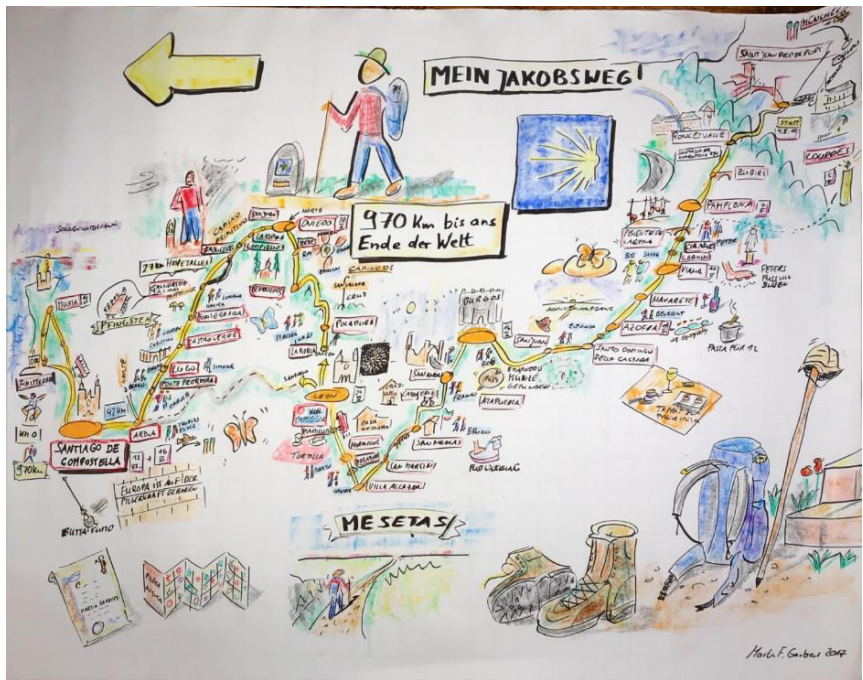




Sketch about my Camino de Santiago from 2017

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INTRODUCTION

On May 4, 2017, I began my Camino with a cleansing bath in the holy waters of Lourdes. The walk started the next day in Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port, the last village in southern France on the Camino Francais. It marked the beginning of a five-week pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela and then on to Finisterre, once thought to be the end of the world.

At first, it seemed like a simple walk — a physical challenge, a pilgrimage along an ancient route that millions had walked before me since the Middle Ages. As the days passed, I realized it was much more than that: a quest to my inner self, reuniting soul and self.

The spiritual pilgrimage begins with the feet and ends where the mind and the soul meet. From here, our conscience penetrates the entire universe.

— found in Hospital del Alma, private museum in Castrojeriz
(see Day #15)

The Camino wasn't just a journey through landscapes; it was a mirror, reflecting the inner transitions we all go through: as

entrepreneurs, as leaders, as human beings searching for something more. I faced exhaustion, uncertainty, and moments of doubt. “You will cry at least once!” an experienced pilgrim had promised me. And I did, multiple times: tears of grief, joy, and bliss. I found clarity, insight, and a deeper understanding of what it truly means to reinvent myself. This book isn’t a typical travel story; it’s a playful combination of insights from my Camino with business coaching principles drawn from my eight years of experience coaching entrepreneurs and leaders, guiding them on their personal growth pilgrimage. It’s about transformation told through the rhythm of the Camino — the struggles, the lessons, the reflections, and the perspective shifts that come when you step away from everything you thought you knew.

The real journey isn’t about reaching a destination. It’s about the experience of who you become by following the signs of the path, at the pace of your natural rhythm.

For most of my life, I followed a predefined, structured path. I studied mechanical engineering, combined it with business administration, and built a career in corporate finance. I started in a European semiconductor company in Munich as a controller, was promoted through the ranks, and later transitioned to an American semiconductor company. There, I led restructurings, managed global business transformations, and handled major operational shifts. Always on duty. At that point, leadership was about performance — achieving results, meeting expectations, and ensuring the business ran efficiently. I was in the corporate world for almost 18 years, and the longer I stayed, the more it felt off.

From the outside, I had everything: a title, travel, financial rewards. But inside, I was quietly breaking. I felt heavy, powerless, and senseless—the early signs of burnout.

Where was I on my life's journey? I felt stuck. My strong discipline and commitment kept me going; giving up wasn't an option in my belief system. This mindset led me to numb and suppress my emotions with more work and extensive business travel. In an attempt to improve my leadership, I joined a men's group focused on family constellations. It was a slow process, but it opened up space for transformation.

Then, one day, destiny made the decision for me. During a pizza dinner with the European executive team, the news broke that a competitor had made an offer to buy the company. While others celebrated, I felt a wave of unexpected relief. This might be my chance, I thought—a chance to walk the Camino de Santiago, to finally listen to the whisper I'd ignored for too long.

I needed patience. It took another year and a half until the M&A integration reached a point where I was made redundant. It was my spiritual wake-up call. I had spent years chasing a version of success defined by status and money, with the constant refrain of "someday I will"—the typical mindset in my environment. That wasn't truly my voice. For the first time, I had to ask myself the difficult question: "What do I really, truly want from life?" Let's walk to find out.

That question led me to the Camino de Santiago. What started as a long walk turned into much more, a chance to reflect, strip away

layers of expectation, and rediscover my true purpose. On the Camino, I saw my career from a new perspective. Leadership wasn't about strategy and execution—it was about self-awareness, clarity, and aligning my actions with my values. An inside-out alignment. I realized how often I had led—or, should I say, managed—based on external expectations and validation, rather than from an internal sense of purpose. I never had the courage to say "No" to many outside requests; my inner pleaser was set to a default "Yes." The Camino became my reset, a space where I could redefine my life and live it on my terms.

Maybe you're holding this book because something inside you is stirring: a quiet dissatisfaction, a longing for clarity, meaning, or a craving for a slower rhythm. Maybe you're not sure what you want yet, but you know it's not this. If that's the case, you're on the right track. Let me invite you to walk with me.

First Mountain - Second Mountain

One of the biggest challenges for leaders facing transition is what in my coaching language I call the “first mountain dilemma.” We spend years climbing, getting the right education, landing the right jobs, and achieving the right milestones, only to reach the top and feel something is missing. The higher we climb, the harder it becomes to step away. The fear of losing status, financial security, and the identity we’ve built keeps many people stuck. It can be a lonely place. Some, like me, are pushed off the first mountain by external circumstances seemingly beyond our control. Others feel the discomfort and stay where they are, afraid to take the leap into the unknown—afraid of losing “it,” whatever ‘it’ means for you.

Real transformation begins when we acknowledge that success isn’t about reaching the summit; it’s about choosing the right mountain to climb. What is the mountain you really want to choose with purpose? The journey to the second mountain is an inside-out creation. It’s a journey of embracing the unknown, the uncomfortable, and the expansive void.

Navigating this kind of transition requires a mindset shift that my coach Chris Joseph refers to as the 5 A’s. First, awareness, recognizing that what once worked may no longer serve us. Then, acceptance, letting go of the need to control every outcome and embracing the uncertainty of change.

Third, aspiration, stepping into an authentic commitment to explore the unknown with curiosity rather than fear. Too often, we cling to what’s familiar, shooting “second arrows” at ourselves,

trying to undo the “first arrow” of what has already changed. Once we start creating from an abundance mindset, real growth happens by taking steps of audacious action.

This book is for those who find themselves at the crossroads or in the valley between the first and second mountains. Whether you’ve been climbing the wrong mountain or have been forced to rethink your path, my hope is that through my journey, you’ll find reassurance that you’re not alone. Transformation isn’t easy, but it’s possible—and often it leads to something far more fulfilling than we ever imagined. You don’t have to navigate it in isolation. I studied the conceptual truths from books, listened to the inspirational experiential truths from fellow pilgrims and teachers, and experienced firsthand the power of transformational truth while walking the path. There’s a path forward, and this book is here to help you find yours. It may even serve you in finding a skillful guide for your second mountain journey.

The Threshold: Intention and Commitment

Before we take the first steps together, I have a few questions—one of which could shape your entire journey.

