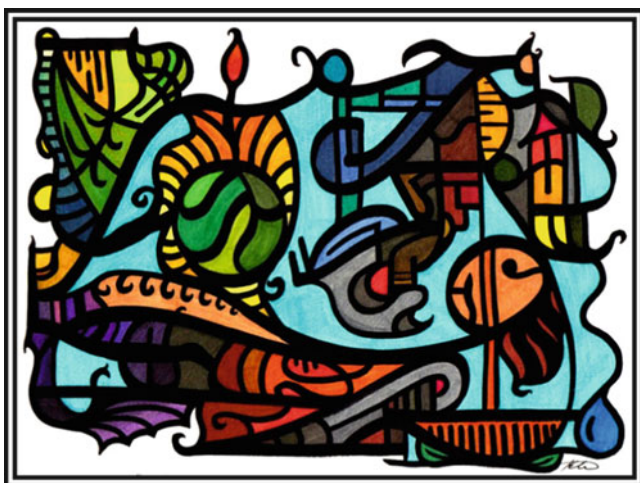


Eric A. Kreuter

Fostering Resilience for Loss and Irrelevance

 Springer

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Foreword by Sherry Reiter

Afterword by Lawrence Allen Steckman

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My deep gratitude goes to “Rex,” who contributed his case study to this project. Rex, a most respectable and important human being, deserves much honor for readily agreeing to share his life history and personal insight on the topics of this book for the expressed purpose of helping others. It is to him that this project is dedicated. Whereas Rex views himself as “survivalistic,” in at least some important respects, he is very much striving and thriving. This is evidenced in the fact that Rex has managed to not only survive living and staying healthy on a very modest budget, but he continues to learn, adapt, and reshape his attitudes, beliefs, habits, communication, and determined spirit. As such, Rex is not stuck in any preconceived domain or relegated to a life of failure. He is free to explore new horizons. He is unencumbered by his rather difficult past. With coaching, Rex moves forward and does so impressively. After approximately eight months of discussions with Rex about the dilemmas facing his life, mainly unemployment, Rex

landed a good job. As he would say, this places him back on the “game-board” of life. It is my hope and prayer that Rex continues to discover new roads to success in his life. He has immense talent with much promise to become a writer, presenter, or just about anything else he chooses. I applaud Rex for his steadfast courage and joyous spirit, and acceptance of new concepts through a coaching relationship, which enables him to move past adversity.

Foreword

An ancient teaching tale depicts a man whose pants have two pockets. In one pocket is a note on which is written, “The world was created just for you.” In the other pocket, there is a note on which is written, “You are but dust.” Which is the truth? Are we totally irrelevant, or do we experience ourselves at the center of the universe? How many of us waver between the two extremes? Many climb the pole only to be knocked down by the winds of change—loss, illness, and trauma.

Sometimes we begin again, although, like Sisyphus, we may feel a hopeless sense of futility. We may “keep keepin’ on,” but feel emotionally, morally, or spiritually bereft. Or, at the other extreme, we are successful in achieving our concrete goals, and yet our satisfaction is short-lived, because we suspect that something is missing.

Living in the age of technology, we are bombarded by forums of questions and answers. Search engines and social networks exist for those who seek advice and information; there are answers to questions we never dreamed of. However, the profound questions of human existence remain the same: *Who am I? What should I do? How can I be content or happy? What may I hope for?*

Erik Erikson writes extensively about the role of hope, and reminds us “Clinicians know that an adult who has lost all hope regresses into as lifeless a state as a living organism can sustain. But there is something, in the anatomy, even, of mature hope, which suggests that it is the most childlike of all ego qualities, and the most dependent for its verification on the charity of fate” (Erikson, p. 115).

Whereas numerous books have been written on loss, trauma, and resilience, too little has been written on relevance. The perception of our own relevance is instilled by our family of origin. If an individual does not experience relevance in one’s own family, then how can one expect to feel relevant in the world? A deficit from childhood and later life experiences will create an imbalance in the psychological ecosystem; it is sure to impact self-esteem, level of optimism, expectations of success, and one’s sense of power in the world.

Enter the psychotherapist, the mentor, the coach, all of whom become major agents of transformation. Dr. Irvin Yalom (1998) stated that the therapeutic agent

facilitates the “corrective recapitulation of the family” (p. 18). Or, from a less analytic viewpoint, the re-balancing of the psychological ecosystem occurs with re-moralization, acceptance, and support. How can the helping professional activate the client’s sense of efficacy and resilience?

Dr. Eric Kreuter addresses the missing piece of the puzzle. All people have a deep need for connection, community, and creativity. These three elements contribute to resilience. Without connection and community, we are isolated. Without creativity, in the largest sense of the word, we are unable to re-configure our circumstances or transform our relationships, situations, and emotions.

Eric Kreuter, a mentor, coach, and expert in forensic litigation, brings a unique contribution to the world of psychotherapy, mentoring, and coaching. He shares his philosophy, which is based on psychology and spirituality. He embodies this philosophy in his egalitarian work with others, as exemplified by his work with the client Rex, female prisoners, his community and organizational involvement, and, last but not least, personal relationships.

Dr. Kreuter’s approach is based upon a respectful relationship, and an ongoing dialogue that emerges where questions and conflicts can be explored without judgment. These dialogues culminate in a practical game plan or strategy for change that is concrete and can be tracked. As we see in the case study of Rex, Eric’s warm and genuine style elicits the positive aspects of his client. Martin Buber writes, “Man wishes to be confirmed in his language by man, and wishes to have a presence in the being of the other...Secretly and bashfully he watches for a YES which allows him to be and which can come to him only from another human being” (Buber, 1965, p. 71).

How can we categorize this approach? Perhaps we can’t. Dr. Kreuter is eclectic: he draws upon existential philosophy, interpersonal therapy, gestalt therapy, narrative therapy, and poetry therapy. His approach is reminiscent of the Rogerian concepts of genuine modeling, positive regard, and unconditional acceptance. He interweaves focused attentiveness and positive psychology with practical problem-solving to help individuals to reposition themselves and create a new relationship with themselves, others, and the world at large.

Dr. Kreuter stresses the importance of all points of connection including friends, family, community and the arts. He utilizes a multitude of therapeutic modalities. The arts, particularly journaling, poetry and script-making, utilize image and word to “imagine the real,” and to connect self to self, other, and the larger community.

Poet David Whyte has written a brilliant poem about resilience called *The Journey* (Whyte, 1988, p. 37). When the blackened bones of loss and trauma are left and the fire has gone out, it may be possible for someone to write “something new in the ashes” of a life. Just when the “No” of a life seems irrevocable, therapists, mentors, and coaches have the privilege of activating the powerful “Yes” that lives within.

Remember the allegory of the two conflicting messages in our pockets? Both messages are misleading. We are neither dust nor the center of the universe. Each life is unique and each person’s unique gifts must be encouraged to unfold. In order to find the one line already written inside one’s heart, Whyte writes: *Sometimes everything/has to be/enscribed across/the heavens*. On the contrary, sometimes all it takes is one humane professional who can intentionally and skillfully assist a

human being in reclaiming dignity, motivation, and the belief that one's life is valued, significant, and, beyond all doubt, relevant.

The creative coping response of writing may be used in several different ways. As an expressive tool, it may be used to complete traumatic responses. It is a way of creatively clearing one's way through the brushfire, and discovering a path forward, past the place that we felt unable to go. By finishing the poem and by telling the story, we complete our frozen and disoriented responses. The observing ego of the writer assists in reflection and harnessing wisdom and greater objectivity. New perspectives may appear from this "creative righting"; the goals include emotional self-regulation, the reclamation of voice, empowerment, and enhanced creativity and vitality. It also may be used as a simple recording device to track progress, setbacks, and goals. Thus when a person finds two conflicting messages left in his pockets—one suggesting he is everything, and the other suggesting he is nothing, perhaps it is time to turn to poets who are also spiritually grounded and professionally trained, like Eric Kreuter.

Clinicians know that an adult who has lost all hope regresses into as lifeless a state as a living organism can sustain. But there is something, in the anatomy even, of mature hope, which suggests that it is the most childlike of all ego-qualities, and the most dependent for its verification on the charity of fate. Hope is the enduring belief in the attainability of fervent wishes, in spite of the dark urges and rages which mark the beginning of existence. "The fact is that no person can live, no ego remain, intact without hope and will" (Erikson, 1964, p 118). Anxiety, fury, depression, and frustration aside, if hope endures, then possibility exists. Whether we call it hope, optimism, or "positive psychology," the future is no longer bleak.

Hope must be tied to the life of the imagination, for the nature of hope is to imagine what has not yet come to pass but still is possible. To use an expression from Martin Buber (p. 110): "hope imagines the real," thus distinguishing this form of imagining from the unreal absorptions of day dreams and fantasy whose object is transient and solitary self-aggrandizement. Moreover, in addition to reckoning with the real, which is still only possibility, such imagining must claim and be claimed by the imagination of another if it is to fulfill itself in hope. Since "hope cannot be achieved alone," imagination must be admitted to be dialogic in character.

Silence is an integral element of communication; in its absence, words rich in content cannot exist. In silence, we are better able to listen to and understand ourselves; ideas come to birth and acquire depth; we understand with greater clarity what it is we want to say and what we expect from others; and we choose how to express ourselves. By remaining silent we allow the other person to speak, to express him or herself; and we avoid being tied simply to our own words and ideas without them being adequately tested. In this way, space is created for mutual listening, and deeper human relationships become possible. It is often in silence, for example, that we observe the most authentic communication taking place between people who are in love: gestures, facial expressions and body language are signs by which they reveal themselves to each other. Joy, anxiety, and suffering can all be communicated in silence—indeed it provides them with a particularly powerful mode of expression. Silence, then, gives rise to even more active communication, requiring sensitivity

and a capacity to listen that often makes manifest the true measure and nature of the relationships involved. When messages and information are plentiful, silence becomes essential if we are to distinguish what is important from what is insignificant or secondary. Deeper reflection helps us to discover the links between events that at first sight seem unconnected, to make evaluations, to analyze messages; this makes it possible to share thoughtful and relevant opinions, giving rise to an authentic body of shared knowledge.

