

STUDIO

Before the First Session

ORIENTATION & READINESS GUIDE

COLLEAGUE | CONFIDANTE | COACH

Russell W. West, Ph.D.

RUSSELLWEST.INFO

COLLEAGUE:

You are receiving this guide because we have already begun a conversation.

Whether our work together focuses on a decision, transition, challenge, opportunity or longer developmental journey, I wanted to provide a brief orientation to the way I approach executive support.

Inside you will find an overview of my process, several readiness exercises and practical information about working together. The exercises are not assignments. There is nothing to submit. Rather, they are invitations to notice what is already present and deserving of your attention.

I believe leadership development is less about acquiring new answers and more about increasing our capacity to recognize, interpret and respond to what is already unfolding around us.

My role is not to fix, direct or judge.
I serve as **colleague**, **confidante** and **coach**.

Together, we create a place where important questions can be examined carefully, difficult decisions can be explored honestly and leadership can be practiced intentionally.

I look forward to our work together.

Best,



Russell W. West, Ph.D.

EXECUTIVE COACH | CONSULTANT | EDUCATOR





THE STUDIO

A Quiet Place for Executive Mastery



PRESENCE

How am I showing up?

Leadership is experienced before it is evaluated. Presence shapes trust, credibility, confidence and influence.



PRACTICE

What am I doing repeatedly?

Leadership is not a position. It is a collection of habits, decisions, conversations and disciplines that compound over time.



PERFORMANCE

What results are emerging?

Performance is where intention meets execution. Together we explore the relationship between your actions and the outcomes they produce.



COLLEAGUE



CONFIDANTE



COACH

I keep a quiet studio for executives, boards and leadership teams seeking greater clarity, congruence and impact.

IN YOUR CORNER.

Leadership is lived in rounds.

A board meeting ends.

A difficult conversation concludes.

A strategic decision is made.

A crisis passes.

A season changes.

*Then, for a brief moment,
the bell sounds.*

You return to the corner.



“

As I have been making sense of what I mean when I say
I keep a quiet studio, I keep returning to a boxing metaphor.

Admittedly, it comes from a gritty sport. Yet most of us have witnessed
the moment that interests me.

The round ends. The athlete returns to the corner.

For a brief moment, the noise recedes.

The athlete sits on a three-legged stool. There is water. A bucket. A towel.
Someone tending cuts and bruises. Someone paying attention.
Someone helping make sense of what just happened.

“How’s the knee?”

*“Did you notice what happened
when he led with the right?”*

*“You made it through
the third round.”*

“You’re holding your own.”

“What’s your plan for the fourth?”

The coach isn’t focused on the opponent.
The coach is focused on the athlete.

Then the bell sounds again.

The athlete stands. Returns to the arena.
And does the work that only they can do.

I have often thought coaching resembles that corner.

**While you are focused on impact,
the coach is focused on you.**

— Russell W. West

Three capacities. One aim: Mastery.

Sustainable leadership is built at the intersection of *presence*, *practice* and *performance*.



PRESENCE.

How am I showing up?

When pressure rises, presence becomes visible. People experience your steadiness, clarity, confidence, emotional regulation and credibility long before they evaluate your strategy.

QUESTIONS WE EXPLORE:

- What am I bringing into the room?
- What signals am I sending?
- How do others experience me?
- What is required of me right now?



PRACTICES.

What am I doing repeatedly?

Leadership is not an event. It is a collection of habits, conversations, disciplines and choices that compound over time.

QUESTIONS WE EXPLORE:

- Which practices support sound judgment?
- What conversations am I avoiding?
- What patterns keep repeating?
- What would mastery require here?



PERFORMANCE.

What results are emerging?

Performance is where presence and practices become visible through outcomes.

QUESTIONS WE EXPLORE:

- What is working?
- What is not?
- What evidence matters?
- What should happen next?

“

Mastery is not found in a single performance. It emerges from the relationship between *presence*, *practices* and *performance*.

— Russell W. West

Our Partnership | How We Work Together

A coaching relationship differs from many other helping professions.

Coaching is a decision-support partnership grounded in the belief that clients are naturally creative, resourceful and capable of determining the course of their own lives and leadership.

