

**Mentor Training for The GIVEN Institute
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Session #1: Drawing Out Fulfillment Stories

“In the design of God, every man is called upon to develop and fulfill himself for every life is a vocation. At birth everyone is granted, in germ, a set of aptitudes and qualities for him to bring to fruition.” – Pope Saint Paul VI (From Populorum Progressio – On the Development of Peoples)

“One very significant line of ‘confirmation’ of one’s personal vocation is..that it is written into one’s concrete history and into the inner dynamism (that is, the movement of the inner forces) of one’s life.” – Fr. Herbert Alphonso, S.J. (From Discovering Your Personal Vocation)

Fulfillment Story Sharing Exercise*

This exercise can be powerful if participants follow the instructions closely and do their best to enter into the experience of one another.

- 1) Break up into assigned pairs. One person storyteller; the other interviewer.
- 2) Interviewer invokes the Holy Spirit with a little prayer (“Come Holy Spirit!”)
- 3) The interviewer leads a **seven-minute** conversation according to these questions:
 - a) What is the fulfillment story you would like to share?
 - b) Open up the verbs! Ask about the verbs!
 - How did you go about _____?
 - Give me an example of _____?
 - Tell me more about _____?
 - If I was watching you _____, what would I see?
 - c) What was most deeply satisfying about what you did in this story?

* For more information about the value of drawing out fulfillment stories for effective mentorship please see *Unrepeatable: Cultivating the Unique Calling of Every Person*, Luke Burgis & Joshua Miller, Ph.D. (Emmaus Road, 2018).

- 4) The interviewer now takes **a couple of minutes** to reflect back to the storyteller what they observed about the person as he/she shared the story. Summarize those actions the storyteller recounted. Describe the emotions s/he expressed. (*Interviewer: Don't fret about what you are going to say as the storyteller shares. You simply need to listen well and share some of your observations.*)
- 5) Interviewer asks: "How does that observation resonate with you?"
- 6) Switch. The interviewer & storyteller now trade places and go again.

Demonstration of Fulfillment Story sharing exercise

Break up into assigned pairs for Fulfillment Story sharing exercise #1

Come back together for debrief conversation

Break up into assigned pairs for Fulfillment Story sharing exercise #2

Between now and the next session after lunch, take a few minutes to reflect on the value for both mentor and mentee of sharing fulfillment stories.

Benefits to Mentors & Mentees That Can Be Gained Through The Fulfillment Story Sharing Exercise.

- 1) Trust & rapport built
- 2) Quick, efficient mode of relationship building
- 3) Can help mentee drop barriers and open up
- 4) Tapping into positive memories can put mentee in a growth mindset
- 5) Dormant memories awakened ("I've not thought of that in years!")
- 6) Affirmation and positivity in the experience can provide a strong bridge for addressing difficult topics when they emerge
- 7) Identification of mentee's unique strengths as she speaks
- 8) Can help both see integration and common themes in the mentee's life story ("I'm starting to see a pattern here.")
- 9) Can help both see the difference between mentee's authentic and false desires ("What I *really* enjoyed.....")
- 10) Helps mentor to be the face of Christ to the mentee as she listens in love

Session #2 Fulfillment Stories & Clifton Strengths

Fulfillment Stories express a whole pattern of gifted behavior including strengths and the unique motivational drives (captured by the MCODE™ that orient them. Normally, 2-3 of a person's top five strengths will be vividly illustrated in a Fulfillment Story.

A Refresher On CliftonStrengths:

- It is grounded in the principle of positive psychology that human flourishing is much better achieved when we identify and leverage our natural talents than concentrate on fixing what we don't do well – i.e. our weaknesses.
- CliftonStrengths indicates a person's innate talents which are "naturally recurring patterns of thought, feeling or behavior that can be productively applied." They are inborn predispositions, the things that we do instinctively.
- Gallup defines a strength as "the ability to provide consistent, near perfect performance in a given activity." This ability "is a powerful productive combination of talent, skill (basic ability to do the steps of a task) and knowledge (i.e. what we know, facts, the information).
- A person's signature themes (top 5 talents) help to express the uniqueness of a person. The chances of meeting someone with the same "top five" themes, regardless of order, is less than 1 in 275,000; chances of meeting someone whose themes match yours and are in same order is only 1 in 33 million).
- Our unique talents help constitute our personal vocations, since God endowed us with them so that we can develop and offer them for the building of His Kingdom.

