



We Are All Gifted

Unfolding & Using
What Matters

The Idaho Core Gift Project

**Idaho Department of Labor Disability
Employment Initiative**

Idaho Council on Developmental Disabilities

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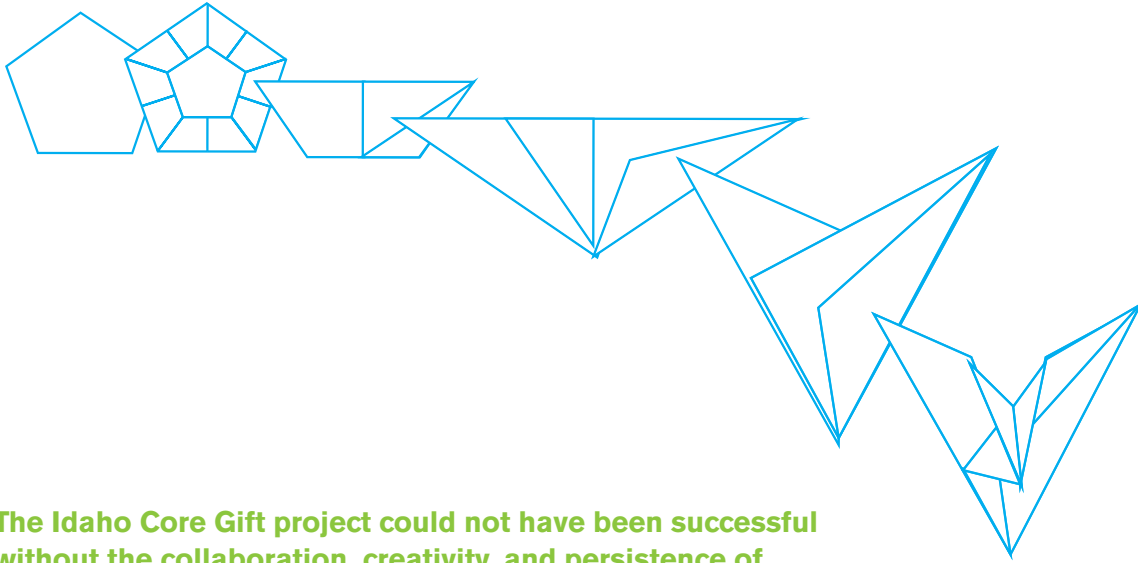
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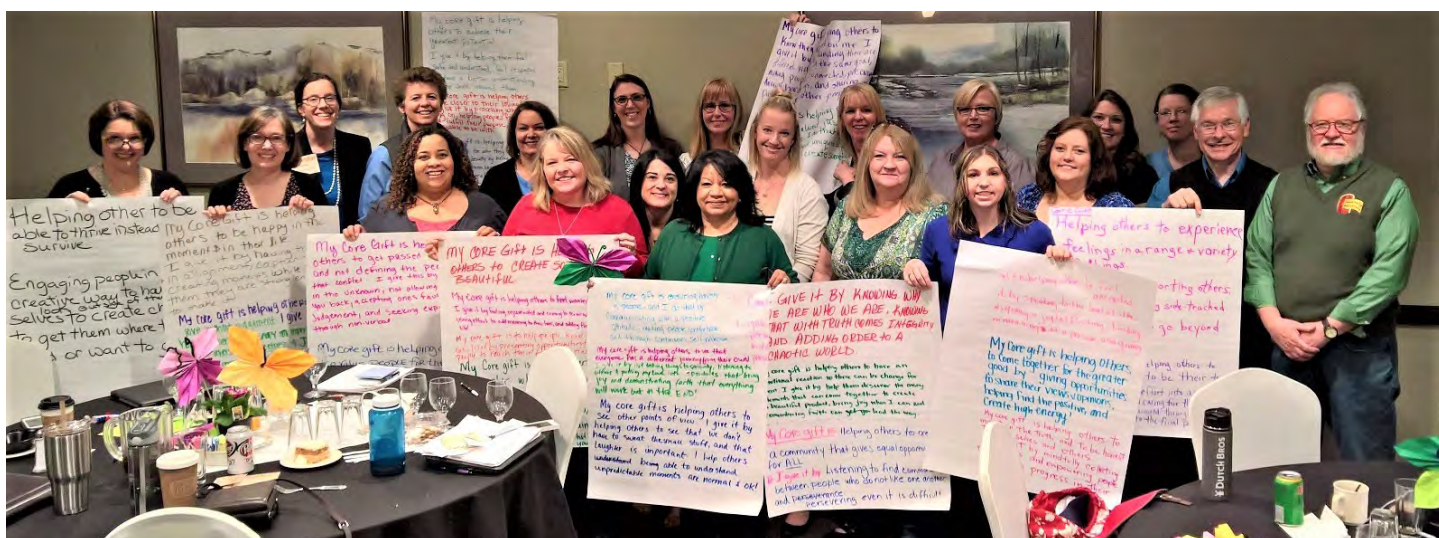
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My Core Gift is helping others to achieve their greatest potential. I give it by helping them feel safe and understood, feel respected, and have a better understanding of the world around them.



Introduction

In April, 2017, twenty-five people, representing fifteen different organizations, gathered in Boise, Idaho to explore how strategies to identify and use the Core Gifts in individuals could make a difference in helping them thrive in school and employment. Over two days, the participants learned interviewing techniques to identify Core Gifts, came up with ideas about how to use Core Gifts within the context of their schools and workplaces. They also agreed to gather again in six months to dialogue

about their experiences. This booklet contains excerpts from that dialogue, examples of different strategies they used, and photographs of some of the students and professionals involved in this work.

What is a Core Gift? It's an age-old idea from cultures around the world that has a very simple premise: humans desire to have meaningful lives. One of the essential components of a meaningful life is identifying and contributing your abilities to those around you. One of those abilities, your Core Gift, is the

ability that matters the most to you. You bring it to all parts of your life and it is an important part of your identity.

The educators and employment professionals involved in the Core Gift Project believe that individuals thrive when they have strong feelings of self-worth, know their abilities, and have a direction in life they value. As one educator said, "How do I help students know they are here for a reason, so they want to continue to grow as an individual? Core Gifts is one way I can do that."

My Core Gift is helping others become closer to their loving Creator. I give it by processing what's going on, helping people figure out and fulfill their purpose, by being enjoyable to be with.