Rather than providing answers, the coach supports awareness, discernment and intentional action—one decision at a time.

The client's agency remains central.

The coach supports that agency.

WHAT TO EXPECT

- ✓ Powerful questions
- ✓ Honest observations
- ✓ Reflection and discernment
- ✓ Accountability to your commitments
- ✓ Challenge when appropriate
- ✓ Confidential partnership
- ✓ Respect for your autonomy
- ✓ A focus on awareness before action

WHAT NOT TO EXPECT

- ✗ Therapy or diagnosis
- ✗ Legal advice
- ✗ Financial planning
- ✗ Chaplaincy or spiritual direction
- ✗ Mentoring based on "what I would do"
- ✗ Consulting recommendations disguised as coaching
- ✗ Judgment of your decisions
- ✗ Responsibility for choices that belong to you

THE RHYTHM OF OUR WORK

MONTHLY STUDIO SESSION

Most engagements include one scheduled coaching conversation per month.

Sessions are approximately 60 minutes and are scheduled directly by the client using the online calendar.

While every conversation is unique, sessions often follow a rhythm similar to the one at right.



BETWEEN SESSIONS

Clients often reach out between meetings when:

- A significant decision arises
- A difficult conversation approaches
- A leadership challenge emerges
- Accountability support would be helpful

The Studio remains available between rounds.



PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS

As an International Coaching Federation (ICF) credentialed coach, I am pledged to internationally recognized standards of ethics, confidentiality, competence and professionalism.

These documents establish expectations, protect confidentiality and support a shared understanding of the coaching relationship.

BEFORE WE BEGIN, YOU WILL BE ASKED TO REVIEW AND SIGN:

- Coaching Partnership Agreement
- Confidentiality Agreement
- Coaching Consent Form
- Coaching Boundaries & Professional Distinctions Acknowledgment

My Apprenticeship, Your Excellence



The apprenticeship that led to the coaching chair has been long, life-giving and in service to thousands of emerging and executive leaders.

Military Beginnings

Earlier still, I trained Marine Corps Officer Candidates, where leadership was treated as a matter of consequence rather than convenience.

Higher Ed & Scholarly Development

I served as a professor, dean and leadership educator—studying, teaching and shaping leaders in academic and organizational settings.

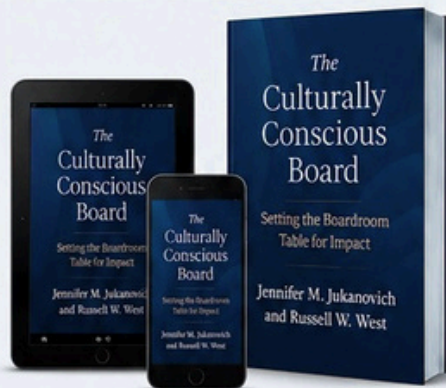
Change Leading Apprenticing

Across four decades, I have advanced leadership through research, writing and ideas that strengthen culture, governance and mission-driven impact.

Decision Support Partnerships

In 2015, I left the academy to move closer to the field itself—to accompany leaders where decisions carry real consequences and where leadership is tested not in theory, but in practice.

Ten years later, that decision continues to feel right.



The Culturally Conscious Board

CO-AUTHORED WITH
JENNIFER M. JUKANOVICH

A practical guide to governance,
culture and board effectiveness.



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foundations, colleges, Tribal
organizations, arts organizations
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COACHING HOURS

Dedicated partnerships
focused on leadership,
governance, culture and
strategy.

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LEADERSHIP
DEVELOPMENT HOURS

Across executive coaching,
consulting, graduate education
and leadership facilitation.

548

DOCTORAL RESEARCH
PARTNERSHIPS

168 dissertations chaired and
380 dissertation committees
served.

5,000+

COPIES SOLD
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The Culturally Conscious Board

He's Been Steadily
Preparing for Years—

*Performance Coach, Strategist,
Professor, Story-Keeper—*
to ask you a question.



ONBOARDING



The Conversation Begins When You Take Your Seat.



Our Partnership | Ethics & Professional Boundaries



Coaching is a professional decision-support partnership built on trust, confidentiality and client agency.