Breakout Exercise: Seeing and Discussing Your Strengths in Your Fulfillment Stories.

First, take a few minutes to review your Fulfillment Stories and your top five strengths. Choose 1-2 strengths that are clearly illustrated in the stories you previously shared with your partner.

Now, get with the same partner with whom you shared Fulfillment Stories.

One partner will take on the role of mentor and lead a 7-minute discussion with these prompts:

- *"What are 1-2 strengths from your Top 5 that you used in the fulfillment stories you shared with me this morning? Please define them using your CliftonStrengths report."*
- Then: *"Share how your stories illustrate those strengths in action."*
- Affirm your partner's comments if you can. If you see other ways that the strengths are present in the stories, point that out. *The purpose here is to shine light on the presence of the strengths within the stories.*

Then, switch roles and go another 7 minutes.

Session #3 Mentoring With Fulfillment Stories & CliftonStrengths

Fulfillment stories are packed with richness; they are saturated with meaning. Not only do they reveal people's unique strengths and underlying motivational drives they shed light on:

- how persons function best on teams or in partnerships;
- the kinds of circumstances that facilitate their flourishing;
- what parts, places and people they are drawn to serve;
- how they cooperate with God and reflect His glory.

They almost always illustrate, in living color, one's response to his/her personal vocation.

The following steps are designed to help mentors work with mentees to draw out and apply the rich meaning of their fulfillment stories. They are designed to be taken after the mentee has captured in writing at least three fulfillment stories and the mentor has had opportunity to draw them out in discussion.

Except for the first step, which is devoted to prayer, the following are not intended to be taken in chronological fashion. Which steps to take depend upon a variety of factors, especially the needs and wants of the mentee,

All the steps proceed in the mode of our previous training sessions especially asking powerful questions and listening with empathy. Normally, mentees should have an opportunity to first come to their own conclusions about the meaning of their fulfillment stories as they respond to follow up questions proposed in each of the steps. But each step also assumes a dialogue where mentor and mentee work together and the mentor has full freedom to offer insight, advise, challenge, affirm and cultivate growth in the mentee as the Holy Spirit leads.

Apart from the first step, which is prayer, I recommend this basic sequence for the mentor in each step, although there are always exceptions.

- 1) Ask the question and listen deeply
- 2) Make reflective and affirming observation (sometimes challenge or correction is needed!)
- 3) Offer your own insight

The prompts and questions below are just suggestions. Move in the direction that works best for you and your mentee.

First – Mentor and Mentee Pray Over the Fulfillment Stories

The following prompts are ordered towards God.

- "Thank you, Lord, for endowing _____ with unique and beautiful strengths."
- "How did you show up in these stories, Lord? How did you bless the mentee in them and through them? What do you want us to see?"

- “We praise you for the ways that you have worked in these stories, Lord. Help us to draw out your glory in them. Help us to shed light on the unique way this mentee reflects your image through them.”

Second – Relationship With God

All the prompts from this section forward are for the mentor to ask her mentee.

- What do these stories tell us about your relationship with God?
- What does He reveal to you about Himself in these stories?
- To what extent did you feel intimacy with the Lord in the context of these stories?
- How do these stories and the strengths they reveal express what God wants to do with you and through you?

Third – Relationship with Self

- What are you learning about how God designed you from these stories?
- What do they tell us about your unique gifts?
- How do these stories show common themes in your life as a whole?
- What connections do you see between these stories and charisms that you (or others) believe the Holy Spirit has given to you?

Four – Relationship with Others

- What do these stories tell us about the ways that you prefer to work with others?
- What do they tell us about the ideal team for you?
- What do they tell us about how independent or collaborative you like to be?