The following people participated in the dialogue that formed the information for this booklet:

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ASCENT Program

Carolyn Bender

Riverglenn Junior High School

Autumn Brechwald

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Toni Belknap-Brinegar

Idaho Council on Developmental Disabilities

Sharon Clagg

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Jennifer Comstock

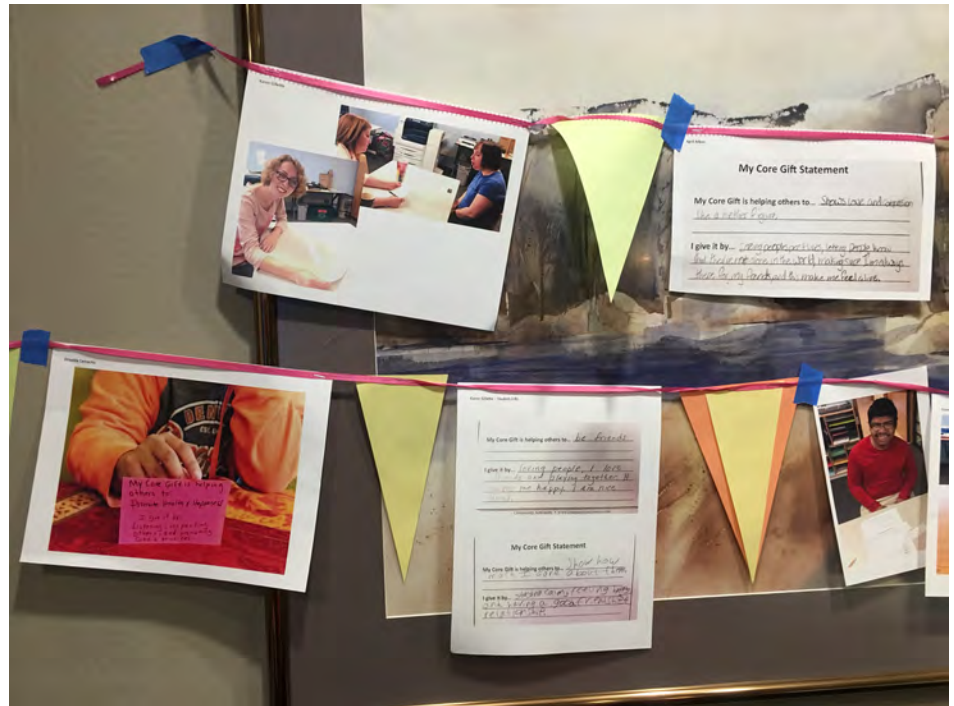
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Julie Sherry

Idaho Department of Labor

Sarah Tueller

Idaho Parents Unlimited

Tracy Warren

Idaho Council on Developmental Disabilities

My Core Gift is helping others with the ability to start and finish things through determination. I give it by my willingness to listen, showing leadership, and having integrity.

Core Gift Basics

It takes Strengths + Life Purpose

Study after study has found a person's sense of *life purpose* or *core gift* to be closely connected to virtually all dimensions of well-being.

What is a "Life Purpose" or "Core Gift?"

"A life purpose is a deeper reason for the immediate goals and motives that drive most daily behavior. ...a purpose can organize an entire life, imparting not only meaning but also inspiration and motivation for ongoing learning and achievement."

William Damon, The Path To Purpose

What is a Core Gift?

Skill:

Something you can do
It **DRAINS** your energy
Not connected to purpose of your life

Gift:

Something you **LOVE** to do
INCREASES your energy when you do it
Connected to the purpose of your life

Core Gift:

Your most valued gift
INCREASES your energy when you do it
Connected to the purpose of your life
Made stronger by life difficulties

What is the Core Gift Discovery Process?

Facilitated interview process lasting about 1 - 1 1/2 hours.

Involves answering questions and using the answers to those questions in several additional steps to discover your primary life purpose.

Resulting *Core Gift Statement* can be integrated into any current planning process or activity.

Useful for education, employment, community engagement, friendships, personal empowerment and self-esteem.

WHY DO GIFTS MATTER TO ME?

HOPE:

"My gifts help me to be seen by others for who I really am."

AUTHORITY AND POWER:

"My gifts keep me grounded in who I am and identify my most powerful interests and abilities."

BELONGING:

"Giving my gifts helps me know where I can belong in community."

WELLNESS:

"Giving gifts I have gotten from difficulties in my life helps me to feel strong and move forward."

My Core Gift is helping others to see themselves for who they are and capturing their beauty by being present at all times, letting them know I accept them and will always speak up for them and myself.

Part One: Why Use Core Gifts?

Introduction

Why would educators and employment professionals move beyond the current strengths model and go deeper into the practices of identifying and using gifts? There are many reasons listed on the following pages, and they all have one thing in common: Core Gifts offer the opportunity to know a person at a deeper level and identify a significant attribute that can help them more fully engage in the world around them.

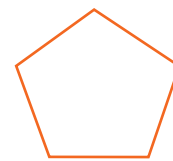
Quotes

Not everyone can write with a pencil, not everyone can use their legs to walk. But if everyone has a gift, then we're helping everyone to see that no matter your ability, you have value. I think that would help create a community that says, "I am okay with hiring this person." "I'm okay with this person being my roommate." It just brings the human-ness back into it. If you can carry that forward with people with disabilities, then you can carry that forward with everybody. **Toni Brinegar**

I think we believe our gifts are what we're recognized for, or what we're good at. But that's not necessarily true. I feel like strengths and talents are very similar—when you're not practicing them, you can lose them. Or you can gain them. And you can always acquire more. But with the Core Gift, I think it's built in you. It's not going to leave no matter what happens in your life.

Caralee Page

The bigger picture for me is that I believe that there are no mistakes. That we're all on this



