This booklet contains eight exercises and two readings that we will use during your weekend retreat. We will instruct you on each as we go. Please read the readings (particularly the biographies) at your leisure. But, please do not jump ahead on the exercises as we want everyone to do them at the same time.

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Inspirational Poetry ................................................................. 46
Vic is a renowned innovator, researcher, author, and speaker in the fields of behavior change, digital communication, and wellbeing. In 2010, Vic won the University of Michigan’s Distinguished Innovator Award. In late 2017, Dr. Strecher was the Donald A. Dunstan Foundation’s “Thinker in Residence” in Adelaide, Australia to develop a “Purpose Economy” of business, government, and communities. His 2009 TedMed presentation on tailored behavior change using digital technologies has been cited by MPHonline as one of the “Top 10 Ted Talks on Public Health.” His free UM massive open online course Finding Purpose and Meaning in Life, which in its first year has over 100,000 enrollees, was named the 4th best 2020 online course in the world by Inc Magazine. His recent focus has been interventions targeting root causes of health and wellbeing, including life purpose and related wellbeing factors as well as social determinants of health. Vic’s latest behavioral, neuroscience, and epidemiologic research; his two books, Life On Purpose and the graphic novel On Purpose; his free online course; and the Purposeful and Resourceful applications his business (Kumanu) has created are aimed at improving human flourishing for all.
Exercise 2
Peer Coaching Exercises

Part 1: Authentic Listening

Journal reflection.
There are three levels of listening
- Level 1: Focus on myself, listening to respond, agree/disagree, for utility
- Level 2: Laser focus on other
- Level 3: Holistic context, listening for meaning, context, not just words
What type of listening do you do on a day-to-day basis? In what context do you find yourself slipping into Level 1, 2, or 3 listening?

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Exercise.
Prompt 1 (1 minute)

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1 Source: Ali Boyd, Evolve Leadership, used with permission.
Prompt 2 (2 minutes)
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Prompt 3 (3 minutes)
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**Exercise reflection:**
How did it feel like to be listened to authentically? What felt different? How did it affect how you responded? What did you learn about becoming a better authentic listener? What skills or tactics are you taking away?
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Part 2: Compassionate inquiry

Journal reflection.
There are three types of questions one can ask in a discussion:
- Closure questions: yes/no, why, binary, pointed
- Open questions: what, how, where, when
- And what else? Silence is a powerful tool too!
What type of questions do you typically find yourself asking? In what context do you find yourself slipping into each of these types of questions?

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Exercise:
Roles:
1. Coach: Listen intentionally, ask powerful questions, high engagement
2. Coachee: Be self-reflective, we are talking about you! Let the coach do the work.
3. Observer: Be present, actively listen, observe and keep time.

Process:
1. 10 minutes of coaching per person
2. 2 minutes of written reflection
3. 3 minutes of feedback for the coach

2 Source: Ali Boyd, Evolve Leadership, used with permission.
Coaching preparation:
You, as coach. How might you prepare for this What questions might you ask them to help them work through this dilemma?

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You, as coachee. Personal reflections after being the coach

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You, as coachee. Feedback for the coach #1

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You, as observer. Feedback for the coach #2

Reflection:
What felt different in this situation than in previous situations you’ve been in? How did peer coaching feel? How did being peer coached feel? Which questions felt the most powerful? What are you taking away from this Peer Coaching session that you will utilize through the rest of this retreat?
Exercise 3  
Reexamine Your Past, Present, Future and Letter to Your Future Self.

Past: Life Thriving History: You now have 7 months since we examined your past, present and future to construct your Story of Self. What has changed? To begin you will redraw your Life Thriving History (see Figure 1 on the next page), identifying peaks and troughs of high and low points through time. Retrace your map from the Fall Retreat and now complete it by filling in the past 7 months. Do you want to amend any part of the map you drew in September? What was happening since then? Are there any new patterns? Have there been notable changes in your life and thought? When? Why?
Present: Values Inventory. Did your values shift over the past 7 months? Do not look at your groupings from September and complete these four steps again.

Step 1: Determine your core values. From the list below, choose and write down (or circle) every core value that resonates with you. Do not overthink your selections. As you read through the list, simply identify the words that feel like a core value to you personally. If you think of a value you possess that is not on the list, be sure to write it down as well.

