

Letter From Laura Whitworth

Hello my Bigger Game friends,

I'm not sure how to start this letter, I have been looking for just the right words and there seem to be too many. So let me apologize for my wordiness as I share what has been happening to me personally. And I am going to preach a bit, give you a bit of history, and ask for your help. I feel a bit shy in all this, and here goes...

It starts out with these words: "You have a spot on your lung. It looks like cancer." I heard those words like an avalanche, and my world has not been the same since. Yes. I've been diagnosed with stage one lung cancer, and recent surgery removed the middle lobe of my right lung and several lymph nodes. They tell me the prognosis for my recovery is good — statistically an 80% survival rate after 5 years, especially if I pursue Chemotherapy. Still, I worry. As we have mentioned in the Bigger Game workshop, outside circumstances can cause a Bigger Game – and certainly a GULP.

It feels so strange to calmly type these words here. Especially given that this is my second brush with cancer in the last 14 years. One of the gifts of a diagnosis like this is that it brings the always lurking prospect of imminent death to the foreground, providing a constant new lens through which to view each and every moment. ††The Comfort Zone of taking life for granted gets busted wide open. As I move through the process of treatment and recovery, I am compelled to ask two questions over and over again: "What is important? What is important now?" Sometimes there is an echo in the background of "What is most compelling?" I keep looking at what is important enough to spend moments of my precarious life on in the coming days.

You won't be surprised to hear that what is important to me is the desire to be involved in something meaningful, something that has lasting impact. I want to be engaged in creating a shift in how human beings relate to each other. I firmly believe that much of what does not work on our planet is because a majority of the world's population does not know how to interrelate in a healthy, positive, and empowering manner. That's all: **they don't know how. We can do something about that!** We can help to put into place a universally aligned system of relating or caring or engaging with one another. And I believe doing something about that is IMPORTANT, compelling, worth my time.

As you may remember, my experience with The Coaches Training Institute has shown me that the competencies taught in the Co-Active Coaching curriculum include an abundance of relationship, communication, and life skills that allow an individual to interact with others in a meaningful and worthwhile manner. The "something" I see we can do is to prove that co-active coaching training develops these necessary life skills. We can do this by taking coaching training into prisons with the *Time To Change* project (TTC). Many of you know that this is my Bigger Game, and cancer has only made it more com-

elling, calling for even more Bold Action. I'd like to tell you more about *TTC*, but first....

I am writing is to tell you about what is going on in my life, and to ask for your financial support. I will be at the **Call To Action Marathon** in Portland on October 3rd to raise funds for *Time To Change*. Although I will not be running in this marathon, I am using this event to pull myself forward, to move through Chemotherapy, and to quicken my healing — to give me something IMPORTANT to fight for. If you are able to financially support me in this venture then please page down to the REQUEST line, or, read on as I share a bit more with you about the *TTC* program.

In 2000, by invitation, the Co-Active Coaching Training program was delivered in a Federal Prison in Colorado to a group of inmates who were working with Youth At Risk. After delivering the five courses we were awed by the changes we saw. This curriculum has proven that people can change, and will change, when they learn a better way. The inmates developed new ways of feeling, thinking and acting that were previously unavailable to them. Transformation would be an appropriate term.

The last course was delivered in July of 2001, and that was to be the end of the experiment. Yet the disaster on September 11, 2001 revealed how desperately our species needs to expand its ability to communicate and relate to one another. (Another compelling purpose.) And we had just seen proof that co-active coaching training was a definite vehicle for changing the way these inmates viewed one another. It seemed that if we could continue to deliver this program to inmates we would eventually be able to develop enough evidence to encourage a national coaching curriculum in the prison system, and eventually an offering in the public education system. And then who knows where this might spread.

When you throw a pebble into the water it creates ripples. This is what is happening by training inmates in important life skills. Yet the truth is our primary focus is NOT about rehabilitating prisoners. Rather, *Time To Change* is trying to prove that we can change people's automatic reaction of violence to something else. That a successful program in the prisons can then lead to taking this type of non profit training to other locations where selfishness and thoughtlessness can be replaced with intention and appropriately used life skills. The economy has made fund raising challenging and at this point *TTC* is looking to the proceeds of this marathon to ensure it's continuing existence. Maybe someday the impact of this training will save more lives than we can conceive of in this moment. So please understand my boldness, as I see this as something important.

Here is my REQUEST - PLEASE BE MY ALLY AND PLEASE CONTRIBUTE:

I ask you to take a moment to click on the link below – and please, if you can, donate \$25, \$50, \$500 or even \$5,000, whatever amount you can. You will be part of something important, and part of an emerging solution. This is a tax-deductible donation, and knowing about your contribution will encourage me in my own recovery marathon.

HERE'S HOW TO MAKE YOUR TAX-DEDUCTIBLE DONATION:

On the Web simply go to The Call to Action Marathon <http://www.thecallmarathon.com>

Click on the "Sponsor Here" button, enter my name, **Laura Whitworth** and enter your contribution information.

OR, WRITE A CHECK, made out to "The Call" with my name in the memo line and mail to The Call To Action Marathon, 11 Schuyler Ct., Clifton Park, NY 12065

Thank for your support, your friendship and your time.

Laura

P.S. As a parting note, let me share my most favorite quote so you can see what I see...

You cannot stay on the summit forever,

You have to come down again . . .

So why bother in the first place?

Just this: What is above knows what is below,

but what is below does not know what is above.

One climbs, one sees. One descends,

One sees no longer but one has seen.

There is an art of conducting oneself in the lower regions

By the memory of what one saw higher up.

When one can no longer see, one can at least still know.

— Rene Daumal.

Co-Active Coaching skills bring the ability to SEE to those who do not know what can be seen. This is my most fervent hope ... that through the *Time To Change* Prison Project we can prove that helping others climb to the summit will allow them to conduct their lives in a more meaningful way.