

Inspired for change:
The Role of the Ideal Self in change and
development

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Agenda

- Definition of the ideal self
- Review of research on the ideal self
 - Measure of ideal self
- Impact of ideal self on change and development
- Future directions

What is the ideal self?

- A meaningful and inspiring personal vision [...] referred to by various names in religious and philosophical literature across cultures—one's North Star, Guiding Light, Calling, Noble Purpose, Dharma and Ideal Self, among others.
- An image of the person you most want to be in the future.

Why the ideal self?

- Source of direction, inspiration, and energy for change and development.
- Components:
 - Purpose, meaning and calling
 - Integration of various pertinent “selves”
 - Personal and social identities
 - Future and hope

Ideal Self is not identity

- The ideal self, [...], is different from identity because it (1) is aspirational and may include values that are aspirational as well, (2) provides linkages among various components of a person's current and desired future selves and (3) incorporates the notions of calling and sense of purpose that could be distinct from identity.

What we know about the ideal self

- Component of the self-system (Baumeister, 1998; Higgins, 1989).
- The best of the possible selves: Captures our desires, values and goals (Markus & Wurf, 1986).
- Discrepancy between ideal self and real self has been used to explain anxiety, depression and procrastination (Higgins, 1994; Carver & Scheier, 1990), playing a key role in self-regulation (Hoyle & Sherrill, 2006).
- Plays a key role in self-regulation (Markus & Nurius, 1986; Higgins, 1987).
- First discovery of the intentional change theory (Boyatzis & Akrivou, 2006).
- Impacts work engagement and career retention in women (Buse & Bilimoria, 2014).