Abundance  
Acceptance  
Accountability  
Achievement  
Advancement  
Adventure  
Advocacy  
Ambition  
Appreciation  
Attractiveness  
Autonomy  
Balance  
Being the Best  
Benevolence  
Boldness  
Brilliance  
Calmness  
Caring  
Challenge  
Charity  
Cheerfulness  
Cleverness  
Community  
Commitment  
Compassion  
Cooperation  
Collaboration  
Consistency  
Contribution  
Creativity  
Credibility  
Curiosity  
Daring  
Decisiveness  
Dedication  
Dependability  
Diversity  
Empathy  
Encouragement  
Enthusiasm  
Ethics  
Excellence  
Expressiveness  
Fairness  
Family  
Friendships  
Flexibility  
Freedom  
Fun  
Generosity  
Grace  
Growth  
Flexibility  
Happiness  
Health  
Honesty  
Humility  
Humor  
Inclusiveness  
Independence  
Individuality  
Innovation  
Inspiration  
Intelligence  
Joy  
Kindness  
Knowledge  
Leadership  
Learning  
Love  
Loyalty  
Making a Difference  
Mindfulness  
Motivation  
Optimism  
Open-Mindedness  
Originality  
Passion  
Performance  
Personal  
Development  
Proactive  
Professionalism  
Quality  
Recognition  
Risk Taking  
Safety  
Security  
Service  
Spirituality  
Stability  
Peace  
Perfection  
Playfulness  
Popularity  
Power  
Preparedness  
Proactivity  
Professionalism  
Punctuality  
Recognition  
Relationships  
Reliability  
Resilience  
Resourcefulness  
Responsibility  
Responsiveness  
Security  
Self-Control  
Selflessness  
Simplicity  
Stability  
Success  
Teamwork  
Thankfulness  
Thoughtfulness  
Traditionalism  
Trustworthiness  
Understanding  
Uniqueness  
Usefulness  
Versatility  
Vision  
Warmth  
Wealth  
Well-Being  
Wisdom  
Zeal
Step 2: Group all similar values together from the list of values you just created.
Group them in a way that makes sense to you, personally. Create a maximum of five groupings. If you have more than five groupings, drop those least important. See the example below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abundance</th>
<th>Growth</th>
<th>Wealth</th>
<th>Security</th>
<th>Freedom</th>
<th>Independence</th>
<th>Flexibility</th>
<th>Peace</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acceptance</td>
<td>Compassion</td>
<td>Inclusiveness</td>
<td>Intuition</td>
<td>Kindness</td>
<td>Love</td>
<td>Making a Difference</td>
<td>Open-Mindedness</td>
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<tr>
<td>Appreciation</td>
<td>Encouragement</td>
<td>Thankfulness</td>
<td>Thoughtfulness</td>
<td>Mindfulness</td>
<td>Balance</td>
<td>Health</td>
<td>Personal Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cheerfulness</td>
<td>Fun</td>
<td>Happiness</td>
<td>Humor</td>
<td>Inspiration</td>
<td>Joy</td>
<td>Optimism</td>
<td>Playfulness</td>
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Values Groupings:

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Step 3: Choose one word within each of five groupings that best represents the label for the entire group. Again, do not overthink your labels. There are no right or wrong answers. You are defining the answer that is right for you. See the example below – the label chosen for the grouping is bolded.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abundance</th>
<th>Acceptance</th>
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<th>Balance</th>
<th>Cheerfulness</th>
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<td>Thoughtfulness</td>
<td>Development</td>
<td>Inspiration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freedom</td>
<td>Kindness</td>
<td>Mindfulness</td>
<td>Spirituality</td>
<td>Joy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independence</td>
<td>Making a Difference</td>
<td>Trustworthiness</td>
<td>Well-being</td>
<td>Optimism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexibility</td>
<td>Relationships</td>
<td>Trustworthiness</td>
<td></td>
<td>Playfulness</td>
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<tr>
<td>Peace</td>
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Step 4: Now, compare this set of labels to your labels from September.

April 2024
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September 2023
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Did your labels change? Why? What does this say about your values and how they change? Was there a life event that reoriented your values? What does this tell you about who you are and where you are going?

