done and will continue to be done by the organization. One of our sage leaders described this way of being generative as “leading quietly.”

As we noted above, these community-based generative services are not just about quiet leadership; they are also about voluntary community engagement (a key ingredient in any attempt to increase “social capital” or “community capital”). In keeping with this spirit of generativity, one of our sage leaders noted, “We don’t retire, we just quit working for money.” George Vaillant (2012, p. 166) offered the same observation with regard to his Harvard grads: “community-building is a career of its own—one of the really great ones.”

Insofar as men and women are serving in generative roles when working with other people, with an organization, or with their community during senior years, they are likely to be more inclined than ever before to exert authority in a collaborative and nurturing manner. And as they teach and mentor, they are also willing to take less credit and be less visible as they age. They already have acquired whatever power and recognition they are likely to get in their lives. They have had their “day in the sun.” These men and women now gain more gratification from watching their organizational or community or cultural “children” succeed than from succeeding themselves. They have shifted from a primary focus on their own success to a focus on significance—making a difference in the world. They care deeply.

## A Life of Deep Caring

The musical “*Pippin*,” by Stephen Schwartz (of “*Wicked*” fame), is about the nature of deep caring. It involves the search for life meaning and the beginning of all types of generativity. The protagonist, Pippin, searches for meaning in life as the son of Charlemagne first through warfare, then through lust, then through revolution against his father, then through governance (replacing his father), then through exploration of religious practices and other pursuits, and finally through leading an ordinary life. He runs away from each path – initially including leading an ordinary life with a widowed woman and her son. Finally, he comes to

realize that the woman and her son are really what he wants in life, and where true meaning can be attained even if in a rather mundane, day-to-day, and non-dramatic manner. Pippin is discovering generativity.

### **Journey of Discovery**

Schwartz' protagonist, Pippin, has initiated a journey of discovery not unlike Dorothy in *The Wizard of Oz* and many other protagonists in novels, plays and myths (as noted by Joseph Campbell in his examination of dominant world myths). The difference between Pippin and Dorothy is that Pippin is traveling on a path toward orientation to the other (generativity), rather than on a path back home as is Dorothy. Perhaps this is because Dorothy is much younger than Pippin.

What might Dorothy's journey be like if we were to provide a narrative of Dorothy years later in life when she is a caring parent, modeling the attitude and behavior of Auntie Em. Perhaps, as a mature adult, Dorothy would become a mentor or guide to young women who are restless about growing up in Kansas. She might even set up a scholarship program so these young women can spend a summer in a foreign land (if not Oz), or she might help to establish a museum that features the artifacts of traveling magicians and peddlers (like the Wizard). These would be portraits of Dorothy's journey to deep caring outside herself and her desire to return home.

We have choices to make—just like Michael Corleone, King Arthur, George Bailey, Pippin and Dorothy. Ultimately, we must choose between generativity and stagnation. Do we undertake the risk of learning and change? Or do we accept the *status quo* and refuse to take a risk? When we are stagnant rather than generative, we continue to do the same old thing. We settle for mediocrity, allowing our dreams and personal aspirations to wither away. We come to resent and even block the ideas and achievements of younger people. We dwell on the past, while abandoning the future.

Typically, stagnation sets in because we are afraid of change. We don't believe for some reason that we can keep up with the next generation. A coaching intervention at this point might be of great significance. Coaching sessions could focus on this fear of change and the helplessness and hopelessness that attend this fear. Agency might be given attention: what can you (the client) do to not only keep up with the change, but actually benefit for it (hopefulness) (Seligman, 1991).

### **A Confiscated Future**

In our own work as coach or consultant to mature men and women, we find they often specifically speak of personal fears associated with confiscated dreams of the future. They have sacrificed to realize personal aspirations and to fulfill dreams about family, career, and even retirement. What happens to so many during late midlife? They no longer have a future, for the future is right now. They have confiscated it and must now either savor the present day or create a new set of plans for the future. This is the process of generativity. Alternatively, if they live primarily in their past with old dreams, they are not the generative guardians that Vaillant identified. Instead, they are regressive defenders of a past that sometimes never really existed, and they don't want the past to be incorporated into the present. This is the process of stagnation.

Ironically, men and women who have spent most of their lives planning and saving for the future often find the creation of a new future to be terrifying. Yet, the creation of a new future is critical if they are to be generative—if they are to recreate themselves for the final acts of their lives. William Bridges (1980, 2001) associates this time of rebuilding with his concept of the “neutral zone.” This is a state of limbo that resides between the old realities and new possibilities.