What brings you here? What is your intention? Are you ready for the shift?

And more importantly, who do you intend to be as you walk this path?

You see, this is not just a book. It is a Camino: your personal transformation pilgrimage. Like any true journey, it begins with a choice. You might want to set this book aside if you are just trying, if you are not willing to commit.

Are you reading as a spectator, observing from a safe distance, perhaps curious, perhaps skeptical? Standing in the ranks, watching a game from afar?

Or are you like a player on the bench, sensing there might be more, but not yet ready to step fully in—playing it safe?

Or are you ready to embrace the infinite game, dust on your shoes, open to the real work and real transformation of walking all the way? I will share more about the “playing to play” concept later.

In pilgrim language:

Are you only watching from afar, like a tourist passing through on a bus tour, hopping off at the Cruz de Ferro to drop a stone, or arriving in Santiago to film the pilgrims?

Are you walking a day here or there, tasting the path but not fully committing, protecting yourself from painful experiences?

Or are you lacing up your boots with intention, ready to walk the full journey with conviction and openness to being changed?

Some readers move through these pages like pilgrims, returning each year and reflecting a few minutes at a time, letting the words settle. Others read it in one long stride, eager to arrive at their version of Santiago.

And some choose to walk with a trusted guide, like my clients who chose a guide and later shared their experiences in interviews included in the second part of this book. Each of them committed to walking through their transformation in business and life. Like you, they faced a turning point and chose support, depth, and truth.

Whatever your pace, whatever your path, choose it consciously.

I invite you to let this book be more than information.

Let it be a mirror. A companion. Let it be your credential, your booklet of collected stamps along the Camino.

This is your moment.

There is no single right way to walk the Camino. Everyone walks their own Camino. This book carries stories of courage, surrender, clarity, and reinvention. It offers not a map, but signs, like the yellow arrows along the Camino, to guide you through your transformation.

One of the leading questions for me:

Are you walking to fast to hear the whispering of your soul?

In the spirit of self reflection, I invite you to pause at the reflection questions, listen to the whisper of your soul and write down what wants to be expressed.

Whether you are walking towards clarity, freedom, purpose, or peace, this is your path to walk.

Walk it at your own pace.

Who Will Find Treasures in This Book?

I invite you to read this book as a source of inspiration, a guide, or a companion on your journey.

- For **Pilgrims** of the Camino de Santiago: Whether you aspire to walk it or are already an experienced pilgrim, you will find reflections from my Camino, along with stories and places that may inspire your path.
- For those in **Transition**, whom I call pathfinders: If you are standing at the edge of change, about to leave behind the old or navigating the uncertainty of what's next, may you find insights in the transformation stories of fellow pilgrims and coaching clients who have walked this path before.
- For **Leaders and Coaches**: You may uncover a treasure chest of coaching tools, mindset shifts, and leadership insights to deepen your personal and professional journey.
- For my **Coaching Clients**: This book may serve as a way to explore coaching concepts in practice or reflect on your transformation and discover the next question to ask.

Whichever resonates with you, may these pages serve as a mirror or a yellow arrow waymarker for your journey of transformation.

Buen Camino!



PREPARATION - THE INNER COMMITMENT

Everything Is Created Twice

Everything is created from intention and commitment. - Before something takes form in the physical world, it is first created in the mind, a seed planted long before it breaks through the surface. As Steve Hardison, the Ultimate Coach, metaphorically puts it: “If you plant pumpkin seeds, you will harvest pumpkins; if you plant acorns, you’ll grow mighty oaks.”

The seed for my Camino de Santiago journey was planted years before I ever set foot on the trail. My first encounter with the Camino came through a book: Paulo Coelho’s *The Pilgrimage*. It sparked my curiosity, and soon, I found myself diving into other stories—Shirley MacLaine’s mystical reflections and Hape Kerkeling’s humorous yet profound *Ich bin dann mal weg*. I also met people who had walked the Camino, like Georg from my men’s group, who has completed four Caminos. Each of them spoke about their experience with a passion and depth that stirred something within me. The idea—the acorn—took root.

When the opportunity finally presented itself, it felt as if a hidden force had been waiting for the moment to emerge. The instant I spoke the words aloud, the Abracadabra energy—I create as I speak—was set in motion. It was as if I had released a genie from its

bottle. There was no turning back. The journey had already begun, long before my feet touched the path.

Still, I had to be patient. The M&A process I was involved in took longer than expected. In the final months of my corporate role, I began preparing, gathering what I needed both physically and mentally for the walk ahead.

Reading about the Camino, I quickly learned how crucial the right footwear would be. Interestingly, it seems to be part of the German collective identity to walk the Camino in sturdy, heavy mountain boots, despite the fact that 99% of the route consists of roads, asphalt, and gravel rather than rugged trails. Local Spaniards and Americans, by contrast, often opt for lightweight trail runners, sneakers, or even sandals. If I could go back and give myself advice, I would recommend the lightweight version. Back then, however, I wasn't ready to challenge my cultural beliefs—or what Vishen Lakhiani calls the *brules*, the bull-shit rules. I bought hiking boots.

Looking back, the most unreasonable, though ultimately valuable, choice was bringing a beautiful paper journal—a heavy 600g, or 5% of my total 12kg load. Today, whenever I read my notes of reflection, I am grateful I took the time to write them, because they bring back memories I can now share with you.

Lourdes – Washing in Holy Water

My journey began in Lourdes. From Munich, I flew to Toulouse and then took a train to this sacred town, drawn by the tradition of cleansing oneself in holy water before embarking on a pilgrimage. I had read that such a ritual helps wash away the past, offering a fresh beginning for the journey ahead. I spent a night in Lourdes, immersing myself in its atmosphere, taking the sacred bath in the holy water, meditating in the presence of Mary of Lourdes, and offering a prayer for a safe and meaningful pilgrimage. I was blessed, and a deep sense of gratitude overcame me as I sat there in silence.

could have started walking from Lourdes, as one of the Camino routes passes through the town. However, my plan was set: I would begin my journey in Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port, the traditional starting point of the Camino Francés.

Arriving in Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port in the early afternoon, I chose one of the private hostels. My first stop was the tourist office, where I registered for the pilgrimage statistics and received my credential, the pilgrim's passport. This small document would not only grant me access to inexpensive municipal hostels but would also serve as proof of my pilgrimage to receive the Compostela certificate at the end.

One of the first mindset shifts as a pilgrim is learning to look for the yellow arrows and scallop shells that mark the way, small and reassuring signs confirming you are on the right path. Another peculiar aspect of the pilgrimage is collecting stamps. Every church, hostel, bar, and key stopping point along the way offers a unique

stamp for your credential, creating a physical record of the places you have passed. It's an ancient form of gamification, a treasure hunt where each stamp becomes a small milestone in the greater journey.

To fully step into my new identity as a pilgrim, I added two essential items to my gear. First, I attached a scallop shell to my backpack, the unmistakable symbol of the pilgrim on the Way of Saint James to Santiago de Compostela. Historically, the scallop was collected at the beach of Finisterre at the journey's end as proof of completion and was carried home. Today, it has become the symbol of Camino pilgrims.

Second, I picked up something I felt was missing: a long wooden walking stick from a souvenir shop. It soon became an extension of myself, a steady companion through the journey. I realized how attached I had become when, one day, I left it behind at a drinking fountain. Without hesitation, I turned back and walked twenty minutes to retrieve it. Some things, once they become part of your journey, are simply too valuable to leave behind.



CHAPTER I

EXIT - LEAVING CHRONOS, ENTERING KAIROS

"When you find your path, others will find you.

Once they are on their path, they will be drawn to your door.

*The path that cannot be heard will resonate in your voice,
and the path that cannot be seen will be reflected in your
eyes."*

from Hospital del Alma, Castrojeriz

The First Steps

Day #1 Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port - Roncesvalles - 27 km

On the morning of May 5, 2017, I dressed in my hiking clothes, had a light breakfast, and stepped out into the cool morning air. As I crossed the bridge in Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port, a surge of excitement ran through me. After all the planning and anticipation, I was finally on my way.