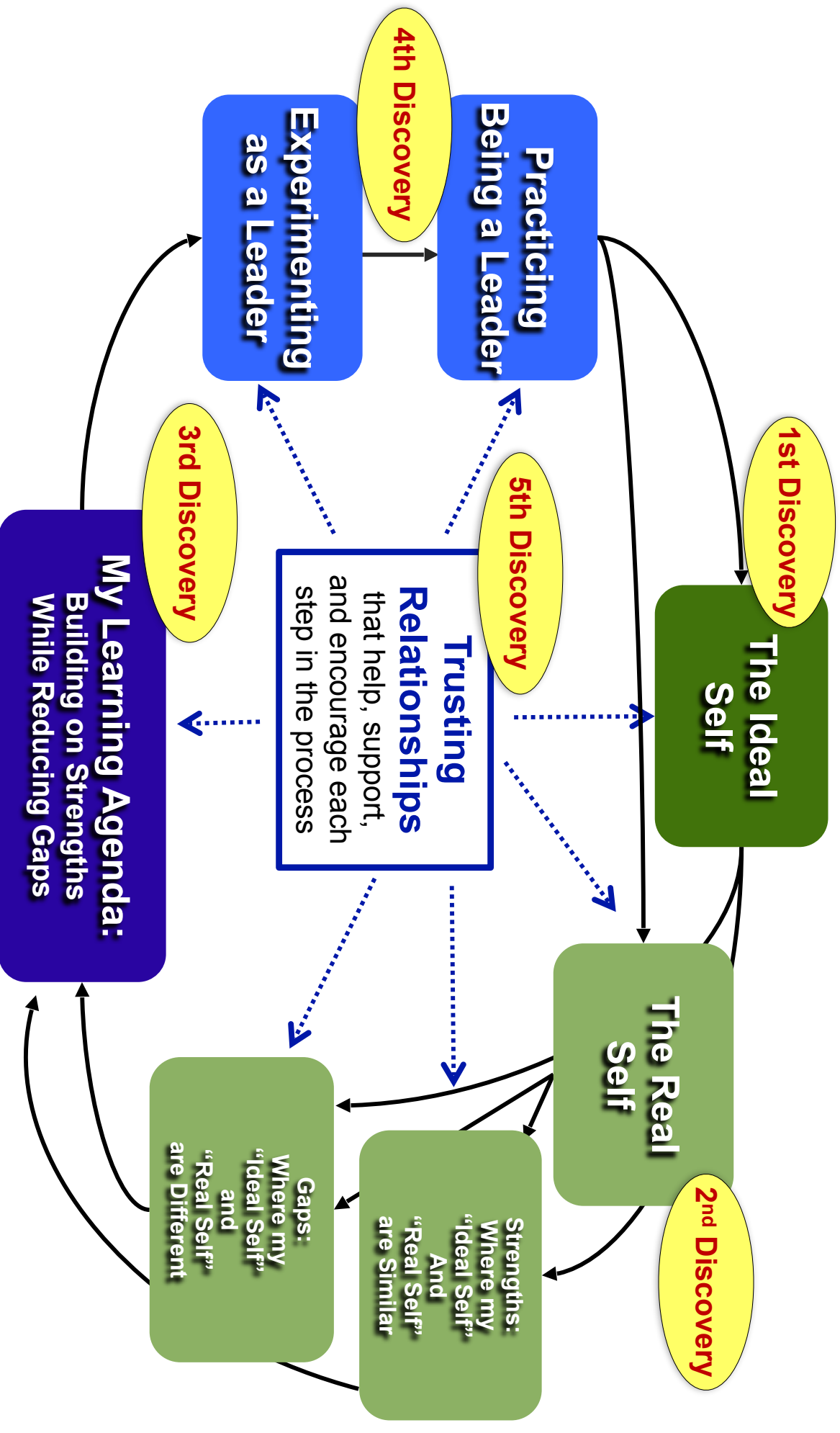
Prior research on ideal self

- Most studies have focused on the emotional and behavioral response (i.e. anxiety and depression) caused by its discrepancy to the real self (Higgins, 1984).
- Intentional Change Theory research (Boyatzis and Saatcioglu, 2007) has looked at it as part of ICT.
- While some studies have included the ideal self—or a contextualized version—have not assessed its impact on employee engagement or well-being.
- Strauss, Griffin, & Parker (2012) found that future work self led to proactive behavior at work.
- Boyatzis and Taylor developed the ideal self measure, which was used in Buse (2012).
- Buse found that the ideal self impacted work engagement and career commitment.

Pertinent characteristics of the ideal self

- We all have an ideal self, but in individuals it varies in levels of understanding, clarity and ownership (Boyatzis & Akrivou, 2006).
- It is activated through clarity, meaningfulness and inclusion.
- Factors of Measure (Boyatzis, Buse & Taylor, 2011) :
 - Clarity of vision
 - Energy linked to hope and meaningfulness of vision
 - Breadth and inclusion

Intentional Change Theory — Coaching Process



Ideal Self Measure

(Boyatzis, Buse & Taylor, 2011)

Ideal Self Questionnaire:

Instructions: Describe, in as much detail as possible, your dreams of your ideal life for 10 to 15 years from now.

The following categories may help stimulate your reflection.

- Your passion, calling, and sense of purpose:
- Your legacy:
- Your values and philosophy:
- Your dreams, fantasies and aspirations:
- How you feel about your future possibilities:

- Other components or elements of your dream:

Response: 1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Slightly Disagree, 4=Neither Agree nor Disagree, 5=Slightly Agree, 6=Agree, 7=Strongly Agree