While the neutral zone is a difficult place in which to dwell, it is also a place that is filled potentially with special bonuses: mentors, spiritual guides, new loves, rediscovered old loves, new dreams; furthermore, the new future is often joyfully and insightfully created in conjunction with the younger people they are mentoring or with whom they are collaborating. All of this is in conjunction with other members of their organization and community with whom they are building their new future. An effective professional coach can help make the neutral zone a place of new birth rather than just the death of something old and dated.

### **Setting the Stage: The Four Roles of Deep Caring and Generativity**

We are ready to "set the stage" for our in-depth analysis of each deep caring role—having introduced several key concepts regarding generativity and deep caring and having suggested several ways in which professional coaches might assist in finding the generative pathway to deep caring. We begin by turning to the word "stage" itself—a word that has several different meanings when the nature of deep caring is being addressed. We use this concept in two different, though related, ways—and each way points to a differing approach to be taken in serving as a coach to a client who seeks to find and engage their own generative aspirations.

#### **Life Phase**

The first is most often embraced by developmental psychologists, where *Stage* refers to a phase in a person's life - like the stages of launching a rocket into space. We propose that each of the four deep caring roles of generativity is prominent at a particular stage in our lives. In taking this stance, we are diverging from the primary focus that most developmental researchers and theorists take regarding deep caring and generativity. It is usually conceived as a specific developmental stage occurring in mid-life. However, a major researcher on generativity, Dan McAdams, suggests that generativity can occur at any point in the life cycle, depending primarily on the culture in which a person lives.

He concludes, nevertheless, that generativity is primarily a mid-life phenomenon and the focuses primary on this point in life when conducting his own research on generativity. According to McAdams, Hart and Maruna (1998, p. 17):

Rather than viewing generativity as a discrete developmental stage in the life cycle, we prefer to conceive of it as subject to developmental expectations and assumptions about time and timing that vary somewhat from one society to the next. . . . Nevertheless, we believe that Erikson was right in situating generativity, in a general fashion, in the middle of the human life span.

It is interesting to note that, at the same time, Cohler, Hostetler and Boxer (1998, p. 275) believe McAdams and colleagues might be considering a broader perspective on generativity:

McAdams and his colleagues, while remaining somewhat committed to the idea of midlife salience of generativity, have recently recognized the difficulty of differentiating between generativity as a personal attribute, which may become particularly salient in middle adulthood as a consequence of social timing, and generativity as a relatively distinct developmental stage . . . To this end, they have begun an intensive study of adults characterized as generative, irrespective of age.

While this predicted broadening of perspective on generativity was offered more than 25 years ago, we see little evidence of it appearing in the subsequent literature. We believe that the four role models of generativity being offered in this set of essays begin to fulfill this prediction and potential. Furthermore, we propose that thoughtful (and sometimes provocative) coaching can promote the discovery of generativity (in one or more forms) at any point in their client's career and life.



## Life Drama

The second way in which we use *Stage* comes from the world of theater. The “stage” is where drama takes place: There is the front of the stage and the back of the stage. There are certainly actors in the spotlight and other actors operating outside the spotlight. And there are some actors off stage. We make extensive use of this meaning of “stage” in part because the psychologist, Erik Erikson, who was one of the first to write about adult development stages, was himself an actor. He was fully aware of this second way in which the word “stage” can be used.

Throughout this set of essays, we will draw on this analogy to theater and will describe four roles of generativity that can be played by anyone, at any point in their life. While, as McAdams has suggested, a specific expression of generativity might be more commonly found at a particular point in our life because of societal expectations (“social timing” in the words of McAdams), we will argue that anyone can be generative in one way or another at any time in their life—and a professional coach can provide valuable guidance in the discovery of this generative role.

While we don't deal specifically with cross-cultural comparisons in these essays, the emergence of generativity during various stages in life and in various manifestations might be particularly relevant if adult development in a variety of world cultures is to be explored. Furthermore, it might be particularly important when coaching in many cultures for the coach to keep in mind the differing ways in which generativity is expressed and the different times in life when deep caring is of highest priority.

## The Four Deep Caring Roles

In keeping with our use of the theatrical metaphor, we make extensive use of the term “role” as we describe four closely related parts that people play when they care deeply and are being generative. The term “role” is being used because we believe generativity is not just about a particular way of thinking, or about a specific kind of maturation (e. g., a change or improvement in one's needs, feelings or beliefs). While many developmental researchers focus on thinking or cognitive maturation, we focus on the role played by generativity as an activity or set of activities. A generative role is played out not just when we think about caring or when we need to be more caring; the role of generativity is enacted when we *actively participate in deep caring*.