The first day on the Camino Francés is known as one of the more physically demanding: a 27-kilometer ascent over the Pyrenees to Roncesvalles in Spain. It's a long climb that demands patience,

endurance, and a steady pace. Leadership is often like this climb—carrying a burden, walking into uncertainty, and trusting the signs even when they are small or faint.

For the first four hours, the road wound upward, a steady climb along country paths and open hillsides. The weight of my backpack pressed into my shoulders, a constant reminder that this was no ordinary walk.

Despite gusts of wind and passing showers, I enjoyed the journey. I watched the endless trail of pilgrims ahead and behind me, each following the same signs, each walking their own Camino.

I connected with the first pilgrims I met: Daniel from Argentina and Imogen from New Zealand. We shared our hopes and intentions for the path. I would meet them again later (see Day #43). On the Camino, you never know when paths will cross again.

As the day went on, I adjusted my rhythm, searching for a pace that felt natural rather than dictated by time. Letting go of the clock and shifting into the rhythm of walking was the first real challenge. It marked the beginning of a shift: from measuring life in minutes and deadlines to experiencing time as distance and movement.

Then, as if to mark the moment, I found my first treasures on the descent to the monastery in Roncesvalles: two coins lying on the path, €2 and 20 cents. There would be more to come.

A Different Sense of Time

It's often said that the first ten days of the Camino are about the body adjusting—learning to walk eight to ten hours a day, feeling the ache of unfamiliar endurance, and slowly forming a new relationship with time.

There is a slowing down, not only in movement but also in thought. As my feet found their natural rhythm, so did my mind.

Time no longer moved in fragmented blocks of meetings, emails, and appointments. It flowed continuously. The hours were measured by landscapes, by the distance between villages, by the shifting sun in the sky, and by encounters with total strangers. You either surpassed them, or they surpassed you. Sometimes you exchanged a greeting, “Buen Camino!”, a few words, or simply a silent nod.

In the early afternoon, after a long stretch across the Pyrenees, I finally glimpsed the roof of the monastery in Roncesvalles. The trail had taken me through a forest above the monastery, quiet and green. Along the way, I passed a wooden cross tucked beside the path, simple and weathered, marked with a name and a date: a pilgrim who had passed away at age 66. I inquired later and learned that many pilgrims die of heart attacks during their first days on the Camino, their bodies unprepared for the intensity of the journey.

It struck me deeply—a sobering reminder that this pilgrimage is not only about distance walked or destinations reached. It is also a path where life and death walk side by side.

In the weeks to come, I would pass more such memorials. The Camino holds space for both beginnings and endings.

When I arrived at the monastery, I found it built more like a fortress. I stood in line with fifty other pilgrims, in the order we had arrived, an unspoken rule that felt both fair and ancient. Beds were plentiful but still limited. One section was reserved, and the free beds were assigned on a first-come basis. Once the capacity of 186 was reached, the doors would close. Latecomers would either have to pay for a hotel or continue walking to the next village.

That evening, I was lucky. I received a bed in the newly renovated, spacious attic room, 72 beds in total. Mine was right next to Daniel from Argentina. We exchanged smiles; no words were needed.

Even washing our clothes was taken care of. A group of French volunteers had set up a laundry service for pilgrims. This small act of care and kindness made us feel truly welcome.

Before dinner, I joined the evening mass in the chapel. It was a traditional Catholic service, the kind performed for centuries. I felt moved by the ritual and the diversity of the group coming together, until the priest made an announcement before communion. He reminded the congregation that the sacrament was reserved only for faithful Roman Catholics—not for the divorced, not for people in same-sex relationships, and not for non-Catholic Christians.

I sensed a slight shift in sentiment.

A few people quietly stood up and left. Their absence felt like a silent protest. I noticed that less than a third of those present stepped forward to receive communion.

At that moment, I was reminded of a family constellation session I had attended with my men's group. A Catholic priest in the group had chosen to marry and wanted his vow removed. In the constellation, the institution stood firm, merciless, unrevocable. When Jesus was introduced into the constellation, it became clear what the real question was: "What would Jesus do?" Reject, or embrace with loving forgiveness? Love always wins.

It was a striking contrast. The Camino is one of the three great Christian pilgrimages, alongside Rome and Jerusalem, historically a path to absolution—a fundraising opportunity, big business in medieval times. Today's pilgrims often walk for other motives: for healing, for clarity, for adventure, or simply to rediscover themselves or find a deeper truth within.

Technically, only the last hundred kilometers are required to receive the Compostela, the official certificate of completion. Nearly everyone in Roncesvalles seemed determined to walk all the way to Santiago.

That first day, despite the exhaustion and the raw emotions, left me with a quiet inner certainty: **Everything is going to be alright.**

Even when a thunderstorm wakes you in the middle of the night.

I thought, better inside than outside.

Four Levels of Freedom on the Camino

Day #2 Roncesvalles – Zubiri, 22km

After a light breakfast, I joined the pilgrims' procession leaving the monastery. Outside the village, I passed a road sign:



Santiago de Compostela 790 km.

A long way to go.

Over the next few days, I began to notice something fascinating about my fellow pilgrims. Walking alongside people from all walks of life, one truth became clear: there is a freedom on the Camino rarely found in everyday life.

The usual external markers that define us—status, wealth, obligations—begin to dissolve, revealing something deeper.

In my coaching practice, I often refer to the Four Levels of Freedom, a concept shared by *Dan Sullivan* in *10X Is Easier Than 2X*. On the Camino, I witnessed these four freedoms—time, money, relationships, and purpose—come to life more vividly than ever before.

Freedom of time – Leaving Chronos, embracing Kairos

“Time is slow for those who wait, fast for those who are afraid, long for those who mourn, and short for those who celebrate. But for those who love, time is everlasting.”

– Henry Van Dyke

My journey began with a shift: from Chronos to Kairos. This wasn't just a new mindset; it was a complete redefinition of how I related to time, work, and success.

In my corporate life, I was a slave to Chronos—Newtonian time, the ticking clock, the back-to-back meetings, and the relentless pressure to produce. I wore it like a badge: “Work hard, play hard.” Beneath the surface, it was leading me to exhaustion.

In the constant hustle, accelerating Chronos time, I had lost touch with my creativity. I was moving fast, but I wasn't going anywhere deeper. The subtle whispers of Kairos—aligned timing—were drowned out by the noise of urgency.

Kairos isn't about clocks. It's more like how Einstein would define it: time relative to space. It's about presence, flow, and intuitive readiness. It invites stillness, sensing, and trust. At first, I didn't believe it. Could a “right moment” really be more powerful than hustle?

It took mentors and the Camino to teach me.

As I walked, I gave myself permission to slow down. To rest. To let ideas breathe. I began feeling the difference in my body and mind. I was no longer racing time; I was walking with it.

Slowing down felt awkward at first, like laziness. But something beautiful emerged. I became more creative, intuitive, and alive. I started noticing things, like butterflies I would have missed before. My corporate life had felt like an endless to-do list, with the frantic “do! Do! Do! Do!” sounding like the busy signal of old analog phones. It was time to put down the receiver, listening Instead for the free signal—Beeee!—the beep of inner readiness.

Over time, my rhythm changed to “Do-be-do-be-doo.” I picture dancing and singing, like Baloo in *The Jungle Book*.

In some churches, Kairos is symbolized by a figure with a lock of hair on his forehead and a bald head behind. You have to grasp the moment as it approaches; once it passes, it's gone. That metaphor lives in me now. I invite myself to listen for the “yes” that comes from presence. From this place, I've become a more present coach, partner, and human being.

We live in a hustle-addicted culture. Once we leave Chronos and enter Kairos, life softens. We don't squeeze time; we expand it.

Camino Reflection on Chronos versus Kairos

Chronos	Kairos
rigid schedule, time-boxed	intuitive rhythm
calendar-driven, back-to-back	energy-driven
output-focused, squeezing time	alignment-focused
doing more → burnout risk	being more → flow potential

Reflection Questions:

Allow me to challenge your beliefs about the freedom of time:

If no one judged how you spent your time, how would your day look different?

What would happen if you scheduled time for nothing and honored it like your most valuable client?

Freedom of Money - An Expression of Energy

One of the first freedoms I experienced was financial.

