



January 2021

## AI's Video Chat

In this ABC I would like to introduce you to a new, additional version of the ABC. It is a *live* edition of the ABC to be held on Thursday, February 11, at 6 PM. with the expectation of others to follow. Let me explain a little about from where it originated and what its intent and purpose is. That said, I do hope you will take a bit of your precious time and join us.

Over the many years of being a scientist and professor my students have asked me a number of questions as they generously took the time to attempt to get to know me better. Some of those questions were more professional in nature (or at least I assumed them to be), and therefore were relatively easy to respond to. But many of them were more personal, and thus far more difficult. I will admit that the first time I was asked such a question I was a little surprised; I could not imagine anything less interesting than the personal thoughts of a scientist/professor.

The most common professional questions were "What are you reading?" or "What would you recommend I read if I am particularly interested in this topic?" Those type of questions were both frequent enough and relatively easy to respond to, and ultimately led to the original *ABC – AI's Book Club*. As we moved further into personal development, however, the questions became much more personal in nature – and admittedly, much more challenging for me. They were challenging in the sense that I was no longer being asked about "facts and figures" but rather about "thoughts and feelings" and, of particular importance, my thoughts and feelings. In my teaching of neuroscience and its application to behavior I have always maintained that it was important to focus on the research and what research would say. In that way, I felt comfortable that students could easily verify what they were learning by simply Googling it and doing a little basic research. But, in reality, their wonderful questions had little to do with the science – again, the "facts and figures" – but rather with its application. Implicit many times within those questions, was the real question: "How are you applying this in your life?"

As guest speakers came into my class, I saw how students reacted to the speaker's response to those "application" type questions. The very best, the most genuine, of those speakers were very willing to get into "Who they were" as opposed to "What they were" questions. They even seemed to enjoy it. Again, please understand that the vast majority of us when asked "*Who we are*" take the easy route (myself included) by giving our *What* response (university degrees, job title, company, years of experience, etc. ...). As I reflected back over the years on the undergraduate classes I taught, when I allowed myself to be more personal by at least touching upon those "Who am I" questions, the student response was always positive. Admittedly, the process often made me feel a bit uncomfortable – again, not for the subject matter as much as it was a deviation from my inherent scientist's "facts and figures" mentality.

Recently, an Italian business magazine asked me to do an interview. The first question was predictable: "Tell us who you are, tell us a little bit about yourself?" After some thought, I realized that we ask the very same question in our MBA interviews. But in the candidate's response we are looking to sort through the typical "What I do" response (the easy, expected response) in search of the information we were really looking for: the "Who am I?" information. (The basic criteria for evaluation is, in a sense: If I found myself seated next to this person on an 8-hour overseas flight, would I survive the conversation, or the lack of it as the case may be?). Successful candidates are better at getting into that either by themselves or through our prompting. I made the spontaneous decision (I must have been having either a very good or very bad day) and decided to see if I could respond more completely to the "who am I" question. After reading my response, the CIMBA Staff here was resolute in bringing this same information to the ABC in the newsletter. But they are both creative and persistent, and decided that since the discussion was personal in nature, it should also be delivered in person. When I inquired if they meant it was going to be filmed, they said "No, in person, live" (or as my favorite Montalbano character, Catarella, would say "personally in person"). While I initially resisted, they were persistent (Don't you agree they should at least let me win once in a while?).

Their first challenge was the name. Should we just make this part of the current ABC and let it function under the same name? If so, should we at least give it a little different twist, such as *Al's Broadcast Club?* or *Al's Blog Club?* An early favorite among the CIMBA Team is *Al's Video Chat*. But since many of the inquiries would likely involve some of the tools and techniques used within our development system and the research surrounding it as applied to myself, is it not essentially "Al's Book" with those in attendance being the Club? The CIMBA Staff will decide shortly.

As to the topic, the CIMBA team (along with a number of students they refused to name), would like me to talk about my personal *Bigger-than-Self* Goals and *Basic Beliefs and Values*. They would like to hear how those Goals and Basic Beliefs influenced the development of CIMBA and its location in Italy. My intent is that by sharing mine, it will make it easier for you to develop your own. So, bring your questions, concerns, comments, and personal stories and experiences and we will all learn something about each other together.

See you then!