



HOW TO EXPERIENCE A HERO'S JOURNEY
AND BECOME THE HERO OF YOUR OWN LIFE STORY

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What if I told you that there is a formula to living a heroic life?

What if there was a basic framework, a roadmap that anybody could follow in order to become the hero of their own life story?

In the 1940s, mythologist Joseph Campbell discovered that heroic myths from every culture are essentially the same story. He discovered a pattern in any story in which an ordinary person accomplishes something heroic. Whether it is the Greek tales of Odysseus's return home from the Trojan war or the life of Siddhartha Gautama, who attained enlightenment and founded Buddhism, these stories follow the same set of steps that Campbell dubbed the "Hero's Journey."

Even if you've never heard the term Hero's Journey before, the story will sound familiar. It has been used by modern screenwriters and other storytellers in popular culture today as a template for some of our most popular stories: *Star Wars*, *The Wizard of Oz*, *Rocky*, and *Harry Potter* all follow the Hero's Journey blueprint.

It goes like this:

At the beginning of the story, we are introduced to a normal guy (or girl) living a normal life in the **Ordinary World**. Then, the inciting incident happens and he has the opportunity to do something different, to pursue a purpose bigger than himself. Initially, he refuses this **Call to Adventure** because it's scary and would mean leaving the comfort and safety of his normal life for some unknown or unfamiliar territory.

The ordinary guy **Meets a Mentor** who provides the encouragement and guidance he needs to finally accept his Call to Adventure, **Cross the Threshold** and leave the Ordinary World behind.

As soon as he commits to this new path, he is immediately beset by trials and tribulations the likes of which he has never experienced before. As he walks this **Road of Trials**, he gathers a band of allies and faces his challenges, some of which he fails but all of which make him stronger.

Eventually, his journey reaches its climax when he faces his greatest obstacle, which he defeats with his newfound skills and strength. The hero **Grabs the Prize** he came for and makes a hasty retreat back to the safety of the Ordinary World. He **Returns with the Treasure**, resumes his normal life a changed man and shares the spoils of his quest with humanity.

This pattern is present in every great heroic story. The details vary, but the pattern is consistent.

The hero may be a young girl, a computer geek, or a cat. Their Call to Adventure may be epic, like putting an end to slavery, or common, like leading their wrestling team to its first league championship. It may take a lifetime to complete the quest or just a few days.

Regardless of the specifics, the hero must always sacrifice something of himself or herself in order to succeed. The Hero's Journey is ultimately a story of personal transformation.

An ordinary person becomes stronger than he thought possible in order to achieve a purpose that is bigger than him.

And so it is in your life. In order to achieve anything significantly meaningful, you must embark on your own Hero's Journey.

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Every Hero's Journey Is the Same

Each Hero's Journey includes seven stages:

1. Ordinary World
2. Call to Adventure
3. Meeting the Mentor
4. Crossing the Threshold
5. Road of Trials
6. Seizing the Prize
7. Return with the Treasure

Every journey requires the hero to make substantial sacrifices in order to achieve his goal. The journey demands significant personal transformation during which the hero learns some vital truth about himself and confronts what scares him most.

Every New Hero's Journey is Unique

What motivated the hero on his last journey may not be in play now. The dangers and obstacles that lie ahead aren't the same tests the hero has been through before. The stakes will be different and so will the costs. The skills and the allies that have helped the hero in the past won't be enough to see him through this time.

5 Things Every Hero Needs

Because the Hero's Journey contains the road map for any great accomplishment, it is predictive. We can apply the lessons from past Hero's Journeys to the upcoming quest. Because of this predictability, we have been able to identify the five things every hero needs in order to successfully complete their quest. Do you have all five?

1. PURPOSE | A hero's journey can't begin until he finds his purpose or until a purpose finds him. And that purpose can only be fulfilled when a Hero accepts their Call to Adventure.

The Call to Adventure is at the beginning of the Hero's Journey because it's the trigger. It's the event that causes the ordinary person to realize he may be meant for a greater purpose. Rocky Balboa's call to adventure was when Apollo Creed, the reigning heavyweight champion

of the world, offered him a title fight. Abraham Lincoln's call to adventure was when the fledgling Republican Party offered him the presidential nomination. Martin Luther King's Call to Adventure was when he agreed to lead the bus boycott in Montgomery.

The Call to Adventure may be obvious or vague; it may be epic, like curing cancer, or more commonplace, like graduating from college. There are only two criteria: it must be a purpose that is bigger than you, and it must make you at least a little scared or uncomfortable.

If you aren't sure of your purpose, answering these questions can help you figure it out:

What injustice in the world are you passionate about righting?

What skills or talents do you have that can make a difference in the lives of others?

What are the stories you want people to tell about you after you're dead and gone?

What is the thing that you want to do but have been avoiding out of fear or uncertainty?

“A hero's journey can't begin until he finds his purpose or until a purpose finds him.”

If you still aren't sure about your Call to Adventure, there is another way to reveal it. Go and find someone who is already on their Hero's Journey, become their ally and do whatever you can to help them. If you spend enough time around people who have already answered their Calls to Adventure, you will eventually find yours.