As an International Coaching Federation (ICF) credentialed coach, I am committed to recognized standards of ethics, competence and professionalism. Before coaching begins, we will review and affirm our coaching agreements, including confidentiality, informed consent and the responsibilities each of us bring to the partnership.

WHAT YOU MAY EXPECT

A confidential and professionally managed partnership.

A quiet studio for reflection, discernment and action.

A sounding board with a bias toward mastery.

Thoughtful questions, active listening and strategic inquiry.

Respect for your values, goals, priorities and autonomy.

A focus on presence, practice and performance.

A coach who believes you are capable, resourceful and responsible.

A partnership designed to strengthen your capacity for leadership, judgment and action.

WHAT COACHING IS NOT

Coaching is not therapy

Coaching is not legal, financial or medical advice

Coaching is not chaplaincy, spiritual direction or pastoral counseling

Coaching is not consulting disguised as coaching

Coaching is not dependency, manipulation or pressure

Coaching is not a relationship in which the coach becomes the decision-maker

OUR SHARED FOUNDATION

The coaching relationship is founded on a simple conviction:

You are capable, creative and resourceful.

My role is not to direct your life, solve your problems or make decisions on your behalf.

My role is to create and protect a professional space where reflection, discernment and action can occur.

ICF CREDENTIALLED

CONFIDENTIAL

PROFESSIONAL

CLIENT-CENTERED

How to Prepare for Coaching | The First Session

YOU DO NOT NEED TO ARRIVE PREPARED.

Many clients begin coaching with a general sense that something deserves attention.

Some arrive with a specific decision.

Others arrive with a tension, opportunity, challenge or transition they have not yet fully named.

You do not need a polished story.

You do not need a perfect goal.

Curiosity is sufficient.

TOPICS OFTEN BROUGHT TO COACHING



LEADERSHIP

- Difficult conversations
- Executive presence
- Board relationships
- Team effectiveness
- Leadership transitions



STRATEGY & DECISION-MAKING

- Burnout concerns
- Boundaries
- Values alignment
- Sustainable leadership
- Meaningful work



HUMAN SUSTAINABILITY

- Career transitions
- Influence
- Mastery
- Identity
- Long-term development

QUESTIONS WORTH BRINGING

- What is demanding my attention right now?
- What decision have I been postponing?
- What conversation needs to happen?
- Where do I feel stuck?
- What opportunity deserves more courage?
- What am I carrying that no longer serves me?
- What would progress look like over the next 90 days?

BEFORE WE MEET

Consider Bringing One of These

- A decision you have been postponing.
- A conversation you know you need to have.
- A transition you are navigating.
- A goal that matters but has stalled.
- A leadership challenge that keeps returning.
- A tension between competing priorities.
- A question that refuses to leave you alone.

YOU DO NOT NEED

You do not need any of these to begin

- A perfect goal.
- A polished story.
- A completed plan.
- A crisis.
- A title.
- Permission to begin.

A SIMPLE REFLECTION

What has your attention right now?

What is at stake?

What would progress look like 90 days from now?

Coaching Partnership Agreement



PURPOSE

Executive coaching is a collaborative partnership designed to strengthen leadership presence, professional practice and organizational performance through intentional reflection, discernment and action.

OUR SHARED COMMITMENTS

AS YOUR COACH, I WILL:

- Maintain professional standards and ethical boundaries.
- Provide a confidential and respectful environment.
- Listen carefully and challenge thoughtfully.
- Support your learning, growth and decision-making.
- Remain accountable to the ICF Code of Ethics.

AS THE CLIENT, I WILL:

- Bring topics that matter.
- Participate honestly and openly.
- Take responsibility for my decisions and actions.
- Communicate concerns directly.
- Honor scheduling and partnership agreements.

PARTNERSHIP STATEMENT

Coaching is most effective when both coach and client engage actively in a relationship characterized by trust, candor, curiosity and mutual respect.

 CLIENT SIGNATURE

DATE

 COACH SIGNATURE

DATE

 RW | Colleague | Confidante | Coach

In Your Corner

Confidentiality & Informed Consent



CONFIDENTIALITY

All coaching conversations are treated as confidential except where disclosure is required by law or where there is a credible threat of harm to self or others.

COACHING RECORDS

Session notes remain the property of the coach unless otherwise agreed. Clients are encouraged to maintain their own records of insights, commitments and actions.