In ordinary life, money creates distance, status, privilege, and access. But on the Camino, everyone walks the same path. The simplicity of walking, eating, and sleeping strips away those layers.

While in my normal life, I would be surrounded by people in a similar socio-economic setting, on the Camino, I met people from all walks of life. Here's a short sample: from very wealthy to penniless.

I met Bob, a wealthy sixty-year-old serial entrepreneur from Texas. Oscar, a South African businessman with hundreds of employees, alternated between humble hostels and five-star hotels. Blake, a nomad who took unschooled children on adventures, never stayed in one place longer than six months and worked six weeks every season. Teo, a penniless French pilgrim, walked with his dog, Princess, relying on the kindness of others.

The Camino acted as an equalizer.

You are not your balance sheet. You are a pilgrim, one step at a time.

The idea of financial freedom isn't about having more; it's about shifting your relationship with money from survival to sovereignty. When money is no longer a constraint, it becomes a creative force. It funds your vision, protects your peace, and allows you to say no to what no longer serves you.

Many people have a fearful relationship with money, driven by scarcity, judgment, or a sense of not being enough. Financial freedom begins when you realize that money is not your identity — it's your amplifier. It magnifies the energy you bring into the world.

Reflection Questions:

Allow me to challenge your beliefs about the freedom of money:

If money were no longer an issue, what would you stop doing tomorrow?

What beliefs about money did you “inherit,” and which ones are ready for a software upgrade?

What would it mean to treat your financial life as an expression of your energy, not your worth?

Freedom of Relationship - Who Walks With You

The Camino gave me hours, actually days, to reflect on the relationships in my life: those I carried with me, those I had lost, and those I was walking toward. Every day, I chose who I might share a section of the way with.

Most of us grow up learning we must manage relationships: “Be a good girl/boy,” a loyal friend, a dependable colleague. Often, these are built around conditional love, with the potential to fall into the “being good enough” trap. We unconsciously inherit dynamics, roles, and obligations—many of which go unquestioned for decades, even generations. Family constellation work was a great eye-opener for me in this regard.

What if the true path to freedom begins when we ask: Who do I choose to walk with now?

Freedom of relationship is the ability to choose and curate your inner circle with radical honesty, integrity, and intention. It means letting go of default loyalty and embracing intentional connection.

In the spirit of: I don’t owe everyone access to my time, my energy, or my growth. It’s okay to say no.

This might trigger a deeper fear of abandonment. But what if it opens the opportunity for new connections on different levels?

Consequently, it reshaped how I built my business.

What if we saw each person in our business life as part of our Camino, a companion on the path? Would I choose them again if I were starting fresh?

With this freedom comes radical responsibility: to align with people who lift my energy, reflect my values, and challenge me to grow.

As a consequence, it gives me the opportunity to stop proving, pleasing, or performing—and to start co-creating with resonance.

It means acknowledging where certain bonds may no longer serve my next chapter. This can be tender, especially with family or lifelong friends. Freedom doesn't always mean cutting ties; it often means renegotiating the terms with more honesty, more presence, and more self-respect.

The Camino provided countless opportunities to choose who I wanted to spend my time with:

Me, myself in solitude, in one-on-one conversations with you, or in the collective us of an extended pilgrim family.

Reflection Questions:

Allow me to challenge your beliefs around freedom of relationship:

Which relationships are contracts from your past that no longer fit your future, draining your energy rather than uplifting you?

Where are you tolerating misalignment because it feels easier than walking away?

Freedom of Purpose – Remember Why

The Camino reveals purpose: sometimes visible, sometimes hidden, always deeply personal.

Some people walk to find their purpose, as if it's something to chase. But what if it's something to remember?

On the Camino, you'll often meet fellow pilgrims who begin their journey for practical reasons: adventure, healing, a breakup, or a deeper quest. A few days into the walk, something deeper begins to surface. The rhythm of your feet on the path, the silence between conversations, the long horizon ahead—everything starts to strip away the layers.

Suddenly, I found myself asking questions I hadn't dared to face:

Why am I really here?

What do I truly want?

Is the life I'm living aligned with the life I was meant for?

In *The Café at the Edge of the World*, John Strelecky invites us into a fable-like space where a weary traveler stumbles into a café with three questions printed on the menu:

Why are you here?

Do you fear death?

Are you fulfilled?

These questions, simple yet profound, mirror the kind of soul-searching that naturally arises on a pilgrimage or during moments of stillness far from the noise of daily life. They are not questions to answer quickly; they are questions to live into—or better yet, to walk into.

For me, this journey wasn't about a career change. It wasn't a breakdown. It was a breakthrough: a quiet, persistent call toward something more real, more aligned, more whole. The path I had walked had brought success—and exhaustion. Behind the polished surface of achievement was a deeper longing: to rediscover who I was beyond the roles. To build a life that felt sacred again.

I now see this as my crossing toward the second mountain: a more spiritual chapter, defined less by performance and more by presence. Coaching became the vessel. The Camino became the metaphor. And the purpose? To walk with others as they listen for their calling.

Freedom of purpose means no longer building life around performance, obligation, or what looks good on paper. It's the shift from asking, "What should I do?" to listening for, "What wants to come through me?" It's about letting go of the need to fit and committing to what feels deeply, undeniably right, even if it doesn't make sense to others.

Purpose is not a destination; it's a compass. And this freedom—perhaps the deepest of all—asks us to listen, slow down, and walk with intention.

My diary holds every twist and turn: the doubts, the insights, the laughter, the tears.

I didn't find the answer. But I found many reminders that I am on a journey of discovery and experience:

"I trust life to unfold perfectly every moment, especially now."

These four freedoms aren't just for pilgrims; they're for anyone ready to walk into a new way of living.

Soul Reflection – Three Questions to Walk Into:

What part of you has been whispering for years, "There's more than this"?

What's the cost of not living in alignment? Who else pays that price?

If your life were a message to the world, what would it say right now? And is that the message you truly want to send?

Stepping into Courage – Reflections about the Arena

Day #3 Zubiri - Pamplona, 21km

Not every day on the Camino brings a physical challenge; sometimes they offer archetypal insights.

After three days of walking, mostly alongside the gentle rhythm of the river, I arrived in Pamplona on a quiet Sunday afternoon. I had planned a rest day here: space to breathe, to journal, to let my body soften after the first stretch. A massage. A slow stroll through old stone streets.

Pamplona wears its history proudly. Its balconies and cobbled alleys echo with stories. At its heart stands the arena, once the site of Roman spectacles and now world-famous for bullfights and the running of the bulls during San Fermín.

Even outside the festival season, the city vibrates with a charged anticipation. Posters and paintings on the walls depict men in white, red sashes tied at their waists, adrenaline flooding the narrow streets. The pulse of it lingers in the stone.

I walked from the gates, where the bulls enter the city, all the way to the arena.

The bullfight itself feels like a relic—outdated, brutal, hard to justify in today's world. Killing an animal solely for the entertainment of a crowd.

The bull run, however, transmits something else. It touched something archetypal.

Something raw. Something masculine. Not in its domination, but in its initiation.

To run with the bulls is not a performance; it's a rite of presence. You don't outrun fear. You meet it. There's no script. No safety net. People get hurt. It's about the courage to stand inside your life, alert and awake.

It reminded me of what's often missing in modern leadership: the kind of embodied courage that doesn't need to conquer but chooses to face the unknown fully.

No bravado. No armor. Only presence, clarity, and instinct.

In that way, the bull run becomes a powerful metaphor—not for recklessness, but for those sacred moments when we choose to show up with our whole selves.

When we say, from the heart, from courage:

I'm here.

I feel the fear. And I step in anyway.

That, too, is the Camino: a series of initiations.

Not to impress anyone, but to return to yourself with honesty and trust.

Your Arena of Courage

This image of the arena stayed with me and eventually became a coaching tool—not as a place of spectacle or judgment, but as a sacred container of impact and true purpose. Most people are not afraid of being small; they are afraid of stepping into their full power. I use the metaphor of Filling Your Arena as an invitation to step into visibility, into service, and into the quiet courage of being fully seen. If you are ready to experience the power of the arena yourself, I invite you to a visioning exercise, as if you were sitting in the chair in front of me. Let's make this real!