The process of communication nowadays is largely fueled by questions in search of answers. Search engines and social networks have become the starting point of communication for many people who are seeking advice, ideas, information, and answers. In our time, the Internet is becoming ever more a forum for questions and answers—indeed, people today are frequently bombarded with answers to questions they have never asked and to needs of which they were unaware. If we are to recognize and focus upon the truly important questions, then silence is a precious commodity that enables us to exercise proper discernment in the face of the surcharge of stimuli and data that we receive. Amid the complexity and diversity of the world of communications, however, many people find themselves confronted with the ultimate questions of human existence: Who am I? What can I know? What ought I to do? What may I hope?

For this to happen, it is necessary to develop an appropriate environment, a kind of ‘ecosystem’ that maintains flexibility. It is important to affirm those who ask these questions, and to open up the possibility of a profound dialogue, by means of words and interchange, but also through the call to silent reflection, something that is often more eloquent than a hasty answer and permits seekers to reach into the depths of their being and open themselves to the path toward knowledge that God has inscribed in human hearts.

Ultimately, this constant flow of questions demonstrates the restlessness of human beings, ceaselessly searching for truths, of greater or lesser import, that can offer meaning and hope to their lives. Men and women cannot rest content with a superficial and unquestioning exchange of skeptical opinions and experiences of life—all of us are in search of truth and we share this profound yearning today more than ever: “When people exchange information, they are already sharing themselves, their view of the world, their hopes, and their ideals” (Lynch, 1965, p. 37).

Sherry Reiter, Ph.D., LCSW

Preface

The only real wisdom is knowing you know nothing.
Socrates

Why is this book necessary? I found myself contemplating the main problem of loss of relevancy and how resilience might be further developed. These thoughts occurred to me while I was moving on with my own life and observing others, whether in my own family, my work unit, or out on the streets. Eventually, I opened up my introspective analytical thoughts to weave in the thoughts and inspirational comments from trusted friends. As a trained researcher and survivor of the process of completing a doctoral dissertation, I began to conduct a multifaceted process of absorption of what others had to say on the topic and to consider what else needed to be said.

Loss is a phenomenon experienced at some point in life by every being. It is also experienced by nonhumans, such as a deer can certainly experience sudden annihilation, but, absent a cerebral cortex, the concepts involved lose their interpretive value, but no offense to the deer is intended. It may involve the death of a loved one, friend, or pet. As well, the concept of “complex loss” involves a person who experiences the loss of a loved one and does not work through the traditional steps of grieving, staying stuck in the state of grief. It can also occur as a result of a casualty, such as theft, accident, or absentmindedness. Loss can involve a person’s employment status or social status. A professional golfer may lose a major tournament by a single putt, which could equate to the loss of hundreds of thousands of dollars in prize money not to mention the elusive gleaming trophy and the lost opportunity to bask in the limelight. At the Masters Golf Tournament held annually in Augusta, Georgia, the winner receives a much-coveted green jacket. This jacket is a symbol of success. But for the golfer coming in second or further down in the pecking order, there is no green jacket. So, then, the jacket becomes the symbol of success and the non-attainment thereof becomes the bane of the golfers who fail to achieve such important attire. We create many types of “green jackets” in our lives, leading to psychological vulnerability.

Resilience is a characteristic pointing to the ability of a person to recover from loss. It is the ability of someone to move past disappointment or failure or upset (Diane Allerdycce, Ph.D., April 28, 2012, personal communication). Some of us bounce back quickly; others languish and remain suffering, even becoming partially psychologically disabled. Returning to the example of professional golf, we can consider the case of Tiger Woods. He is, perhaps, among the greatest golfers in history. Because of personal issues, his prowess on the tournament circuit has waned. He is attempting to make a remarkable comeback. As such, his efforts testify to his resiliency. Relevance is the degree of a person feeling connected to their primary and important components of their life. People carry complex internalizations of their internal sense of relevancy. Situations occur during the span of life to alter this particular sense.

Humans are complex and, as such, require evolving theories to explain behavior and to understand the many psychological mechanisms that either build resilience or lead to the loss of important relationships or connections. Such loss can lead to an erosion of a person's self-perception of their relevance. Irrelevance is damaging to the sanctity of a person's self-esteem and self-confidence and can serve to derail the momentum of a person's life. This book attempts to explore this subject through an illustrative case study (Rex) and appendices, which include a stage play based on my work with female prisoners. All writings are representative of creative constructs to forge a sustaining foundation of relevance and resilience.

I discovered much written on resiliency and connectedness. Likewise, plenty of content has been published on loss, including complex loss, as well as grief, the process of grieving, and the momentum of moving forward. I talked with many people about resilience. "We all have resiliency built into our nature" (Robert Fechter, June 20, 2012, personal communication). Mr. Fechter is, in my opinion, a very resilient person. He and I have discussed the thesis of this book and he agrees not everyone can survive the constant psychological onslaught brought on by life's dilemmas, disappointments, and upsets. In a way, can we all field every curve-ball thrown at us? Therefore, I maintain that most people can be helped, at least to some meaningful degree, to alter their self-perception and to develop new tools necessary to evoke greater happiness in their lives.

The material presented, including the expressive writing found in Appendix A and B, has been integrated with an important case study of an individual ("Rex" for the purpose of anonymity). Rex's life history and the exploration of resiliency and relevancy, determined through regular dialogue between us, weave nicely into the theoretical text, providing the reader with a lasting example of how the presented material can play out with a willing human subject. It is one of my primary objectives with this book to provide therapists with additional tools to incorporate into their therapeutic practices in order to help people who have difficulty with low resilience or who communicate feelings of irrelevance.

Eric Anton Kreuter, Ph.D.

Abstract

Resilience and irrelevance are constructs joined together in this book as a novel way to explain each distinct, yet interrelated, phenomenon. An attempt is made to show how a person can build up one construct to reduce the impact of the other. While not a universal possibility, this book suggests ways to guide a suffering person in order to catalyze hidden inner strengths and to develop new coping mechanisms through responsible coaching. Illustrative examples provide a unique view of the concepts covered in this material. I draw upon my collective life experience, philosophical interests, and ongoing research to assemble the information contained herein. Though not meant to provide highly clinical interpretations of the subject matter, the text is entirely designed to inspire thoughts and counterpoint useful for students, therapists, and individuals who may choose to explore their own issues without the need to overlay excess pathology onto the meaning behind the suffering of the person. By exploring interior and exterior issues in one volume, the subject matter can be viewed from several perspectives. I discuss the potential for most, if not all, persons who suffer debilitation of their life endeavors to be helped through courage and creativity to explore the rich material of the past that might contain virtue for the present and future. My experience as a career coach, mentor, teacher, and workshop leader have provided me with a wealth of experiences to share, offering a wide view of an important topic. Faculty and therapists are encouraged to consider the potential of poetic expression and creative writing as means to unlock the pent-up feelings and negative energy often associated with suffering. The messages and illustrations are meant to inspire deeper thoughts of both the chaos in a life troubled by loss of relevance, as well as hope for betterment.

Commentary

Kenneth M. Moltner, Esq.

A book cannot just have meaning for the author, especially a book such as this. Writing should have purpose for its audience. And it can, in fact, maybe should, be a catharsis for the reader and the writer/contributors (it certainly was for me). It should speak to all of us who read it.

In this book, Dr. Kreuter has brought a wealth of experiences and philosophies into play to allow each of us to decide for ourselves the proper path to resolve the conflicts that inhere in our own feelings of loss of relevance. One size does not, and cannot, fit all. That is the beauty, and challenge, of life. And, I suggest, the poignant point of this book. In the final analysis, we have to define our own reality—we have to land on our own two feet—and forge our path to achieve our goals. Drawing from the experience and thoughts of others can guide our inner resiliency. But we are the ones that ultimately make the determinations and are, ultimately, responsible for ourselves.

That is why this book is so important, because it proffers not only an explanation, but a foundation for self-reflection and hopefully building a stronger foundation of resiliency. Such foundation is embedded in real-life experiences and time-tested principles that are brought together to form a congruent whole. A good book can teach. From a good book we can learn. From this book we can learn at least something about ourselves, as well as others.

I suggest, however, that neither this book, nor any such book, can provide all of the answers (and this book does not pretend to). This is not a book about how to build a toy or fix a car, it is a book about providing us with tools to help build resiliency and help fix the inner self—building blocks toward the answer. There are step-by-step instructions to build a toy or fix a car because the process is set, the means to achieve the goal, and the pieces with which to achieve it, are fixed. The human psyche is individualized, bombarded by many influences, and affected by at least some of those. The polar opposite of being set in stone, the human psyche, as is life, is fluid. It changes, and people must adapt. Because each person's life experience is different, this work will have a different meaning to each person, as it should. But the important

point is that it will have meaning, and, whether in small or large part, resonate with all of us in some way. We should be able to take something from it. It is my fervent hope and belief that this book has satisfied those somewhat lofty goals, but, particularly when dealing with the human psyche, of critical importance.

Acknowledgments

Without the assistance of a number of people, this book would have been much more difficult, if even possible. Through their efforts, my very rough ideas ran through willing filters, distilling them into reasonable ideas fit for this presentation. While not every suggestion was followed, many were. It is to these special people that I wish to express heartfelt appreciation and unabashed acknowledgment of their individual intellectual prowess and fortitude over the time period from idea to completion of each morsel, which, together with other morsels, evolved into a unified soup known as a book.

Primary appreciation is expressed to my dear wife, Meryle Faith Kreuter. She has been my inspiration for two decades. Her emotional support and intellectual guidance throughout the process of writing, editing, and completion of the manuscript has made all the difference. As a Licensed Clinical Social Worker in private practice, she exemplifies the essence of a dedicated professional. My own sense of caring for others has been influenced by her sensitivity toward others, especially those in need of help.