INFORMED CONSENT

The client understands:

- Coaching is not therapy.
- Coaching is not legal, medical or financial advice.
- Coaching does not diagnose or treat mental health conditions.
- Coaching is voluntary.
- The client may end the coaching relationship at any time.

QUESTIONS

The client is encouraged to ask questions regarding process, expectations or boundaries at any time.

CLIENT SIGNATURE

DATE

COACH SIGNATURE

DATE

Session Logistics, Scheduling & Fees



SESSION CADENCE

Unless otherwise specified:

- One coaching session per month
 - Approximately 50–75 minutes
 - Conducted virtually or by mutual agreement
-

SCHEDULING

Clients are responsible for scheduling sessions through the agreed-upon scheduling process.

RESCHEDULING

Twenty-four hours notice is appreciated whenever possible.

BETWEEN SESSIONS

Clients may occasionally contact the coach for brief questions, updates or decision-support needs between scheduled sessions.

FEES

As outlined in the accompanying engagement agreement or proposal.

TRAVEL & SPECIAL ENGAGEMENTS

Retreat facilitation, speaking engagements, assessments or travel-based work are governed by separate agreements.

Before Our First Session



WHAT PROMPTED YOU TO PURSUE COACHING AT THIS TIME?

WHAT OPPORTUNITIES ARE EMERGING IN YOUR LEADERSHIP,
WORK OR LIFE?

WHAT CHALLENGES CURRENTLY HAVE YOUR ATTENTION?

IF THIS COACHING PARTNERSHIP WERE SUCCESSFUL, WHAT
WOULD BE DIFFERENT ONE YEAR FROM NOW?

WHAT MUST BECOME TRUE FOR YOU TO MEET THE DEMANDS
THIS SEASON IS MAKING OF YOU?



I look forward to our conversation.

— Russell W. West, Ph.D.

