



Portland Institute  
For Loss and Transition

## *Principle of Practice*

# Seek Calling in a Time of Crisis

*'From small beginnings come big endings'<sup>1</sup>*

COVID 19 forces many of us to a standstill, which should be understood not only on a physical level, but also on the level of our identity. It is this standstill that challenges us and our clients to consider our calling: *Who are we, what do we do and what impact do we have on the world around us?*

This crisis calls upon us to be sensitive to the signals that the circumstances and the people around us are bringing in and to learn from them. This crisis can become a transition when we allow ourselves to further explore and process these signals in the proximity of secure bases. In this way we can find new answers to old and often unasked questions: *Who am I really? Who do I want to be?*

Your calling and your identity, your self-image and self-esteem are inextricably linked. A found and lived vocation translates into the different roles we fulfill in life, which also brings them into better balance. Over-identification with one of the roles irrevocably leads to 'hassle' in the form of, for example, relationship problems, loneliness, difficulty fulfilling your parenthood, experiencing meaninglessness or lack of focus, latent conflicts, and so on. In this crisis many

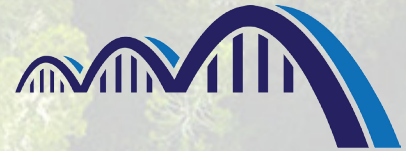
discover that an over-identification has taken place. That for too long, for example, too much energy has gone into work at the expense of family

By questioning clients about their roles and what they learn about themselves during this crisis, we open a perspective in which they can feel that they are at the helm of their lives. Then they can experience that they have a choice in how they respond to what life throws at them: *how do I lead myself and others through this time? Who am I and what unique contribution can I make?*

The client can learn to read the signs with our help: *How does this crisis, this reality invite me to rely on an inner knowing of what I have to do?* Where it sometimes seems that the crisis makes everyday life impossible or leaves desires, goals and dreams undone, the situation may also invite us, and the people we help, to give new meaning to their calling and to find new ways – however small – to fulfill our calling in the roles we have in life.

(Re) discovering your calling, and living it in this time of crisis, does not mean that you have to

<sup>1</sup> From 'Pilgrim' by Fink, on the album 'Hard Believer' (2014).



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radically change your life. Even though things will change in life, many things will remain the same. This crisis invites you to be curious about the signals that life gives you and how you can interweave them, step by step, with the new reality.

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This principle was coproduced with Klaartje van Gasteren, Marnix Reijmerink and Leo Wilhelm of [De School voor Transitie](#) in the Netherlands.

*From small beginnings come big endings.*

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Here is an exercise you can do with your client to start the search to discover their calling.

- Ask your clients to close their eyes and breathe calmly from their stomach.
- Then invite them to think and freely associate on the question “*Who am I?*” What words come up? Ensure that they identify things that characterize who they *are*, not what they *do*.
- Place four chairs in the room in a circle. Each chair represents a type of role:
  - Personal roles (e.g. father, wife, sibling)
  - Organizational role (s) (e.g. owner, manager, worker)
  - Social role (s) (e.g. football coach, book club organizer, choir member)
  - Professional role (s) (e.g. consultant, physician, homemaker)
- Have your clients sit on each of the chairs consecutively and have them name what role(s) they fulfill from each perspective in life and prompt say out loud what it is they do exactly from that role: *What action is associated with the role in question?*
- Ask your clients again to close their eyes and breathe calmly from their stomach.
- Then have them sit on every chair again. Ask them what impact they already make or wants to make on the world around them from the role(s) they fulfill. Explore and record the impact they want to make in keywords for each chair.
- Now draw up the balance together: view together the yield that you wrote down. Have your clients complete the following sentences:  
I am ... (*being*)  
who ... (*activity*)  
So that ... (*impact on the world*)

For instance:

**I am** a companion **who** brings love and adventure to people’s hearts, **helping** them find and live their full potential.