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Sherry Reiter, Ph.D., LCSW, is a clinical social worker, registered poetry and drama therapist, and mentor. As director of The Creative Righting Center, she trains helping professionals to incorporate creative methods in their work. She has taught at Touro College (Teacher of the Year, 2009) and Hofstra University for the past three decades. *Writing Away the Demons: Stories of Creative Coping Through Transformative Writing* (North Star Press, 2010) focuses on the use of writing for psychological survival.



Kenneth M. Moltner, Esq. is counsel to a New York City law firm, practicing commercial litigation and matrimonial law. He has presented Continuing Legal Education lectures to attorneys at the New York City Bar Association and the New York County Lawyer's Association including on New York State litigation practice. He is an adjunct professor who teaches a continuing education course in litigation at Hunter College and has taught at New York University's SCPS. Mr. Moltner is a graduate of New York University, Phi Beta Kappa with Honors in Politics, and obtained his J.D. from New York University School of Law. His community experience includes service as a former chair of a Manhattan Community Board, member of the board

of a not-for-profit organization, and a Special Master for a New York State Supreme Court Justice, among other positions. He is also a recipient of a New York City Council Proclamation for Community Service.



Lawrence Allen Steckman, Esq. holds summa cum laude degrees in classical music performance and philosophy and pursued doctoral studies at Columbia University in philosophy where he received his M.Phil. He graduated law school with honors and has been identified by Super Lawyers Magazine as one of New York’s “super lawyers” in securities and business litigation. Mr. Steckman practices law full time, has published more than 40 works on the law and is involved in entrepreneurial projects in the energy and commodities sectors. The poems included herein are from his unpublished works.



Chris Kreuter (Artwork), the eldest son of the author, enjoys making things above all else. He has published numerous drawings, comic books, board games, and more. The process used to create the abstract drawings throughout the book involved spur-of-the-moment expression. This technique often reveals thoughts and emotions

hidden deep in the psyche. His work complements the subject matter of this book in the sense that one can develop a sense of order and rhythm among the chaos of the present moment.



Cathleen M. Kreuter, MS-MFT, is a recent graduate from Mercy College in Dobbs Ferry, NY. She has a Master of Arts degree in marriage and family therapy and graduated with distinction. As a volunteer with Cross-Cultural Solutions, she helps educate potential volunteers about traveling internationally. She is currently interested in pursuing a Doctorate in the field of psychology, but would first like to gain experience in the field. She is an avid scrap-booker and poet and enjoys sewing.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Our species is defined by the tools that we use (psychocommercials.com, 2011).

The subjective reality of the socialized being can be transformed. “To be in society already entails an ongoing process of modification of subjective reality” (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 156). We live in the mix with those we know, those we will encounter, those we wish to encounter, those we would prefer to avoid, and the vast majority of those we shall never know, certainly not intimately. We exist as individuals, but blend into the ever-changing patterns of communities the fabrics of cultures and the tapestries of civilizations. We are, as individuals, unique, of course, but have commonality with others. It is the commonality that serves to form bonds between people. We want as much to be unique as we want to be part of a collective. With some people, we have solidarity. With others, we have conflict and, at times, we experience difficulties forming new relationships. Sometimes we experience internal conflict, and sometimes the experience of conflict enrages us or repulses us to move in a different direction. A world without interaction with others, except for respecting purposeful cloistered periods of isolation from interaction with others for internal reflective thinking and prayerful meditation, would be shallow and pointless. In a way, we appear as representations in the hearts and minds of others. Hence, validation, acknowledgement, and constructive criticism are all nurturing and important to provide stimulus for interpersonal growth. “The self does not exist except as a social construct” (Dr. Mark Schulman, president of Saybrook University—San Francisco, CA, personal communication, June 9, 2012). Even our own patterns of communication must be examined to identify any specific notions of defeatism. We can talk our way into things and out of things. Reshaping negative patterns replaced by more positive themes will, doubtlessly, aid in the transformation of the inner capacities of the individual.

This theme overlaps with J. L. Moreno’s (1889–1974) theories about sociometry, a field that addresses the phenomenon of rapport, who attracts or repels us, whom do we find to be irrelevant to our lives. Sociometry, as developed by Moreno (1943),

is a theory that suggests "...a measure can be developed for a deeper understanding of society and a key to the treatment of its ills" (p. 299). According to Adam Blatner, M.D.: "Relevance is a very intriguing theme: I happen to be very gifted, graced, clear about my own relevance, having built several quasi-mythic narratives around it, and drawn from socially-approved role definitions: The quality of feedback from wife and adult children make a difference" (Adam Blatner, personal communication, May 20, 2012b). Blatner (2012a) feels that "50% of people have low to weak connections in the following areas:

- Meaning of their work, contributing to the world being a better place (morale);
- Meaning of their relationships, feeling helpful to valued others;
- Feeling that one's participation in certain social groups, clubs, activities, is valued, and that one is missed; that one's services are appreciated."

The too busy quality that results in lack of strokes, thank yous, expressions of appreciation, makes for the harshness of urban life. Small-town or regional habits of greetings, acknowledgements, courtesy, promotes slight surges of relevance. Relevance in turn is a component of self-hood. (Adam Blatner, personal communication, May 20, 2012b)

In a lecture by Robert Bellah (1986), he quoted Alexis-Charles-Henri Clerel de Tocqueville (1805–1859), a French political thinker and historian who said that our fathers only knew about egoism (an excessive or exaggerated sense of self-importance):

Now we have this new thing: individualism. "Individualism," and this is one of the places where he comes as close as he ever does to defining it, is a calm and considered feeling which disposes each citizen to isolate himself from the mass of his fellows and withdraw into the circle of family and friends; with this little society formed to his taste, he gladly leaves the greater society to look out after itself. (p. 1)

"Our life has a distinct inner aspect in addition to the outer. Many people are so involved in outer things that they hardly know there is an inner, let alone how to explore it and what is there" (Van Dusen, 2001, p. 108). Exploring is a necessary first step in order to attempt true and lasting transformation. Washburn (2000) states: If wisdom cannot be taught, it can be pursued. And this, of course, is the purpose of disciplines like yogic concentration leading to absorption, Buddhist mindfulness leading to insight, and Christian prayer leading to contemplation (p. 207). Transformation itself is not acquired through one-stop shopping, but through the complexity of dynamic change in permanent and significant ways, leading to improvements in a person's lifestyle, effectiveness, resilience, and connected relevance to the world of which they are an equal part. But, before we attempt to fix anything wrong, we must openly explore the concept of loss and how loss can undermine a person's life. Today, people are in a state of flux. "It almost seems as if modern man, and especially modern educated man, is in a perpetual state of doubt about the nature of himself and of the universe in which he lives" (Berger, 1963, p. 50).

According to Berger and Luckmann (1966), "Knowledge of everyday life is structured in terms of relevances. Some of these are determined by immediate pragmatic interests of mine, others by my general situation in society" (p. 45). There are endless connections possible in most lives. We can take advantage of luck and hard work, or

we can ignore and move past the dynamic process of connecting. Sometimes we can revisit connections forgone or lost, and sometimes we experience failure to seize the moment, equaling loss. Either way, we can grow. The purposeful or unplanned loss of connections, such as an old college buddy, can make room for new connections more suitable to the person we have become. We are not meant to collect people or continue each and every relationship we form in our lives.

As the flower that goes unpicked from its bed survives to be adored by others, so too the love we scorn or are unable to secure remains available for others. The same is true for jobs. Not every grape must be picked from the vine as we are not alone in the world and others are hungry. We may, though, need to examine our foregone opportunities to help others if altruism and goodwill are important to us. Perhaps the greatest measure of the resilient person is one who helps another become better, expending personal energy, willingly, to serve another human being. Perhaps a person who is lacking resilience may be less inclined to extend their energy toward helping others.

The construct of relevancy can be applied to how people live, work, and form relationships to other people as well as to institutions. Fromm (2006) wrote that people care about how to be loved and how to be lovable. “In pursuit of this aim they follow several paths. One, which is especially used by men, is to be successful, to be as powerful and rich as the social margin of one’s position permits” (p. 1). Often, during everyday common occurrences in the average life, circumstances are encountered that impact positively or negatively on our interior sense of relevancy.

The phenomenon of loss is not always clear. Boss (1999) defines ambiguous loss as an unclear loss that defies closure. “For many, the psychological family in our hearts and minds is as important for assessing stress and maintaining resiliency as the physical family we live with” (Boss, 2006, pp. 1–2).

Resilience can be developed on a deeper level. “Resiliency is a constant and positive adaptive trait” (p. 27). Boss (2006) defines resiliency as “...the ability to regain one’s energy after diversity drains it” (p. 27).

Therapists encounter people “searching to find themselves.” “Are they truly lost?” What may be happening is that people may be examining the world around them, looking for deeper answers, which may exist in the noir places in our lives where we fear to tread. Gergen (2000) sees “...significant signs of renewed commitment to these beliefs, signs that people are becoming increasingly concerned about their spiritual well-being, their moral values, and their emotional capacities, and wish to locate a solid, objective basis for centering themselves and giving direction to the future” (p. 199). According to Williams and Davis (2002), “Increasingly, we believe that life coaching is an evolutionary step beyond traditional therapy. We don’t believe traditional therapy will become extinct but will be more associated with the clients who need clinical services” (p. 40).

Relevancy is defined as a relative state of feeling of attachment to what, according to the individual, are the major elements of one’s life: family, career, peer network, social network, organizational affiliations, and other aspects of a full life. The word “connection” can be considered synonymous to relevancy. Erikson (1998)

wrote about biological processes upon which a human being's existence depends, which involve a body, the psychic process organizing individual experience by ego synthesis, and the communal process of the interdependence of persons (pp. 25–26). In studying these processes and how they may fail, the resulting phenomenon of “somatic tension, individual anxiety and social panic” (p. 26) can be studied. Such tension plays out, for example, in the form of self-doubt wherein the positive momentum of a life endeavor is derailed by the phenomenon of loss of courage (fear). At least some of the debilitation we face is caused directly by our own negative thinking.

