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This first GISC newsletter of the year comes in the spirit of optimism, awareness, and community, as we face challenging economic times together. This month, we bring you unique perspectives of head-and-heart, husband-and-wife, left-brain and right, from members of our talented and resourceful community: an international banker, a therapist, a career coach, and our own CEO.

Jamie Stewart, CEO of the Federal Farm Credit Funding Banks Corp., and his wife, Deborah, a therapist in private practice, offer a fascinating joint head-and-heart perspective on today's economic outlook. Beverly Ryle, career coach and graduate of several GISC programs, takes a look at the true meaning of resilience, while her business partner and husband Michael Ryle walks us through the Cape Cod Model with a newcomer's eyes. Nancy Hardaway, GISC CEO, recaps some fascinating reading she's been doing and offers a distinctly Gestalt take on the latest information in neuroplasticity and whole-brain-thinking, and how we might all apply this knowledge to our daily lives. We hope you enjoy this respite from the activity and pressures of your day. Enjoy! **Laurie Fitzpatrick, Editor**

Economic Outlook 2009 Q & A with Jamie and Deborah Stewart

In this unique look at the economic challenges facing us in the months ahead, Jamie provides the economic and business point of view; following each of the questions posed to Jamie, Deborah provides some possibilities for personal meaning making.

What is the economic forecast for 2009?

1. The recession will continue until late 2009 or beyond.
2. Unemployment will be very high, as much as 8% - 9%.
3. The outlook is very bad for housing, automobiles, and retail sales.
4. The short-term outlook for prices is deflationary (prices going down) due to excess inventory and capacity in many industries.

What might this mean for you?

This kind of forecast is anxiety producing. A lot of leaders and service providers are worried that the organizations and individuals who employ them will (or have) downsized or cut back on "non-essential" services like consulting, coaching, and psychotherapy. A friend's husband just lost a managerial job he held-with dedication-for thirty years.

Reflecting on the insecurity of these times led me to the deep wellspring of human experience found in fairy tales. There is always an inherited

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The Spirit of Resilience Beverly Ryle



As an illustration of the way our culture can suck the life out of a word, George Carlin offered "shell-shock." A word which once vividly described the terror of war

has been watered down over time, first to "battle fatigue," and finally to "post-traumatic stress disorder," or its even less evocative acronym, PTSD.

Unfortunately something similar has happened to the word "resilience." According to one IBM website, resilience in business is all about "managing risk and making your information more secure" in order to shift from the old paradigm of "experience" to a new paradigm of "anticipate and adjust"- whatever that means!

I understand the need to creatively employ language to communicate business ideas in compelling new ways, but it's hard for me to see such a vibrant word as "resilience" stripped of its power, especially when it has so much to offer in helping us to forge new paths through uncertain economic times affecting the security of our professional lives.

In moments like this, when the junk food of buzzwords leaves me hungry for deeper understanding, I open a

notebook from one of the Gestalt trainings I have taken and read through my notes until I find something more nurturing to chew on.

Here are a few points from Week One of Leadership in the 21st Century (Fall 2005) that speak to the true meaning of resilience.

- Because of the extraordinary rate of change, turmoil and complexity, we are forced to design projects with no idea of an end point. The future is so totally unpredictable we don't know where we're going.
- A healthy organization (or person) readily adapts to its environment. A diverse ecosystem is more successful than a monoculture.
- Organizations work very hard at never having to be surprised and in so doing they shut down their capacity to be responsive and adaptive.
- Modeling adaptability to an uncertain world means adopting a stance that is curious and inquiring, one that welcomes surprise. By confronting "fixed" patterns of behavior you create more choice in how you respond.

Remembering the experience of being in sessions facilitated by Paul Rookwood and Bridget Farrands (whose words are paraphrased above) helps me to see how Gestalt teachings have expanded my capacity for resilience, not only in the sense of recovering from setbacks or weathering storms,

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The Cape Cod Model: A Beginner's Experience

Michael Ryle

My wife was in her first week of studying the Cape Cod Model when she asked me if I would like to join her in the fishbowl. "The what?" I said. She explained she had volunteered the two of us to be a "client system" for her instructors to demonstrate intervention techniques associated with the model. "What's it all about?" I asked. "You'll see." That was all she would say on the subject, and whenever she clams up, it gets my attention.



