



Manifesto Musing

Are You Walking My Way?

I have had occasion to reflect upon my Signature Character Strengths again this week. When I joined Toastmasters International over two years ago – to retain my confidence in the public arena after retiring from classroom teaching — I decided to deliver my Ice Breaker speech focusing on my Signature Character Strengths. I entitled it, *Know my Signature Character Strengths, Know Me*.

For the upcoming Toastmasters Club meeting, as a Level 4 task on my Pathways journey of Presentation Mastery, I decided that it was time to revisit this speech, especially as due to time constraints then, I only covered my first three Signature Strengths, *Love*, *Forgiveness*, and *Gratitude*. The fourth and fifth are *Perspective and Leadership*.

For each strength I chose a snapshot from my life, to highlight the strength and then explicitly stated my takeaway learning. For *Love*, I referenced my upbringing in Broken Hill, New South Wales in the 1950's as the third child of four. The city itself was a harsh environment for me, in which my gender, colouring (red-headed and freckled) and stature (tall and skinny) all seemed misaligned with what was popular and of importance at the time. My personal search was for unconditional love. My takeaway learning, from these times and years of living, was that in order to receive it, first I must give it. In order to receive it in return, I must be able to recognise it when it is offered.

The snapshot I chose to feature *Forgiveness*, was of a time in my teaching career in which I was asked to be a teacher representative on an employment panel. To prepare, I undertook Merit and Equity training and conscientiously set myself to the task. Unfortunately, in practice, the theory I had learnt was sadly missing. I found myself in a moral dilemma. In good conscience, I could not agree with the processes of the panel. Beyond registering a dissenting vote, I was conflicted about how else to disassociate myself. My health broke down as a result of this moral crisis, and only in time was I able to find forgiveness. I needed to forgive those who I felt should have known better — which did not mean conceding they were right. I needed to forgive myself for not having the courage to say more in the moment.

Gratitude is the third of my top three Signature Strengths. I chose to speak of Justin and my journey with **My Manifesto**. From the time I was coaching Justin at Geelong Grammar School, to the co-authorship of our book, *My Manifesto: a compassionate guide to reveal your best life*, I was able to be in a partnership which allowed and celebrated me being me. I learnt that in serving others, I could serve me. The synergy we found, based upon aligned values, continues today as we work with our manifesto mates, old and new, in webinars and workshops. I am grateful every day to have this dimension in my life.



My last two Signature Strengths, *Perspective and Leadership*, flow out of and converge the life experience that I have gained in living my first three Signature Strengths. I have the perspective now of understanding that love is all around me. Seeing it, realising it, requires adulthood, stillness, and self-love. Forgiveness, given that we are all human, is an everyday practice. Sometimes it will be needed for us, and sometimes for others. Suspending judgement, and offering love are vital to enable forgiveness. Gratitude is an act of conscious will. We are all able to produce it, by knowing where to look. You find what you are looking for.

The leadership I ascribe to, is *servant leadership*. Everything I now know I make available to all whom I walk beside. As I have found my way home to myself, I make myself available to 'walk at least one other home' (referencing Maria Sirois and Rumi).

Are you walking my way?

Warm wishes,
Sue