The “stage” is the setting in which we engage the generativity role. This role undoubtedly is influenced by changes in the way we think and feel, and the emerging needs and motivations in our mature life. But generativity is more than this. It is about playing a role in relationship to other people. It is about playing a caring role. It is about action, not just thinking good thoughts. It is about feeling gratified in having done something that tangibly benefits people.

With this articulation of our perspective on the roles of generativity as active engagements in the world, we identify four roles of generativity that we believe are played-out in our lives:

*Role One:* raising children, enacting a project, or performing a specific job in an organization.

*Role Two:* mentoring, leading, and leaving a legacy inside an organization.

*Role Three:* leaving a legacy outside family and organization by fostering and ensuring the maintenance of a tradition and/or preserving heritage.

*Role Four:* working on behalf of a community or broader society, ensuring the welfare and prosperity of people living in this community or society.

While we will spend considerable time exemplifying each of these four roles, we begin with a simple illustration.

The first role of generativity is tangibly demonstrated in the offering of food to our family. We have engaged in a project (cooking a meal) that will benefit our children and other family members by providing nutrition, gratifying their senses, and creating a setting in which familial conversations can take place. Meals often provide sanctuaries in which certain kinds of words can be stated and in which nonverbal communication is prominent. Many religions make use of food and special meals to portray, honor, or invoke spiritual presence in a family setting.

Deep caring can move even further and deeper. We contract with a professional coach and indicate that we want to move “outward” in our life’s work. We want to work with the next generation. What happens when we want to convey to the next generation what we have learned about cooking? We prepare and distribute recipes. If we are particularly ambitious and are skilled and knowledgeable cooks, we write cookbooks or even host a cooking show on a cable channel. The goal is to spread and sustain our knowledge by teaching the next generation or our current generation. This is the second role of generativity.

With the encouragement of our coach, we not only write our own cookbook; we also honor other great cooks. We seek to preserve their recipes, cookbooks, and even previously recorded cooking shows. This is the third role of generativity, and it has to do with heritage and tradition. Say the public library in our town has decided to throw away or sell at a greatly discounted price older books to make room for newer ones. Among them are some old cookbooks that seem out of date and are among the first books to be discarded. You find out about this decision and petition to keep the outdated books, noting that great recipes remain eternally valid and vital. It would be a shame to discard this enduring culinary wisdom and dishonor the wonderful women and men who carefully prepared these books. This is Generativity Three at its height.

This third role of generativity can also be enacted when we seek to honor a person who has won the most baking contests at the annual county fair over the past 30 years. We collect baking recipes from many people in our community and assemble them in a cookbook named after the baking champion.

Researchers in many fields have been doing this for many years. They honor a colleague who has made major contributions to their field by assembling a series of essays that focus on the themes and findings for which their honored colleague is noted. These assembled essays are given a fancy, Germanic name—they are called “Festschriften.” This is big time Generativity Three.

There is a fourth way in which generativity is enacted on behalf of the culinary arts. Our coach encourages us to think “outward” not only in time (honoring contributions by others) but also in space (reaching out to our community). We can engage our community in the enhancement of these arts. We start a recipe-sharing club. We ask a chef in town to come to one of our homes and cook a meal for some members of our community. At the same time, the chef offers some tips about cooking and shares her recipe at the end of the meal. We pay for the food and chef, and the chef donates the money to a charitable cause. The chef finds the event to be personally gratifying, and her restaurant gets some publicity.

Generativity Four is also enacted when we start, manage, or advocate for a program that provides left-over food from restaurants and grocery stores to homeless families in our community. Called by many names (often “Urban Harvest”), these food-sharing programs are a “god-send” for many destitute people and local shelters. In some large cities, it is estimated that food not used by restaurants and not sold by groceries

could meet all the nutritional needs for every homeless person living there. It is only a matter of legal protection (the so-called "Good Samaritan" laws) and finding the right people and distribution networks to get food to these people. Typically, the costs of distribution are offset by restaurant and grocery store savings in reduced garbage services. It comes down to a matter of generative services on behalf of the community's ultimate welfare. It comes down to the enactment of the fourth role of generativity.