A few days later, the two of us sat opposite each other in the great room of the Gestalt International Study Center in Wellfleet, MA, surrounded by students of the model from all over the world. Near us sat Sonia Nevis and Carol Brockmon, our "interveners," in chairs with wheels (I did not yet understand the significance of the wheels).

"What do we do?" I asked. "Just talk," Sonia said. "What about?" "Anything." "Anything?" "Anything."

I guess I didn't really believe her when she said anything because after a few minutes I steered the conversation to a topic that was somewhat controversial, and thus more "significant" than the trivial stuff we had been discussing - or so I believed.

From time to time Sonia and Carol would confer, and then Sonia would roll her chair up to where we were, interrupting by entering our space to give us feedback, with humor and lightness, on our competencies, first the well-developed and then the less well-developed, our range of choices, our co-created resistances, etc. (I use Gestalt language to describe it, but I did not learn these terms until later.) When she was done she would roll back out of the way so that play could resume. After doing this several times,

she asked me how I was feeling. "A little perplexed," I said. "How so?" "Nothing you've shared with us has anything at all to do with what we have been saying to each other. It all has to do with how we've been saying it."

Everybody laughed. It seemed that I, even though to me Gestalt was just a word I once heard in an introductory psych course, had intuitively grasped something that Sonia had been trying to beat into their heads for an entire week - that Gestalt is about process, not content.

I was intrigued. I'll be the first to admit, I'm basically a content kind of guy, but I understand that there is a wealth of meaning in process, and I wanted to know more. So when I had the opportunity to attend an introduction to the Cape Cod Model on October 25th of last year, I jumped at it.

This was a one-day program, definitely a whirlwind experience - not quite if-it's-three-fifteen-this-must-be-the-Paradoxical-Theory-of-Change, but it did move along briskly. It was easy to understand why a full presentation of the model takes two weeks.

The program was led by Stuart Simon, Gestalt Jedi Master, and I wasn't in his presence long before I decided that he is desperately needed on The McLaughlin Group where all those people simultaneously creating their own figures can sometimes make competencies hard to discern.

Early in the day, Stuart mentioned Fritz Perls' description of Gestalt as "a love-affair with the ordinary," and it struck a chord with me because I was then re-reading Joyce's *Ulysses*, seven hundred pages dedicated to the most exquisitely loving depiction of everyday life you could imagine. Joyce, like Perls, knew that the vast majority of us live in the ordinary the vast majority of the time, and if we want to look for meaning in life, that's where we are likely to find it.

In the afternoon, the discussion turned to the ancient question, is the glass half empty or half full? and how the model attempts to breathe new life into those tired words, pessimism and optimism.

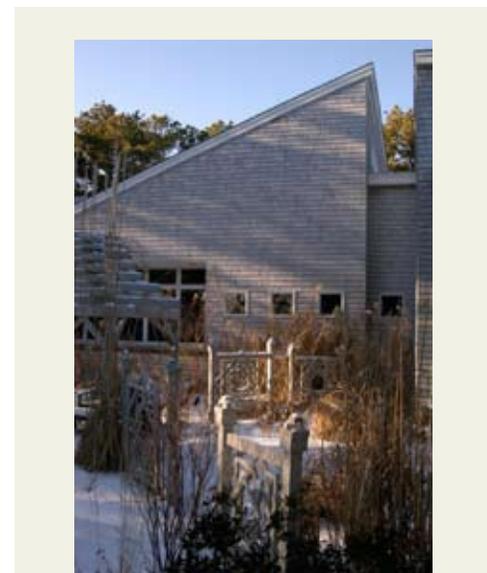
First pessimism. Stuart made the rather startling observation that we are "genetically coded" to be pessimistic.

It seemed odd, coming from someone with such a sunny disposition, but then he went on to talk about going to Africa and watching animals in the wild eating. They would snatch a mouthful of grass or leaves quickly and then immediately look around for predators. I had never thought about pessimism as a necessary condition for survival, but it's true, you do need a pessimistic outlook in the wild if you're going to make it through the day without being devoured. And though we humans live in a different kind of wilderness, we still sometimes need a little negativity to pull us through, to almost quote Bob Dylan.