Erikson referred to the efficacy of clinical work to approach human behavior in terms of one of these processes: “...for each item that proves relevant in one process is seen to give significance to, as it receives meaning from, items in the others” (p. 26). Erikson (1946) discussed the sense of identity having sources within the individual and is sustained by identifications with others in one's surrounding.

“As part of a social network, we transcend ourselves, for good or ill, and become a part of something much longer” (Christakis & Fowler, 2009, p. 30). Connectedness provides an important element of meaning in one's life. Isolated individuals may experience feelings of loneliness or abandonment. Living apart from others and separating oneself from the rhythm of society can develop into a person resembling the lifestyle of a hermit. Common reference points are lost. A person living this way can become distant from connected relevancies to their former world where they might have been connected to a family, a career, a social network, or other aspects of a cultured society.

Bennett-Goleman (2001) discussed the importance of relationships, which are the basic connections in people's lives:

An added benefit of breaking the chain of habit inside ourselves comes from how it reverberates through our relationships. Any relationship is a system, a web of causal interactions, so that how one person acts elicits a given reaction in the other person. Systems theorists and family therapists tell us that one way to alter a system is to change how one part of it acts, thus altering how other parts react. Changing ourselves, then, offers a way to break our relationships out of destructive ruts. (p. 258)

Even living within the bounds of a metropolitan city, a person can appear to be totally disconnected to anything civilized or normal. It may even be easier for a person to become lost in a large city as opposed to a small-town setting where, generally, everyone knows everyone else. An example is a mentally ill homeless person who wanders the streets, spending much of their time muttering about and scaring passersby. Such a person will, for the most part, be ignored. It is a sad sight. Few offer any help. Some stare or look disgusted. The person, while of course human, acts in a way that appears animalistic or dangerous. They have no discernible connections to anything relevant in polite society. At most they may seek refuge in a local shelter though many homeless actually prefer living on the streets. They will cause people to be afraid or to mock them. Food may be obtained from food pantries or begged for on the streets or, sometimes, rummaged out of trash cans. Industrious persons collect bottles and cans to recover deposits. A portion will be fortunate to find programs designed to help them acclimate back into society as fully functioning beings.

Others may resort to crime in order to survive as the lines of ethics may blur with each passing night on the cold, lonely streets, leading to increasing distortion between abiding the law and the desperate efforts to survive the harshness of life.

Such a soul is truly lost in society and appears not to have any relevance or connections. Their interiority (a person's mental or spiritual being) may consist of considerations of what they had or where they were at a previous point in life. Some will know how it was lost; others will have lost conscious awareness of their prior life. Some become involved with illegal narcotics and, as a result, will become even more lost, even to their own selves.

The connections between humans are vital components of maintaining relevance within. "In short, humans don't just live in groups, we live in networks" (Christakis & Fowler, 2009, p. 214). These authors feel that the connections people form have origin in the theory of natural selection. Further, the tendency of a person to be selfish may be a survival instinct. "If you have several opportunities to cooperate with the same person, one way to get that person to help you is to promise future cooperation" (p. 219). Belonging to groups may help a person to feel good about their life and give living greater purpose. Joining a group probably meant increased chances for survival. We can refer to animals that travel in herds. They do so not only for social reasons but also for protection. Similarly, some species travel in packs (e.g., wild dogs) because they can hunt as a group much more efficiently than on their own. As well, birds fly in formation as it is found that doing so increases their flying efficiency by over 10%. Regardless of the status of wealth, everyone needs some form of purpose in life in order to feel fulfilled. It is for this reason that extremely wealthy people continue to devote some time to charitable or civic organizations or other forms of philanthropy. Some wealthy people who have reached high levels of success in one aspect of life may try to reach similar success in other ventures: politics, for example. There is a marvelous aspect of human resiliency that drives even the most successful people to stay connected and continue to break new ground in different arenas.

"I take spirituality to involve the lived transformation of self and community toward fuller alignment with or expression of what is understood, within a given cultural context, to be 'sacred'" (Rothberg, 2000, p. 163). In a sense, people who have achieved critical mass in terms of material wealth may still hunger for ways to fulfill themselves.

Nelson (2000) stated:

Thus, the subtle contact of spiritual knowing emerges only when we let go of whatever ontological anchor that secures us and realize that reality is but one face of one looking glass and spiritual freedom is to consciously leap through it as an act of intentional creative play. (p. 80)

Attachment, as a distinct construct, is the depth of one's connections with others within a shared cause and the level of responsibility inherent in the role. For example, consider an individual who is president of a local charitable organization who is actively engaged with the membership, attends and chairs most meetings, contributes a meaningful amount of personal time to the activities of the organization, and

is well regarded as being critical to the continuance of the organization. Such a person has a deep positive attachment within one important element of his or her life. In this way, he/she feels relevant and, justifiably so, feels good about him or herself on a daily basis. He/she is likely viewed by society as relevant by any measure. The “spillover” effect of such positive feelings carry over to other aspects of the person’s life. These positive feelings enable a person to manage what Schneider and May (1995) referred to as the “primordial poles: freedom and limitation” (p. 5). Groups come and go. The Women’s Club of New Rochelle, NY, just celebrated its 100th anniversary as an organization. In its prime, which was during World War II, there were about 800 members. Membership dwindled to about 40 and, finally, was disbanded in 2012. Club President Mary Jane Reddington said: “It’s bittersweet, after 100 years, it’s very sad to have this happen because at one time, it really was the most prestigious organization in New Rochelle. We accomplished so much” (Rauch, 2012, p. 1).

The freedom to give juxtaposed to the limitation of one’s discretionary time creates a definite balance in a person’s life but also a certain tug and pull depending on the current day, and other conflicting obligations might be going on. Some people may become overprogrammed. They have agreed to be on too many committees and take on too much responsibility. This can lead either to burnout or laxity in the service to one or more organizations. One way to actualize a person’s inner spirit is for the person to be involved in causes, giving of the self in the service of others. However, it may also have a detrimental impact in other areas, such as problems balancing between activities with the inherent limitation of time. This delicate balance may need fine-tuning. Therefore, individuals who have the luxury of time to donate a portion of their time are well advised to commit where such commitment adds to the pleasure and satisfaction of life and not tear away at the fabric of life.

Bringing a humble presence to all endeavors can lead to a more authentic presentation of the self. This approach will help draw people in rather than repel them. Even when giving of one’s time, doing so humbly would likely enhance the reception of the gift by the receiver. In contrast, falsely portraying oneself to others can have devastating consequences. For example, overstating or overselling on job applications and interviews or boasting contrary to the evidence may backfire and cause problems. Humble people may do better by understating their backgrounds and, instead, letting people find out how good they are.

Bowlby’s attachment theory is related to the material presented in this book based on the premise that “...individual social behavior may be understood in terms of generic mental models of social relationships constructed by the individual. Attachment theory concerns the nature of early experiences of children and the impact of these experiences on aspects of later functioning of particular relevance to personality disorder” (Fonagy, 2003, p. 2). Bowlby’s (1980) theory suggests a universal human need to form close bonds. “Bowlby proposed that the quality of childhood relationships with the caregivers results in internal representations of working models of the self and others that provide prototypes for later social relationships” (p. 4). “Closely attached people who become separated through ambiguous loss suffer a trauma even greater after death. To regain resiliency, revising one’s attachment is essential” (Boss, 2006, p. 162).

People either tell the truth about their past history or they fabricate stories. They may be partially honest and partially mysterious when it comes to self-disclosure. In Bowlby's attachment theory:

There is a strong link between the kinds of attachment patterns found in infancy and the narratives people tell about themselves several years later. Put briefly, securely attached children tell coherent stories about their lives, however difficult they have been, while insecurely attached children have much greater difficulty in narrative competence, either dismissing their past or remaining bogged down in it, and in neither case being able to talk objectively about it. (Holmes, 2001, p. 9)

Humility applied to efforts toward accomplishment of goals will serve to help a person make a positive initial impression. Therefore, humility becomes intertwined when a person is portraying their accomplishments or abilities. The overly competitive environment facing people today may influence the competitive spirit beyond healthy levels. For example, a salesman who cheats by selling to customers outside of his defined geographic zone enriches himself at the expense of another salesperson. While the sale helps the company, the manner must be examined as a selfish act. Should the salesman's inappropriate act be detected 1 day and the commission reversed and the salesman then terminated for dishonesty, it is possible, then, that the person will develop a greater sense of humility and conscience. However, this is far from guaranteed. The top barrier to occupational fraud and abuse is a statement usually contained in an employee manual that states the company's disciplinary protocols for employee dishonesty.

How do we see ourselves in the world? Laing (1990) referred to a person who has a "...sense of his presence in the world as a real, alive, whole, and, in a temporal sense, a continuous person" (p. 39). He referred to such a person as "ontologically secure," a person who maintains a sense of his own and other people's personal reality and identity given the encounters of hazards of life (p. 39). A person with a serious illness may begin to feel isolated from their former friends and coworkers. Chronic pain and protocols for medical treatment may limit opportunities for interaction, adding to the suffering person's dilemma. Therefore, the previous feelings of ontological security begin to dissipate as the person slowly begins to realize that life has changed, perhaps dramatically. Friends come by less often, and when they do, visits are shorter and maybe awkward. Boredom can also become a factor for a person hospitalized or resident in a nursing facility. Connections to fellow patients/residents may not be so easy given the relative state of health (physical and/or mental) of the accessible individuals.

Perhaps even more severe is the waning frequency of visitors to the incarcerated person. Over time, even relatives may lengthen the time intervals between visits, especially if significant travel is involved. An impact of such decreased effort may be reduced connectedness between the inmate and others, including significant others. Over time, this erosion could lead to complete deadening of once vibrant connectedness.