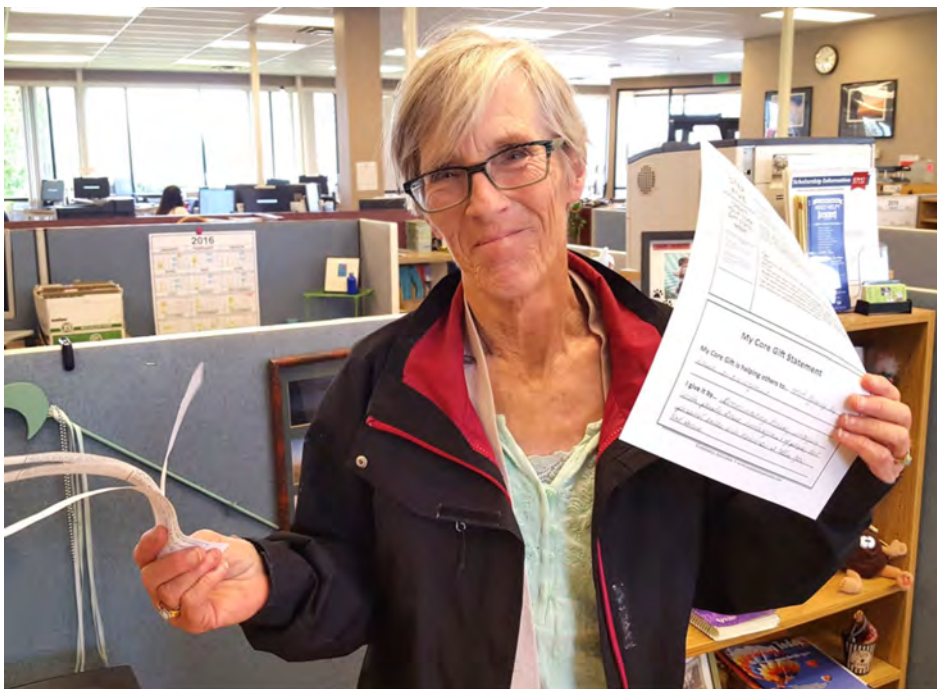
The process is so interesting. It's like the person thinks: "If I don't say it now, I'm never going to." **Gordon Graff**

Gifts are a powerful tool against despair. **Toni Brinegar**

Earth, and we're here to work together. And I think if people can know how they can best work with one another, by knowing their gifts, it's one of the best things I can give my students when they're in my classroom. **Jennifer Hower**

I've been surprised with students, how quickly they're able to answer those questions. I know when I've been interviewed with those same questions, I struggled with them. Sitting there saying to myself, "Boy, that's a tough one!" **Autumn Brechwald**

My Core Gift is helping others to know they can count on me. I give it by understanding there are different ways to reach the same goal, making people feel connected, persevering through hard things, and sharing my passion with other people.



Knowing your Core Gift is different than giftedness because giftedness are strengths you can use in some situations, but your Core Gift is what you can use wherever you are. Gordon Graff

Core Gifts seems really practical. It's like, "Here's the bones, here's a structure for helping you find and give your purpose." April Arbon

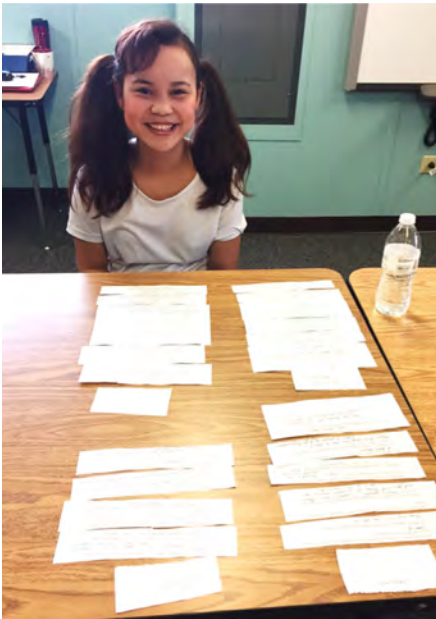
It's easy in a church or religious setting to talk about purpose, but harder in a secular setting like a school. To be able to bridge that gap with a method to help people discover their purpose in any setting is really meaningful for me. It's acknowledging the part of ourselves that knows we're here for a reason. And I can do that within the confines, limits, and structure of a public school. This gives me freedom to do that. **April Arbon**

I worked in youth foster agencies for a while. I'll never forget this one young woman who never had any money, had been abused, and just out of jail. She asked me for some hand lotion. I gave her some and she slowly put it in her hair, staring at me the whole time, waiting for me to freak out because she just put hand lotion in her hair. She had so much anger from the way she was raised, and this was one way she could get power in the

moment and get some of those feelings out. I think back to then, and if I could have had this Core Gift process and done it with young people. And then made that the focus of my work. How would you use your gift today? It's kind of like a touch stone. I think that would give them some hope. It would give them the memory that they do have goodness inside.

Toni Brinegar

My Core Gift is helping others to unlock skills and talents they didn't know they had. I give it by loving others, being empathetic to peoples' situation, so they feel empowered to make memories that add to their life experience.



If I'm somebody's supervisor, and I know their Core Gift, it gives me a sense of how to approach them to offer help. I know more about who they are and how they want to be seen, and their major strengths. It helps me to tailor the things I say to them, and the kind of help I might offer. If it's a difficult discussion, knowing the person's Core Gift can help me know how to approach them in the right way. Also, if I have two people working on the same thing, I might suggest different approaches and different resources based on their gifts. I

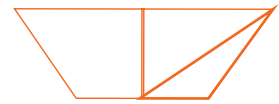
probably wouldn't even do that consciously, but it would happen because I know where they're coming from because I know their Core Gifts.

Gordon Graff

I interviewed one student who I've worked with a lot. The student is new to our program and has had a lot of difficulty in her life. We've set goals and discussed "Who am I" kinds of questions. When we did the Core Gift interview, I remember thinking, "Wow, her answers really match up with what I remembered her saying about herself. For her, as she kept narrowing things down, it all came down to how important it is to love yourself.

Autumn Brechwald

Hope is the reason to get into the idea of gifts more. There's so much hopelessness and apathy now in our country. Core Gifts can help each one of us



This goes past strengths, it goes to the core of their makeup. Sandy Hacking

We tend to get along best with people who accept our gifts. Often times it's people in our family who resist our gifts the most! Julie Sherry

find balance, to help swing the pendulum back to hope. And believing that people are inherently good and worthy. Gifts are the evidence. Look at all these Core Gifts that people have! There's not one that's negative. **Toni Brinegar**

I get excited thinking about jobs students can get related to their Core Gift. What would they be passionate about doing? That's my thing. Not just getting any old job. What's going to get you excited to wake up every morning and go to work? And helping them discover that. Also

My Core Gift is helping people feel loved and valued just the way they are. I give it by listening well to hear their story, helping them appreciate their uniqueness, and supporting them to create something beautiful.



This is so profound. I started teaching in the days when there were separate schools and my students were labeled as being untrainable. Now we're talking about gifts! Karen Gillette

Your child can do things that other children can't do. Or can do in a different way. They can find fulfillment and happiness. Maybe it's us that doesn't understand. **Sandy Hacking**

doing community service work. Can these students serve based upon their gifts? Yes, they can.

Jennifer Hower

I think for students who are already struggling or marginalized, it's a way to connect with them about something. In an alternative setting, students are usually behind academically. Connecting over Core Gifts is a way to build a relationship with them.