The problem with optimism, the other side of the coin, is that it has been so misused - think of Dr. Pangloss in Voltaire's *Candide*, a character who so perfectly represents the idiocy of trying to "gloss" over everything ("pan"). Or that peculiarly American brand of blind optimism Sinclair Lewis called "boosterism."

But Gestalt talks about optimism in terms of energy, in the sense of, where ya gonna put yours? Asked whether the glass is half empty or half full, we know what the pessimist and the optimist would say. But even though Gestalt is committed to the "optimistic stance," it answers differently, and much more pragmatically, I think. In a spirit of true inquiry, it responds with another question: are you drinking, or are you pouring?

Michael Ryle is Manager of the Center for Career and Business Development. He writes fiction, and plays the Double Bass in the Cape Cod Symphony Orchestra.



The Spirit of Resilience

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but also in achieving more buoyancy in dealing with challenging situations in my life and teaching and modeling for others how to do the same.

Instead of a bland description of resilience as the need to "adapt and adjust," I have a set of mantras which connect to accessible, practical actions I can put into immediate use as I grapple with business problems and the projected fear that radiates from them:

- Remember there are multiple realities. In hard times some businesses suffer loss, others thrive, other recreate themselves.
- Stay in the present. The decline in my retirement portfolio is today's loss, not my financial status on the day I retire.
- Look at the competencies. What skills and attributes do I have (i.e. creativity, perseverance, generosity) that will serve me well in trying circumstances?
- Ask for data. Do I have a trusted friend, advisor or peer group who can shed light on ways that I sabotage my leadership effectiveness under stressful conditions?
- Expand my range of response. What opportunities are there for me to practice new behaviors, to surprise others and myself in how I react?
- Lean in to connect. Can I use feeling vulnerable to make me more receptive to listening for what I need to hear to be more fully present and alive with what is happening right now?
- Lean back to gain perspective. Is it helping me to expose myself to so much bad economic news? What is my physiological reaction to it?
- Experiment. If resilience were strength training (which in a way it is), how might I shape "workouts" to help me incrementally "lift more weight"?
- Place events within the cycle of experience. Where am I in the ebb or the flow of this event? If contact has been made, is meaning-making far behind!

In addition to this smorgasbord of

choices, I also have a framework for resilience - an optimistic stance. As I shared recently in my newsletter (www.successonyourownterms.com/newsletters/2008November.htm), there's nothing more attractive than someone who manages, despite very real problems, to manifest genuine optimism. People who can find a way to get past their own fears are an asset to any organization.

In "The Willing Suspension of Disbelief: Optimism" (*Gestalt Review*, Volume 9, 2005) psychologists Joseph Melnick and Sonia Nevis talk about what they call the "optimistic stance." They see optimism as "an orientation to the future and a way of encountering the unknown" that consists of two components, hope and courage.

"We view hope primarily as a wish," the authors write. "It is vague and unfocused and does not fuel an interest in doing." This is where courage comes in, by providing the energy to act. "A courageous person sees possibilities and can experiment. If you have the courage to live out your hope, you can then let go of the old and enter the void of the unknown. You are able to let things fall apart ... supported in the belief that something good will happen."

This is the abiding spirit of resilience.

~



Beverly Ryle, a career counselor and business consultant, is the Director of the Center for Career and Business Development. Her new book, Ground of Your Own Choosing: Winning Strategies for Finding & Creating Work, was released in 2008.

Neuroplasticity, the Economy, and Gestalt

Leader's Blog

by Nancy Hardaway

I've been reading about how when a part of the brain is physically removed, or becomes nonfunctional because of stroke, another part takes over the functions of the lost cells.



Our human systems are amazing. We cut ourselves and our skin heals. We can have our hearts broken by the loss of a spouse and we can function and go on and love again. We can create a company, go bankrupt, and create another. But not always. I've been wondering, what will determine whether any country, any organization, or any individual will emerge from the current economic crises with health and momentum?

I'm thinking about three things that make a difference in outcome after crisis whether personal or organizational: optimism - believing we can heal, survive, thrive; support - getting help and perspective from others so we don't get stuck; and staying open - rather than shutting down we find ways to be open to new options.