George Herbert Mead (1863–1931), an American philosopher, sociologist, and psychologist, primarily affiliated with the University of Chicago, was one of several distinguished pragmatists. He is regarded as one of the founders of social psychology

and the American sociological tradition in general. Mead argued the antipositivistic view that the individual is a product of society or, more specifically, social interaction, stating that the *self* arises when the individual becomes an object to themselves. Mead further offered that we are objects first to other people, and secondarily we become objects to ourselves by taking the perspective of other people. Are we, then, any more than what we are in the eyes of others?

Alfred North Whitehead, (1861–1947), an English mathematician and philosopher, wrote on subjects, such as algebra, logic, foundations of mathematics, philosophy of science, physics, metaphysics, and education. Whitehead influenced logic and virtually all of analytic philosophy. Whitehead was also a Platonist who “saw the definite character of events as due to the ‘ingression’ of timeless entities” (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2006).

Would a person with a solid sense of self be less likely to become jealous when good things happen to coworkers, friends, or neighbors? An insecure person may feel less worthy when others around him or her achieve things of substance. Perhaps it is human nature to want for the self and to feel inadequate when good things happen around us, but not to us. As an example, let’s say a group of workers always plays the weekly lottery and you always join in, but 1 week you decide not to participate for one reason or another. Yet, the drawing for that week determines that the group actually won the top prize and will split a large sum of money. You feel left out but not entitled because you did not participate. None of the winners say anything negative to you nor do they boast. You pretend to be happy for them, but inside are you really happy? Does this experience engender feelings of regret, or do you self-condemn for making what is tantamount to a bad decision, as statistically unsupported as that may be? You watch over the course of the next few months as the winners start to quit their jobs, move to larger homes, buy more expensive automobiles, or take exotic vacations. This may become a test of how secure you feel, which also may become a test of your internal relevancy. Why should something good happening to someone else in any way dilute your internal sense of self?

In a famous quote of Eleanor Roosevelt, “With freedom comes responsibility.” Limitations may hamper creativity but reign in excessiveness to some degree. Dread of either extreme leads to potential disability. Frankl (2006) wrote that “...man is self-determining. Man does not simply exist but always decides what his existence will be, what he will become in the next moment” (p. 131). But that is easier said than done—and why that is so is explored in this book. Adding to the concept of such polar opposites, they found that “...dread of either freedom or limitation (due generally to past trauma) promotes extreme of dysfunctional counter-reactions to either polarity” (p. 5).

When attachments are either severed or insufficient to produce lasting daily positive feelings, the person may begin to experience a sense of loss of relevancy. This might manifest as depression or sadness with the person appearing withdrawn and lethargic. Comments made to such a person, taken as negative, may serve as fuel to propel the person into an even deeper morass. For example, telling a person he could have handled a situation better, stated more as a criticism and less as a constructive comment, can lead to a person feeling decreased self-esteem. At least in

some cases, the problem of relevancy may arise not necessarily based on an underlying mild mood deflation (or more severe clinical depression), though the affect may mimic such severe disorders. Treatment of loss of relevancy may be fine-tuned and not lumped into existing treatment protocols used for depression and malaise.

Our actions can lead to habits. “Generally, all actions repeated once or more tend to be habitualized to some degree, just as all actions observed by another necessarily involve some typification on his part” (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 57).

Schema therapy “focuses on healing maladaptive patterns, or schemas, like the sense of emotional deprivation, or relentless perfectionism” (Bennett-Goleman, 2001, p. 11). “Key among the scientific discoveries behind emotional alchemy: that mindfulness shifts the brain from disturbing to positive emotions and that the brain stays plastic throughout life, changing itself as we learn to challenge old habits” (p. 10). “Many of the core issues for certain schemas—notably deprivation, abandonment, and unlovability—revolve around this dimension of connectedness” (Bennett-Goleman, 2001, p. 272).

There are many ways in which people can feel that they have lost relevance. Relevance can be lost due as the technological advancements of a product outpace the technical acumen of the aging salesperson. People who are out of the workforce for awhile may neglect the importance of retooling their skills, which might lead to greater reemployment opportunities. Similarly, auto manufacturers close down their assembly lines periodically so as to allow for retooling when there is a new model ready for commencement of production. It is important to consider the need to adjust to changing times in order to manage through these events, which can reasonably be expected to occur. A loss of relevancy is particularly acute in an actor or singer of renown. For example, the late Whitney Houston (1963–2012) was an American recording artist, actress, producer, and model. In 1996, she told Oprah Winfrey, “[doing drugs] was an everyday thing... I wasn’t happy by that point in time, I was losing myself” (Mumbi, 2012). The loss of relevancy can be due to change in style or new acts more suitable to the emerging tastes of successive audiences. Slowly, as the audience and buyers dwindle, so goes the popularity of the act or the person, relegating him or her to become part of the dustbins of history. This phrase is part of a quote attributed to Leon Trotsky (Marxist): When the Bolsheviks came to power as a result of the October Revolution in 1917, Julius Martov (1873–1923), who was originally a close colleague of Lenin and with him founded the League of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class in 1895, became politically marginalized (Cliff, 1986). This is best exemplified by Trotsky’s comment to him and other party members as they left the first meeting of the council of Soviets after October 25, 1917, in disgust at the way in which the Bolsheviks had seized political power.

Some will take this in stride; others will feel very let down by the change in tastes that they have not foreseen, not adjusted to, and cannot control. Perhaps the relative resiliency of the individual will dictate part of the severity of the transformation.

What happens to the person who does not win the race or the salesperson who experiences a big potential sale lost to a top competitor? Does this person fade into

the background and get lost to society, or is there a place for the second- or third-place finisher? Then, consider all iterations of that question to the person who comes in dead last. Where does such a person turn? Is there a lesson to be learned by coming in last? Some would say that person needs to scale down his or her sights and choose less lofty goals. But what if achievement in that losing domain happens to be that person's life dream? Do we take that away from them because they lost? Or can we cope knowing that someone (relative, friend, coworker, or client) is trying hard again and again to succeed where past failures suggest giving up?

Because of the potential existence of collateral medical or psychological problems, a person who presents characteristics of a loss of relevancy should be carefully evaluated medically and psychologically. Therefore, treatment of persons deemed suffering from the impact of loss of relevancy may be best handled by focusing first on diagnosed medical issues then on other defined psychological problems. When the person is free of other serious concerns, or even if those concerns are ameliorated to a relevant degree, his/her feelings of loss of relevancy can be more ably approached.

It seems essentially important to remind people that the human condition offers and may even require a never-ending struggle to reach for the stars and try to exceed all expectations. While this may ring true for those highly motivated and internally competitive individuals, there is perhaps a lesson for those in struggle as well. Jaspers (1995/1971) wrote: "We always live, as it were, within a horizon which still surrounds us and obstructs our view. But we never attain a standpoint where the limiting horizon disappears and from where we could survey the whole, now complete and without horizon" (p. 17). Therefore, it may be of some comfort to those struggling with issues to realize and be reminded that we are all in a unique place within our own lives. Some points over the course of a life will bring greater struggle than others. There is, as Jaspers has written, a limitless boundary over the existence of mankind. Because of this, it might be possible for some to achieve levels of success so lofty that they might be considered superhuman. Such is not the case. The person who held the record for the fastest mile only enjoyed that position until another human ran faster. Records, it is said, are meant to be broken. At least, records are meant to inspire competition. The very origins of the Olympic Games were based on the universal desire to compete and to try to be the best, meaning being better than everyone else. Stephen Crane's (1871–1900) poem about a man running along the horizon provides insight:

I saw a man pursuing the horizon;
 Round and round they sped.
 I was disturbed at this;
 I accosted the man.
 "It is futile," I said,
 "You can never—."
 "You lie," he cried,
 And ran on (2010/1905, p. 24)

In the view of Lawrence Allen Steckman (2012):

The philosopher's tendency is, of course, to try to understand the meaning of "meaning." My academic side says this must be addressed prior to figuring out how

one develops “resiliency” in the face of a sense of a loss of meaning. However, whatever the ultimate meaning of “meaning,” various strategies provide a sense of something to which the word “meaning” refers—and this is true even if none of us use that term in exactly the same way [radical translation, Willard Van Orman Quine (1908–2000), an American philosopher and logician in the analytic tradition]—so the standard possibilities:

1. *Christian*—Kierkegaard—faith in the absurd intensifies inner passion, which overcomes the abyss, so the Christian defeat Nietzsche’s death of God via the leap of faith into the arms of the waiting God.
2. *Atheist*—Nietzsche—the world has no inherent meaning; the uber-man must create his own meaning, he dances on the edge of the abyss, along the surface of glistening reality—notwithstanding God is dead.
3. *Pragmatist*—meanings are social constructs and, by growing up in society, we find meanings all over the place—we do not have to hunt for meanings, which certainly do not derive from a God.

Your book is pragmatic—the solution to the loss of meaning is not an inquiry into the meaning of meaning, but an effort to find strategies that get someone to feel something as a means to succeeding in attaining experiences of the type that engenders a sense of a purposeful/meaningful life.

Synopsis of Chapter

1. There exist many ways to explain the phenomenon of resilience and how it can provide relief from the potentially devastating impact of perceived irrelevance.
2. Transformation, as a process, can be catalyzed in the individual to convert patterns of negative thought and behavior toward sustainable interpersonal growth through empowerment and a guided exploration into the deeper meanings of life and its guaranteed dilemmas.
3. The basic human need for connections and collaborations extends back to our early ancestors. If such connections are severed or damaged without replacement or repair, there can be notable erosions in a person’s internal self of self-esteem and drive to succeed in life.
4. Attachment brings a certain level of responsibility to others.
5. Loss, as a concept, is not something to fear, but something to understand, accept, and learn to cope with, reliant on internal reserves of resilience and newly learned concepts embraced by courage and fortitude.
6. Relevance can be measured by the quantum and quality of important connections in life.
7. Isolation, whether purposeful or the result of injury or disease, can lead to loss of relevancy.
8. Life is more fulfilling with accepted purpose in the backdrop.
9. Humans are, in some ways, defined by their limitations, but some limitations are fabrications of a person’s effort to sabotage the potential of their own life.
10. Pragmatism is suggested as the tool to open new doors toward improvement in one’s outlook and response to situations and events.

