

SIGNATURE PRESENCE

Adapted from a submission to the University of Cambridge (UK) Executive and
Transformational Life Coaching Certificate Program

Zoran Vujisic

Universidad del Turabo – PUERTO RICO

Zoran Vujisic, FRSA, FRSPH, FRAS, MRSSAf, MRSNZ is a Certified Marriage and Family Therapist. His qualifications include a B.A. (Humanities), S.T.L. (Orthodox Theology), M.A. Ed. (ESL), D. Min. (Marriage and Family Therapy), Ph.D. (Applied Linguistics), and Th.D. (Practical Theology). He is currently pursuing a Professional Certificate in Executive and Transformational Life Coaching at Cambridge University, UK.

Introduction

Signature presence can be a significant asset in the academic and helping professions. Although the term, ‘signature presence’, was coined by Mary Beth O’Neill, the concept is ancient, and can be found in the writings of several socio-religious psychotherapeutic traditions. Signature presence is the ability to see, perceive / apperceive, connect / relate, and interact in a powerful, convincing, and meaningful way. It includes the self-confidence that emanates from the alignment of principles / values and actions, allows / facilitates the communication of authority, authenticity / genuineness, realness, validity, self-belief, enthusiasm / excitement, zeal and commitment, evoking a similarly enthusiastic and wholehearted response from the recipient of the communication (Leary-Joyce, 2007). Ultimately, signature presence is a distinctive set of assets, and moreover a set of characteristics / core virtues, that can make the academic or helping professional unique and effective (Leary-Joyce, 2007; Nelson 2010). Signature presence

develops in the context of 4 vectors (a) relationship, (b) communication, (c) ‘present moment mindfulness’, and (c) accurate self-concept / worth.

Signature presence is initiated within the context of the first vector, i.e., the academic / helping professional relationship. Therefore, the basis for the establishment of the relationship is fundamental, and a clear / precise understanding of that relationship is an important point of departure. Such an understanding, formal or informal, will facilitate the establishment of a rapport between the academic and student or helping professional and client, and thereby create an atmosphere in which the academic / helping professional’s signature presence can develop / expand, i.e., within the framework of clear direction and guidelines (Leary-Joyce, 2007).

The second vector of signature presence is communication. In the academic and helping professions, quality and success depend upon the academic / helping professional’s communication skills, i.e., his / her ability to effectively communicate thoughts, ideas, dreams, feelings, and emotions. Communication determines signature presence and is enhanced by the academic / helping professional’s ability to use the appropriate tools / techniques efficiently and successfully.

The third, and possibly the most important, vector of signature presence is ‘present moment mindfulness’, which requires stillness / focus, i.e., ‘Self 2 focus’ (DiLeo, 2007; Gallwey, 2000; Kline, 1999; Leary-Joyce, 2007; Vujisic, 2010a). In order to accomplish stillness / focus, ‘soul chatter’ or internal scripts / self-talk must be put into check (Vujisic, 2010b). This watchfulness will facilitate the formation of a clearer picture / vision of the core energies of people and situations / circumstances, and how these impact the academic / helping professional and his / her own experience. Rationalizations, judgments, fears, and doubts will dissipate with the development of ‘present moment mindfulness’, resulting in a supersensory flow that foments

a satisfying and meaningful existence, without attachment, and moreover, with quality presentation (Downey, 2003; Leary-Joyce, 2007). The Eastern neptic-tradition is particularly useful in developing stillness / focus, through the techniques of meditation / prayer, breathing, and bodily postures / exercises. Through these techniques, watchfulness is developed, and the academic / helping professional can expand his / her ability / capability to observe his / her own thoughts without attachment. This results in stillness / focus, and heightened awareness, and a deep state of calmness and sense of ‘present moment mindfulness’ (Vujisic, 2010a).

The fourth vector of ‘signature presence’ is accurate self-concept / worth, which is intrinsically linked to self-awareness (Leary-Joyce, 2007). This is related to the quantity / quality of self-talk and to an inner sense of wellbeing. Ultimately it is connected to the academic / helping professional’s value system, particularly to his / her cultural / religious values and his / her ‘personally significant’ or deep-seated values, of which s/he must be acutely aware, and which provide a basis for (a) time-focus, (b) human activity, (c) social relations, (d) people / nature relationships, (e) integrity / wholeness, (f) self-awareness, and (g) ‘unstuckness’ (Baldwin, 1992; Seligman, 1998). Poor self-concept, or an over-inflated self-concept, can foster fragmentation and a major disconnect / dissociation with reality, i.e., self-concept does not align with the reality check of objective third-party confirmation. Integration provides the academic / helping professional with confidence / presence, and enables him / her to work with students or clients across a range of issues competently.

In order to develop his / her signature presence, the academic / helping professional must foment his / her own personal growth across the 4 vectors, i.e., (a) identify / classify and formalize relational contexts; (b) augment his / her theoretical / practical knowledge and communication skills; (c) develop stillness / focus, which will enable the academic / helping

professional to have a better perception / experience of his / her own reality, and that of others; and (d) enhance accurate self-worth / self-awareness through input / feedback from personal / professional relationships (Leary-Joyce, 2007; Nelson 2010). Development in these vectors will result in inner peace / confidence, and moreover, a sense of authenticity, which will be experienced by the student and / or client as strong signature presence (Leary-Joyce, 2007).

In addition to its definition and the vectors in which it develops, the academic / helping professional is challenged to bring his / her 'signature presence', to the academic / helping professional relationship in a way that can assist / serve the student and / or client (Bluckert, 2006; 2011; Nelson, 2010). When the academic / helping professional succeeds in doing this, s/he can develop, not only competency, but also professional satisfaction and fulfillment, ultimately achieving self-actualization. In order to reach this goal, the academic / helping professional can begin by asking him / herself the following questions: (a) How can I identify and transcend the obstructive thoughts, words / talk, and actions that keep me from developing, embodying, and communicating a strong signature presence? (b) What are the media for communicating signature presence? (c) How can I integrate intuition and rationality? (d) How can I integrate being and doing, (i.e., How can I ensure that what I do flows from who I am)? and, (e) How can I present myself to students / clients with credibility, influence, and impact?

References

Baldwin, M.W. (1992). Relational schemas and the processing of social information.

Psychological Bulletin, 112, 461-484.

Bluckert, P. (2006). *Psychological dimensions of executive coaching*. Berkshire, UK: Open

- University Press.
- Bluckert, P. (2011). Coaching articles. Retrieved from <http://www.pbcoaching.com/article-coaching-supervision.php>
- Di Leo, P. L. (2007). *Depressive symptomology and the prayer of the heart*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Regions University, Montgomery, AL.
- Gallwey, W.T. (2000). *The inner game of work*. New York, NY: Random House Trade Paperbacks.
- Kline, N. (2010). *Time to think: Listening to ignite the human mind*. London, UK: Octopus Publishing Group Ltd.
- Leary-Joyce, J. (2007). *Signature presence*. Lecture presented at the EMCC conference, Stockholm, Sweden.
- Nelson, K. (2010). *Your total coach*. Oxford, UK: Infinite Ideas Limited.
- Seligman, M. (1998). *Learned optimism: How to change your mind and your life*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, Inc.
- Vujisic, Z. (2010a). *Orthodox psychotherapy: A study in the treatment of depression and anxiety*. Saarbrücken, Germany: VDM Verlag Dr. Müller Aktiengesellschaft & Co. KG.
- Vujisic, Z. (2010b). *The art and science of healing the soul: A guide to Orthodox psychotherapy*. Saarbrücken, Germany: VDM Verlag Dr. Müller Aktiengesellschaft & Co. KG.