

APPENDIX C

The Core

Protocols V. 1.5

TO: Readers

FR: Jim and Michele McCarthy, McCarthy Technologies, Inc.

RE: The Core Protocols Version 1.5 Distribution

Dear Recipient:

The information in this document, The Core Protocols V. 1.5, is “software for your head.” Although it is a somewhat new take on how to distribute ideas, we think the medium of software, its common characteristics, and the way people view it, is the best way to distribute any system of functional ideas and procedures. People understand that software is supposed to do something, and they also understand that successful software will likely be upgraded with better (or at least different) versions over time. You will find these things to be true of The Core protocols.

There are many other benefits to treating procedures as a kind of software and distributing them as software is distributed; but, whatever benefits there may be, they all depend on the customer receiving a perfectly faithful copy of the program to begin with. This document is your copy.

With computers, when you install a new program on your hard drive, you reasonably expect the files provided by the manufacturer to be a replica of the master program. Though the program may have other problems, most often the fidelity of the bits involved in your copy is not of great concern to you. With software for your head, things are a bit different. The document you are reading now is meant to support the person-to-person “copying technology” on which we depend for the promulgation of The Core protocols.

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The Core Protocols V. 1.5, distributed in its entirety within these few pages, consists of

1. *This letter*
2. *The Core protocols and commitments*
3. *The Core Protocols License Agreement*

These three elements constitute (wholly and inseparably) The Core Protocols V. 1.5. Later versions may well be available on our Web site (www.mccarthy-tech.com). The files mentioned in the License Agreement (below) consist of these three parts. All three of these parts should be included with the package you are now reading. Please note that there are many other pieces of The Core that you might find useful, especially the patterns, antipatterns, and definitions of The Core. These are published in a book¹ (wherein these words were also first published) and in our course material, but they are not included here, and are not governed by The Core license.

When you distribute The Core protocols, what you distribute are the pages in this Appendix. If you decide to tell someone about The Core protocols, or to “teach” them to someone, you are, in fact, copying The Core protocols. Such verbal “copying” efforts are buggy and incomplete. They can also be very annoying, especially if the person doing the copying is evangelical. But we do think it is good to copy The Core protocols, so we’ve made it free of charge to do so, provided that you actually copy it: Copying The Core protocols means that you must provide all the material in this document before or at the time you attempt to impart any of the substance of The Core protocols to someone else. You must include (1) This statement from us, (2) The Core protocols, and (3) The Core Protocols License Agreement, either in writing or by e-mail (an electronic version of this document is found on our Web site at www.mccarthy-tech.com).

It’s not really so many pages, and by passing them out, you won’t have to explain, defend, or evangelize The Core. It’s really just software. Pass it out, and people can take it from there.

We offer courses, BootCamps, and certification services for practitioners of The Core protocols, services that are detailed at www.mccarthy-tech.com. Nothing in this distribution authorizes you to actually teach The Core protocols, or certifies you as competent to do so. You are not authorized to conduct a BootCamp on The Core. If you are participating in some type of authorized course or BootCamp, your instructor will have shown you his or her certification from McCarthy Technologies by now, which authorizes the activity. If this hasn’t happened, it is an unauthorized activity.

Incidentally, if you have already heard about The Core protocols from someone who purportedly knew all about them, but you’ve never seen this note, now you know something new about that person.

Thank you for your interest in our work.²

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THE CORE SYSTEM

VERSION 1.5

(v1.5 – Beta Release 1.5 (8-24-04))

The Structure of The Core. The Core is a structured personal and inter-personal system to help you get what you want, whatever you want, while spending the least possible time, money and effort in doing so. The Core has been in various stages of development, experimentation and in daily use since 1996. The Core 1.5 consists of two types of things:

1. **Eleven special promises** (*The Core Commitments or CoreCom*).

These are pledges that each person who adopts the Core:

- a. Must endorse to adopt;
- b. Will renew frequently and explicitly;
- c. Will keep practicing until something better becomes available.

While there are other types of commitments associated with The Core, the Core Commitments (CoreCom) are governing.

2. **Eleven specified behaviors** (*The Core Protocols*)

Specified behaviors designed to facilitate one's fidelity to the Core Commitments.