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**Future: Your Obituary.** Reread the obituary that you wrote for yourself in September. *Does it still resonate? Is there anything you would like to change, add, take out?*

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**Your Letter to Your Future Self.** Reread your Letter to Your Future Self. *Would your September 2023 self be pleased with your April 2024 self? Are you the kind of person that your September 2023 self hoped you to be? Have you achieved the goals and objectives that your September 2023 self wanted you to have achieved? What challenges did you meet in living out your Personal Mission/Purpose Statement and how did you overcome them? Did your prior you set any metrics or milestones and did you achieve them?*

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Exercise 4
Retelling Your Story of Self - The Hero’s Journey

I want you to have the most fulfilling life possible. That comes from living the life you were destined to live. To do that, we now return to your Story of Self but want to add a new angle, to retell is as a “Hero’s Journey”!

The study of a hero’s journey can be traced back to 1871 with anthropologist Edward Burnett Tylor’s observations of common patterns in the plots of great heroes. Others have followed, most notably Joseph Campbell in his book The Hero With a Thousand Faces.³ Picked by TIME Magazine as one of the 100 best and most influential nonfiction books written in English since 1923,⁴ Campbell’s book studied religious, spiritual, mythological and literary classics to describe the common structure of “the hero's journey,” or the “monomyth”⁵, as emblematic of one universal mythology that spans the world’s religions. The common template is that of a hero who goes on an adventure, is victorious in a decisive crisis, and comes home changed or transformed. Campbell found this monomyth in the stories of religious figures (i.e. Osiris, Prometheus, Jesus, Moses, Muhammed, the Buddha) as well as timeless literature (i.e. King Arthur in Knights of the Round Table, Odysseus in Homer’s Odyssey, Captain Ahab in Moby Dick). His book also incorporates a mixture of Freudian concepts, Jungian archetypes, unconscious forces, and studies of the rites of passage rituals to support his theory.

"The hero's journey" has been a strong influence on artists and intellectuals in contemporary arts and culture. Its structure can be seen in other movies like The Wizard of Oz (1939), Beauty and the Beast (1991), Aladdin (1992), and The Lion King (1994). The monomyth pattern was used explicitly by George Lucas in creating the script for the film Star Wars (1977) and was also used in the development of the Matrix series. Many have noted how closely the Harry Potter books hewed to the monomyth pattern.

Campbell describes the narrative pattern as follows: “A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces

⁵ Campbell borrowed the word monomyth from James Joyce’s Finnegans Wake (1939)
are there encountered and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man.”

The pattern is broken down into 3 sections which are then broken down into 17 stages (see below⁶).

Section 1: Departure. The hero or protagonist lives in the ordinary world and receives a call to depart that world and go on an adventure. The hero is reluctant to follow the call but is helped by a mentor figure. From there the hero “crosses the threshold” to begin the quest, leading them to a supernatural world and entering “the belly of the whale” (reference to Jonah) where familiar laws and order do not apply.

Section 2: Initiation. Once the hero traverses the threshold to an unknown or "special world", they face tasks or trials, either alone or with the assistance of helpers. The hero eventually reaches "the innermost cave" or the central crisis of the adventure, where they must undergo "the ordeal," overcome the greatest challenge of the journey, undergo "apotheosis" (meaning the culmination or climax) and gain the reward (i.e. a treasure of wisdom, skill or power).

⁶ The Hero’s Journey Spiral ©2019 by Thea Cooke is licensed under Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International.
Section 3: Return. The hero must then decide to return to the ordinary world with this reward but faces more trials on the road back. They may be pursued by the guardians of the special world, or they may be reluctant to return and may be rescued or forced to return by intervention from the outside. The hero again traverses the threshold between the worlds, returning to the ordinary world with the treasure that has been gained, which may now be used to improve the lives of others in the hero's ordinary world. The hero is transformed by the adventure and gains wisdom or spiritual power over both worlds.

Not all monomyths contain all 17 stages, nor are they always in the same order. But the key insight is that the repeated pattern of this motif is a model for how one may choose to live a life of meaning and purpose. In fact, many have used the monomyth as a metaphor for personal spiritual and psychological growth.

With that as a framing, we now return to your story of self. As we discussed in retreat #1, your life has an arc and you are in the middle of it. In the three exercises, you have described your past, present and future. What you have done is written your, as yet unfinished, life story. Now, as you did in September, connect those three pieces into a coherent and interconnected whole in the form of a narrative or story as a journey with you as the hero. But, with a shift in focus.