Filling-Your-Arena - a legacy exercise

Close your eyes or soften your gaze, and take a deep breath. Let your body settle. Allow your mind to quiet just enough to listen from your heart.

Now, imagine this:

You are twenty or thirty years into the future. You're not in the audience; you're on stage, center stage, seated on a simple chair. The lights are gentle, golden. The air carries a quiet reverence. This is not a performance. It is a witnessing. You look out and see the theater is full.

In the front rows, you recognize the faces of those whose lives you've touched. One by one, their eyes meet yours—clients, students, colleagues, patients, coachees. People you supported not through force, but through presence, insight, kindness, and truth.

They are here because you had the courage to face your fears. To walk through the anxiety of being visible. To shift from hiding to being fully seen. To offer your gifts—not perfectly, but powerfully.

Now the vision expands. Each person in the front row was changed by you, and they brought someone else. A father who became more present invited his son. A leader invited her team. A couple who reconnected invited their children. A burned-out executive who became a coach invited their clients. A teacher invited her students. A healer invited her community.

And so the rows fill. The balconies fill. The arena grows. What was once a small theater now opens into a great stadium of light.

These are the ripple effects of your work—the lives touched because you dared to speak, serve, and show up. Because you stepped forward when you could have stayed in the shadows.

And now, I invite you to receive. No words. No action. Simply receive.

Let the waves of gratitude move toward you. Let the silent applause rise—not as noise, but as a pulse of truth. Feel the energy in your chest, your hands, your breath. Let it in.

You are not being celebrated for being perfect. You are being honored for being real. For saying yes when it mattered. For showing up with an open heart.

“It is in giving that we receive.” (Saint Francis of Assisi)

This is a moment of stillness. A moment of embodiment. A moment of legacy.

Let yourself feel it fully. Sit in it. Let your soul breathe. Hold the silence.

This is what it means to fill your arena.

You can listen to this practice on my website.

If you would like to witness this vision come to life, turn to the second part of the book, where Manfred Huber shares his transformation story—one ripple among many.

Reflection Questions:

Allow yourself to pause and reflect on:

What kind of arena are you filling?

Who will be in your front row?

Beyond them, who else might be standing in the higher ranks,
touched by the ripples you've created?

Restday Reflections Pamplona, from my diary

"Focus on the path and you will find a treasure."

"Be patient and Kairos will provide an opportunity!"

"Trust the way; it will provide."

"There are butterflies everywhere!"

"Slow down to the speed of love; it will let you go further!"

"You never know if you will meet again on the Camino."

"Enjoy the breaks!"

"Business opportunities are everywhere; just serve!"

"Trust life. Everything unfolds perfectly in every moment, especially now."



CHAPTER 2

EMBRACING THE UNKNOWN

Walking with a Mirror

Day #5 Pamplona - Cirauqui - 27km

What happens when we stop walking alone and allow someone to hold up the mirror?

In Pamplona, on my day of rest, I walked to the bus station to meet my good friend Peter. When I first shared my plans to walk the Camino, he had been one of the first—and the only one—to say, “If you’re open to walking a few days together, I’d love to join you.” True to his word, he booked his flight and bus, and we met in Pamplona, ready to walk together for a week toward Burgos.

The next morning, we set off, enjoying each other’s company. We had been friends since university, even roommates, and shared a long history. Peter didn’t just join me for a few days on the Camino; he held up a mirror I hadn’t dared to face.

On that stretch between Pamplona and Burgos, something subtle and profound happened. Peter noticed it before I did. Where I once charged ahead with energy and plans, I was now stopping to admire

a flower by the path, noticing the light shifting through the trees. My radar was wide open. I was walking slower—not just with my feet, but with my spirit.

Peter later told me, “You weren’t in your usual mode. It was like you were practicing mindfulness as a survival strategy. Like something had cracked open.”

And he was right. I had come to the Camino after years of high-functioning, high-speed corporate leadership. Somewhere along the way, especially in those last years as a controller, I had stopped listening. I was so used to saying yes, to powering through, to trusting that I could handle anything, that I ignored the signs of exhaustion.

Peter was the one who dared to say it aloud: “Martin, I saw you at rock bottom. I was worried. You weren’t even listening anymore. You were just... gone.”

Hearing that was hard, but it was the truth. My optimism had become a mask. My ability to “handle it all” had become my saboteur. Looking into this mirror was painful.

What if someone held the mirror up to you?

It was the space where I allowed myself to feel again. To let old identities fall apart. To admit that the controller in me had tried to protect me—and had locked me in. Peter challenged me several times: “Why did you choose to become a controller?”

Letting Go of the controller

The Camino humbled me. I had arrived with a plan, a route, a guidebook, and three apps. I wanted certainty. The trail had other ideas. Hostels filled up. Sleep evaded me. My body ached. The more I tried to control the experience, the less joy I found in it.

Slowly, I began to enjoy the experiment. I stopped booking a bed, trusting the path, and walking into the unknown. At first, this brought anxiety. Then, unexpectedly, it brought peace.

Control had been my strategy for safety, but it also kept me from truly being present.

Each day, waking before sunrise and walking west, I'd watch my shadow stretch long in front of me. Step by step, I was—quite literally—chasing it. I came to realize that the Camino wasn't just a trail through Spain. It was a path inward. Every step invited me to confront what I had long avoided: the shadows I had pushed aside in my race to succeed.

Letting go of control didn't mean losing structure. It meant loosening the grip, trusting more, listening more, and walking not to achieve—but to arrive.

What if real transformation isn't about changing who we are, but softening the grip of who we thought we had to be?

Entrepreneurs at the Speed of Trust

Day #6 Cirauqui - Luquin - 24km

One of Peter's and my favorite topics has always been business ideas. Naturally, as we walked the Camino together, conversations turned to entrepreneurship. The Camino itself offered living examples: simple, human-scale ventures that revealed something deeper about how trust and service can shape a business.

I remember a small town where a teenage girl had set up a lemonade stand in front of her family's home. Homemade lemonade, offered on a donation basis. No pressure. Pure presence. You see this often on the Camino: pilgrims pausing at humble setups, a thermos of coffee from the back of a car, a basket of fruit in a box alongside the path, a food truck with a few snacks, or a fridge beside a handwritten sign that says "Donativo."

These weren't ambitious startups chasing scale or clicks. These were acts of quiet service, born from trust. No pitch. No urgency. Pure knowing: if I show up with sincerity, the right people will arrive.

And they did. Hundreds of pilgrims pass each day. Right when the body aches or the spirit needs a lift, there it is: a rest point, a refreshment, a smile. No storefront. Just a soul behind a table.

It reminded me of what I've come to embrace in my coaching practice. The best growth doesn't come from forcing; it comes from serving with integrity, again and again, until trust compounds. It takes patience and service to build a business this way. All the

successful coaches I met along my journey focused on building their business through referrals, through a simple phrase: “You might want to talk to Martin.”

Clients don't push. They share, like pilgrims swapping notes on the best hostels, cafés, or secret spiritual spots. I do the same. When I know someone else is better suited for a client's specific need—be it therapeutic, financial, or legal—I offer a warm, committed introduction. No ego. No commission. Pure aligned service.

I recall one client who had recently exited a C-level role with a substantial payout, ready to hand nearly half of it over to the tax office, unaware there might be another way. Years ago, I had stood at the same threshold, not knowing. Over time, I built a network of trusted advisors. With one well-placed introduction, that client converted a liability into a long-term asset, building a six-figure portfolio from what would have been lost.

That's not only smart finance. That's Kairos, the opportune moment. As with the Camino's quiet entrepreneurs, the best work happens not when we chase but when we attune. When we walk not at the speed of Chronos, cramming the calendar, but at the speed of Trust and Kairos.

