

Friday Night 11/06/2015 at Stillness Retreat Center, Chapel Hill, NC, USA  
"Macros and MacroShifting: An Introduction" – Robert L. Lee  
© 2015 Robert Lee All Rights Reserved  
Transcription and Audio Editing by Kurt Simpson

Time references an audio track (available by request). What follows is a modified verbatim transcription. Um's and ah's and false starts have been omitted as well as some comments meant as asides. Questions and comments from many participants have been removed to protect confidentiality at their request.

Other participants: MC: Marcella Calabi; KS: Kurt Simpson; RL: Robert Lee

0:00 - So macros are things which change with difficulty. It's that simple, things that change with difficulty. And I've been defining micros as things that change more easily. So they're both defined very simply and they are defined in a way that you could make something a micro because you think of it that way even though it took you five years of concerted effort it actually unfolded fairly systematically and so you think of that as a micro. Whereas a macro typically you work on it and you think you're in it and you might not get anywhere and then you work further and you start to feel like you're getting somewhere and you're back at the beginning or you think you've solved it and then you haven't and it's just that kind of thing.

1:04 - And my sense is that just the miracle of focusing partnership works really well for micros. I mean there are all kinds of just terrific things that you work on them and you get a little change and then little change leads to a little bigger change and then pretty soon the whole thing is changing. And that's a micro. It has an unfolding usually the work gets moved forward.

1:40 - But macros do not typically ... I don't mean that no one has never changed a macro with focusing ... they certainly have ... but they wouldn't necessarily open up and respond to focusing partnerships. They don't necessarily respond to all kinds of long term work: psychotherapy, coaching, spiritual direction, they just are not so predictable. And so that's one thing.

2:16 - And the second thing is when I've done a lot of training programs, as people sometimes or often tell me later, they say, "boy ... I really grew a lot during that time." And about the tenth person that told me this I thought why don't we design a growth process that looks like training programs but just as a growth process, you know where there is some didactic and workshop kind of stuff and there is partnerships and these kinds of things but not as certification or this kind of thing as good as that is but as a kind of a growth structure that you can do anytime and whenever and how many other times. So, I'm quite fascinated with that kind of growth structure, something that looks like training programs look like and Macroshifting and how that kind of process could really lead to some unfolding.

3:37 - So, I want to mention kinds of Macroshifting because people often think of just one or two kinds. I'm sure there could be fifty kinds but I have nine. So, that just helps us come to what is possible to choose or to work on.

4:07 - So the first one I call mental health. And just anything in mental health. That doesn't have to be the psychotherapy version of mental health. It can be your own version of mental health. It's just all the things and all the nuances of what it is to be mentally healthy.

4:33 - And the second one is physical health. And I talked to Kurt a good bit yesterday about how fascinating it is to me that physical health macros are so similar to any others. It is like you would think "oh mental health macros you're working this way and then physical health macros you work another way" and there are some differences but in some other way there is a way you enter the macro and you find an implicit intricacy. Like there is a web that wasn't visible when you started and as you enter it this web its intricacy starts to reveal itself and in that process there are places that you are drawn to as you discover something in the intricacy. You're going, "oh ... I didn't think of that," and those places often are responsive places. So, they are places that when you work there they respond and so when one thing responds and it doesn't matter whether it's mental health or whether it is physical health. Then something begins to happen in the whole and other places come. So it is rather interesting. And it doesn't

have to be a disease or something it can just be any ... thing that is about the physical directly.

6:24 - And it isn't ... in the '70's the Simonton's developed this method for fighting cancer where they would visualize the immune system gobbling up the cancer cells and there was this kind of thing that got some results. It could be something of that but it might not be in that direction at all. It's just that anything you really care about has all kinds of intricacy to it and when you enter it there is much more and that things can happen within this structure.

7:07 - And the next one is relationships and it really includes all kinds of relationships, family relationships, partner relationships, friendships, collegiality. And it also includes hierarchical relationships both from you working up above to underneath someone your supervising or your boss or an authority figure of some sort it includes that too.

7:44 - And then another kind is professional development and career and what you love and what's right for you.

7:56 - Another one is community development. All these research studies show that the people who have a robust community they have mental health I think they have pretty good physical health there is all these studies you know? And when I think back to times in my life that were particularly fruitful or enjoyable often they will have had lots of community so it's a really interesting way to get into that territory.

8:31 - And another one is integrity. And finding the places in us that are corruptible ... still. And facing those even a little bit ... even a little bit is really quite something. So, there is a piece around macros ... a macroshift is hinged to growth in your integrity. One implies the other.

9:07 - And another one is spirituality.

9:10 - And the last one I call mundane. And that is just that any little tiny thing that is difficult to change can be a macro. Can be a little tiny habit. I have a little tiny habit that I work on every

now and then and it's just fascinating to see all that is in there.

9:37 - So this is the preliminary to your just thinking further about choosing a macro. And the piece that I want to say is it is not like "you can do anything. Just choose anything and change it."

10:04 - And I left out social change I think. Social change is so obviously intricate in a way and quite interesting. MC: Say more about that being an individual's macro. RL: Yes, so let's say that you decide there is something you want to change in society or in the world and you want to really give yourself to it and it is kind of right for you to do it. So like I think that the Quaker movement or whatever it is ... is really interesting. I mean, if you study the influence of Quakers on social change, like women's suffrage and the underground railroad in the South and all kinds of things it's just astonishing. And when I go to Meeting it is just amazing to me the seriousness that they come to around how society works and such.

11:25 - So I had thought if the Quakers had focusing it would really give them a missing piece. Like they don't have this little psychological edge ... they have a lot of good psychological things and that there are many kinds of things. So I don't know if I'll give my life to this or anything but I have it enough that I've been cultivating it and something might happen with it. So that has a little social change and also, the Quakers have this self-government kind of tradition, it is really quite intricate and stable. So whatever is there for you ... that you really would like to change this thing out there. Something like that.

12:25 - So I've always thought you can just pick something that is difficult and just go after it and why not and wow isn't that just astonishing to think you can do that. But I feel a little bit differently about it now. It's not that you can just turn iron to gold. You kind of have to find what is also the right moment for this macro for you, something that you might not think is quite possible but it's been seeming more possible. So that you're also trying to define a macro in a way that has some congruence in your life. ... some "oh this would make sense to really do

be very diligent about and to really go into" and not just think of it as, "oh I want to ...," I think there is some royal place in me, "I want to just go and change this and change that." I think it's had a little bit of that flavor as a bias from me. So I'm just trying to have it be more like, "what is something that you could really take hold of and it would kind of make sense for now in that kind of way."