Retell the story as a “hero’s journey” in which you are the central hero. You are on a quest, or you are about to embark on one. Are you crossing the threshold now or are you on your quest? What is it? As you look at your aspirations, what insights are you seeking to gain and how do you hope to share them with others to improve the world? You have been through psychological and emotional troughs in your journey; how did you get through them and what did you learn? Treat your dark times as necessary periods of discernment to be prepared for your quest. You have also been through psychological and emotional peaks in your journey; explain these as periods where you were gaining your reward (i.e. wisdom, skill or power) and applying it; what were you modeling in the world? What helpers, mentors or guides helped you along your way? What can you glean from your present position that can give you insights about where you are on the quest? Don’t be afraid to think of your life on these heroic terms. If you can visualize such a life, you will be more likely to live it. The following four pages offer a series of prompts to help you retell your Story of Self as a Hero’s Journey.
**What is your quest?** Think of the Obituary you wrote. Now go further. What are the ultimate accomplishments you could hope to achieve? They need not be attainable; in fact, it is best if they aren’t. As the artist Henry Moore said “The secret of life is to have a task, something you devote your entire life to, something you bring everything to, every minute of the day for the rest of your life. And the most important thing is, it must be something you cannot possibly do.”

How did you overcome the challenges you have faced in pursuit of this quest? How can you make sense of the troughs in your past, the dark periods where you noted low psychological success? How did you get through them and, importantly, what did you learn and how did you grow?
What can we learn from the high points of positive psychological success that you have experienced in pursuit of this quest? What was it about these high points that make them stand out? What can you learn from them? Were they moments of sharing your reward with others?

What can you glean from your present situation that can give you insights about where you are on your quest? What does the Values Inventory tell you about where on your hero’s journey and what you still need to learn (and how may it have changed)?
Who were the helpers, mentors or guides that supported you along your way?
How did they come into your life? In what ways did they guide you?

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Do you need helpers, mentors or guides going forward? Who might they be?
For what do you need them? How might you find them?

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Anything else to explain Your Hero’s Journey
Exercise 5
Skills and Tactics for Staying on Course.

This section is a blank slate for you to write down skills and tactics for staying on your course. Through the readings, discussions and panel, what tips have you learned to incorporate into your life as you leave the University of Michigan? What mentors and support communities are in your life? How will you find more? How will you expand your horizons and how will you recharge your batteries? The list of possibilities is endless, but none of them will happen by themselves. You have to make a concerted effort to bring them into your life.

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Kelsea Ballantyne (Ross MBA/MS Erb and Tauber Institutes, Class of 2016)

I am a female, first-generation college student. I grew up in small town Idaho, married my high school sweetheart, have an amazing 4.5-year-old daughter, love to be in the forest/outdoors, and have a lifelong passion for learning. My purpose in life is to be present and deeply connected so I can recognize and bring out the light and wholeness in all people, situations, and organizations. I step out of my comfort zone and disrupt the status quo to transform our world.

At a young age, I was provided a lot of opportunities to experiment, take risks, and solidify and live into my leadership values and purpose. I was elected my high school president and captain of my varsity volleyball team. I was not the most athletic or the smartest, but I worked hard, deeply cared for the people and causes I was leading, helped us see our potential, and did things with what people might call a little weirdness. This theme carried into my years in college where I was again elected as student body president, chosen as a senior lead resident advisor, and ran a reading program for elementary students who had English as a second language.

I then put my leadership values and purpose to the test when I became the first undergraduate from my university to earn a Fulbright Scholarship. I even made the Fulbright a little unusual, opting to stay abroad in the “global classroom” for six years rather than the standard 12-month program. I founded and led a social enterprise in the red-light area of Kolkata. After three years, I moved to Tunis, Tunisia and worked as a consultant in large development organizations (UN Women, African Development Bank). All this time abroad taught me that no matter where I am in the world and how small or large of an organization, if I continue to live by my purpose, I can truly make a difference.