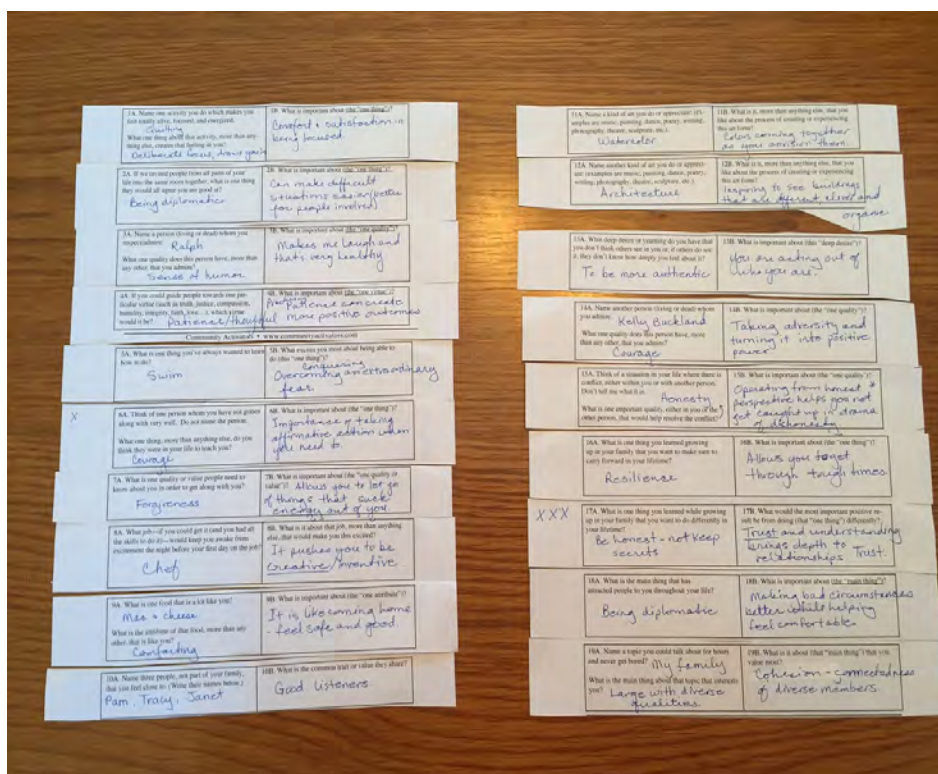
Core Gifts are a way to talk with students about their dreams. Dreams are in short supply for many of the students I work with in the school system. Many students aren't thinking about their post-high school goals or have positive thoughts about their future. So, focusing on something positive that's within them, that everybody has, appeals to me.

Mary Chavez-Miranda

Working in public schools, with the most underserved and struggling students, how do I help them be hopeful? How do I help them know that they're here for a reason so they want to continue to grow as an individual? Core Gifts is one way I can do that. **April Arbon**

The Core Gift process creates a lot of rapport between the teacher and the student. First, when the light bulb goes off and

My Core Gift is ensuring honesty in people, and I do that by communicating with a positive attitude, making people comfortable, and through continuous self-reflection.



they believe they have this gift and can do something great. That builds their confidence and trust in you. And second, when they know that you also know that they have that potential, you can help them move forward. I can say, "I've seen you at your best. I know you can do more than what you're doing right now." **Caralee Page**

Part of our job is to help people know there isn't

anything wrong with them, and they can accomplish a lot. But, unfortunately, they're labeled right when they're born. Your child has this. And that perpetuates the societal construct of "My child is special. My child can't do what other children can do. My child doesn't understand." I want to say back to them, "No, your child has a gift to give us." I get the wanting to protect your child, but you're unfortunately hiding away their gifts. **Lance Kaldor**

I'm hoping that Core Gifts will give some of my students a rudder or paddle to go through the storms of life. Something they can use to find a course and get back on that course.

Jennifer Hower

I keep going back to Jennifer's story about the young gal. Just tough as nails. You can't break through that at all. And yet she did by talking about Core Gifts. And so many of these kids that we work with hide their gifts and never have that opportunity to go down deep within and pull that out. **Sandy Hacking**

Businesses are going to school boards, and they're saying, "Make a good employee. Make somebody who will be a successful widget maker, or whatever." The focus is not on the whole person. We have to get back to developing whole persons who have intellectual, emotional, physical and spiritual

My Core Gift is helping others to see that everyone has a different journey from their own. I give it by not taking things too seriously. Listening to others and putting my love into products that bring joy and demonstrating faith that everything will work out in the end!

selves. The idea of gifts helps develop a whole person.

Caralee Page

In one situation, teachers and college students were doing the interviews with each other. For teachers to be interviewed by students brings up a whole question of authority. Being the Core Gifts interviewer is one kind of authority, and the role of being a teacher is a different kind of authority. It's an interesting dynamic, and they talked about that. **Tracy Warren**

I don't want somebody else to speak for the students. It's really a pet peeve of mine. I don't want anyone to interject who they think the student is or how they think they are feeling. I really want it to be authentically from the students. Sometimes the Core Gift interview is hard when students have difficulty with communication, but I'm going to figure it out. **Karen Gillette**

Brenna (13 y.o.)

My Core Gift Statement

My Core Gift is helping others to... Stay calm
~~and~~ so they can work toward
doing what they want in life.

I give it by... in making people feel good
by helping them to realize that
they are unique. They should
not give up.

I think we're very good at the negatives. Here's what's wrong, this, this, this, this and this. But to say, wow, this is what's great and this is what really matters and what's truly going to make a difference. A focus on gifts is a focus on the "cans." I can.

Julie Sherry

Core Gifts gives a statement that the person can carry with them to say "This is it, I do have value. This is what I can do. This is what my purpose is." And instead of just hearing the usual "You're such a good kid, you can do this, you can do anything," they can truly see, this is what

my purpose is. **Sharon Clagg**

Being able to show somebody their Core Gift is giving them a release off the job chain, or hamster wheel, so to speak. Society has got me pegged like this, so I can only do this. But when you show me my Core Gift, suddenly that goes away and I can take that and put that wherever I want it. **Lance Kaldor**

Once you know your Core Gift, it gives you more energy to develop around it. It's motivational to think, "So I've got this Core Gift, now what would make it stronger?" **Julie Sherry**

My Core Gift is helping others to see other points of view. I give it by helping others to see that we don't have to sweat the small stuff, and that laughter is important. I help others be able to understand unpredictable moments are normal and OK!