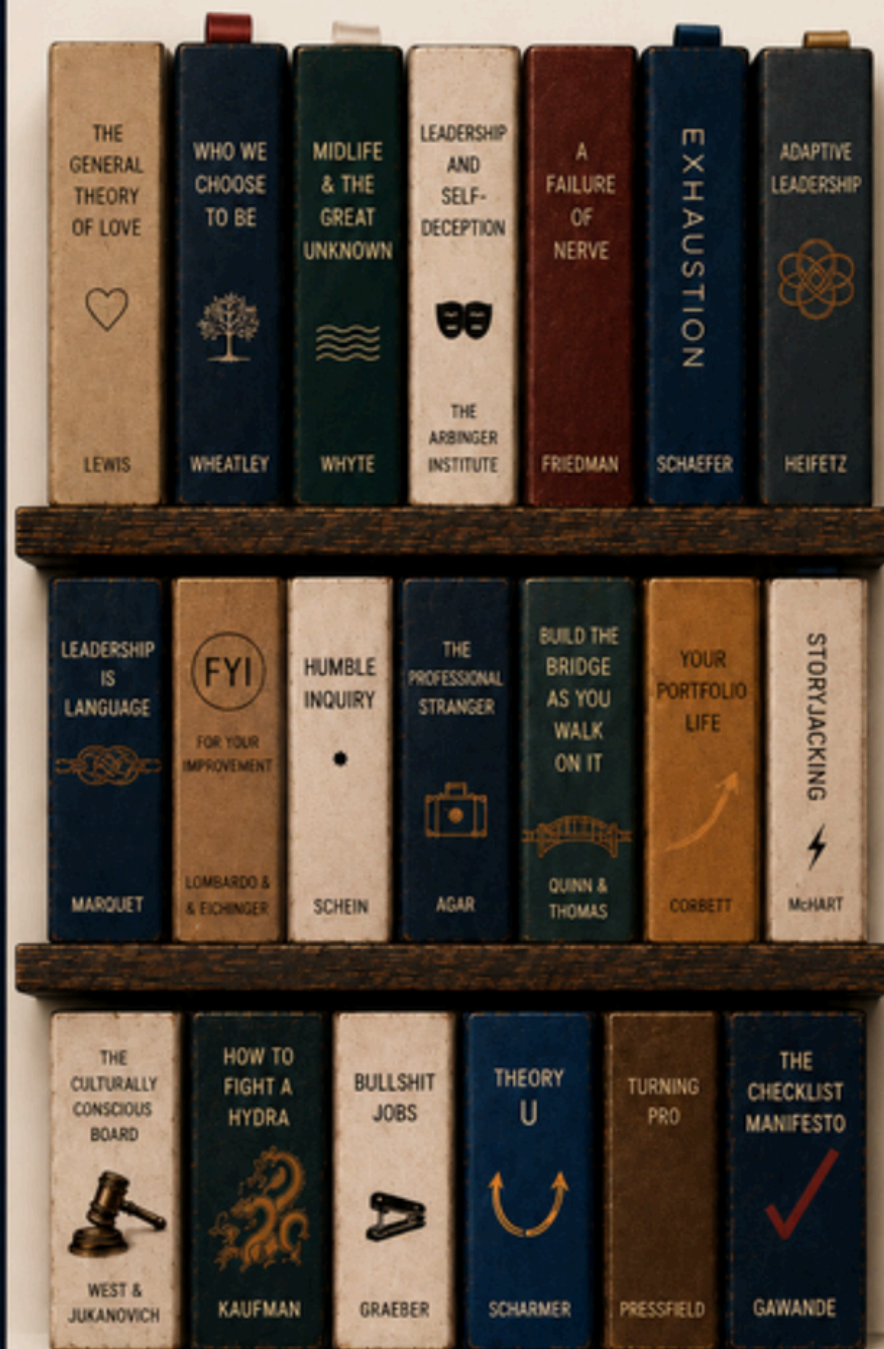
We've Given This Some Thought

FOR LEADERS WHO ARE READERS

Some books become more than references. They become companions.

These titles have shaped my thinking and often surface in conversations about leadership, governance, human sustainability and meaningful work.

They are not assigned reading. They are books I return to often because they continue to illuminate the path.



A WORTHPLACE COLLECTIVE EXPERIENCE
RUSSELLWEST.INFO



A LIVING BOOKSHELF

Leadership is a lifelong apprenticeship. I continually refresh this collection with new books, films, TED Talks, podcasts, articles, interviews and other resources that fortify the practice of leadership.

Some entries may disappear.
Others may arrive unexpectedly.
This bookshelf remains a work in progress.



A STANDING INVITATION

If you encounter a book, film, article, podcast, TED Talk or other resource that has shaped your leadership, I hope you'll send me a note.

Many of the most valuable additions to this shelf come from conversations with thoughtful readers and fellow travelers.

I welcome your recommendations and look forward to discovering what is shaping your thinking.



PRESENCE

What Must Become True of Me?

- The General Theory of Love — Lewis
- Who We Choose to Be — Wheatley
- Midlife and the Great Unknown — Whyte
- Leadership and Self-Deception — Argyr Institute
- A Failure of Nerve — Friedman
- Exhaustion — Schaefer
- Adaptive Leadership — Heifetz

These books explore identity, emotional maturity, self-awareness, courage, attachment, meaning and the inner life of leadership.



PRACTICE

What Habits Express My Becoming?

- Leadership Is Language — Marquet
- FYI: For Your Improvement — Lombardo & Eichinger
- Humble Inquiry — Schein
- The Professional Stranger — Agar
- Build the Bridge as You Walk On It — Quinn & Thomas
- Your Portfolio Life — Corbett
- Storyjacking — McHart

These books focus on conversation, observation, learning, feedback, experimentation and the daily disciplines that shape leadership practice.



PERFORMANCE

What Informs How I Measure and Manage?

- The Culturally Conscious Board — West & Jukanovich
- How to Fight a Hydra — Kaufman
- Bullshit Jobs — Graeber
- Theory U — Scharmer
- Turning Pro — Pressfield
- The Checklist Manifesto — Gawande

These books help leaders think about systems, governance, execution, accountability, culture and organizational impact.



SCAN TO FIND
AN ANNOTATED
BOOK LIST

A living version of this bookshelf—continually refreshed.



Any Questions?

*We're here to help.
Let's keep building what matters.*



CONTACT DR. WEST |



RW.EMERGENCE@LIVE.COM |

