

Lee Coffee Interview

Zoe Tao: Thank you so much for coming in today. Will you tell me a little bit about what brought you to the Jung Center?

Lee Coffee: Yes, I first started coming to the Jung Center in probably about 2000. I was in San Antonio at the time and I saw one of the synopsis' of a class that was being offered and it piqued my interest because it was talking about meaning, meaningfulness, and mindfulness, and I had read some books on mindfulness and so I drove from San Antonio to Houston and to attend that class. And when I found it to be such a rich experience, I looked at some of the other offerings and came back and forth From San Antonio to Houston to the Jung Center for those meaningful classes. And I moved here in 2006.

ZT: So many, many years of attending Jung Center classes. So what got you teaching here?

LC: Well because I got certified to facilitate the Myers Briggs type-indicator, prior to 2000, I had a vested interest in Carl Jung's life's works. I had to some degree studied comparative religions, so when I was here and I was working I was able to teach classes on spirituality and healthcare as well as MBTI. Because of my collaboration with the Jung Center and collaboration with the Rothko Chapel, I got a chance to meet Sean Fitzpatrick and through our discussions about how I may be able to add value to the Jung Center, there was an opportunity provided to me to facilitate MBTI here.

ZT: Do you feel like there's a common thing that people in your classes are seeking?

LC: The meaning of life, self-awareness. Who goes outside dreams, who goes inside, awakens. And I think it's important for us to awaken, you know kind of do our own homework, and awaken to what are those talents, what are those untapped areas of myself-how can I bring those subconscious parts of me to conscious awareness to benefit society.

ZT: What do you think is the most difficult part of this process of meaning-seeking?

LC: There's a great book that says I'm not crazy, I'm just not you. And if I can just accept that. And there's nothing you know sometimes wrong with that. So when I took my first. Says we have wellness issues, mental wellness issues. But for the person is just want to say I'm okay, you're okay-you know I want to learn more about myself so I can embrace my whole self. I think that can be a difficult journey. I bring something to this table of humanity that can benefit me and benefit this world.

ZT: So you also teach to people who are healthcare staff, and work in one of those most stressful environments there is.

LC: Well, when going to church, one of the things that introverts do is to listen and reflect. And the difference in a church or a synagogue or mosque or some other religious or spiritual setting is that an introvert might just want to sit and listen to the preacher, whereas the extrovert might want to be a little bit more active and engaging, and want to talk to their neighbors. And understanding again that we are both energized differently-that introverts are energized by introspection and self-reflection, whereas the extrovert is energized by action, and to understand why some people are more comfortable standing up than others are, and there's nothing wrong with it. My preference is to just kind of take it in and reflect on it, whereas others' preference is to shake everyone's hand in the room twice. I think that that can help people understand again that this is how I'm hardwired, and those are my strengths, and I can accept that you also have strengths-and how we can use those to communicate and resolve conflict more effectively. And so in that spiritual dimension understand that some people are looking just at the facts, what the facts are associated with world religions, whereas others are looking at a world of possibilities. What are the facts based on sensing, what are the possibilities based on intuition. Logically, how do you make decisions vs. how you feel, effectively. So how all of those components of typology help a person look through the lens of spirituality, and other lenses in life.

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ZT: Do people often surprise themselves, when they look inside and they find that maybe this doesn't resonate as well with me as I thought it did, but this does?

LC: I think the biggest "Aha!" moment that people have is when people realize that there's acres of diamond that we haven't mined in our own background, for our own self-discovery. We go out in the world and try to learn things about others. Some people say I know my mom, my brother, my parents, but when they're in the workshop and they answer questions that align with their preferences, and then when we're having discussions with others in the workshop that are like them. Some people in the grocery store, they have a grocery list-other people walk into the store with money. And if they're a team, partner or husband wife or whatever other relationship, and one person is like let's just walk up and down the aisles where the other is like, hey, this is a structured experience. But once you realize that that's okay, it is it reaffirms that again, I'm OK, I'm not crazy. I'm just not you. And it's OK for me to embrace who I am. That's usually one of the biggest Aha's, that this stuff is actually really accurate.

ZT: So it allows people to tolerate difference, not only in their own lives but in the workplace, and with anyone they meet afterward.

LC: Both tolerate and be inclusive and benefit from. When you think about all the technology that we have, if someone was always around thinking about possibilities but you don't have some sort of person to go, what are the facts, how can we make this a reality-and so when you have that diversity of psychological thought brought to any engagement, you can tap into the richness of the type differences. So that the sensing person, one of the decision-making models is what are the facts, what are the possibilities on how to use those facts, what are the logical reasons on why you use it that way, and then what's going to be the impact on people, both good and bad? When you understand that, you can use all the strengths to help yourself or somebody else grow.

ZT: And is that what initially attracted you to Jungian psychology in particular-personality types?

LC: It is, because I was looking at it the first time I took the instrument back in 1998. I was in Cocoa Beach, Florida, and when I took the instrument my type-preference was listed as ISTJ, and when I realized that most of what that type preference was who I was at work, very, very reflective, how much money I was managing, how I organized my day, how I made logical decisions-and that was all true and it's true of anybody that's in the business world to be successful. It's something about the instrument that if I could learn from this process I could help people grow. So at the time I went back to San Antonio and then I had the opportunity to get certified, and it was just that possibility. And that was one of the first Aha! moments for me, I live in the world of possibilities. So I was like oh, this makes perfect sense now, now I see why I'm always seeing the possibilities of making something come true and not necessarily just what the facts are, but being able to look around corners with the facts, and it kind of validated that this is who I am, and that there's nothing wrong with that. And so when I got certified and understood the instrument more, the more I learn the more I want to learn, and the more I continue to learn. And I come over to the Jung Center and purchase various books because it just gives me a deeper understanding of myself and provides more meaning for my life.

ZT: And do you feel like you've learned a lot from your students as well, in whatever setting?

LC: Absolutely. Last year we had a couple in the workshop, and the wife said that she sent her husband to the store to get mayonnaise, and her preference is sensing. And he comes back with Miracle Whip or other things and she asked him why, and he could explain it. But in the class when we were talking about it, the explanation was she is a person who is a sensor-she always looks through the factual, I said I want mayonnaise, that's what I wanted. Whereas he goes in the store and he says, well you know, Miracle Whip, mayonnaise, and sandwich bread is all that stuff that can be used when making potato salad, which is what the dish was. And in that class, they both had that Aha! moment, that this is why we get into conflict over certain things, where she'll give him her facts and he automatically reframes it in the world of possibilities. So it's helped students, and of course by them learning it helps me learn. So it's a reciprocal relationship.