Talking about her own stroke in *My Stroke of Insight*, neuroscientist Jill Bolte Taylor refers to research on brain function that tells us that the left brain responds to fear and worry by narrowing focus. The more active the left brain becomes, the more it reinforces anxiety. From a neurological standpoint, each time the neurons are stimulated, it takes less external stimulation for the circuit to run again. Which means that it's easier for old patterns to play out than new patterns. Fear response supports more fear. The left brain shuts out new input; it doesn't want to make new decisions and new choices because of the risks.

The fear that is stirred by the current conditions in the world and the enormity of the unknown evokes a

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Economic Outlook 2009

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problem in the kingdom - the age-old way of saying that we're all subject to the "contagion effects" of the field, our country and the world. The hero/ine responds to crisis as a call to adventure, and has a willingness to engage in life as it is. He or she goes into darker realms where the payoff isn't always obvious and requires more than intellectual skills.

The hero/ine isn't alone: he or she meets wise women, helpful animals, and acquires the magic wands and curative potions necessary to accomplish the impossible task. Sonia Nevis is a wise woman. Our home is filled with animal images - the river otter, pleased with the fish he just caught, Seymour the moose (get it?), and my desktop hedgehog-he has "attitude." I have the wand of intention, and I drink from the cup of fellowship friends so willingly pour.

The hero/ine always returns with the treasure - increased wholeness. And so shall we. We can support each other, share our resources, and stay curious. Besides, our Gestalt training helps people cope, so all of us are more needed in the world than ever.

Why are we experiencing such a severe economic downturn?

1. The U.S. consumer has been living beyond his means for years by borrowing increasingly more money. That party is over.
2. Many financial institutions were mismanaged during the real estate/consumer lending bubble. They are now downsizing as their bad loans are recognized. Foreclosed properties constituted 45% of home sales in 2008.
3. Speculation in real estate led to over-building on a large scale: there are 2¼ million empty homes for sale at this time. New home building is down to record low levels.
4. State and local governments saw tax revenues rise during the bubble. Now they are reducing programs because tax revenue is plummeting. (Of course governing bodies did not put any money into reserves during the real estate boom.)

What are the implications for individuals of an economy gone wrong?

It seems to me that in the midst of the mess, we are realizing anew that we

care about autoworkers, construction crews, and local shops and restaurants. Maybe we should think big by thinking small: look for opportunities to be proactive and effective at the local level, where we can have influence. (Thanks to Edwin Nevis for a conversation about this.)

One wonders where the locals were when the highway to Alaska's "bridge to nowhere" was being built - an expensive, useless road. We have probably been prudent with our personal finances (and Jamie says they'll bounce back most of the way with time), but the distance between "me" and "you" now needs to be bridged by "us." And that's a bridge that costs nothing to build. We are now challenged to expand, reach out, and relate.

What is the long-term outlook for the U.S. economy?

1. Consumer spending will be reduced for years because the U.S. standard of living was not sustainable. Foreign lenders will no longer support our extravagant lifestyle - the U.S. is not currently a good loan risk.
2. Consumers will borrow less and save more. The U.S. savings rate was zero over the last decade: it will rise to about 5% of income. This is a much healthier and more prudent way to live.
3. The U.S. will import less and export more in order to pay down loans to foreign lenders. We have the opportunity, for example, to increase our exports of software, computers, and agricultural products - and it serves us well to become more competitive.
4. If government stimulus spending is aimed at improving our global competitiveness (education, and infrastructure such as roads and railways) then we will do well in the long run. If the stimulus is oriented toward encouraging more consumer spending, our problems will last much longer.
5. It is not clear if prices will remain low because of excess manufacturing capacity in China, etc., or if inflation will become a problem because of huge government deficits. My personal view is that we are facing a long period of slow growth and deflation.

What does this mean for me?

Maybe outmoded ways of doing business - including how we engage in the business of living - need to be left by the wayside so that something new can emerge. The economic



downturn is a huge reality check, facing us with the shadow side of our culture: materialism, consumerism, and individualism at the expense of responsibility.

Facing the imbalance in our cultural values is a call to consciousness. We have to live more moderately, which means questioning and changing collective and personal values. Is the good life really defined by having the right stuff? (How about designer jeans for an oxymoron?) We have turned our collective face to the outer world of status, money, power and style. Turning inward, and to each other, holds a lot of potential, and actually looks rather refreshing.

How should one make personal financial decisions during 2009?