Adopting The Core Commitments is accomplished by signing the Core Commitments Page in front of a witness (See page two, below), and then sending the original document to:

Core Adoption Records
C/O McCarthy Technologies, Inc.
9719 Crystal Lake Drive
Woodinville, WA 98077
USA
(425) 487-2467

The Core Commitments

It is my firm purpose now to provide myself with the best available help in *attaining what I want*, and to *help others attain what they want*. To achieve these ends, I choose to adopt the commitments below and make them my personal promises.

I also now join with those who have already made these promises, and who are now collaborating actively on keeping them by using the related protocols.

The duration of my adoption is indefinite. I freely obligate myself to the commitments below until such time as I encounter or create another system that better fulfills my purpose.

The Core Commitments continued...

Therefore, I promise I will:

1. **Exercise my freedom to choose;** preserve this freedom by being accountable for my choices, and by encouraging others to do as I do.
2. **Engage when present.**
 - a. **Know what I want in the large and in the small, and**
 - i. Disclose this knowledge continuously.
 - ii. Seek and accept others' help in discovering and getting what I want.
 - iii. Invite others' continuous support in helping me behave as if I meant to achieve what I want.
 - b. **Listen and observe as fully as possible, and**
 - i. Consistently offer clear articulation of my own emotional information,
 - ii. Expect that from others,
 - iii. Decline to offer and refuse to accept incoherent emotional transmissions.
 - c. **When I believe I have a better idea than the currently prevailing idea, I will state it at once** to any and all of those who can perfect, reject or implement it. Once I state an idea, I will maintain it until:
 - i. I *learn* that it is not the best idea after all,
 - ii. Someone else *improves* it, and states it anew,
 - iii. It is officially *adopted* or is decisively *rejected*.
 - d. **Speak always and only when it will improve the general results/effort ratio.**
 - e. **Offer and accept only rational, results-oriented behavior and communication.**
3. **Disengage from unproductive situations:**
 - a. When I cannot keep these commitments.
 - b. When others are not behaving in a manner consistent with these commitments.
 - c. When it is more important that I engage elsewhere.
4. **Support the best idea regardless of its source,** and however much I hope an even better idea may later arise.
5. **Do now what must be done eventually and can be done now.**
6. **Seek to move forward toward a particular goal,** by biasing my behavior toward action.
7. **Use the Core Protocols when they are applicable.**
 - a. **Adopt new protocols – or other specified procedures - always and only when they improve results.**
When I discover or encounter a superior protocol or procedure, I will document it and inform others who may help propagate it,
 - b. **When I violate or witness violation of the Core Commitments or the Core Protocols, I will explicitly acknowledge it,** and I will work to improve the situation at once.
 - c. **Neither harm - nor tolerate the harming of - anyone for their fidelity to these commitments.**
8. **Get effective help continuously.**
9. **Never do anything dumb on purpose.**
10. **Inform others of my commitment to results-orientation,** and, as appropriate, invite them to join me, by giving them a written copy of these Core Commitments.
11. **Welcome help from others when my public behavior seems at variance with these promises.**

I renew my personal adoption of The Core Commitments whenever I CheckIn by saying, "I'm In."

Signed: _____ Date/Location: _____

Print Name: _____ Witnessed By: _____

The Core Protocols

1. Pass (Unpass)

Pass is how you decline to participate in something. Use it anytime you don't want to participate in an activity.

Steps

1. When you've decided not to participate, say, "I pass."

Commitments

1. Hold reasons for passing private.
2. *Pass* on something as soon as you are aware you are going to *pass*.
3. Respect the right of others to *pass* without explanation.
4. Support those who *pass* by not discussing them or their *pass*.
5. Do not judge, shame, hassle, interrogate or punish anyone who *passes*.

Notes

1. In general, you will not be in good standing with your Core Commitments if you *pass* most of the time.
2. You can *pass* on any activity and any commitment; however, if you are a member of a group wherein all members have adopted The Core Commitments, you cannot pass on a *Decider vote*, and you must say "I'm in," when checking in.
3. You can still *pass* even though you have already started something.
4. "*Unpass*" any time you desire. *Unpass* as soon as you know you want to participate again by saying, "I unpass." *Unpass* takes on the same commitments as *Pass*.