Part Two: Why My Core Gift Matters to Me

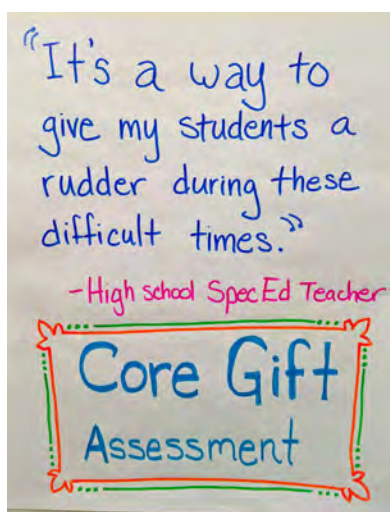
Introduction

There is an old saying in helping professions, “You can’t take somebody further than you’ve been yourself.” For helping professionals, discovering and giving their Core Gifts provides a practical understanding of the benefits and difficulties in knowing your Core Gift as you put it to use in your life. Also, when employees in a workplace are familiar with each other’s Core Gifts, it can build comradery, trust, and help to identify the significant abilities each person is bringing to their work together as a team. Since Core Gifts are active in all parts of a person’s life, employees can continue to hone their Core Gift ability outside of work and bring that back to their jobs to strengthen their professional ability and work environment.

Quotes

My Core Gift is helping others to realize that everyone deserves respect. That’s helpful in my job with the Idaho Council on Developmental Disabilities because part of our mission is to help the greater Idaho recognize that people with disabilities have value. It’s easy for me to work here because it feeds right into my Core Gift. But my Core Gift can also

hinder me if I’m not careful. When I get into situations where



I believe people are being very disrespectful to people with disabilities, my anger response is stoked. Before I knew my Core Gift, when I would feel that injustice rising inside me, it was more like an intangible feeling I just knew was there. But now that I’ve named it with my Core Gift, I can better anticipate situations, prepare for them, and act intentionally. Finding words for that feeling has been very helpful to me.

Also, I’ve also done the interview with people outside of the schools. On one occasion I thought, “I really want to do a Core Gift interview with this

My Core Gift is helping others to experience feelings in a range and variety of things. I give it by supporting others. Keep them from being side-tracked and helping them go beyond themselves.



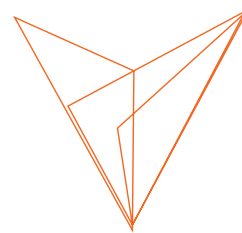
person because they're really annoying me, and I want to know why!" And it worked, because now I see why we don't agree on things. I have more understanding of why she does what she does, and why we are so different. It's made me relax more with that person.

Toni Brinegar

My Core Gift is helping people thrive, instead of just survive. That can be a really irritating gift to other people. Some people

in my family really don't like my gift! I'm always trying to get people in my family to change, so they can thrive. But now that they know it's a part of my Core Gift, they understand it better. And I'm more able to let things go since I know I can over-do it sometimes. **Julie Sherry**

Wanting to know the Core Gifts of other people switches the focus. This is not about me as the expert workforce consultant, it's about you and your gift. It's



It's easy for me to work here because it feeds right into my Core Gift. But my Core Gift can also hinder me if I'm not careful.
Toni Brinegar

My Core Gift is to help "unlock the mystery." So, this all makes sense to me that I want to really understand my students.
Karen Gillette

about who you are and what's really there. Anything that's going to help me find a way to be the best possible me, as well as help pull the best possible you out of somebody else is going to be a win-win with me.

Lance Kaldor



My Core Gift is helping others to have confidence to be their true self. I give it by putting effort into accomplishing things, reaching out and caring for those around, adding beauty to the world through music, and putting a piece into the final product of my creation.



My Core Gift is helping people thrive, instead of just survive. That can be a really irritating gift to other people! Julie Sherry

and energy. I don't have a lot of original thoughts, but I'm good at building off what other people have said or done.

Gordon Graff

Knowing my Core Gift helps me understand why I've done some of the things the way I've done them. And the problems that got created when I've done things that didn't use that Core Gift to the best advantage.

That kind of validation means a lot. Sometimes it can feel like I'm just floundering around even though I'm making some progress. Knowing my Core Gift gives me something I can grab onto and believe, "This is going to work." It helps me keep steady amidst all the chaos and

pressure and uncertainty.

Also, I think the presence of others, especially when we're all offering our gifts, expands our capabilities. I know that when I'm with other people, and we're all offering our gifts to the discussion, I start breathing faster and I get totally energized. It's like a turbo-boost. Sometimes when I'm trying to come up with an idea myself, I sort of feel drained and discouraged. I think our gifts are a motivating force and help things gain momentum

When I did my Core Gift, I discovered that one of the ways I express my Core Gift is by helping people find their purpose. So, I'm super-connected to the concept and to the idea. **April Arbon**

My Core Gift is to help "unlock the mystery." So, this all makes sense to me that I want to really understand my students. And, I've got to focus on the person, not everybody else

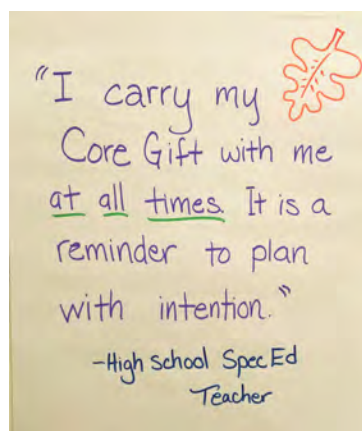
My Core Gift is helping others to get past conflict and not defining the person by that conflict. I give this by trusting in the unknown, not allowing it to hold you back, accepting one's faults without judgement, and seeking expression through non-verbal communication.



around them. I'm kind of like a bulldog with the bone. I won't back off 'til I figure it out. With my students, there is so much to understand. Sometimes, I'm making a guess that this is what the student means when they answer one of the Core Gift questions. But I see that so much, other people talking for an individual and saying what they mean or are feeling. And I'm thinking, "How well do you really know the person?" I'm really careful about not wanting to project, so I have to figure out ways to get information from the student, without me guiding too much, and without me having to guess. And without relying too much on parents,

who often will have completely different answers than the student. I want to be able to do this even better. I want to dig deeper. To keep unlocking the mystery! **Karen Gillette**

When I came to the Core Gift training, I was at my burnout limit and I couldn't figure out why. But then when



I discovered my Core Gift, I began to understand. My Core Gift helping others to feel nurtured. The upside is that I have an ability where I can really see people and be very open minded about them because I want to understand them, and I want to help them. The downside is I like to nurture people too much, and I can get exhausted by my efforts and not take care of myself. Or, I'm giving them help that they don't want. Knowing my Core Gift helped me recognize that's why I was getting burned out from trying to give 110% effort into every aspect of my life.

