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solve problems. More importantly, we will begin to recognize our own points of passage and respect how important they are for us.

STAGE 1: The Separation

The Call

The Call invites us to the journey. We may choose willingly to follow The Call, or we may be dragged into it. It might come as a sudden, often traumatic change in our lives. Or, it can come gradually as a growing sense of unhappiness. We might feel that we have outgrown the roles we are playing or the environment in which we live. Sometimes we hear The Call but ignore it. When we follow it, our journey begins.

The Threshold

Once we accept The Call, we must pass over the Threshold. The Threshold is the doorway between the world we know and are comfortable in, and the unknown. Fears and doubts that we have can block us from crossing the Threshold. Negative beliefs or harmful behavior patterns can also keep us from taking this step. These blocks and resistances are called the "threshold guardians."

Sometimes our fears protect us by preventing us from taking a journey that we're not ready for. But when we are ready, we find the way past the fear. When we do this we make a commitment to our journey. We say, "I'm ready. I can do this."

This is also the time when we might meet helpers. Helpers give us direction, support, and encouragement to continue on our path. The most important of these helpers is the mentor or guide who keeps us focused on our goal and gives us stability. Helpers and guides tend to appear throughout the journey when we need them the most.

STAGE 2: The Initiation

The Challenges

Once past the Threshold, we begin the journey into the unknown. We face a lot of challenges along the way. In the beginning, they might be easy to overcome. This helps us gain confidence. But, as we go on, the challenges get harder. They test our commitment and strength.

We learn who to trust to help us on our journey. There are often people that we meet who seem like helpers, but who use our own fears and

doubts to use us and to pull us away from our path. We must rely on our intuition and the advice of our mentor

to help us recognize true helpers.

The challenges we face force us to confront our greatest weakness: our poorest skill, our shakiest knowledge, our most vulnerable emotions. If we can't, the journey ends and we must turn back.

Into the Abyss

When we reach the Abyss, we face the greatest challenge of the journey. Here, we must face our greatest fear, and we must face it alone. Here is where we must "slay the dragon," which often takes the shape of something we dread, or have repressed, or need to resolve.

It is the most frightening time in the transition because we have left behind the old structure of our lives and a new structure has not yet taken its place. The old habits we have, the old ways we know to do things don't work anymore.

The upside is that we are free of the old structure, with its assumptions, expectations, and limits. We can now consider a whole new range of options and opportunities. As a result, even

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Transitions as a Hero's Journey

though it is the “darkest hour” of the journey, and the point we fear most, the Abyss is the point where transition can occur. We can stop being what we were and start becoming what we are. We may find the challenge is too great and that we must turn back. Unless we set off to try again, our life won't be what it could have been.

Transformation and Revelation

As we pass beyond the Abyss and overcome our fears, we are changed. The final step in the process is a moment of death and rebirth: a part of

The final step in the process is a moment of death and rebirth: a part of us dies so that a new part can be born.

us dies so that a new part can be born. Fear must die to make way for courage. Ignorance must die for the birth of enlightenment. Dependency and irre-

sponsibility must die so that independence and power can grow.

Part of the Transformation process is a Revelation, a sudden, dramatic change in the way we think or see our life. This change in thinking is crucial because it makes us truly a different person.

The Atonement

After we have been transformed, we go on to achieve Atonement, that is we are “at-one” with our new self. We have incorporated the changes caused by the Journey and we are fully “reborn.” In a spiritual sense, the Transformation has brought us into harmony with life and the world. The imbalance that sent us on the journey has been corrected — until the next call.

STAGE 3: The Return

After Transformation and Atonement, we face the final stage of our journey: our return to everyday life. We discover our gift, and want to

share it with the world. Sometimes, however, things don't go smoothly. For example, we might lose our new understanding if we put ourselves back in the same situation or environment we left earlier.

The Journey is a Map

The Journey is the pattern that we follow in our lives as we face challenges and go through life changes. If we understand the Journey pattern, we will be better able to face difficulties that invariably come and to use our experiences to become stronger and more capable. Understanding the Journeys we each make can help us achieve wisdom, growth, and independence, and become the people we want to be.

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Adapted from the original version by Angela Orlando with permission from Reg Harris. To read the complete version, go to www.yourheroicjourney.com/Journey.shtml.

Why is it called the Hero's Journey?

Joseph Campbell, a great thinker and teacher, found that in cultures all over the world, stories about heroes had common stages illustrating what the hero goes through on his or her quest. He called this the Hero's Journey.

Classroom activities related to the Hero's Journey can be found on Maricopa Community College's *Hero's Journey* Web site. This site provides a free and open environment for learning the classic mythical story structure and where anyone can write original stories or analyze classic ones that follow this structure. www.mcli.dist.maricopa.edu/smc/journey/index.html