The Role of Vulnerability

Day #7 Luquin - Viana - 22km

Interestingly, the Camino has a way of determining how long a journey lasts. On the third day, Peter developed blisters so severe that he had to discontinue his walk. What was meant to be a week together was shortened to three days. And yet, those days remain some of the most special shared experiences in our friendship. To this day, we look back on those few intense days on the Camino as a time of reconnection, laughter, and deepened understanding—proof that even a short pilgrimage can leave a lasting imprint. I invite you to explore further in the interview I conducted with him in the appendix. True friendship is determined by the courage to speak the inconvenient truth and the willingness to hold it.

I was learning to give up control—not only of the destination, but also of the experience itself. This didn't mean abandoning responsibility or failing to plan; it meant allowing myself to step into the unknown with an open heart, trusting that the universe had its rhythm, and I was simply a part of that flow.

The act of surrendering control was uncomfortable. It required a vulnerability I wasn't used to showing. For much of my life, I had been driven by the need to perform, to achieve, to get things done, to have control over every situation. Now, I was faced with the truth: my desperate need for control had created blind spots. I had closed myself off from the possibility of truly connecting with the world around me.

Vulnerability plays a crucial role in this process. What I call a blind spot or vulnerability is an area of myself I haven't yet accepted. By sharing these aspects openly with other pilgrims or people in general, I become more approachable. People can relate to me better. There's an empathy that naturally emerges, as we are social beings. When someone is vulnerable and shares their challenges, we instinctively form stronger connections.

What struck me on the Camino was that most people undertake this journey with an inner calling—a question, a personal quest, the reason why they are walking. Many had lost a partner, experienced separation, or faced illness. Often, a deep life-changing event had caused them to be vulnerable or to lose something they held dear. In my case, I had lost my job, my main source of income. This shared vulnerability opened up conversations along the way, with everyone speaking from their place of hurt or loss with compassion and acceptance.

This represented a significant shift for me, as I connected and engaged on a human-to-human level. There were no titles, no positions—those things dropped away. You truly see the other person and become fully present. Sometimes, by simply listening with presence—which is my key leverage as a coach—the other person can express what they really want to share. When we create calm and silence, people can feel what they want to share. In that silence, they can dive even deeper into the emotions they want to feel. Being free of judgment helps to be aware and accept destiny.

This was the beautiful experience of the Camino—meeting so many people willing to share from an emotional state. In our “normal world,” everyone claims to be “fine” or “good,” holding up the facade of perfection. Not everyone is truly doing well, and few are willing to share at the level of vulnerability what they’re really feeling or what they’re not allowing themselves to feel.

It's All About Energy- Daily Momentum Coaching Tool

Day #8 Viana - Navarrete - 22km

Walking the Camino taught me one essential truth: it's all about energy.

Each day on the trail invites you to reconnect with your inner battery. You quickly realize what lifts you—and what drains you. The weight of your backpack, the weather, the quality of your sleep, the silence or conversation around you, and the emotions you carry—resentment, joy, trust—everything affects your energy.

When your energy leaks, even a small hurdle feels like a struggle.

When your energy flows, you walk with joy, presence, and clarity. You feel a strong sense of direction.

This isn't just true on the Camino; it applies to leadership, business, and life.

Let me share three energy coaching tools to help you build momentum in your daily energy:

- What if you consistently implemented just one of them?
- Where in your life are you leaking energy—emotionally, relationally, or spiritually?

The Energy Audit: A Mirror for Your Life

In a coaching session, when a client feels stuck, tired, or unclear, we don't jump into strategy immediately. Instead, we focus on the essential: energy awareness.

The Energy Audit, a concept I learned from Rich Litvin, is a deceptively simple tool. You take a sheet of paper and draw a line down the middle:

On the left: Energy Drains On the right: Energy Gains

I ask my client to list people, projects, places, practices, and responsibilities. What depletes you? What nourishes you?

It only takes a few minutes, and the fog begins to lift. Clients suddenly realize what's been draining them—and what's quietly giving them life.

The Leader's Camino: From Exit to Expansion

Here's a sample for you to explore: Fill in your own examples

Energy Drain	Energy Gain
Clients I dread	Walks in nature
"Should-do" tasks	Creative play

Ask yourself: Which one thing could I change or do differently today or this week?

Coaching Math creates 1% Energy shift

Start with your energy. Take a sheet of paper and draw four quadrants:

Top/Nominator: Start (+) and Multiply (x)

Bottom/Denominator: Stop (--) and Divide (÷)

START + (Addition)	MULTIPLY X – More of...
Walking 1-on-1 meetings	Coaching 1-on-1 with my coach
ME-Time blocks	Time with ideal clients
STOP – (Subtraction)	REDUCE ÷ – Less of...
Saying yes only to please	Solving other people's problems
Projects that no longer excite me	Screen time after dinner

Clients identify 2-3 items for each quadrant. Within ten minutes, they have a tangible set of actions. Even if only one item is implemented over the next 30 days, energy improves—by 1% or more. And that 1% matters. It compounds. It builds momentum. It shifts identity.

The real goal is to reduce time spent on low-energy or low-value tasks and intentionally mix in activities that bring energy, joy, creativity, and flow.

Even one shift here—done consistently—creates momentum. +1% energy.

Bonus: Revisit this every 30 days and watch how your life recalibrates.

Energy is not about time—it's about alignment. When you shift your energy, you shift your reality.

The Energy Scan: A Leadership Dashboard

The Quick Energy Scan is designed for leaders and entrepreneurs, inspired by Stefan Merath's book "Dein Wille geschehe!".

We assess three simple metrics on a scale of 1 to 10:

METRIC	QUESTION	SCORE (1–10)
Energy	How alive and vital is the energy in your team or company right now? (Sense your energy)	1–10
Alignment	How aligned is everyone in creating value for your clients? (Ask your clients)	1–10
Growth	What is the current growth trajectory (individually, for your team, or company-wide)?	-10 to 10



How to Use:

Use this scan before coaching sessions, team offsites, or making big decisions.

Ask your team for their input as well. Use the Net Promoter Score for customer alignment and compare perspectives.

Focus on the lowest score. This serves as your point of focus.

This tool acts as a dashboard. If any number is off, you know where to direct the conversation. Any real solution in coaching will likely shift one or more of these scores.

Creating Space for Growth

Day #9 Navarete - Azfora - 20km

In reflection, walking from Navarete to Azfora was a typical day—if there is such a thing. It was the ideal, average pilgrim's day. On the Camino, the rhythm of walking, resting, and reflecting revealed something profound: true growth requires space. What started as a rhythm on the Camino transformed into a life rhythm as a coach.

My Ideal Average Day as a Pilgrim

Each day on the Camino followed a rhythm that was both simple and sacred. I would wake early—around 5:30 to 6:00 AM—gathering my things quietly in the dark and stepping onto the trail before sunrise. The first hour felt like pure magic: a silent walking meditation beneath the first light of day.

Around mid-morning, I'd stop for a strong espresso, a bocadillo, or fresh orange juice before continuing the walk—often alone or in meaningful conversation. Lunch offered a pause, a connection. The final stretch brought arrival, rest, and reflection.

Evenings were communal and joyful, filled with shared meals, laughter, and stories. By 10 PM, I'd crawl into my sleeping bag, earplugs in, drifting off into recovery and vivid dreams.

It was a deeply fulfilling rhythm: movement, reflection, nourishment, presence. No clock. No pressure. Just the next step.

I wondered: How could I build such a rhythm into my coaching work?

My Ideal Average Week as a Coach

I came across the concept of an "Ideal-Average-Day" in Rich Litvin's Intensive and expanded it—not into a perfect day, but into a balanced week. Like the Camino, it's not about control. It's about rhythm.

Back home, I carry that rhythm into my calendar. My ideal Wednesdays are mostly green—my color code for energy replenishment. These are my non-negotiables: a forest walk, a sauna session with a colleague, a massage, or a coaching session where I receive coaching myself. These are not luxuries; they are the source of everything I give.

As *Devon Bandison* said in *Gamechanger*: "Give from the overflow." When I fill my cup with rest, beauty, presence, and nourishment, what overflows is what I offer to others.

Inspired by nature's cycles, my coaching week flows with intention across five core energy zones, each with its color in my calendar:

Green – Replenish: Rest, receive, recharge. Walk, sauna, coaching for me.

Blue – Deliver: Deep, transformational client work. Paid sessions, fully present.