Caralee Page

Core Gifts makes me a better teacher because I can see what makes students tick. For me personally, with each student I do this with, it's like opening a present. It's just so exciting to see the students' reaction and them thinking, "This is good stuff!" **Jennifer Hower**

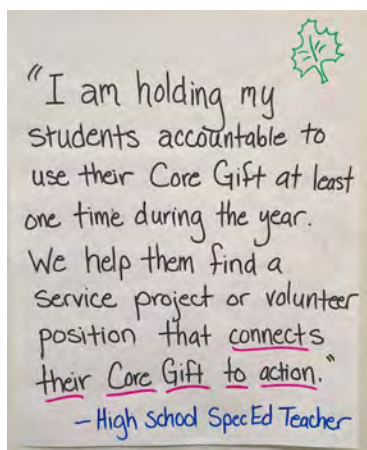
My Core Gift is helping others to value people for the way they are. I give it by allowing the freedom to create, being easy to be around, and understanding that truth is a basis for understanding.

Part Three: What Did We Do?

Here's a sample of the different ways we used the Core Gift process and tools

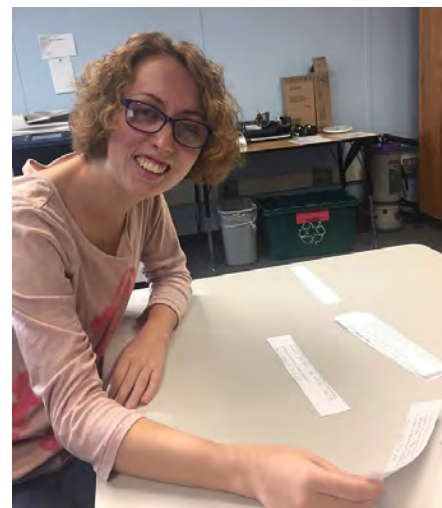
I did a Gift interview with a person from Experience Works, a program that helps older folks who have finished their careers and want to come back into the workforce. She went back and told others about it, and three more people came in for the interview! They are adding their Core Gifts to their resume or their cover letter, to let employers know what they are going to bring to the workplace.

Lance Kaldor



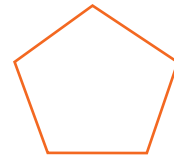
I did Core Gift interviews with some of the staff at schools. One of the people found out through the interview that they preferred working with individuals, not groups. He said that the interview process solidified his thinking that he wasn't necessarily meant to be in the job he is in. **Sharon Clagg**

I've done the Core Gift interview with some of our collaborators at other agencies. It really helps me to understand them, and we become friends. That's really helpful when I'm trying to get things accomplished on behalf of students or teachers. I can just make a phone call and they're usually not going to say no to me. I've got a deeper relationship with them as a result of doing the Core Gift interview. **Julie Sherry**



The students in my class have moderate to severe disabilities, in the 30 to 50 IQ range. It was a challenge for me to try to figure out how to do the Core Gift questions with them. Even explaining what your gift is, your purpose, is very difficult. But we plugged our way through and the answers were very basic. Some of the students had difficulty with communication, so I changed the questions and I pulled out pictures from my experience with them, and they would point to one of the pictures that made sense to them. Because I was

My Core Gift is helping others to create something beautiful. I give it by knowing why we are who are, knowing that with truth comes integrity and adding order to a chaotic world.



What would a school be like that had everyone's Core Gift on the walls? Toni Brinegar

determined to have it come from them, and be authentically them, I didn't interview their parents. My goal is to figure out how to make this work better for kids that have difficulty with communication, and my Speech/Language Pathologist is working with me on that. However, we did get some basic things. We got Core Gifts from everyone.

Once we had the Core Gifts, we sat in a big circle with staff and students. We read, or the students read, their Core Gift. It may be as basic as one of the students saying, "I'm happy, I make people feel happy." And then we went around the circle

and each one of the students said you make me happy by this, or I see that you're happy when you do this. So, by the time we got around to the whole circle, the student got to hear from fourteen or fifteen people how they see them exhibiting that Core Gift that they came up with. So that was really profound. Some of the students got emotional. For example, there were 15 people telling them how they make us feel happy if that was their gift. For any of us, how often do we ever get to hear what people like and admire about me? It's hugely impactful. And then we sent their Core Gifts home, so

they could share it with their parents and we posted all of them on the wall in the school. One thing that was really great was that parents don't necessarily get to hear or see what everybody feels about their child. So, this helped them understand the value their child brings to the classroom.

Karen Gillette

We did Core Gift interviews with the cheerleaders at our summer retreat. We did an introduction to what it is, and then they did it with each other in pairs. They talked about how they have one thing in common, cheerleading, but they found

My Core Gift is helping others to have an emotional reaction so there can be change for them. I give it by helping them discover the many elements that can come together to create a beautiful product, bring joy when I can and remembering faith can lead the way.



out how different they really are and yet they work together on one thing. This was a very unlikely thing for them to do—a group of teenagers being asked to think outside of who they are in a group setting—and some groundbreaking things came from it. They recognized that everyone has a story and we don't always see what we think we see. And that we're all good at putting on a show and not expressing who we are for fear of judgement.

I did learn quite a bit from knowing their Core Gifts. There are strong personalities in the group, and you can tell who are the leaders and who

are the followers. But to have their Core Gifts out in the open, and help others see that some of them have gifts for leadership, is powerful. Not just to see someone as “bossy”, or “know-it-all”, but to have them understand how that gift of leadership can help the whole team. **Sarah Tueller**

I appreciated what you said Sarah, about the teenagers, and the assumptions that sometimes people make about others. One of the most surprising things for me is that when you first meet someone, you automatically start making assumptions about who they are. But then you start the interview and it really breaks down those assumptions. It's a reminder that everybody has a story. Some of the people I thought would be resistant and give really short and closed answers—they really opened up and it's just like, wow!

Tracy Warren



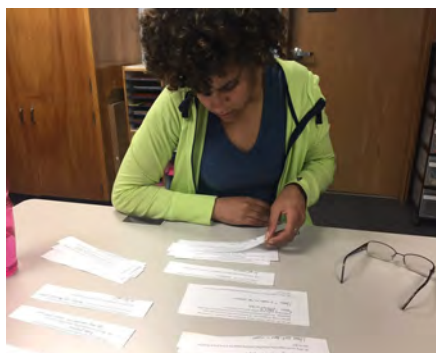
...all through the week, they were noticing other things they did well. Core Gifts help you to notice your other gifts.