2. CheckIn

The *CheckIn* protocol increases results by providing a structure for making emotional information available. Its use removes emotional ambiguity, and encourages free speech and confidentiality. Use *CheckIn* when a group convenes, when you feel the need emotionally, and when you believe you might be moving towards unproductive behavior. The *CheckIn* protocol serves the dual purpose of recommitting yourself to the Core Commitments of presence and efficiency-seeking behavior, while also giving you a means of disclosing emotional state, for your own benefit and that of the team.

Steps

1. Speaker says either:
 - a. "I feel (*one or more of MAD, SAD, GLAD, AFRAID*)." Speaker may provide a brief explanation.
OR:
 - b. If others have already checked in, the speaker may say, "I pass". (See *Pass*)
2. Speaker says "I'm in." This signifies that Speaker intends to behave according to *The Core Commitments*.
3. Listeners respond, "Welcome."

Commitments

1. State feelings without qualification.
2. State feelings only as they pertain to yourself.

3. Be silent during another's *CheckIn*.
4. Do not refer to your own or another's *CheckIn* disclosures without explicitly granted permission from them.

Notes

1. In the context of the Core, all emotions are expressed through combinations of *MAD*, *SAD*, *GLAD*, or *AFRAID*. E.g. Excited may be a combination of glad and afraid.
2. *CheckIn* as deeply as possible. Checking in with two or more emotions is the norm. The depth of a group's *CheckIn* translates directly to the quality of the group's results.
3. Do not do anything to diminish or augment your emotional state. Do not describe yourself as a "little" *mad*, *glad*, *sad*, or *afraid* or say "I'm mad, but I'm still glad".
4. Except in large groups, if more than one person checks in, it is recommended that all do so.

3. CheckOut

CheckOut requires that your physical presence always signifies your engagement. You must *CheckOut* when you are aware that you cannot maintain The Core Commitments, or whenever it would be better for you to be elsewhere.

Steps

1. Say, "I'm checking-out."
2. Physically leave the group until you're ready to *CheckIn* once again.
3. Optionally, if it is known and relevant, you can say when you believe you'll return.

Commitments

1. Return as soon as you can and are able to keep *The Core Commitments*.
2. Return and *CheckIn* without unduly calling attention to your return.
3. Let your group know when you will return if you know when that will be, otherwise say nothing about your return.
4. Do not judge, shame, hassle, interrogate or punish anyone who checks out.

Notes

1. It is a misuse of *CheckOut* if you use it to get unwarranted attention, express anger behaviorally, cause disruption, and so on. However, if you do want to do any of these things, you need to check out.
2. *CheckOut* if your emotional state is hindering your success, if your receptivity to new information is too low, or if you do not know what you want.
3. *CheckOut* is an admission that you are unable to contribute at the present time.

4. Ask For Help

Ask For Help allows you to efficiently make use of the skills and knowledge of others. *Ask For Help* is the act that catalyzes connection and shared vision. Use it continuously, before and during the pursuit of any result.

Steps

1. Asker inquires of another, "(Helper's name), *will you X?*"
2. Asker expresses any specifics or restrictions of the request.
3. Helper responds by saying "Yes" or "No", or by offering an alternative form of help.

Commitments

1. Always invoke the Ask For Help Protocol with the phrase "Will you..."
2. Have a clear understanding of what you want from the Helper.
3. If you do not have a clear understanding of what help you want, signal this by saying "I'm not sure what I need help with, but will you help me?"
4. Assume that all Helpers are always available and trust that any Helper accepts the responsibility to say "No".
5. Say "No" anytime you do not want to help.
6. Accept the answer "No" without any inquiry or emotional drama.
7. Be receptive of the help offered.
8. Offer your best help.
9. Postpone the help request if you are unable to fully engage.
10. Request more information if you are unclear about the specifics of the help request.
11. Do not apologize for asking for help.