To build on what I had learned abroad, I set my sights on University of Michigan’s MBA/MS at the Erb Institute with a certificate from the Tauber Institute. However, for the first time in my life, the MBA program on its own made it
difficult for me to feel like my leadership style and my values mattered—I felt constrained by the narrowing definition of career goals and achievement sought implied by the MBA stereotype. I had never known anyone who had done an MBA, so I had no idea what I was getting myself into. So, I found other ways to be present and stay grounded—being a part of the Erb Institute, doing a 200hr yoga teacher training, being a graduate student instructor, serving on the Presidents board for labor standards and human rights, being a part of the Center for Positive Organizations, doing my internship in Detroit at the non-profit Focus:HOPE, designing and teaching my own design thinking curriculum as an independent study, and connecting deeply with professors who I could see were doing things differently. So, when I made the decision to start my career post MBA in at a six-year Executive Development Program at Boeing, many of the people I had surrounded myself with said, “what?!”

Because corporations have so much sway and power in the world, I wanted to see if I could truly be a change-maker within Boeing and learn about how corporations worked along the way. I rotated every year for six years, ranging from leading shop floor teams at 4:30 in the morning while pregnant to being offered the position of Director of Sustainability. Throughout, I stayed true to my values and purpose; at some points I was leading corporate level change in our Manufacturing and Operations and at others I was leading the Chief of Sustainability and Vice President of Product Development and their executive teams through a design thinking “Sustainability Lab.” The Lab helped lead the design of Boeing’s next aircraft and production system be focused on sustainability and our team members who build it. But, too many times, I saw leaders and the company do things that were too out of alignment with my values. I made the decision to leave as a well-respected leader who had something to say, and I shared these views with other leaders and people I had encountered over six years at Boeing before I left.

Do I regret taking the job at Boeing? Not at all. Every time I am called to lead something, it is another opportunity to bring out the light and wholeness in others and the organization, meet some great people, hone my leadership purpose, learn some great lessons, and hopefully make the world a bit of a better place.
Ian Makowske (Ross MBA/MS Erb Institute, Class of 2016)

My passion has long been environmental sustainability. I grew up in the woods and beaches of New England and from an early age felt a strong connection with nature and a responsibility to address the impacts of climate change I saw affecting the places I loved. My path to a role in corporate finance at a company with this passion at the core of its mission has been less straightforward as I worked through how to develop and use skills and interests in support of that passion.

Growing up I saw the power and influence of narrative and I studied English literature at University of Michigan with the goal of understanding and teaching language as a way to drive sustainable behavior change. My undergrad studies at Michigan included an additional key formative element: my time on the men’s gymnastics team. With a Michigan family legacy and as a competitive gymnast since 3rd grade, my goal had long been to compete for Michigan and I was fortunate enough to walk on to the team. Progressing from a walk-on Freshman terrified of being cut and barely making line-up to competing as part of a national championship team showed me the importance and power of hard work and determination as well as disciplined and reflective planning, practice, and execution. My love for gymnastics (and an opportunity to continue competing internationally after graduation) led to a role working for Michigan’s Athletic Department. Whether in my formal role in administration and operations for the gymnastics team or volunteering as student athlete ambassador for donors at Michigan football games I worked to incorporate sustainability, including proposing and hosting one of the NCAA’s first zero waste national championships. I very quickly saw how important an understanding of both the environmental science behind sustainability and the financial and organizational aspects of programs designed to promote sustainability would be for my hope to have positive impact. These realizations were the primary motivation for returning to school through the Erb Institute at Michigan.

Once at Erb, I had some initial thoughts of how to try to thread my English lit background and sustainability passion together in a business-oriented impact...
career but completely contrary to these ideas, I (shockingly, for me at least) came to love my core finance class. With a few family members in finance I appreciated the view into their world, but even more so enjoyed the power of modeling and quantitative approaches to problem solving that could be put to use in emerging sustainability fields like impact investing. This led me to off-campus recruiting, an internship, and ultimately a full-time role with Mission Throttle, a boutique impact investing fund turned advisory services firm in metro Detroit. I spent my first three and a half years after grad school as a strategy and finance consultant for social enterprises and non-profits in a range of impact sectors (everything from early childhood education, environmental justice, mental health, microloans, and elder care) and thinking about how to grow Mission Throttle. When Mission Throttle ultimately shuttered its advisory services practice in 2019, I felt I had built more of the finance acumen I wanted, had gained some insight into the intersection of business and philanthropy, and also learned some of the trade-offs of working for an early-stage, smaller organization.