Caralee Page

I'm on our local school board. One of my goals is to really talk about the kids on the fringes that we don't usually get to talk about? Let's start with the kids who are in the alternative middle and high school, and the special education students, and see where we could go from there. I've had some good responses to that idea from others in the school district. I started by doing Core Gift interviews with some of the Administrators and School Board members, so they get oriented to what it's about. Some of the people have said they understand better why they have landed in the field of

My Core Gift is helping others to create a community that gives equal opportunity for ALL. I give it by: Listening to find commonality between people who don't like one another, and persevering even when it is difficult.

education. I'm trying to plant seeds about gifts. The idea is a little different, so it takes a while to build support. I know that. I'm an organizer. It's not a race. I want them to want it, instead of me saying this is what you should have. I'd like it to be a part of professional development and use this in the District with students. What would a school be like that had everyone's Core Gift on the walls? **Toni Brinegar**

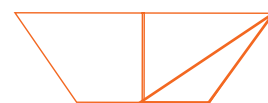


I'm a teacher at a school for kids with emotional disturbance.

We've gone through the process in our class. We introduced the concept to students, had them discuss a story about gifts. We wanted them to get totally into the idea that we exist for a purpose.

Some of them are seniors, and we want them to transition out into the world with a sense of purpose.

We try to get the seniors to self-reflect anyway on their goals and their behaviors and hold each other accountable. So, it would be a natural fit to have them reflect on how they are doing sharing their Core Gift, and brainstorm some

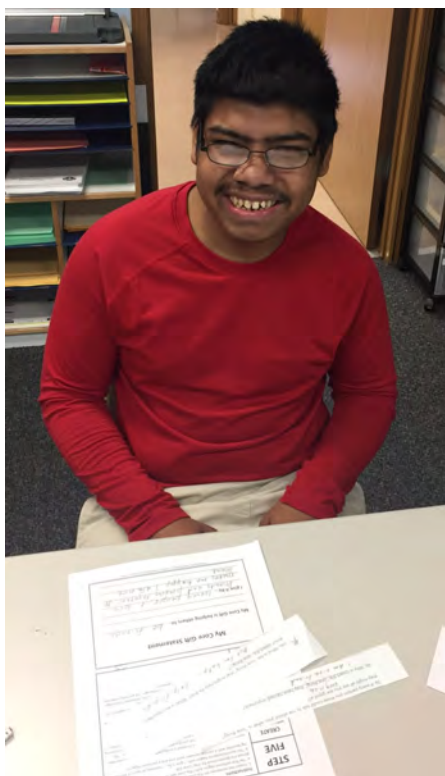


This was a very unlikely thing for them to do—a group of teenagers being asked to think outside of who they are in a group setting—and some groundbreaking things came from it. **Sarah Tueller**

applications for using it. I'd also like them to connect their Core Gift with the service project they have to do. I'd like them to see that using their Core Gift can be therapeutic. **April Arbon**

After the Core Gift training, I said to myself, "O.K., I'm going to scrap the next three weeks of my curriculum and focus the entire time on Core Gifts. I could tell that my co-workers were thinking, "What?" First, I interviewed the staff. We have three assistants and it was good to see how their Core Gifts contributed to their strengths in the classroom and how they work. **Karen Gillette**

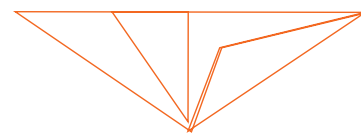
My career gift is helping others to feel accepted. I give it by speaking to the level of the person, giving a joyful feeling, finding hidden meaning of a person, and giving praise.



I did the interview with a student who professionals say has an IQ of forty. The themes of being happy, loving other people, helping friends, and playing together kept coming up over and over again. So, we ended up with a Core Gift of him “helping others to be friends. I give it by loving people. I love friends and playing together. It makes me happy, I am a nice friend.” And if you meet this young man, he’s so happy. I

mean he really is. When we all got in a circle and shared our gifts, he couldn’t read his, so we helped him. And all the other students were all like, yes! I mean, he walks into a room and everybody smiles. He’s just the nicest kid. Sounds like a kind of simple gift, but it’s so accurate for him. **Karen Gillette**

We did a Summer Camp for students with Autism and other disabilities. On the first day, we did Core Gift interviews with all the students. We told them that everyone has a unique gift that nobody else has. And they needed to know what they’re gift was, so they



... just to see what Karen Gillette did with gifts with her students, it’s so beautiful.

Julie Sherry

could see where they could fit into the world and how needed they are. We wanted them to be motivated to find jobs and be successful in the workforce. After we did the Core Gift interviews, one of the instructors gave a class on job searching and also gave a personality test. We helped the students compare the personality test and their

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My Core Gift Statement

My Core Gift is helping others to... be happy

I give it by... talk, play and be a friend.

My Core Gift is helping others to come together for the greater good. I give it by giving opportunities to share their views and opinions, helping find the positive, and create high energy!

Core Gifts to identify jobs they might be interested in. I noticed that some of the students kept getting out their Core Gift paper again and reading it.

Caralee Page

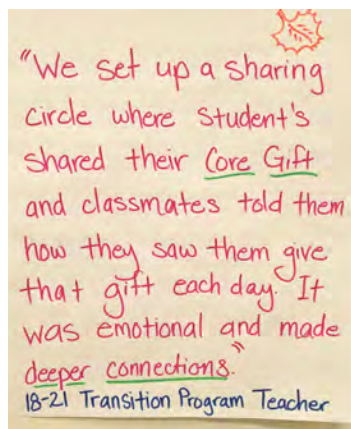
On the second to last day, we wrote up all of their Core Gifts, and we had them in the room on the wall. We had all of the students go up to the wall and check-mark the gifts of other students that they liked. Some students checked everybody's gifts, because they're like, "I love everybody's gifts because they're all needed." So, it was really cool, and during that time there was a lot of self-efficacy and self-advocacy going on in the room.

Sometimes it started very simple. A student will say, "I made my bed by myself today, I can do that." And then they began to see some of their other strengths. And then, when they saw they had a Core Gift and it was really important, they

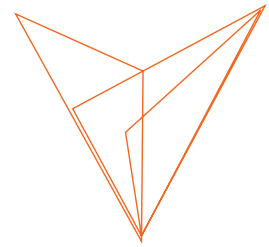
began to be able to see even more of their strengths. And all through the week, they were noticing other things they did well. Core Gifts help you to notice your other gifts.