Chapter 2

Loss of Relevancy: The Problem and Literature Review

Any real change implies the break-up of the world as one has already known it, the loss of all that gave one identity, the end of safety. And at such a moment, unable to see and not daring to imagine what the future will bring forth, one clings to what one knew; to what one possessed or dreamed one possessed. Yet, it is only when one is able, without bitterness or self pity to surrender a dream one has long cherished, or a privilege one has long possessed, that one is set free—that one has set one's self free—for higher dreams for greater privileges. (Baldwin, 1961)

“Everyone experiences ambiguous loss if only from breaking up with someone or having aging parents or kids leaving home. As we learn from the people who must cope with the more catastrophic situations of ambiguous loss, we learn how to tolerate the ambiguity in our more common losses in everyday life” (Boss, 2012). Frankl (2006) wrote: “A man who let himself decline because he could not see any future goal found himself occupied with retrospective thoughts” (p. 71). Think of an imaginary young man, Steve, a college graduate who was recently laid off from his job as an assistant warehouse manager. Steve was an average student who has a “normal” social life and a small but steady group of friends, mostly college buddies whom he can see as he likes. Steve was hardworking, never took unnecessary sick days, arrived to work on time or, sometimes, early, and was well liked by coworkers. He dated Margie, a bookkeeper, for a few months until she decided he was too young for her. Steve took the breakup hard but realized he did, in fact, have very different interests.

When Steve arrived at work on a crisp fall Monday morning, he was immediately summoned to Mr. Smith's office. Mr. Smith, the Human Resource Director, explained to Steve that the company was having financial difficulties and, like so many of its competitors, was forced to cut back on staff. Steve was devastated but understood what Mr. Smith said. He was given 2 weeks' severance pay and a letter of recommendation. He said goodbye to only a few of his coworkers, feeling embarrassed and sad, preferring a quiet exit. He drove home and spent the next few days moping about.

Steve's life world has been rocked due to the sudden termination, not of his own making in these challenging economic times. He had not considered options as he liked his job and was satisfied with the salary and occasional overtime around holidays. Steve saved some of his money so he had about 3 months of living expenses in the bank. Instead of looking for another job right away, Steve languished and hung around his small apartment, drinking more and more beer and staying out late at night with his friends, some of whom were likewise between careers.

Steve did not open up to people about how he felt, but those who knew him best saw him falling apart in several ways. When they sought to help him, Steve would simply shun them say that he was just in a funk and that only he himself could pull himself out. He did not let anyone in to his interior life. Deeper down, what Steve felt was that his purpose in life had greatly diminished. He saw the world essentially, and uncontrollably, passing him by and at quick speed. He began to feel very anxious. Everyone else around him seemed to have a destiny and a purpose to their life. His was like driftwood just going with the tide, aimless and without control.

Steve lost his momentum due to loss of employment, but what he really lost was his perceived edge, his unique dynamism felt inside his own being. Where he used to see himself on par with others, he now sees himself at a lower end of the spectrum. All the hopes and dreams once fermenting in his soul had now all but melted. Steve was lost to the world because he was lost to himself. We can call this syndrome lost relevancy because Steve's plight involves a suppression of his inner strength or inner connection to his interiority and thus to the world around him. From his perspective, his feelings generate either a positive connection (as in love or eagerness), a negative one (as in hate or apathy), or, even worse, nothingness (an empty state of nonexistence). A person can be physically alive, but be in a state of nothingness, manifested in a sense of loss of connectedness to others. But, how does a person make stronger, lasting connections?

Connecting with people can mean calling friends, inquiring about the health of a parent, reaching out to people who may have leads to possible jobs, etc. Disconnecting is turning off these avenues of basic relating. In the process of turning off the connections, the person becomes more and more "out of it." This state of drifting can lead to long-term psychological damage and a distorted view of existence. This view is the acceptance of one's nothingness and has meaning and a purpose: The purpose is to do nothing and to be nothing, a goal seemingly reachable by anyone without need of effort.

In order for Steve to feel reconnected to the world, he needs to reflect on his current inventory of strengths and weaknesses; to establish achievable goals for himself with the aid of a mentor, coach, or therapist; and to work toward achievement of these goals over a reasonable length of time. Only Steve can determine what these goals are, though he can be guided by a trusted person through this process. Some people achieve more with the support and guidance of a mentor/coach because they have someone to whom they are accountable. By checking in periodically in terms of specific steps toward completion of goals, the person may become even more active in achieving them. Accountability is actually a form of connectedness and would be an excellent first approach to the person suffering from loss of relevancy.

Importantly, the attitude and orientation of the helper should be centered on what Carl Rogers called *unconditional positive regard*. In addition, having a sense of "... deep empathy may also serve as an opportunity for expanding the therapist's mindfulness or awareness" (Hart, 2000, p. 254).

Some mentees like to feel that they have someone to report to. Then, in the process of mentoring, there needs to be a definite weaning of the process, at least to the extent possible so the person can move forward on his or her own merit and avoid the creation of perceived or hidden dependency. "When you take 100% responsibility for holding yourself accountable, your performance will improve, your relationships will flourish, your market value will soar, people's respect for you will skyrocket, you will be a great example for others to follow, and your self-esteem will grow" (Smith, 2010, p. 1).

Until Steve finds new threads tying him in to the fabric of shared existence, he will continue to feel isolated and unworthy to take up new challenges. He will continue to experience a loss of interest. He may vocalize his annoyance at society or be bitter about being terminated from his job, but these are not the same as having purpose. He will continue to feel a loss of relevance.

The many people who were recently acting as a gang in their collective "occupation" of major centers of commerce (such as Wall Street) may appear to have found a purpose in life, but their role is one foisted on society. They exist outside or at least on the fringe of regular culture. They are a type of counterculture, finding meaning by fighting established systems enjoyed by others. These upstarts, as well-meaning as they may seem, have no unified connection to each other than the weak commonality of having the same enemy. "The enemy of my enemy is my friend," to quote an old adage. "The Occupy Wall Street protests have drawn huge numbers of confused and directionless young people, but maybe that's not all bad" (Rosenberg, 2011). They believe that they have accomplished something versus society's perception about whether they have accomplished anything. Unfortunately, some members became lawless and committed violent crime during their stand. Thus, the relevancy of the movement can be viewed from the perspective of the protesters, themselves, or the public, where there is mixed reaction. As an analogy, the famous protest in Massachusetts—the Boston Tea Party—by all historical accounts, did accomplish an end to certain egregious taxes. Ironically, taxes in the colonies were significantly lower than those in England, especially for tea; therefore, did they really understand what they were doing? Clearly their effort was relevant and remains an important part of the history of democracy in the New World. Will the Wall Street occupation become merely a footnote on blogs, or will it be analyzed 1 day as having profound affect? It did spark sister groups in San Francisco and other cities. People were and are listening to them, but will anything change? For this question to be answered in terms of relevancy, time will tell.

Once the disturbance is quieted, or the bulk of the crowd becomes bored, the identification with the cause will dissipate, leaving the participants with the same void they had before. The time and effort spent as part of the rebellion will not likely open new roads in the lives of the demonstrators. Most will return to the void, and some will be more miserable than before. In a way, rebellion, uprising, or insurrection

is an excuse to be naughty or to rise up and throw off the shackles of disappointment in a blind attempt to better one's circumstances. It may, therefore, be seen as encompassing a range of behaviors aimed at destroying or replacing an established authority such as a government or a head of state. This activity requires some thinking and some degree of motivation, but it is not the same as a goal-directed activity with a long-term benefit at stake where the hoped-for fruits of labor are earned. Also, there are risks involved such as crime, harm, disease, and arrest.

Returning to Steve, he may not know what to do "today" to solve his plight, but he is very much eligible to set a plan of action in place this very day to make substantive differences in his life. What will help Steve is to learn the concept of patience and to realize that sustained effort over the long run will compound into large improvements. There is also the problem of people becoming disillusioned due to widespread corruption, which compounds the problem of the internal struggle. Honest people may see others get ahead through fraud and abuse where their own hard work may not be enough to compete. For example, let's also assume Steve is overweight, smokes, drinks excessively, and dresses shabbily. By setting up simultaneous objectives in parallel, Steve can apply his energy in multiple ways, gaining confidence in one area to keep his spirits high in the other areas. As a packaged approach to self-directed behavior modification, using a coach or mentor to guide him, Steve could curtail his smoking addiction, lessen his consumption of alcohol, start a fitness regimen, and enlist the help of a knowledgeable clothing store salesman to help him retrofit his wardrobe. If Steve gave himself a reasonable period of time to accomplish change, he would eventually see weight loss, increased lung capacity and fitness, improved health, and, doubtlessly, an upgraded mood. By dressing better (easier said than done), looking better, and feeling stronger, Steve could now reenter the marketplace (again, easier said than done especially in a tough economy) and find employment.

What keeps many people from accomplishing their plans is sometimes reduced to nothing more than a lack of willingness to endure the pain and pressure over the short term, a lack of patience, and an inability to recognize the benefits over the long term. Such short sightedness, applied to one's own life existence equates to a never-ending pattern of ineffectiveness, self-condemnation, and a lack of determination to succeed. Goals cannot really be set by a hopeless person. Hopelessness creeps up on people who dismiss any potential positive moves in their lives and instead choose negative activities or prefer the status quo, which has fewer requirements. One particular female inmate told me: "Being in prison is easy in the sense that there are no major requirements. All the cleaning and cooking are done for you and work is optional." It is the lack of self-demand that is the most devastating to one's ability to make any progress inside their life. We can sympathize with a person who has "hit his head against the wall too many times" and who has lost the zeal to keep trying, but, they have abandoned their own resourcefulness.