After Mission Throttle I was fortunate to join Rivian, then just emerging from stealth mode as an early-stage EV company partnered with Amazon. While more corporate and offering less of the direct impact of an organization like Mission Throttle, Rivian felt (relatively) more stable than my Mission Throttle, provided a chance to continue building a more traditional finance skillset, and ultimately directly aligned with my passion for environmental impact at scale. I was lucky enough to be hired into a corporate finance role, working on everything from consolidated month-end/quarter-end reporting to finance system implementation to financial statement forecasting through Rivian’s IPO. More recently I’ve transitioned to supporting Rivian’s G&A functions and new Chief Sustainability Office as finance partner. Working at Rivian has had its own share of challenges over the past years but I’m grateful to be working for an organization that is aligned with my own passion for sustainability and excited to be part of what will hopefully be a journey re-shaping mobility.

I still live in Ann Arbor – my wife (also a former Michigan gymnast) is currently finishing her final year of Ob/Gyn residency and will be at Michigan Medicine for at least her first year out of residency. Outside of work I love just about any outdoor activity from skiing and kayaking to gardening and playing music around a bonfire.
Sonja Manning (Ross MBA, Class of 2021)

My driving purpose in life is to help people realize their potential and live healthy, happy, and full lives. I’ve been working on living that purpose through multiple ways thus far – enabling clients and organizations as a Consultant at Deloitte for 6 years, coaching individuals and groups in spin and yoga classes for almost 10 years, consulting for health and wellbeing companies such as WellSet, ExerAI, MIRROR, Muse-S, FittInsider, Bridge Builders Collaborative and more during my MBA at Ross and now as the Chief of Staff at Levels, a Series-A company focused on reversing the metabolic disease epidemic.

A bit more about my experience at Ross! At Michigan, I founded an industry club called FitX that is focused on learning from and engaging with companies in the preventative healthcare space that are changing how consumers access or track their own health and wellness. It was through sourcing, scoping and managing multiple part-time consulting projects that I learned about and eventually tried Levels as a beta member. Solving the metabolic health crisis is perhaps the most important way our society can help people realize their potential and live happy, healthy, and full lives. Working at Levels is the closest I’ve ever been to living my driving purpose - professionally and personally. You can learn more about my work as a Chief of Staff at Levels in this article, published in the First Round Review.

I didn’t just end up at Levels right after graduation though! I went back to Deloitte (as a GSAPer) for 8 months. When I saw the Levels job description, I felt like I was running towards it vs. running away from Deloitte. However, I had just gotten an early promotion to Manager at Deloitte, and while I was not happy per se, I was also not unhappy. The idea of having all my student loans paid off was enticing! I eventually decided (against my parent’s wishes) to leave the money on the table, and pursue a job that further aligned with my values and passions. This was the best decision I’ve made, and I’m now a huge advocate for taking risks aligned with your values.

I received my BA in Organizational Sciences from The George Washington University. I grew up in Minneapolis, spent 10 years in DC, some time in Chicago and Ann Arbor, and now I live in Los Angeles with my boyfriend Alex (Ross class of 22’!). Outside of work, I love to hike, bike, surf, cold plunge, skydive, travel, and shop for/eat locally grown foods!
Alexandra “Lexx” Mills (Ross MBA/MURP, Class of 2022)

My parents grew up in low-income families in D.C. with childhoods very different than the ones they provided for my siblings and I. When I was two, they figured out how to buy a home in the suburbs of Bowie, Maryland so they could chart a different path for the family they were building together.

I still spent weekends and summers with my grandmother in D.C. so I was acutely aware of how different my life could have been. Seeing this contrast was a blessing because it instilled an immense sense of gratitude within me, along with a drive to create a better future for Black families like mine, but who had not yet broken the cycle of poverty.

Neither of my parents graduated from college, but they always cultivated the value of my mind and my potential. Throughout undergrad, I was a Sondheim Public Affairs Scholar, committed to a career in public service. By the time I graduated, I still was not sure what exactly that would mean for me, but I knew I had a purpose: Build better, prosperous futures for Black people.

After graduation, I spent a year in Malaysia teaching English as a Fulbright. It was there that I decided to pursue a career in public education. After all, education had made such a tremendous impact in my own life. I taught elementary school first in D.C. and then in Baltimore, and it remains one of the hardest things I’ve ever done. Regardless of what I did during the school day, I still had to send my students home to the same disinvested communities. Thus, I transitioned into community and economic development on a major urban revitalization project in Baltimore. I loved my work!