Caralee Page

This whole process has been so amazing to me. It just opened my student's eyes and they were so excited. I see my students five days a week, and I usually do a quick warm-up with them. I like to focus in on



writing, but right now our focus has been their Core Gifts. I'll take two or three questions from the Core Gift interview,



...the students got to hear from fourteen or fifteen people how they see them exhibiting that their Core Gift. So that was really profound.

Karen Gillette

and we'll focus on those questions. When I sit down with a student, sometimes I'll have to help them refine their answers, but we're doing it together. When they have their Core Gift statement finished, I put it up on the wall with the sayings I've gathered about Gifts.

Jennifer Hower

As someone who is not a teacher, I have to say that if it wasn't for the grace of the wonderful teachers in this room, I'd have a hard time believing that some of these students would get the attention they

My Core Gift is helping others to maintain the truth and to be honest to themselves and others. I give it by mindfully collecting my thoughts and empowering people to make progress in their lives.

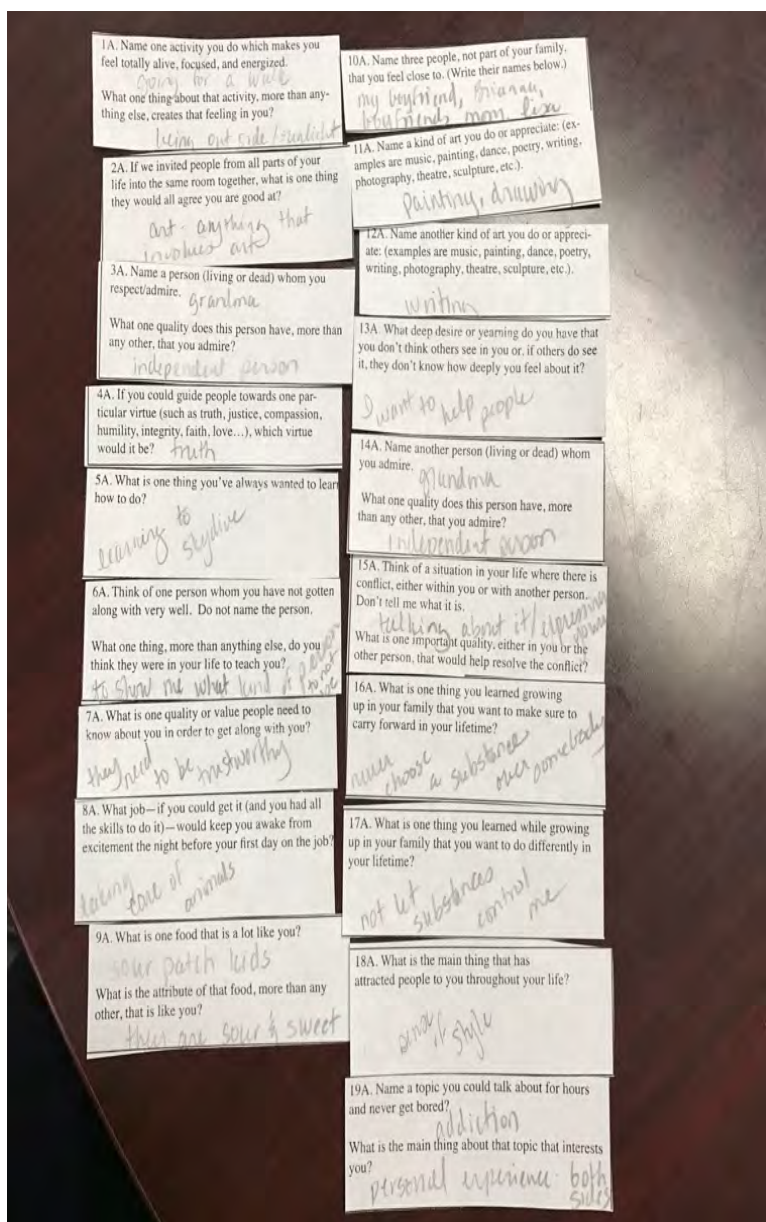
need to find out they have gifts and can be a major component of our society. **Lance Kaldor**

It's a good strategy to interview the parents before their children, so they understand what it is, and they see the impact that it had on them, so they better appreciate and respect the result that you might get with their kids. You don't have to convince them of the value of it. **Gordon Graff**

I did a Core Gift interview, outside of my job, with a person who was in school to be a Physician's Assistant. It was interesting. I really watched as he was processing the result of his Core Gift statement. His Core Gift was all about helping people be connected with each other. As a Physician's Assistant, he could be in surgery, he could do different kinds of medical practice, right? But with his Core Gift,

he decided to go into Family Practice, where he could be more a part of a community and have more opportunity to help people be connected. He had ideas about starting

a community garden in the neighborhood he was moving to, as a way for people to be connected. The interview really made an impact on him. **Julie Sherry**



My Core Gift is helping others to be happy in the moment and in their life. I give it by having things in alignment, capturing and creating moments while showing them they are strong enough to make it.

Part Four: Moving Forward

The participants in this booklet are, each in their own unique way, pursuing their Core Gifts while helping others discover their Core Gifts and find lives of purpose. Often working with people in the midst of on-going struggles, they have found Core Gifts to be a practical way to bring understanding to current difficulties and seeds of hope for the future.

Modern neuroscience says that hope is based on having a vision of the future, believing that vision is worth it, and being able to take the first few steps forward. There are so many examples of hope in action in this booklet. A public-school teacher commented that when she first started teaching, the students with disabilities she was working with were thought of as “untrainable.” Now she’s working to help those very same

kinds of students unlock and use their Core Gifts. Another participant said, “There is so much hopelessness in the world right now.” Then, pausing for a long moment, she said, “Gifts are a powerful tool against despair.”

There is so much yet to learn about how to bring gifts into the mainstream of our educational and helping systems and, more importantly, into the life of our communities. We can get there, but only if each of us, using our Core Gifts, contributes to both the learning and action required

to move beyond the existing “strengths” way of thinking to reclaim the deeper gifts and identity we all carry with us each day.

Gifts, part of the heritage of cultures around the world, offers us a path to come together, so we can all find our home.

My Core Gift Statement

My Core Gift is helping others to... get through
hard things.

I give it by... being understanding and listening.

My Core Gift is helping others to be able to thrive instead of survive. I give it by engaging people in a creative way to have them look outside of themselves to create change to get them where they need or want to go.



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