1. Don't sell your equity/stock market investments - it's too late.
2. Keep your money in low-interest-rate but safe investments such as bond funds, money market funds or bank CDs.
3. There is no hurry to get back into the stock market or real estate. The risk is on the "down" side for 2009.
4. Reduce spending, increase savings, work harder, reduce stress, and help others.

This doesn't sound very encouraging...

My friend Bonnie once taught me a life lesson. We lived in California and had a lemon tree in the backyard. Bonnie visited and was, I thought, rather naively exultant about our runty lemons. Forget lemonade: she made lemon meringue pie, lemon bars, and lemon jam - she was overjoyed about the creative possibilities of a tree full of lemons. Her Midwestern enthusiasm (which means being seized by the gods) bypassed my imaginative limitations. She heard the call to life's bounty...and so can we. Go to the movies, have a potluck dinner, clean out your closet (donate the rejects), write a novel, catch up on sleep. Leave generous tips of all kinds. You can still love, laugh, and play.

Jamie Stewart is CEO of the Federal Farm Credit Funding Banks Corp., which unlike many financial institutions, is still profitable. The Farm Credit System makes loans to farmers and ranchers across the US. Many Farm Credit managers have attended the GISC Leadership program.

Deb Stewart is a psychotherapist and psychoanalyst who works with individuals and couples in a private practice and who is "enormously grateful to GISC for riches beyond measure."

They have both been involved in GISC training, and serve on GISC's Board of Directors.

Coming Up at GISC:

March 5 - 10
Applying the Cape Cod Model
to Coaching

March 21 - 22
Couples' Workshop:
Difficult Topics, Successful
Conversations

April 20 - 22
Skills for
Influential Leadership:
An Overview

May 1 - 3
In It Together: Partners
Facing, Managing and
Welcoming Change

May 14 - 21
Cape Cod Training Program,
Week One

May 28 - 31
Organizational Conference:
Leadership Succession

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A Leader's Blog

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dominant response by the left brain to shut down new ideas and new thinking. Consequently, we need to work harder today to stimulate our right brain thinking - both for quality of life and for professional success. So much is unknown, we can't respond only with the known.

Daniel Pink, author of *A Whole New Mind* contended in this 2005 bestseller, "the keys to the kingdom are changing hands." He makes the case that the linear, analytic, logical, number crunching, computer-like capabilities that have dominated the last few decades will have to be replaced by a broader type of thinking. That the economy and the society will be rebuilt on the inventive, empathic, big-picture capabilities. "Today, the defining skills of the previous era - the 'left brain' capabilities that powered the Information Age - are necessary but no longer sufficient. And the capabilities we once disdained or thought frivolous - the 'right brain' qualities of inventiveness, empathy, joyfulness, and meaning - increasingly will determine who flourishes and who flounders. For individuals, families, and organizations, professional success and personal fulfillment now require a whole new mind."

In order to develop this whole new mind, he suggests we exercise the right brain more by working on developing aptitudes characteristic of right brain type thinking: developing the ability to create things that are emotionally engaging; developing the ability to persuade, communicate, and understand oneself; developing the understanding of what makes people tick and how to forge relationships. The fact that these are all aptitudes we develop in our Gestalt training intrigued me, and then I came to the aptitude he calls "symphony" which is the ability to "grasp the relationship between relationships," or what he calls big picture or gestalt thinking. These are all ways of opening up, not shutting down. And neuroscience shows that when you increasingly activate particular areas of your brain you literally grow that part of your brain - just like muscle tissue develops when we exercise.

Here at GISC we teach a lot of the skills Pink describes - tools for expanding knowledge and

awareness of self and others; skills of understanding behavior of individuals and groups; the ability to influence; a new way of seeing interrelationships between people, content. Although we train consultants, and coaches, and therapists, and leaders, our faculty crosses disciplines, many of our classes are full of all four disciplines and more, and our decisions recognize the contribution of knowledge in one discipline to another. Think about how many great discoveries were made because of applying an idea from one field to another. Think burrs on a trouser leg after a walk inspiring Velcro for an obvious example. The richness of our programs comes from the breadth of our knowledge, but our organizational strength is also derived from the value we place on one another.