Red – Explore&Create: Unpaid exploratory sessions with potential clients.

Yellow – Connect: Nourish relationships. Write messages. Catch up with past clients.

Orange – Create: Build new offers. Develop tools. Write. Follow what's alive.

As in a pilgrimage week, the foundation is green. Energy first. Then everything else flows.

Giving From a Full Cup

As I write this, I know tomorrow is fully protected: a green day. Sauna with a colleague. Later this week, I will receive a constellation session. Three replenishing moments in one week. That's not indulgence; that's by design, by strategy.

This rhythm allows me to serve with clarity, coach with depth, and create from joy. It's the same rhythm I encourage my clients to build, especially entrepreneurs conditioned to fill every slot with productivity.

I challenge them:

"Block two-hour ME-Time slots."

"Protect them like your most important meeting."

"Track them as a business KPI."

My inner CFOs even run the numbers. Take your annual revenue, divide it by the number of creative hours you have gifted yourself, and suddenly that becomes the birthplace of your next move. The €10,000 walk in the woods isn't about ROI; it's about alignment, insight, and truth. Growth doesn't come from squeezing more in. It comes from stepping out — from reflection, regeneration, and resonance.

Reflective Questions:

Let me invite you to slow down, open your calendar, and ask yourself:

If your current calendar is a mirror, what does it reveal about what you truly value? What is missing?

Who or what are you always available for, and what would shift if you became equally available to your soul?

If you created one protected slot of creative space, what would you focus on? Why haven't you made it sacred yet?

Miracle Morning – My Morning ME-Time

Day #10 Azofra - Santo Domingo de la Calzada - Redecilla del Camino 25km

I woke early, before the first light, and stepped into the cool stillness of the plains. Everything was silent, the world not yet awake. As I walked, the horizon began to glow, the first blush of rose-gold light bathing the landscape behind me. My shadow stretched ahead, long and soft.

No rush. No goal. Focus on breath. Focus on rhythm. Focus on presence.

I found myself humming, lighthearted and spontaneous, carried by a joy that asked for nothing. Even as I passed through a ghost town, a relic of a broken real estate bubble, the emptiness didn't feel desolate. It felt wide open. Like a chapel without walls. A sensation of universal awareness.

By the time I reached Santo Domingo de la Calzada, the day had already gifted me a small miracle. My body was alive, my mind quiet, and my soul... spacious. Across from the cathedral, I sat for an espresso and a bocadillo, the sunlight warming my shoulders.

That cathedral is home to one of the Camino's strangest and most beloved miracle stories—a German pilgrim in the 14th century falsely accused, the cooked chickens that stood up and crowed. A tale of innocence, justice, and improbable grace.

And maybe that's the point:

The Leader's Camino: From Exit to Expansion

Miracles don't always arrive in thunder or light. Sometimes they come quietly, at dawn, with your feet on the path and your heart finally soft enough to feel.

That morning reminded me: how you start your day shapes everything that follows.



A sunrise in the open fields outside Azofra

Creating Your Miracle Morning – A Coaching Tool

If you wake up early, the Camino offers a daily opportunity for sacred stillness. I carry this special energy of the quiet morning into my everyday life, beginning with a ritual I call my Miracle Morning.

Most days, I rise around 5:30 AM. Before the world calls to me, I take time to return to myself. On the dark days of winter, I light a candle; in spring, I listen to the birds. I sit in silence. Sometimes I meditate, sometimes I simply listen. Always, I tune in.

I learned the structure from *Hal Elrod's The Miracle Morning*. His **S.A.V.E.R.S.** framework provided a language for something I had already been doing intuitively:

S – Silence: Meditation, breathwork, or prayer. Creating stillness before the noise.

A – Affirmations: Speaking truth into the day. Grounding in possibility.

V – Visualization: Imagining the energy of a day lived well.

E – Exercise: Movement that wakes the body—even for just a few minutes.

R – Reading: A few pages of wisdom. Letting someone else's clarity sharpen my focus.

S – Scribing: Journaling. Capturing thoughts, feelings, dreams, or gratitude.

Some days, I do all six. Most days, I choose a few. The point isn't perfection—it's presence. Starting the day with intention. Filling my cup before I serve anyone else.

The miracle isn't in what you do—it's in who you become by starting the day with intention.

Silent Cry for help! - The Butterflies

Day #11 Santo Domingo de la Calzada - 24km - San Juan de Ortega

The Camino, on the stretch toward San Juan, winds through a dry pine forest. The air is still, the path dusty, and the scent of pine and earth mingles in the afternoon heat. At some point, the trail opens onto a wide dirt road, and ahead, I notice another pilgrim resting in the shadow of a pine tree. She is barefoot, her boots off. As I draw closer, I inquire about her well-being and feel the weight of her journey before she even speaks. I offer her some water, as it appears that her bottle is empty.

Pilgrim's wisdom: Always carry more water than you need; someone might need it.

Her name is Eleonora, from Glasgow. She is walking the Camino to mourn—grieving the passing of her mother. Her feet hurt, the blisters from her boots causing her pain. I sense a silent cry for help, so I offer to walk slowly with her to the next village, which is probably still two hours away, under the hot sun with little shade. Some stretches are better walked in company than alone. We walk slowly, our conversation naturally finding its rhythm as the miles pass. She tells me about her mother's final weeks—the quiet moments, the love woven into the hardest goodbyes—and how hard it is for her to find a way forward. I listen with deep empathy, feeling for her, as I have walked a similar path. My memories surface—the loss of my father, the way grief never truly leaves but heals over time.

And then, the butterflies appear—monarchs, black and orange.

One after another, they flutter around us, their delicate wings catching the sunlight, their dance both chaotic and precise. Two of them drift closer, circling, until finally, they land—right in front of our feet. We stop. We breathe. And in the stillness, something sacred unfolds. A wave of deep emotions rises in me.



Eleonora doesn't know what butterflies mean to me, so I share with her, my voice trembling, an agreement with my father.

The summer before my father passed, he spent long, sun-soaked days at our family summer home on Lago Maggiore. Despite the pain of his progressing cancer and the stress of the chemotherapy, he still took his ALCAZAR Riva boat out on the lake, still lingered in the garden, still taught his grandsons to water ski. Though his

hourglass of Chronos was running out, he knew it. We all did. And so, we cherished each moment, not knowing which ones would be the last.

One day, after a beautiful, hot summer day in the refreshing coolness of the gorge of Cannobio, we stopped at a café for a delicious ice cream and bumped into a small shop, the kind filled with hidden treasures waiting to be discovered. My eyes landed on two metal butterflies—one large, one small. On impulse, I bought them. Back at the summer home, I gave my father the larger one and kept the smaller one for ourselves.

"One day," I told him, "you will be on the other side. And if you ever want to send us a message, send a butterfly."

From that moment on, butterflies became more than just creatures of the wind. They became whispers from beyond—quiet reassurances that love doesn't vanish; it transforms. And every so often, when a butterfly circles near, I stretch out my hand. Sometimes, just sometimes, one lands. Especially the Monarchs!

And standing there with Eleonora, on that quiet road in the middle of the Camino, I knew. My father was there. Her mother was there. Grief and love, loss and presence—woven together in the silent, sacred flutter of wings. It was the first time I cried on the Camino, tears of grief, a feeling of loss not yet healed. As my friend Georg had anticipated, "You will cry at least once on the Camino!" He has walked it four times. Explore his story in the interview section.

The emotional release allowed me to walk for a long stretch in reflective silence. I realized I was missing my father, especially in such a phase of uncertainty—a transition, not knowing what the future might bring. The inner self-talk rumbled: “What shall I do now? Get back into the well-paid corporate world? Start my business? Follow the footsteps of entrepreneurship, like my father, who started a business at 40, or like both of my grandfathers, who had been entrepreneurs?”

I continued walking and ended the day at the monastery of San Juan de Ortega. Emotionally raw, physically tired, and very thirsty, I was thankful to find one of the last free beds and have a refreshing beer with a few fellow pilgrims sitting at the café outside, while Eleonora continued to a hostel she had reserved.

