

## Interview with Valia ... FAQs

### 1) What's your story? How did you get into this work?

Years ago, I suffered a sudden spell of panic attacks. Out of the blue, I found myself on the floor, blacked out, no recollection of what had happened except a few bruises as a vivid reminder. I did what any busy, driven, Type A New Yorker would do – I ignored it. The attacks got worse and worse with no warning signs of impending havoc. They would strike in the middle of the night, while out to dinner with my husband, at work – no correlation. The symptoms were as disconnected as the frequency anything from trembling and shaking to gasping for air and dizziness to general unease and worry. What was most confusing of all was that my life was perfectly happy; I was healthy and strong, highly successful in my career, blissfully married, nothing was “wrong”, per se. Except one minor (ok, MAJOR) thing – I was living my life for everyone else.

As long as I can remember, I was the “good girl” doing everything “right” – from schools and grades to jobs and relationships. This strategy worked for a long while. In fact, it's the only way I knew how to exist in this world. To define myself through others – I was the “nice” person that found true value out of making others feel happier in their own lives. You might be thinking, there's nothing wrong with that – you're a nice person! I didn't think there was anything wrong either until it began feeling like an addition. I couldn't separate who I was apart from who I was for others. I couldn't voice my own opinion without seeking external validation first. I couldn't speak my truth for fear of rejection by others. And the list goes on.

After several months of the attacks, I decided to begin a journey back to myself. I knew there was a reason this was happening and that I, in some way, was creating this experience. What ensued was a year-long quest of self-discovery. You name the helping modality, I did it: therapy, coaching, acupuncture, craniosacral therapy, yoga, meditation, energy healing, feng shui, improv, scalar energy, and that's just the beginning! Each twist and turn of the journey opened another door of learning and growth.

From that chapter forward, I committed to change. I experienced first-hand what it meant to lead my life, not just live it. I redefined what leadership was in my life. I discovered how small I was playing and how claustrophobic it was to play by everyone else's rules but my own. Leadership Development was always within me – from yearning to be a teacher at a young age to serving as a Trusted Advisor to clients, mentors, and managers my entire career. So, to answer the question of how I got into this work... you don't choose this work, it chooses you. This is always who I have been. I am a coach, I am a person who can unleash leadership and greatness in others. I just needed to experience what that meant from the inside-out so that I could come “home” to leading my most inspired life by connecting to who I truly was.

## 2) Why Leadership Development?

I believe that Leadership Development is at its core human development towards self-mastery. I am deeply inspired by the paradoxes of leadership: We think of the CEO in the media yet moments of leadership occur in daily interactions at all levels of the hierarchy; We think of aggression and power yet some of the most profound leaders engage through vulnerability and empathy. Any challenge in an organization can be tackled by developing the approach the company takes towards its people.

We spend the majority of our lives at work and yet there is so much pain in people's professional experiences; people living to work, chasing salaries, hostile corporate settings, settling for less than they are. That is why I choose to work with organizations and leaders who are ready to make a change in their day-to-day experience as well as the experiences of their people. One individual showing up at his or her most authentic leader triggers an enormous ripple effect to all those lives that the individual touches and ultimately the organization at large. That's the power of leadership development.

## 3) Who are your Clients?

My clients are "enlightened corporates." They are highly successful and driven individuals and organizations that are hungry for a new experience of leadership. They believe that leadership is something that can only come from within and they are eager to take the journey to discover what's possible. My clients seek holistic transformation, not just temporary change. Whether they are ready to play a bigger game in their own life or create new possibilities for their organizations, my clients know that the growth and development of people is the only investment that enables this lasting transformation.

I have been fortunate to work with incredible clients and organizations. Clients often ask if I specialize in their industry. I don't need or want to be an expert on your industry because **you** are. I am an expert in leadership development, best training practices across industry, as well as excellence in the coaching process. From Fortune 500 companies to Entrepreneurs and Start-ups, I work across industry and scope. Leadership development is human development – it uncovers new ways of thinking, feeling, acting, and being in this world. Some recent client highlights include: McKinsey & Company, Edelman, HBO, Digitas, Kaltura, Georgetown University, New York University.



#### 4) What makes you different from other coaches and trainers?

I believe wholeheartedly in the paradox of leadership – it comes from within. I am not a band-aid coach who fixes what's broken on the surface with an individual or organization. I am a leadership coach who guides clients to dig underneath the surface of their world in order to tap into what's really going on. I believe in a holistic approach to leadership – mind, body, and spirit. As such, I don't deliver any "off the shelf" products or services. I customize and co-create every experience so that it addresses the very heart of what needs to shift and evolve.