Notes

1. Asking for help is a low-cost undertaking. The worst possible outcome is a "no", which leaves you no further ahead or behind than when you asked. In the best possible outcome, you reduce the amount of time required to achieve a task and/or learn.
2. Helpers should say "no" if they are not sure if they want to help. They should say nothing else after turning down a request for help.
3. You cannot "over-ask" a given person for help unless he or she has asked you to respect a particular limit.
4. If you don't understand the value of what is offered, or feel that it wouldn't be useful, or believe yourself to have considered and rejected the idea offered previously, assume a curious stance instead of executing a knee-jerk, "But..." rejection (see *Investigator*).
5. Asking in time of trouble means you waited too long to ask for help. Ask for help when you are doing well.
6. Simply connecting with someone, even if they know nothing of the subject you need help on, can help you find answers within yourself, especially if you ask them to *Investigate* you.

5. Protocol Check

Use *Protocol Check* to ensure that the protocols are getting the best results. Use it when you believe a protocol is being used incorrectly in any way or when a Core Commitment is being broken. The purpose of the Core Protocols is to get results as efficiently as possible. When you use *Protocol Check*, you are insuring you and your team succeed.

Steps

1. Say "Protocol Check"
2. If you know the correct use of the protocol, state it. If you don't, *ask for help*.

Commitments

1. Say "*Protocol Check*" as soon as you become aware of the incorrect use of a protocol, or of a broken *Core Commitment*. Do this regardless of the current activity.
2. Be supportive of anyone using *Protocol Check*.

3. Do not shame or punish anyone using Protocol Check.
4. Ask for help as soon as you realize you are unsure of the correct protocol use.

6. Intention Check

Use *Intention Check* to clarify the purpose of your own or another's behavior. Use it when you can't imagine a positive outcome resulting from the behavior. *Intention Check* assesses the integrity of your own and another's intention in a given case.

Steps

1. Ask "What is *your/my* intention with *x*?", where *x* equals some type of actual or pending behavior or words to that effect to the person whose intention you want to know.
2. If it would be helpful, ask: "What response or behavior did you want from whom, when as a result of *x*?"

Commitments

1. Be aware of your own intention before checking the intention of another.
2. *Investigate* sufficiently to uncover the intention of the person or his actions.
3. Make sure you have the intention to resolve any possible conflict peacefully before intention checking someone else. If you do not have a peaceful intention, *Check Out*.
4. Do not be defensive when someone asks you what your intention is. If you can't do this, *Check Out*.

Notes

1. In the situations where *Intention Check* is a useful tool, it almost always indicates a *Core Commitment* is being broken.
2. If conflict arises that seems irresolvable, *Check Out* and *Ask For Help*.

7. Decider

Use Decider anytime you want to move a group immediately and unanimously towards results. Use it to achieve the best decisions possible, in the most efficient way possible.

Steps

1. Proposer says "I propose [concise, actionable *behavior*]".
2. Proposer says "1-2-3."
3. Voters, using either Yes (thumbs up), No (thumbs down) or Support-it (flat hand), vote simultaneously with other voters.
4. Voters who absolutely cannot get in on the proposal declare themselves by saying "I am an absolute no. I won't get in." If this occurs the proposal is withdrawn.
5. Proposer counts the votes.
6. Proposer withdraws the proposal if a combination of outliers (No votes) and support-it votes is too great¹ or if proposer expects not to successfully conclude *Resolution* (below).

¹ "**Too Great**" can be approximated by using the following heuristics: a) approximately 50% (or greater) of votes are Support-It, OR b) the anticipated gain if proposal passes is *less than* the likely cost of *Resolution* effort, OR c) (the anticipated gain if proposal passes *times* the estimated percentage likelihood that proposal will ultimately pass with *Resolution* effort) is *less than or equal to* the cost of *proceeding to Resolution*

7. Proposer uses *Resolution* protocol with each outlier to bring him in by asking, "What will it take to get you in?"
8. Proposer declares the proposal carried if all outliers change their votes to Yes or Support-it. The team is now committed to the proposed result.