This was my first exposure to real estate, and I witnessed its power to transform communities. But I also saw how without ownership, Black people could not truly and equitably benefit from investment in their neighborhoods. Thus, I decided to pursue my MBA and Master of Urban and Regional Planning at the illustrious University of Michigan to disrupt this industry. GO BLUE!
This was my plan:

1. Join the Real Estate Fund and become a beast at financial modeling!
2. Spend a few years in a kick ass job in real estate private equity to learn the business.
3. Found my own firm to invest in businesses and real estate in low and moderate-income communities to transform neighborhoods and create wealth building opportunities.

This is what happened:

1. I had a terrible experience on the Real Estate Fund. It mirrored the white-male dominated commercial real estate industry. I did not receive the technical training or mentorship support I expected to break into this field, and I actually received pushback when I attempted to diversify the fund’s membership during the short time I served as an MD in my second year.
2. After teaching myself financial modeling, I realized it was not for me.
3. I then got my dream internship with a real estate developer in Detroit focused on equitable development! But when it came to an end, I realized yet again that this field was not for me.

I felt lost. I had spent my graduate career pursuing this field that no longer felt right. I was entering my third and final year of school. After a life-saving conversation with my mama, I decided I would return home to Maryland after graduation and figure it out. Once I knew I was coming home, I put a call in to my mentor in Baltimore. A year later, that call led to my current role as the Director of Economic Inclusion and Impact for Johns Hopkins University and Health System.

My job is to leverage the influence and economic power of Johns Hopkins and our partners across the incredible City of Baltimore to create economic opportunities for Baltimoreans through building, hiring, buying, and investing locally.

I love what I do. I trusted the Universe, stayed true to my purpose, let go of what did not serve me, and I ended up exactly where I was meant to be.
Exercise 7
Clarifying and Communicating Your Personal Mission/Purpose Statement.

You created a Personal Mission/Purpose Statement in September. A lot of time has passed since then. In this exercise, it is time to write it again. Maybe it has changed significantly; maybe it has changed a little; or maybe it hasn’t changed at all. Think carefully before you come to this last conclusion. Your sense of purpose is constantly evolving and one aspect of life is to constantly monitor and search for it. In fact, the moment, you think you have it precisely defined, you may lose it. As the Neil Young song, Love is a Rose, says:

Love is a rose but you better not pick it
Only grows when it's on the vine
Handful of thorns and you'll know you've missed it
Lose your love when you say the word mine

In this exercise, you will write down your Personal Mission/Purpose Statement as you see it now. As in September, building off the prior exercises of past, present, future and now, the hero’s journey, write a one-page description of what defines who you are as a person and identifies your purpose and passion in life. Try to explain how you aim to pursue that purpose or quest, and why it matters to you.

But there is one more step. It’s one thing to write your Personal Mission/Purpose Statement down on paper. It is another to communicate it to others. In the Saturday evening session, you will be given the opportunity to explain your calling to others in whatever medium or mode of communication you prefer: words, images, movement, song, poetry, physical artifacts, art, whatever works to communicate your idea of your personal mission in life. The benefit of this flexibility is that you seek to explain something that may be beyond simple words.
Your Personal Mission/Purpose Statement:

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Exercise 8
Zoom Out: Envision Your Future Self

Individual Journaling Reflection
How do I want to show up in my personal and professional life?

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What energizes and fulfills my future self?

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Paired Reflection Discussion
● What do you observe?
● What about your professional and personal life in the future is energizing to you?
● Where were you more specific? Where were you more general?
● Are there any specific people, places, organizations, or details that came to mind in your vision that are notable?
Exercise 9
Zoom In: Envision Your Path Forward

Individual Journaling Reflection Part 1: Where are You Now?

Where are you today?

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In what ways are you already living out your envisioned self?

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Individual Journaling Reflection Part 2: Envision the Path Forward

What do you want to learn in order to make your vision a reality?

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What is the gap between where you are today and where your vision is?

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What skills do you want to develop in order to make your vision a reality?

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What experiences do you want to have in order to make your vision a reality?

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What assumptions about your future self do you want to test out?