2. ALLIES | Imagine if Frodo didn't have Gandalf, if Luke Skywalker didn't have Han Solo, or if Steve Jobs didn't have The Woz.

There has never been a hero able to do it all by himself. Even the "Lone" Ranger had Tonto.

People often fail to achieve their goals because they don't have the support of the right allies. If your Call to Adventure is sufficiently meaningful, your Road of Trials will be brutal. You will fail along the way, and you will need the encouragement and support of people who believe in you and your purpose.

Here are four types of Allies that will play key roles in your hero's journey:

1. The Mentor: This ally's Journey has is over. This is somebody who has already achieved the goals you have set for yourself or has accomplished their own big, scary goals. The Mentor provides you with knowledge and instruction. Without the Mentor, that knowledge would come to you only through a series of time-consuming failures and tough learning experiences.

2. **The Peer:** This ally is on their own hero's journey. This is somebody who is passionately pursuing their own goals. If you are an entrepreneur launching a start-up, you would find Peers at other start-ups in your industry or a similar industry. The Peer offers valuable insights and is someone you can share with and compare experiences with. Together, you can discuss what is working, and what isn't.
3. **The Promoter:** This ally is an influencer who loves to say good things about you behind your back. This is somebody who knows all the right people, who has a large audience, and who is a raving fan of you and your purpose. From the Promoter you gain social proof, credibility, and connections.
4. **The Technician:** This ally fills a vital gap in your skill set. If you are an engineering wiz, you may need an ally who can market your product. If you are the visionary, you are going to need an ally who can run the day-to-day operations. From the Technician, you gain skills that compliment rather than duplicate your own.

3. SKILLS | Imagine Braveheart without his courage, Luke Skywalker without The Force, or Martin Luther King without his oratory ability. Each of these heroes relied on skills in order to free Scotland, defeat the Empire, and champion civil rights. The hero lives and dies by his skills. When he uses his skills, the hero is in his “zone” and unstoppable.

And so it is with you. In order for you to complete your Hero's Journey and accomplish your goal, you must strengthen your skills.

There are two categories of skills you need:

Technical Skills are those that allow you to do the work you need to do in order to succeed. If your hero's journey is about becoming a champion bodybuilder, your technical skills will be things like posing, nutrition, supplementation, weight lifting, etc. If your hero's journey is a quest to transform the way that people connect with their friends online, your technical skills will be things like programming, design, raising venture capital, and marketing.

General Skills are skills that allow you to be successful regardless of your specific Hero's Journey. General skills consist of leadership skills, time management skills, and communication skills. Each of what I call **the nine heroic virtues** is a general skill: joy, discipline, curiosity, humility, courage, faith, forgiveness, responsibility, and sacrifice. These are the skills and virtues that set you apart from other people attempting the same goal as you.

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4. CHALLENGES | Anybody who has ever changed the world or achieved greatness started out as an ordinary person just like you and me.

At the beginning of his journey, he wasn't the hero he needed to be in order to reach his goal. He wasn't strong enough, smart enough, or wise enough. It was the journey itself that transformed him from the person he was into the hero he needed to become.

Our journey is the same. The challenges, struggles and epiphanies we experience along the way transform us from the ordinary person we are into the hero we need to be. The anxiety and excitement of accepting your Call to Adventure, the counsel of your Mentor, and the sacrifices you make on the Road of Trials are vital and will slowly burn off your impurities, harden your resolve, and forge you into a hero.

Without sufficient challenges, you will remain weak, scared, and naive. Are you seeking out the challenges that you need?

5. INSPIRATION | In working towards his goal, the hero experiences failure—repeatedly. He occasionally gives in to his fears and he doubts his ability to persevere. He questions his sanity for even accepting the Call to Adventure in the first place. At times, he feels alone, weak, and scared.

Without sources of encouragement and inspiration, your fear and doubt will win. Although your allies are valuable sources of encouragement, they aren't enough. You also need to look for inspiration outside of yourself and your circle. You must search for stories and examples of other people and their Heroic Journeys.

Your inspiration might take the form of music, art, spirituality, stories of triumph and redemption, or anything else that reminds you that what you are doing is worthwhile and to not give up.

You can become the person you want to be. You can live the life you want to live. The path is difficult, but that's ok, it's supposed to be. Things in life are either easy or important, but not often both.

If you accept your Call to Adventure, you will be in good company. Every hero from Siddhartha to Michael Jordan has relied on their Purpose, Allies, Skills, Challenges, and Inspiration to help them complete their journey and achieve their goals.

Now you know their secret. Go do something about it. 📌

Info

ABOUT THE AUTHOR | Jeremiah Miller's goal is to save the world through better leadership. He started his company, [Forging Leaders](#), because he believes that authentic leadership is the solution to the most pressing problems in our society and our lives. He believes each of our four foundational institutions: family, business, religion, and politics, is suffering from a leadership crisis, and he's here to do something about it. He works with organizations of all sizes, from sole proprietorships to Fortune 500 companies. His clients are typically men and women between the ages of 30 and 60 who hold leadership positions within their organizations. In addition to one-on-one and group coaching, he facilitates workshops and gives presentations on leadership development, creating remarkable company culture, employee motivation, and effective communication.

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