Commitments

1. Propose no more than one item per proposal.
2. Remain present until the *Decider* is complete; always remain aware of how your behavior either moves the group forward or slows it down.
3. Give your full attention to a proposal over and above all other activity.
4. Speak only when you are the proposer or are directed to speak by the proposer.
5. Keep the reasons you voted as you do private.
6. Reveal immediately when you are an absolute no voter and be ready to propose a better idea.
7. Be personally accountable for achieving the results of a *Decider* commitment even if it was made in your absence.
8. Keep informed about *Decider* commitments made in your absence.
9. Respect an absolute-no voter's commitment to non-disclosure.
10. Actively support the decisions reached.
11. Use your capacity to "stop the show" by declaring you "won't get in no matter what" with great discretion and as infrequently as possible.
12. Insist at all times that the *Decider* and *Resolution* protocols be followed exactly as per specification, regardless of how many times you find yourself doing the insisting.
13. Do not pass during a *decider*.
14. Unceasingly work toward forward momentum; have a bias toward action.
15. Do not look at how others are voting to choose your own vote.
16. Avoid using *Decider* in large groups. Break up into small subgroups to make decisions and only report *status* in a large group.

Notes

1. Vote No only when you really believe the contribution to forward momentum you will make to the group after slowing or stopping it in the current vote will greatly outweigh the (usually considerable) costs you are adding by voting No.
2. If you are unsure or confused by a proposal, support it and seek clarification offline after the proposal is resolved. If you have an alternate proposal after receiving more information, you can have faith that your team will support the best idea (see Core Commitments).
3. Voting No to make minor improvements to an otherwise acceptable proposal slows momentum and should be avoided. Instead, offer an additional proposal after the current one passes or better yet, involve yourself in the implementation to make sure your idea gets in.
4. Withdraw weak proposals. If a proposal receives less than seventy percent (approximately) Yes votes, it is a weak proposal and should be withdrawn by the proposer. This decision is, however, at the discretion of the proposer.
5. Think of yourself as a potential solo outlier every time you vote No.
6. Only vote *absolute no* when you are convinced you have a significant contribution to make to the direction or *leadership* of the group, or when *integrity* absolutely requires it of you.

8. Resolution

When a *Decider* vote yields a small minority of outliers, the proposer quickly leads the team, in a highly structured fashion, to deal with the outliers. *Resolution* unabashedly promotes the proposal by focusing on bringing outliers in at least cost.

Steps

1. Proposer asks outlier "What will it take to get you in?"
2. Outlier states in a single, short, declarative sentence the precise modification required to be in.
3. Proposer offers to adopt the outlier's changes, or withdraws the proposal.

Notes

1. If the outlier's changes are simple, then a simple *Eye Check* is performed to determine if everyone is still in.
2. If the outlier's changes are complex, the proposer must withdraw the current proposal, and then submit a new proposal that incorporates the outlier's changes.
3. If the outlier begins to say why he voted No, or anything other than what it will take to get him in, then the proposer must interrupt the outlier with "What will it take to get you in?"

9. Perfection Game

The *Perfection Game* will support you in your desire to aggregate the best ideas with helpful criticism. Use it whenever you desire to improve something you've created.

Steps

1. Perfectee performs an act or presents an object for perfection, optionally saying "begin" and "end" to notify the Perfector of the start and end of the performance.
2. Perfector rates the value of the performance or object on a scale of 1 to 10 based on how much value he has to add.
3. Perfector says, "What I liked about the performance or object was X," where X accounts for each point given.
4. Perfector offers the improvements to the performance or object required for it to be rated a 10 by saying, "To make it a ten, you would have to do X."

Commitments

1. Accept criticism without argument.
2. Give only positive criticisms; what you like and what it would take to "give it a 10."
3. Abstain from mentioning what you don't like or being negative in other ways.
4. Withhold points only if you can think of improvements.
5. Use ratings that reflect a scale of improvement.

Notes

1. A rating of ten means you are unable to add value, and a rating of one means you can add essentially all the value of the object with your ideas. If you cannot give ideas to make an object better, you must give it a 10, even if you don't like it.
2. The important information to transmit in the *Perfection Game* improves the performance or object. For example "The ideal sound of a finger snap for me is one that is crisp, has sufficient volume and startles me somewhat. To get a 10, you would have to increase your crispness."
3. As a perfectee, you may only ask questions to clarify or gather more information for

improvement. If you disagree with the ideas given to you, simply don't include them.