Five – Personal Vocation

- What kind of contribution did you make in these stories?
- The laity are called to sanctify the earth, to bring renewal. What do the stories tell us about how you are called to help sanctify the people and places in your life?
- How do these stories reflect the unique way that you can and ought to reflect Jesus to the world?

Six – Action Plan

- What are the connections between your Fulfillment Stories, your strengths, and your Action Plan?
- What do the stories tell us about the best ways for you to implement your Action Plan?
- What do the stories help us see about effective ways for us to work together on your Action Plan?

Going Deeper with Fulfillment Stories

Break up into the same pairings from this morning when we did fulfillment story sharing.

The Exercise:

First, the listener from the fulfillment story sharing exercise takes on the role of “mentor” and the storyteller takes on the role of “mentee.” Each conversation should last about 20 minutes.

Second, pray over the stories using the prompts above to get started.

Third, the mentor asks what the sorts of insights the mentee would like to explore from his/her stories based on the topics above – Relationship with God, Relationship with Self, Relationship with Others, or Personal Vocation.

Fourth, using question prompts suggested in the topic that the mentee selects, the mentor and mentee open up the fulfillment stories and the strengths present in them. They receive and explore the insights.

Then, mentor and mentee switch hats and go another 20 minutes.

Come back together for debrief conversation.

Session #4 – Deploying Fulfillment Stories & Clifton Strengths in Your Mentorship

These suggestions are basic. Cynthia and the GIVEN staff may have additional requests or advice.

Key lessons from the training can and should be deployed throughout your mentorship – e.g. empathic listening, reverent attentiveness to the mentee’s stories, an emphasis on developing her talents in the context of her action plan.

I recommend three specific conversations explicitly utilizing the training:

- 1) Fulfillment Story Sharing (as per session #1 above)
- 2) Prayerful Reflection on Meaning and Implications of the Stories (as per sessions #2 & #3)
- 3) Proactively Deploying Your Mentee’s Strengths in her Action Plan

1) Fulfillment Story Sharing

Suggested Prompts for Framing Up The Conversation

- “Fulfillment stories are an excellent way for you to realize deeply the gift that you are, for us to get to know one another, to see powerful ways that your strengths have already served and can be deployed, to better launch your action plan, etc.”
- Use the template provided to describe fulfillment stories.

- Share an example of one of your own stories.
- Invite your mentee to ask the Holy Spirit to call to her mind those stories that best reveal His design for her. Ask her to write three fulfillment stories using the instructions and template provided. Let her know you'll need about an hour to talk about them.
- Be sure to have your mentee send a copy of her CliftonStrengths report to you prior to the conversation. Closely read her report. Ask her to do the same if she has not done so yet.

For the Conversation

- Use the conversation guide we reviewed today.
- Take notes on key points, especially recurring themes and what the mentee found most satisfying about what she did in the stories.
- Reflect to your mentee what you heard from her after each story she shares. Note especially the presence of the mentee's top strengths in the stories and where she seemed most alive in her action.

2) Prayerful Reflection on Meaning and Implications of the Stories

Note this beautiful reality: sharing fulfillment stories is NOT simply a hearkening back to past realities; when you give space to your mentee to share them, the stories become part of the present moment and take on new meaning because they have been given to you. *They are a precious part of the gift of herself.* Furthermore, they become part of the future when you use them to inform your mentee's action plan.

Be sure to pray over the stories and invite your mentee to do the same. Then, reflect upon and explore their meaning according to Session #3.

3) Proactively Deploying Your Mentee's Strengths in her Action Plan

We must be intentional about developing our strengths. Strongly encourage your mentee to explicitly draw on her strengths as she formulates and implements her action plan. You might want to explore with your mentee how she thinks about her own deficiencies. Many people beat themselves up because of their deficiencies or spend inordinate time thinking about how they compare with others. Many focus on "fixing" deficiencies as opposed to utilizing their God-given strengths. These are mistakes which waste precious time and lead to disappointment and unholy sadness.

Thus, I recommend that you devote a full conversation to reviewing each strength and laying plans for how the mentees can regularly deploy them in her Action Plan.