People who do not establish meaningful goals may, instead, revert to past activities or events to occupy their thoughts. For a person to reach meaningful goals, setting out incremental steps that lead to progress may be more feasible than an immediate profound change.

While recognition and recall of the past is certainly important and necessary for a connected life, it must not be the sole perspective unless coupled with a view to the future grounded in the present moment where life is actually lived. The process of recall is a main feature of psychological research in the area of memory. "...the study of the laws of learning and those of retention involves recall just as much as does the study of recall as such" (Koehler, 1975, p. 279). Introspective thinking allows a person to review what occurred in a way that allows for modeling of change for revision in order to achieve better results. Revisions borne of reflective thought enable new levels of awareness, self-empowerment, essentially, and a greater sense of command over his or her life. Life is a continuum. Being in the present from a conscious perspective can include a healthy mix of reflections on the past as well as the establishment of goals and plans for the future. For example, a young adult goes to a 4-year college to study engineering, learning the science of his or her chosen field. The student hopes for a satisfying and rewarding career as an engineer but may alter those plans once in progress should circumstance or opportunities shift. There will be tests. Study and preparation will be necessary. There may very well be loans to pay back. The pressure may mount to get a job and start to repay debt. If the would-be student could not or would not look forward and simply lived in the perspective of retrospect, then there could be no move toward advanced education.

There may be nothing to question here if the young person makes a conscious choice to forego the opportunity to attend college or does not have either the means or the grades to make it into a school. However, there is a reason to question the person who misses the opportunity to learn about himself through the process of being in a challenging environment (i.e., being a prisoner in a concentration camp as described by Frankl or growing up disadvantaged with no guides or mentors, though these two constructs are not meant to be equated). Hope for a brighter future or hope for survival does not have to be lost if the person can gain by learning about one's inner strength. The challenge is to dig down and find that well of might deep inside the soul. Perhaps, many are never challenged or never do the spiritual work to locate and harness that strength.

Take, for another example, the hiker who fell and was wedged between rocks. After several days, he was faced with an extremely difficult choice: to die there or to free himself using the only means possible—cutting off his left arm to free his body! The hiker did muster the supreme courage to do so and, using nothing more than a small knife, severed his own limb, using a tourniquet to prevent bleeding to death. How many of us could find the courage to survive under such circumstances? There is no way to answer because, unless faced with that situation, how could anyone know what they would do? Metaphorically, we can apply this dilemma to a psychological problem where a person is trapped inside what they consider an ineffectual existence or a person whose working life has been comprised of numerous short-term jobs (the proverbial "revolving door"). What steps could be taken, and what strength might be needed to take those steps? What grips the person's strength to rob them of free will to overcome obstacles? We could say that the person who grows up in a crack house has an excuse for not caring about going to school, but then we are obliterating that person's potential to overcome that formidable obstacle.

If it were possible to extricate such a person from the destructive environment, we could “save” the person, but that may not be adequate for the long term. The person still must cope and deal with future life pressures, using the same potential inner strength as before. The challenges will be different, but the paradoxes will still be there. Perhaps in the process of “rescuing,” we should remember to guide the person to see their inner value and muster the will and determination that is essential to triumph over circumstances. Further, the helper must avoid assuming command and control over the life of another, especially a vulnerable person. The person must envision the connection between life before, life after, and how their dynamic change in thought makes all the difference.

Baruch Spinoza (1632–1677) was one of the most important philosophers of the early modern period. His naturalistic views on God and the human being serve to ground a moral philosophy centered on the control of the passions, leading to virtue and happiness. Spinoza, as quoted by Frankl, said: “Emotion, which is suffering, ceases to be suffering as soon as we form a clear and precise picture of it” (p. 74). Hope becomes the light from which new possibilities shine. We as people live on hope, but some hope is unrequited. New actions, based on the discovery of new possibilities, create a change in the person who then becomes more dynamic because of the new momentum. Even if it takes more than a few false starts, as long as the person remains hopeful, the potential continues to exist for improvement in life’s circumstances.

In Frankl’s perspective during the Second World War: “Whoever was still alive had reason for hope” (p. 81). Some might question Frankl by saying that merely being alive, faced with almost certain annihilation, was not a hopeful situation but a tortuous one. It is for this reason that many prisoners in the camps committed suicide as a way out of their horrible suffering. What Frankl saw is the value of preservation of even the most minimal of hope based on the sheer will to survive. In the case of the concentration camp prisoner, the person must, logically, hope for the war to end, be rescued, or escape. As a way of coping with the painful surroundings, a person could imagine a world free of tyranny and one filled with beauty and love (as many of them did). Frankl encouraged his fellow prisoners to believe that they could restore their lives as much as possible once they were free. He also suggested that they reflect back on their positive memories as something that could never be taken away from them. A past experience is permanent.

Nelson Mandela served a prison sentence of 27 years, mostly on Robben Island, and then became president of South Africa from 1994 to 1999. He rose above his torment as a prisoner to lead his country and create a new unification and was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1993. “...I have become acutely aware of how one’s presence expands and contracts in direct proportion to the severity of challenges and difficulties in the environment” (Hanna, 2000, p. 131). Mandela could have become bitter and angry following his release, but, instead, he found a new path to become a respected world leader. His inner strength is similar to those who achieved new perspective following release from the Nazi concentration camps. Rather than become violent following the psychological trauma of depersonalization, they rose above such reactionary behavior to find a new way. This is resiliency

and demonstrates how people can regain their sense of relevancy through their positive attitude and focus on their future.

The dynamic life looks for increasing opportunities for relevancy. The poor want to be rich; the rich want to run foundations or raise money to cure disease; the major league baseball player wants to win the Triple Crown, which consists for a batter, leading the league in homeruns, runs batted in, and batting average. All are worthy, albeit lofty goals. The person who falls short of lofty goals may still experience a feeling of success in life. The formerly poor person may secure employment and be able to afford a small house 1 day; the wealthy person may find vast richness in dedicating his or her life to a valid cause; the ballplayer may become a good-enough hitter to sustain an exciting career for more than two decades. Though a person may fall short of the perceived maximum goal, the actual level of accomplishment may be quite adequate, even good for the person. If they recognize their own effort in achievement of these goals, they may thrive in life and feel completely connected, therefore, relevant in their own life and in the world. Even if some connections are lost or abandoned, others may endure, and new connections may fill any perceived void.

Social media provides the quick ability to connect or de-connect to with specific people or groups. While belongingness within a circle, especially through technological and asynchronous means, provides some meaningful connection, there may be a shortfall in terms of physical connection. Thus, a young man staying home on a Saturday night because of a lack of a date or opportunity to go out with a group may become engrossed with his laptop computer or tablet and spend hours connecting in various ways to others similarly plugged in. No judgment is intended here to suggest this is in any way inferior or inadequate, but is meant to provide analytical material should the person wish to examine his own life, possibly with the aid of a therapist, depending on how the person feels about his or her own life.

Social networks are also increasing the number of people who first connect electronically and then go on actual dates. “In 2006, one in nine American Internet-using adults—all told, about 16 million people—reported using an online dating website site, such as Match.com, eHarmony.com, or the wonderfully named PlentyofFish.com, as well as countless others to meet people” (Madden & Lenhart, 2006). Thus, relevancy in terms of creating dating relationships has been enhanced by the increasing use of online sites that decrease geographic concerns for some people. While a person seeking to meet someone might restrict their search to people living in the immediate area, there might also be complete openness to meeting people in more distant parts of the world.

What is also needed in the purpose-driven life is courage. “Courage is self-affirmation ‘in-spite-of,’ that is in spite of that which tends to prevent the self from affirming itself” (Tillich, 2000, p. 32). The courageous person learns from mistakes and tries always to do better. Such a person accepts challenge and may run toward fear, even laughs in the face of such fear. We can call this being brave. He accepts the risk that they might fail and feel it is not really a failure if they try their best. The self-affirming individual tries to fortify his/her inner strength by staying positive. By commending oneself for even the smallest accomplishment, the internal will to keep going stays strong and may feed internal resiliency.

Boss (2006) expressed certain cautions about resiliency. “First, remaining resilient is not always desirable, especially if it is always the same persons who are expected to bend. People with less privilege and power—for example, people of color and women—have become great adapters to the whims of others. They are expected to give in to those with higher agency and to fit in without making waves” (p. 58).

Resiliency is not a trait that a person is born with. It is a process of ‘becoming’ more resilient over time. Resiliency is learned through mastering struggles and achieving goals. It is a lifelong learning process. Core to Torah learning is self improvement, as a lifelong process; and core to resilience is studying the Torah. (JewishIdeas.org, 2012)

There is, of course, a distinct advantage to being lucky or born into an advantageous environment. “It is those who are successful, in other words who are most likely to be given the kinds of special opportunities that lead to further success” (Gladwell, 2008, p. 30).

Our inner sense of self is connected to the outer sense of self. By forming connections between examining who we are (to ourselves) and how we relate to others, we can increase our efforts when we see a lack of results. “Our life has a distinct inner aspect in addition to the outer. Many people are so involved in outer things that they hardly know there is an inner, let alone how to explore it and what is there” (Van Dusen, 2001, p. 108).

In a way, the person who loses important connections with his or her life may feel as if they have dug a big hole for themselves and have fallen in with no easy way out. The person might try to reverse their steps to get out, but it may be more plausible for the person to discover new pathways out of the abyss to catch up with the flow of life at some other point. A new path to a new destiny is found, perhaps not otherwise attainable or recognizable except for the experience of being in the void for that portion of time. It is therefore postulated herein that no time in an examined life is time wasted, but used in the never-ending quest to find the true purpose and meaning of life. To some, the purpose is simply defined as building wealth, fame, or both. To others, it is self-actualizing as a good person filled with a history of giving to others. To many, the end result is not cognizable and may even be feared.