10. Personal Alignment

Personal Alignment helps you penetrate deeply into your desires, and find what's blocking you from getting what you want. Use it to discover, articulate and achieve what you want. The quality of your alignment will be equal to the quality of your results.

Steps

1. **Want.** Answer the question: "What specifically do I *want*?"
2. **Block.** Ask yourself, "What is *blocking* me from having what I want?"
3. **Strength.** Figure out what would remove this block by asking yourself "What *strength* – if I had it – would shatter this *block* of mine?"
4. **Shift.** Pretend the *strength* you identified is actually what you want.
5. **Again.** Repeat steps 2 to 4 until this process consistently yields a *strength* that is powerful enough to shatter your blocks and get you what you originally thought you wanted.
6. **Done.** Now write down a *personal alignment statement* in the form "I want [*strength*]."
7. **Signal/Response/Assignment.** Create a *signal* to let others know when you are practicing your *alignment* and a *response* they can give you to demonstrate support. E.g. "When I say/do, 'X' will you say/do, 'Y?'" Optionally, turn it into an assignment by saying you will do X a certain number of times per day, where X equals an activity that requires you to practice living your alignment.
8. **Evidence.** Write, in specific and measurable terms, the long-term *evidence* of practicing this *alignment*.
9. **Help.** Ask each member of your group for help. They help by giving the response you would like when you give your signal that you are practicing your alignment.

Commitments

1. Identify *blocks* and *wants* that are specific and personal.
2. Identify *blocks* that, if solved, would radically increase your effectiveness in life, work and play.
3. Choose a *strength* that is about you and preferably one word long.
4. Choose a *signal* and *response* you will initiate several times per day that is positive, meaningful to you, and looks different than normal behavior.
5. Ask for help from people who know you, and/or know *alignments*.
6. Identify *evidence* that is measurable by an objective third party.

Notes

1. A personal *block* is something you find within yourself. It does not refer to circumstances or other people. Assume that you could have had what you *want* by now, that your *block* is a myth that somehow deprives you of your full potential.
2. A *strength* is a personal and observable characteristic, virtue, or power.
3. Identify both immediate and long-term *evidence* of your *alignment*. Write down results that start now (or very soon) as well as results you'll see at least 5 or more years in the future.
4. The most successful *responses* are unique, memorable, dramatic in some way, and often flamboyant. (However, a moment's ritual silence in a usually noisy environment is always a vivid response).
5. When members of a group are completing their *personal alignments* together (asking each

other for help), the final step of the process is most powerful if done as a ceremony.

6. If you are struggling with figuring out what you want then adopt the alignment "I want self-awareness." There is no case where increased self-awareness would not be beneficial.

11. Investigate

Investigate allows you to learn about a phenomenon that occurs in someone else. Use it when an idea or behavior someone is presenting seems poor, confusing, or simply interesting.

Steps

1. Act as if you were a detached but fascinated inquirer, asking questions until your curiosity is satisfied or you no longer want to ask questions.

Commitments

1. Ask well-formed questions.
2. Ask only questions that will increase your understanding.
3. Ask questions only if the subject is engaged and appears ready to answer more.
4. Refrain from offering opinions.
5. Do not ask leading questions where you think you know how they will answer.

Notes

1. Avoid theorizing about the subject or providing any sort of diagnosis.
2. Consider using the following forms for your questions:
 - i. *What about X makes you Y Z?*
 - ii. *Would you explain a specific example?*
 - iii. *How does X go when it happens?*
 - iv. *What is the one thing you want most from solving X?*
 - v. *What is the biggest problem you see regarding X now?*
 - vi. *What is the most important thing you could do right now to help you with Y?*
3. Ineffective queries include:
 - i. Questions that lead or reflect an agenda.
 - ii. Questions that attempt to hide an answer you believe is true.
 - iii. Questions that invite stories.
 - iv. Questions that begin with "why."
4. Stick to your intention of gathering more information.
5. If you feel that you will explode if you can't say what's on your mind, you shouldn't speak at all. Consider checking your intention or Check Out.

LICENSE AGREEMENT

The Core Protocols V. 1.0

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Jim and Michele McCarthy, www.mccarthy-tech.com

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