After joining the evening mass and having a light dinner, I felt a wave of homesickness wash over me. Maybe it was the emotional intensity of the day, or simply the quiet ache of wanting to share something so meaningful—yet knowing how hard it is to explain an experience like this to someone who hasn’t walked it. The call home was brief, a little superficial. Words didn’t quite land the way I’d hoped.

Then, a small moment stayed with me:

A comment from my eldest son, Gabriel—something I later found written in my diary:

“Dad, you look happy!”

And my reply: “Yes, I am.”

In the photo I had sent, I had started to grow a beard. I looked a bit like a vagabond—weathered, free, softened by the road. And maybe, for the first time in a long while, I looked like someone who had let go.

The White Butterfly - A Coaching Metaphor

When clients undergo deep transformation, I often bring the butterfly as a guiding image. The shift from caterpillar to butterfly isn't just a change; it's metamorphosis.

The caterpillar feeds, plays, and grows, until one day it turns inward. It spins itself into a cocoon, and inside, something extraordinary begins. The caterpillar dissolves. Its structure completely breaks down into a formless mass. Scientists call this mass imaginal cells—cells that carry the vision of the butterfly, though at first, they're indistinguishable from the old form.

Gradually, these cells find each other. They begin to organize, forming wings, a body, a new being. No one can say exactly when or how this shift happens. It emerges in its own time.

One of my clients once arrived in the midst of this in-between. He had let go of a leadership role and couldn't yet see what was coming—only that something was ending. In that session, I drew him a white butterfly in the center of a white canvas. Blank. Undefined. A symbol of what had not yet emerged.

We placed all his questions, fragments, truths, and intentions around it, like nourishment for the next form. That image stayed with him. It gave shape to the unknown without forcing answers too soon.

Then comes the cocooning. The withdrawal. That strange moment when nothing feels familiar—neither the past nor the future. It's

disorienting. Yet, this phase is sacred. It's where the imaginal cells begin their hidden work. We agreed on a nine-month window for his cocooning phase.

Eventually, a new shape forms. As in nature, a butterfly cannot simply exit the chrysalis. It must press through the narrow opening. The struggle isn't suffering; it's essential. The resistance pushes fluid into the wings, making them strong enough to fly.

If someone were to cut the cocoon open to help, the butterfly would never fly. It would die.

This is why, in my coaching, I don't rush the process. I give time. I hold space. When clients hit the tension point—the place where the old no longer works, and the new isn't ready—I stay present. I don't rescue them. I witness. I say, “I trust you. I see you.”

It may feel painful. It may feel endless. This is where strength is required. This is where the wings form.

And when they do emerge—when they show themselves in their full, vibrant truth—I am in awe. Every time. Their colors are their own. Unmistakable. Irreplaceable.

This is why I bring the butterfly into my coaching. Because true transformation isn't about fixing or changing; it's about becoming. And becoming takes surrender, patience, and the courage to emerge in your own time. No rush, be patient.

Practical Pilgrims Reflection: Metaphor Breakdown: The Butterfly



Caterpillar → Growth



Cocoon → Dissolution / Reflection / Inner Growth



Imaginal Cells → Identity Shift



Emergence → Struggle Creates Strength



Flight → Authentic Living

Reflective Questions:

Let me invite you to reflect on the white butterfly:

What might your white butterfly be holding for you—just waiting to unfold?

Who do you know that might benefit from reading about the white butterfly?

A Treasure Hidden in Plain Sight - a Coin from 1654

Day #12 San Juan de la Ortega - Atapuerca Hills - Burgos – 26 km

I had spent the night in the monastery of San Juan, one of those 60-bed dormitories—filthy, loud, and definitely not on my list of highly recommended hostels. I woke early, stirred by the symphony of snoring, the rustling of plastic bags, and my bed neighbor shining his headlamp straight into my face—another addition to the bad pilgrims list.

Rather than trying to fall back asleep, I packed my things and left that unpleasant place in the first light of dawn. The clear, misty morning air greeted me outside. As I walked, I was rewarded with a beautiful sunrise. I stood inside a man-made spiral of stones, watching the sun rise between two majestic trees—a magical moment just for me. I felt joy and bliss. How lucky am I to experience this?

Later that morning, I had another lucky moment, probably the most powerful “message from the path” on my journey. I was about to climb the Atapuerca hills—passing near the famous caves known for their prehistoric drawings—sweat dripping under the midday sun, when my phone rang. It was my former HR business partner, calling to finalize the settlement details.

As I stepped aside to take the call, my foot struck something metallic. The distinct sound stopped me. I bent down and picked it up. It looked like a bottle cap at first. Once I rubbed it clean, I saw the number: 1654. Had I just found an old coin?

I smiled. Mercury, the god of merchants and travelers, must have sent a message: "Watch the path, and the wisdom will reveal itself."



Later that day, I met Bob, the entrepreneur from Texas, at a café. I showed him the small treasure—the light, grayish coin. My numbers-mind did a quick trick, adding two zeros to the year of coinage. The number roughly matched the settlement offer I'd just received. It hit me: Not only had I found a coin, but I had received seed money—enough to start something new.

Later in the Burgos museum, I discovered the coin was an 8 Maravedís from 1654, issued under King Felipe IV. Its numismatic value? Maybe 10 euros.

I still carry that coin today as a reminder to stay open to the unexpected gifts along the way. I wonder where else in my life I have treasures hidden in plain sight?

Physical Exhaustion and Rest

Day #13 Burgos Rest Day

The physical demands of the Camino taught me a vital lesson about balancing exertion with rest. I was surprised by my body's ability to walk long distances. On many days, I walked for ten hours, amazed by what my body could endure. Though I felt the pain the next day, I also realized that I was stronger than I had believed.

When real pain set in, and my body ached, I could hear my inner whining voices grow louder. Exhaustion amplifies internal negativity; the inner commentary turns more critical and more complaining.

Today, when entrepreneurs or CEOs express frustration during coaching sessions, I often ask, "When was the last time you physically exhausted yourself? When did you last stretch your body—go for a run, swim, or take a long walk?"

Many are so immersed in their businesses that they forget their bodies even have this capacity. I encourage them to stretch physically again. Engage in movement. Test their limits. This practice changes how they view challenges in other areas of life. When we move our bodies, we expand our perspective.

Rest Day is a Training Day

Most people don't plan for rest. On the Camino, I allowed myself a rest day about once a week. I treated it as a training day—an

approach I later heard echoed by *Matt Chavlovich*, a former professional goalkeeper and business coach, who led my small group during Rich Litvin's Intensive.

In larger cities, I'd book an Airbnb instead of staying in a hostel and remain for two nights. On these "zero days," I didn't wear my hiking boots—just sneakers, to explore at a gentler pace. I gave my body time to heal. I always booked a massage to release the tension in my legs and feet. Painful, but deeply releasing.

These rest periods became beautiful opportunities to reset.

When I work with ambitious entrepreneurs constantly operating at high speed, I often invite them to examine their calendars:

“What do your rest days look like? How do you train around your rest?”

The price of entrepreneurship can be burning the candle at both ends. The challenge for leaders is to create space to re-center, recalibrate, and re-create their lives from a place of alignment.

When was the last time you honored rest—not as absence, but as preparation for your next expansion?



CHAPTER 3

SANTIAGO AS A DESTINATION VS. A DIRECTION

The San-Antón Experience

Day #14 Burgos - San Anton - Castrojeriz- 37km

I realized Santiago was no longer a place to reach, but a direction to follow, sign by sign. After a rest day in Burgos, I resumed my Camino, walking thirty kilometers through the misty rain of the Mesetas. The landscape was vast and quiet, and with every step, I could feel the dampness settling into my clothes and bones. Fatigue crept in, and I was ready to stop at the next available hostel. Before checking in, I stepped into a small church in Hontanas, drawn by something unspoken. Inside, a quiet prayer corner had been set up, honoring spiritual leaders from various traditions around the world.

I picked up Coelho's book from my backpack—the only book I carried with me—and opened the marked page of the Merciful Prayer. As I read the words, a wave of deep gratitude washed over me. And then, almost as if the Camino itself was speaking, my inner voice gave me clear instructions: "Keep walking!"