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Paired Reflection Discussion

● How might you use the next year to gain the learnings, skills and experiences that will help you towards your vision?
● What opportunities are available to you in your next job? The city you’ll be in? Through your network?
Exercise 10
Zoom Forward: Envision Your Goals & Guardrails

Individual Reflection Part 1: Goals
What are two goals you want to accomplish in the next year that you think will help you move closer to or live into your envisioned future self? For each goal, what is your ‘Next Right Step’? Or the thing you can do to build momentum?

GOAL #1:

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For Goal 1, my next right step is...

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GOAL #2:

For Goal 2, my next right step is...

Paired Reflection Discussion

- Share your goals and next right steps
- How do these goals help you move closer to your envisioned self?
- How will these next right steps help you build momentum toward your goal?
**Individual Reflection Part 2: Guardrails**

**Values:** How will you know if you’re living out your values? What visible indicators will you see/feel if you are out of alignment?

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**Non-Negotiables / Boundaries:** What non-negotiables do you want to set for the next few years and prioritize above all else? What boundaries do you need to be successful in achieving your goals and honoring your non-negotiables?

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**Habits:** What habits and systems will help you achieve these goals and move toward your vision?

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**Pitstops:** How often do you plan to stop, check-in and re-evaluate your route? What will be your trigger or reminder to stop?

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Co-pilots: Who will you go to for support, honest advice, and accountability? Name 3-5 people and what you will ask of each one of them.

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Paired Reflection Discussion

• Share some of the guardrails you reflected on.
• What supports are going to be most helpful to keeping you on your path toward your envisioned future self?
Inspirational Poetry

What Then?
by William Butler Yeats (1865-1939)

His chosen comrades thought at school
He must grow a famous man;
He thought the same and lived by rule,
All his twenties crammed with toil;
'What then?' sang Plato's ghost. 'What then?'

Everything he wrote was read,
After certain years he won
Sufficient money for his need,
Friends that have been friends indeed;
'What then?' sang Plato's ghost. 'What then?'

All his happier dreams came true -
A small old house, wife, daughter, son,
Grounds where plum and cabbage grew,
Poets and Wits about him drew;
'What then?' sang Plato's ghost. 'What then?'

The work is done,' grown old he thought,
'According to my boyish plan;
Let the fools rage, I swerved in naught,
Something to perfection brought';
But louder sang that ghost, 'What then?'
The Road Not Taken
by Robert Frost (1874-1963)

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, as just as fair,
And having perhaps the better claim,
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;
Though as for that the passing there
Had worn them really about the same,

And both that morning equally lay
In leaves no step had trodden black.
Oh, I kept the first for another day!
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,
I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.
Start Close In  
by David Whyte (1955-)

Start close in,  
don’t take the second step  
or the third,  
start with the first thing  
close in,  
the step you don’t want to take.

Start with the ground you know,  
the pale ground beneath your feet,  
your own way to begin the conversation.

Start with your own question,  
give up on other people’s questions,  
don’t let them smother something simple.  
To hear another’s voice,  
follow your own voice,  
wait until that voice becomes an intimate private ear that can really listen to another.

Start right now  
take a small step you can call your own,  
don’t follow someone else’s heroics,  
be humble and focused,  
start close in,  
don’t mistake that other for your own.

Start close in,  
don’t take the second step  
or the third,  
start with the first thing  
close in,  
the step you don’t want to take.
For A Leader
by John O’Donohue (1956-2008)

May you have the grace and wisdom
To act kindly, learning
To distinguish between what is
Personal and what is not.

May you be hospitable to criticism.

May you never put yourself at the center of things.

May you act not from arrogance but out of service.

May you work on yourself,
Building up and refining the ways of your mind.

May those who work for you know
You see and respect them.

May you learn to cultivate the art of presence
In order to engage with those who meet you.

When someone fails or disappoints you,
May the graciousness with which you engage
Be their stairway to renewal and refinement.

May you treasure the gifts of the mind
Through reading and creative thinking
So that you continue as a servant of the frontier
Where the new will draw its enrichment from the old,
And may you never become a functionary.

May you know the wisdom of deep listening,
The healing of wholesome words,
The encouragement of the appreciative gaze,
The decorum of held dignity,
The springtime edge of the bleak question.

May you have a mind that loves frontiers
So that you can evoke the bright fields
That lie beyond the view of the regular eye.

May you have good friends
To mirror your blind spots.

May leadership be for you
A true adventure of growth.
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