## **Generativity in Four Acts: Expanding and Extending Our Region of Care**

Generativity is clearly a multi-dimensional concept with many different manifestations; it is with the assistance of a professional coach that we might open new vistas of deep caring. There is still something to keep in mind when we are reflecting on our own generativity or assisting someone else (as a coach) to reflect on their life of deep caring. We can keep in mind our own age and the unique pulls we find at specific points in our life to be caring in a specific way. We propose that each of the four roles tends to be center stage at a specific time in our life. Following is a preview of the prominent role of generativity being played most often at specific times in our life.

### **Early Adulthood**

There is a period early in adulthood when we attempt to balance a commitment to both love and work. It's a time of life when the generative role includes parenting our children or parenting a specific project or job in an organization. This generative role often continues to show-up in our life through continuing and changing relationships with our children and through the shifting nature of the projects or jobs we engage in organizations. The prevailing motivations are based in Generativity One: a focus on direct and sustained care for someone or something that is immediate (close to us in terms of both space and time).

### **Early Middle Adulthood**

This role tends to be played-out during the middle years of our life when we are moving into a position of experience, expertise, or influence in an organization. This generative role focuses on being a mentor to younger or less experienced members of the organization. This role also involves us as monitors, mobilizers, and motivators. This is the original notion of "generativity." In some sense, we become a grandparent in our organization and frequently become an actual grandparent in our personal life.

Much of the gratification comes not from personal achievement and advancement; rather, it comes from fostering the growth and achievement of other people - and the next generation (including our own children) being successful. As in the case of the first generative role, this second role of generativity frequently remains salient later our life. With the prevailing motivations of Generativity Two, we expand our caring to people outside our family. We mentor and lead. We move from individual success to broader significance, at least within our own sphere of influence and control.

### **Late Middle Adulthood**

We find that the third role often is assigned to the later years of mid-life, as well as our senior years. This generative role is what developmental researcher, George Vaillant (2012), identified as "guardianship". It is the time when we are serving as maintainer of traditions. We are storytellers, chair of the board rather than CEO, and "old timers" who like the way things have been and should continue to be.

We are in the business of preserving heritage and honoring those who have contributed much to our society. We are legacy-leaders. Generativity Three prevails. We expand our caring in time and expand our attention and action to caring about objects and traditions, not just people. We become holders and

promoters of heritage. We are guardians of a world that is in jeopardy of passing away or being ignored. It is not a matter of holding on to the old ways and living with nothing but the old memories—these are the first signs of stagnation. Rather it is a matter of bringing the old into the new and of creating new memories by honoring old memories—this is a sign of generativity.

## Senior Years

Like role three, the fourth role is usually engaged during later mid-life, as well as during our senior years. This generative role concerns not just the preservation of what now exists and should be valued in a specific community; it can be engaged now and in the near future to further enhance and enrich it. The generative leaders in this role want both to sustain and build. This takes the form of leadership that often operates in the spotlight during the senior years (60s-90s). It also operates and influences outside the spotlight during many of the earlier years in our lives (as exhibited by many younger, emerging leaders in communities).

In generativity four, we expand our caring in space and expand our attention and action to caring about the welfare of people living in our local community or more broadly our society or even our world. It is in this fourth role that we find the most distinctive contribution to the literature on generativity. This is an area in which we will dig much deeper later in this series, for the role that generativity plays in community leadership (what we call civic engagement) often builds and relies on the three other roles. It is a richly textured form of generativity that is sorely needed in our contemporary world. It requires all the skills, experiences, and motivational incentives to be found in the other three generative roles.

The futurist, Fred Polak (1973), writes about the need for any society to have a clear sense of its own future if it is to thrive. Those engaged in this fourth role of generativity are actively involved in creating and articulating this image of the future, as well as engaging in tangible acts that illustrate and help to animate this image. There may be nothing more important for senior leaders in any society to perform than bringing the past not only into the present but also into the future. What do we wish to preserve from the past? What can we learn from the past (and present) that will help us plan for and engage our collective future? We appreciate what we have learned and “learn into the future” (Scharmer, 2009) by bringing together the old and new.

## Conclusions

What does all of this mean about the relationship between generativity and deep caring? What does it say about creation of conditions that lead to generativity and deep caring? What are the implications of what we written for those involved in the provision of professional coaching services? Stated simply, generativity is about expanding and extending our *region of care*. We expand this region by moving from a concern about our own family and special projects to a concern about people outside our family – in our organization, in our community and even in our world. This is expanding our region of care by an expansion of space. We also expand our region of care through a wider temporal concern. We look back and forward in time to preserve and propagate our core values and visions. A skilled and caring professional coach can assist us with this expansion.

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