What makes me different is my definition of leadership. I believe a leader is someone who shows up every day in the world living authentically and fearlessly from a place of purpose and value. I believe in living from the inside-out. Whether you a CEO leading hundreds or someone simply looking to better lead your own life, it all begins from the inside. When there is something imbalanced on the inside, there is always a problem on the outside. My job is to help you uncover the areas in your life that need to shift so you can more powerfully unleash your power and potential. My mission is to help my clients lead their most inspired lives.

#### 5) What have you learned from your own journey through leadership?

So much. And I continue to learn in every moment. I'll narrow it down to three lessons that keep coming back throughout my experience:

- **Listen To Your Emotions:** The body has incredible navigation system programed within it. We often try to numb emotions or ignore aches and pains – these are our clues to discover where we need to recalibrate our experience. Once you learn the language of your body, nothing feels "hard" anymore – it's just another layer of self-mastery.
- **The Power of Silence:** We can only hear our intuition, the silent voice inside that's connected to deep wisdom, when there is silence. Whether meditation, going for a walk, practicing yoga, or simply sitting and breathing – these moments are where your experience can recalibrate and get back on track.
- **Choose Your People:** We're often in relationships, friendships, partnerships out of habit and comfort. The more I grow into my power, the more people in my life start fading away because they feel uncomfortable with what they might not be doing to evolve their own lives. Letting go was a big challenge for me but once I surrendered and allowed those who no longer belonged out, brilliant like-minded people were able to flow in.



## 6) What advice would you give to your younger self?

“Slow Down. Calm Down. Don’t Worry. Don’t Hurry. Trust The Process.” – Alexandra Stoddard.

When I was younger, I felt like I carried the weight of the world on my shoulders. I am an only child to Greek immigrants parents. While they encouraged me to be all that I wanted to be, this came with a tremendous amount of (self-created) responsibility and pressure. I didn’t want to disappoint, I wanted to take care of them so they wouldn’t worry, I wanted to grow up and succeed quickly to make them proud.

I’m often called an “old soul” - by those who know me closely to perfect strangers. I believe that my old soul has come into this earth with a deep purpose to help transform people’s lives by showing them what’s possible when they tap into their inner truth. Armed with this calling, I feel like I’ve often rushed on the treadmill of achievements to “what’s next”. I would want to let my younger self know (and my today’s self for that matter!) to slow down and enjoy the journey. I know now that the universe unfolds our path as we are ready and rushing doesn’t do anything but add stress and chaos to an already perfect process.

## 7) You often guide your clients to uncover their deepest values – what are yours?

I believe that knowing our values – and living by them – is a fundamental non-negotiable of leadership. These guideposts help us to navigate our most powerful lives. So often, people don’t make the time to really discern what is truly theirs and what they’ve “borrowed” from others. This fuzziness leads to profound stress and unhappiness throughout life. It’s incredible how transformative the sessions and talks on values are for my clients – they are the bedrock of this work.

I check in with my values quite often because they can and do change depending on our current experiences. My eternal value is Love. It drives how I live, work, and lead. I believe love is what brought me to my work. After love, my 3 top values are: Passion, Experience & Self-Mastery. Without passion, I don’t believe I can ever be fully fulfilled in my life’s experiences – personally or professionally. **Passion** is connected to love and feels like energy, like flow. **Experience** is how I prioritize my time. I don’t value material gifts, I want to extract the essence of experience from everything I do – whether a training with a client, a vacation with my husband, or a class to learn a new skill. Finally, I believe **Self-Mastery** is why we were put on this earth. For each of us to uncover our deepest truth. If we can live and lead from that place, it’s magic.

## 8) What's next for you?

I believe I'm living my purpose each and every day. What's next is expanding the scale in which I work. I want to spread the mission of helping people lead their most inspired lives to as many individuals and organizations as possible. Through books, teaching, programming, and bigger audiences and engagements, I'll continue developing leaders throughout the world.

This work unleashes a new way of experiencing our personal and professional lives – feeling grounded, connected to others, living in flow. When one of us evolves, the ripple effect is contagious. In stepping into our greatness, we allow others to do the same. Imagine what's possible when people feel re-inspired and purposeful, alive and excited again – that's the kind of world I want to live in. So, like Gandhi profoundly states, I'm being the change I want to see in the world.