IS1. *I feel inspired by my vision of the future.*

IS2. *My vision reflects many possibilities.*

IS3. *My vision includes fun activities.*

IS4. *My vision includes my work in terms of my jobs and career.*

IS5. *My vision includes my family relationships.*

IS6. *I am excited about my vision.*

IS7. *My vision includes leisurely activities.*

IS8. *I feel hopeful about my vision.*

IS9. *My vision includes my physical health.*

IS10. *My vision includes my values and philosophy.*

IS11. *I feel optimistic about my vision.*

IS12. *My vision includes my contributions to others and the community.*

IS13. *My vision includes relative priorities of things important to me.*

IS14. *My vision includes my intimate/love relationships.*

IS15. *My vision includes my spiritual health.*

IS16. *I have a clear vision of my desired future.*

IS17. *My vision includes my desired legacy in life.*

IS18. *My vision of the future reflects the things most important to me.*

IS19. *My passion, calling, and sense of purpose are clear to me.*

IS20. *I see many possibilities in my future.*

POSSIBLE COACHING QUESTIONS

Ideal Self	Real Self	Learning Agenda	Experimentation & Practice	Resonant Relationships
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If your life and work were ideal in 10-15 years, what would it look like? • What do you wish to be doing in 7-10 years from now? • Describe the person you would love to be? • What are your core values and long-held beliefs? • What situations and experiences give you the biggest energy boost? • What is your deep sense of purpose, passion or calling? • What is it that you think about when you don't have to think about anything? • If you won 80 million dollars or the equivalent after tax, how would your work or life change? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What feedback have you received that helped to reinforce your Ideal Self? • What common themes do you see in feedback you have received over the last few years? • What stands out about your current strengths that will help you move toward your personal vision? • Are there strengths that others see in you, that you don't see in yourself? If so, what are they? • Are you surprised by any of your feedback? • Are there gaps between who you are now and who you want to be in the future? • When you were at your "best self", what were you doing? Describe the experience. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will your learning goals bring you closer to your Ideal Self and personal vision? • Are you building on your strengths with these goals? • How will you evaluate your progress? • What are you currently doing that interferes with accomplishing your goals? • Specifically, what actions are you excited to take to bring you closer to your Ideal Self? • Will the action steps fit into the structure of your life? How? • What resources do you need to learn what you want to learn? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell me about your regular, monitored, intentional practice toward your goals. • Share with me an experience or two you had that brings you closer to your Ideal Self. • How did you use your strengths in these experiences? • As you were implementing and practicing aspects from your learning agenda, how did it feel? • Where will your "safe" practice settings be? • Do you feel your practice is bringing you closer to your Ideal Self or personal vision? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who is helping you with your personal and professional development? • Who offers you emotional support? • Who provides you with opportunities that "stretch" you? • Who is your "truth teller"? • Who confirms and affirms your identity and sense of self? • Who helped you the most in your life to become who you are or get to where you are? • Who is on your Personal Board of Directors? How does each person support your learning? • How can you engage these trusted individuals to help you get closer to your Ideal Self?

Temporal impact on the ideal self

- A static conceptualization of the ideal self does not adequately capture how the ideal self might evolve.
- People's aspirational work identities may change throughout their careers, and their personal identities may change throughout their life.
- A static model does not explain how changes in the components would lead to a revision of the ideal self.

Discovery of my uniqueness

- Time and experiences provides more insight into my uniqueness.
- Role of coaching and relationships for feedback about the discovery of my ideal self and my real self.
- Through iterative interactions, our implicit knowledge about ourselves is made explicit.
- What is the possible impact that my uniqueness can have on an organization?

Theoretical Implications

- The most meaningful dreams we hold, positively impact our engagement and performance at work, as well as our general well-being.
- Employee engagement has always been proposed to be about aligning employee needs and goals with the tasks of their tasks at work. This study provides evidence for this proposition.
- Employees who are able to see links between their jobs and their desired future are better organizational citizens, perform better in their task expectations, and have better managerial reputations.
- Furthermore, these employees generally feel better about their relationships at work.
 - Directionality of this relationship is not clear.
 - Do the positive emotions generated from the ideal self lead to better relationships (emotional contagion), or do better relationships help employees dream and find links between their work and desired future?

Theoretical implications

- Finally, work relationships provide a context for feedback where one can identify progress towards the ideal self, as well as feedback for learning and further formulation of one's ideal self (Boyatzis, 2006; Kram, 1996).
 - Points to the powerful role of the interplay between the ideal self and work relationships in helping people develop and self-actualize.

Practical Implications

- Talking about an employee's future can have substantial beneficial for both employees and the organization.
- Limitations towards this alignment:
 - Job roles and management
 - Employees who have not really thought about their ideal self
- ICT has substantial promise to help in this alignment.

Future Directions

- Better understand how employees align their work and their ideal self (i.e. expand job role-breadth, find avenues of alignment, visualize growth in org.).
- Experimental design study to test an ideal self intervention on engagement, well-being and performance.
 - Help to further understand the mechanisms of the impact of employee ideal self
- Impact boundaries of employee ideal self on engagement, well-being and performance
 - Is there a difference in impact on high performers? Low and average performers?
- Testing the impact of the supervisor relationship in employee ideal self.
 - Impact on intent to leave or turnover
- Impact of work experience on self-awareness and development of ideal self.
- Impact of ideal self development on recruitment, training, turnover and performance.

Thank you!!!