We teach the Cycle of Experience which has enormous value in understanding how we're processing the changes going on around us now. The cycle describes how we encounter something new, process it, act on it, and then integrate it (or not, in which case we start the cycle all over again). There are short cycles - seeing a dog run in front of our car and swerving, slightly longer cycles - discovering we need a new car, reading ads, and then purchasing, and long term cycles - deciding we want to open our own business, creating a plan, turning it into reality, building its success and then turning it over to the next generation.

We all have stages on the cycle where we prefer to hang out - some like dreaming up options, others prefer planning, some like to jump to action. If we use that preferred piece of the process, particularly in times of stress, and avoid moving through the others, or move through too rapidly without paying attention to where others are around us, we're likely to repeat our problems. Our faculty has a saying that if you start to see the same ground over and over, by the time you get to it the third time, you need to get perspective from someone else.

Fear shuts our creative brain down. When we shut down we don't look for options. Without options we become more fearful. Which shuts us down further. Then we need support. We need to see the danger but not only the danger. We need help to open

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up our thinking. To engage the right hemisphere. To explore options. To face the difficult facts and the difficult conversations. To know what is impossible and also to see what is possible. To take in another perspective on the same situation. If we can make an assumption that there's a way out, we start looking for that way out.

Which brings me back again to optimism. We'll thrive because we believe we can thrive. Jill Bolte Taylor says that because of what she knew about neuroplasticity, she knew she could recover from her massive stroke. So she didn't give up. Although it took eight years, recover she did. The brain creates opportunity when it believes opportunity is there. The other night I was in a worry loop about a problem at the Center, replaying a variety of negative outcomes. Suddenly, I thought, "what if everything worked out fine?" Immediately, new options came to me. The optimism allowed me to think differently.

It's optimism, support, and our training to stay open to new options that will allow our Center to thrive, through this crisis, and into the future. What's going to help you survive and thrive?

Nancy Hardaway is President and CEO of GISC and is a faculty member of Women, Work, and Leadership and Skills for Influential Leadership.

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GISC Program Calendar

2009:

March 5 – 10	Applying the Cape Cod Model to Coaching
March 16 – 28	Gestalt European Conferences (Hungary)
March 20 – 22	Women, Work, and Leadership
March 21 – 22	Difficult Topics, Successful Conversations: A Couples' Workshop
March 29 – April 3	Leadership in the 21st Century, 2008-09 Week Two
April 20 – 22	Skills for Influential Leadership: An Overview
May 1 – 3	In It Together: Partners Facing, Managing and Welcoming Change
May 14 – 21	Cape Cod Training Program, Week One
May 17 – 23	International Organization & Systems Development, Week One
May 28 – 31	Organizational Conference - Leadership Succession
May 31 – June 3	Leading Nonprofit Organizations
June 11 – 13	Working on Your Work
June 23 – 27	Executive Personality Dynamics for Coaches
July 26 – 28	Working with the Body in Mind
July 30 – August 1	The Building Blocks of Creativity
August 27 – 30	Next Phase: Navigating Personal & Professional Transitions
August 29-Sept 4	Cape Cod Training Program Europe - Week One
September 10 – 11	Wrestling with Ethical Dilemmas
September 12	Psychopharmacology
September 13 - 14	Introduction to the Cape Cod Model of Change
September 15 - 18	Cape & Islands Nonprofit Leadership - Session One
September 20 – 25	Leadership in the 21st Century, Week One
October 1 – 8	Cape Cod Training Program, Week Two
October 9 – 12	Consulting Excellence: Finding Your Developmental Edge
October 15 – 17	Skills for Influential Leadership: An Overview
October 19-21	Cape & Islands Nonprofit Leadership - Session Two
October 21 – 24	Facilitating Leadership Transitions
October 26 – 29	Graduate Leadership Forum
November 7 - 11	Building Effective Professional Relationships
November 13 – 15	Conference: Consulting to Family Businesses
November 16 – 22	Applying the Cape Cod Model in Organizations
December 3 – 6	Writers' Workshop
December 8 - 10	Cape & Islands Nonprofit Leadership - Session Three

2010:

January 26 - 28	Cape & Islands Nonprofit Leadership - Session Four
February 13 - 19	Cape Cod Training Program Europe - Week Two
March 9 - 11	Cape & Islands Nonprofit Leadership - Session Five
March 21 – 26	Leadership in the 21st Century, Week Two
April 27 - 28	Cape & Islands Nonprofit Leadership - Session Six