The ultimate feared destination in life is death, the passage to the final abyss. This is where organized religion takes hold with the promises according to doctrine. For those who do not proscribe to a dogmatic lifestyle, the end may just be the actual end of the road of life; therefore, it is best to reap everything possible while alive for there is nothing beyond. Either way, the life lived must have a beginning and must end. The in-between part (the lived life) can be dynamic for the majority of time or be punctuated by episodes of despair or time spent in the void. These time-outs may resolve into net positive transformation opportunities, or they may be completely filled with pain and suffering as setbacks along one’s particular road.

One’s faith can have a vital role in a person’s process of regaining lost relevancy. Turning back toward one’s childhood faith or joining a new faith could open up new dimensions in a person’s life. For some, a feeling of emptiness or lack of direction might be amply resolved through becoming part of a congregation. Within the communities of the various organized religions are various opportunities, including to

volunteer or furthering one's study to become a spiritual leader of some type. Thus, there can be new goals set following embarkation into such a direction. Even doing a small but regular task at a weekly service may itself become itself, a vital connection to one's existence. I attend regular services at a local Roman Catholic Church. For years, I have assisted with the process of walking around with the collection basket as my small part a small service to the church. It does, though, provide me with a deeper sense of commitment to the church.

Tillich (2000) viewed the divine-human encounter and the courage to be as derived from the "...courage of confidence in the personal reality which is manifested in the religious experience" (p. 160). Kreuter (2011b) wrote about the process of transformation in an act of kindness creating a wooden cross from the limbs of a destroyed tree as a way of presenting a creative gift to an elderly neighbor who owned the tree. This transformative act was based on a shared connection to a common faith. In doing so, both the elderly man and I increased our relevancy to each other; thereby to the world. The process of fashioning the cross then presenting it to the man along with an original poem created a very poignant atmosphere of connectedness.

Loss: Its Forms and Prejudices

Sometimes we are too quick to judge that whatever happened is bad or results in significant loss. This can be viewed as a form of prejudicial thought, although, with more facts, we might alter our perception. I was in attendance at a dinner in 1990 hosted by the Children's Cancer Research Fund, whose purpose was to raise funds to find a cure for cancer. The main speaker was a young woman who began her speech by saying: "Cancer is the best thing that ever happened to me." The audience of about 500 guests remained quiet as she spoke eloquently about how her disease changed her thought and value system, leading her toward far greater appreciation of the meaning of her own life. In a way, her battle with cancer became a fight not just for her physical survival but for revival of her inner spirit and her sense of drive and motivation. It was as if she suddenly moved into the fast lane of her primary source of energy: her own self, defined as her thoughts, attitudes, beliefs, and strengths. Tedeschi and Calhoun (1995) refer to a man who was profoundly affected by a motor vehicle accident, who said the accident "...was probably the best thing that ever happened to me" (p. 61).

Taking a fresh, unbiased view of something seemingly negative can transform the situation into a net positive event if we dare to look at it. Fear by itself, instead of driving us away from the source of fear, can sometimes impel us to run toward it as a mechanism to fight its power and enable us to conquer what was formerly a limiting of our existence. Franklin Delano Roosevelt, in his first inaugural address (1932), said: "This great Nation will endure as it has endured, will revive and will prosper. So, first of all, let me assert my firm belief that the only thing we have to

fear is fear itself—nameless, unreasoning, unjustified terror which paralyzes needed efforts to convert retreat into advance” (<http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/5057/>). This is not to say that all fear is based in irrational thought. If we were alone in the deep woods at night and a huge bear were lunging toward us, a sense of fear would seem very appropriate. Such an unenviable experience certainly warrants some measure of fear response, perhaps even panic. Management of this situation, if even possible, requires quick thinking and immediate action. We might choose to run away or to stay and fight, using whatever weaponry we can quickly locate (the “fight-or-flight” response). Regrettably, in these types of settings, involving nature and natural instincts for survival, humans would want to escape to live another day. Because the bear needs to eat and to defend its territory, we can somehow justify the setting for battle or chase or a combination. We may very well escape or kill or maim the bear. The bear may catch one of us and tear our flesh until death, then have a meal. Alternatively, if we were not alone, but part of a small group, one of us (the unlucky one) dies, but, perhaps, the rest survive and flee to safety. We lose a friend, relative, or the group leader who brought us out to the woods in the first place. A memorial service is held soon after, and stories are embellished concerning the great battle in the woods. The deceased is thought of in heroic terms for giving up his or her life to give the others a better chance of escape. The survivors move on and will probably avoid the woods forever. What can we take away from this example? There are always choices in life. We must always consider that we have choices.

Loss can be simply defined as a detriment, disadvantage, or deprivation. It can be temporary or permanent. It can be small or large. It can be monetary or otherwise. Loss can be caused by tort (criminal or civil wrongdoing), theft, accident, purposeful injury, absentmindedness, or due to an unknown cause. We only consider the concept of loss as a bad thing because it usually means something that was previously desirable is no longer in place because of something or someone. Blame helps in this regard to attribute responsibility for the loss as a way of externalizing energy toward another person or thing or Mother Nature. We may choose to blame an innocent person or a scapegoat. We may find what was lost and be happy again.

“At the most obvious level, scientific studies have failed to support any discernible sequence of emotional phases of adaptation to loss or to identify any clear endpoint to grieving that would designate a state of ‘recovery’” (Neimeyer, 2001, p. 2). Understanding the consequences of loss on morale, psyche, and efficacy is crucial to the concepts presented in this book. Are there ways to bounce back from loss and regain momentum to make a comeback? Can a person who loses all of their money in a small business work toward rebuilding financial wealth and using it to start another new business? Perhaps, if there is learning, adaptation, improvement in approach, or a better way is found to do something, a better result will be possible the next time. In this case, the loss may be instrumental to propel us toward improvement. Thus, if we dissect the life of a successful person, we might be shocked to find that the person experienced significant failures in life prior to reaching the point of success. Mentoring or counseling a person who has had a setback logically should include reinforcement of the concept of doing one’s best and learning from one’s mistakes. More than basic philosophy and catchphrases, simple directives can help

clients to grow from disaster, learn from error, and rise from the ashes of despair. It is of prime importance for mentors, coaches, and therapists to lend their ego strength, instill hope and optimism, and help individuals to find new ways to reach new and attainable goals. As Langston Hughes (1902–1967) wrote: “Hold fast to dreams, for if dreams die, life is a broken-winged bird that cannot fly” (poem-hunter.com, 2010). It is a mandate for the helper to validate and place proper levels of optimism on the value of the person’s future potential. Such advice amounts to giving the person time to see their own future as including ample time to fix what went wrong and find new ways to reach goals, perhaps setting new, more attainable goals.

Synopsis of Chapter

1. If we dwell only on the past, we cannot see the future.
2. Loss of relevancy can be triggered by disconnections in a person’s life.
3. Establishment of achievable goals can help a person recover from loss.
4. Taking personal responsibility for one’s life enables development of resiliency.
5. Patience as well as sustained effort is necessary in order to establish new momentum in life.
6. Ineffectiveness and self-condemnation are blockades to reaching success.
7. Introspective thinking allows for reshaping of future behavior, conduct, and attitude.
8. A person can be guided by helping him or her see their inner value.
9. New momentum begins with an appropriate mix of hope and action.
10. Dynamic people look for new ways to feel relevant in their lives.

Chapter 3

Analysis of the Factor of Societal Pressure Contributing to the Problem

In society, we are capable of joy, and our culture is capable of being positive if our lives reflect on our individual abilities expressed in our work, our play, our social life, and our government (Fromm, 1956). Society likes winners and the celebration of victory, whether high school sports or political races. We never read headlines that say: Mayberry's football squad played valiantly, taking second place with their heroic play. We want to read about the winner and the great late fourth-quarter 80-yard touchdown pass to win the game 21–20. What is more enjoyable to watch on televised replays of incredible sporting feats: a fabulous score or a grand save? People want to see other people succeed, especially their spouse, their children, their parents, or their favorite sports team. They identify with their favorite, and they become a sort of sponsor. Living vicariously through the spirit of being a fan, the person may dress in team colors, decorate his or her home with team logos, and, possibly, collect memorabilia associated with that team. A parent may maintain a type of trophy/medal/certificate shrine to exhibit items won by their child or grandchild. Such displays engender happiness and provide the person with a sense of grounded belongingness to the world. The fan goes to games and feels good doing so. The proud parent attends every sporting event for their child's baseball team and roots openly from the sideline. This is connection, and it is very important. Athletes enjoy having their relatives in attendance for their performances, but sometimes this is not feasible.

Erich Fromm (1900–1980) said: "...it can be argued, shifted from a Freudian concern with unconscious motivations, to a recognition that humans are social beings whose beliefs and motivations are deeply inscribed by the societies and cultures of which they are part" (Smith, 2002, p. 3). Fromm (1942) explained that "...freedom from the traditional bonds of medieval society, though giving the individual a new feeling of independence, at the same time made him feel alone and isolated, filled him with doubt and anxiety, and drove him into new submission and into a compulsive and irrational activity" (p. 89). Insecurity and fear may help to explain how people seek the security and rewards of authoritarian social orders such as fascism (Smith, p. 3).

Fromm (1979) argued that the spirit of mankind equated to a competition between having and being. Having involved material possessions and was based on greed and aggression. Being is rooted in love and is concerned with common experience and productive activity. When we have, we also have obligations to protect, to insure, to house, to watch. When we are in a state of pure being, we just need to keep being. The solid foundation of internal sense of self can propel a person toward exuding very healthy self-confidence. William James (1950) wrote: "We reach thus the important conclusion that our own reality, that sense of our own life which we at every moment possess, is the ultimate of ultimates for our belief" (p. 297). Shallowness can include strictly focusing on wealth accumulation rather than building up one's inner sense of self or character. A human's life may be spoken of often in terms of achieved and notorious wealth, but the true definition of character transcends mere capitalistic expressions of a life so examined. While happiness does not buy money, it may set the stage for orchestrating a sustainable effort to set and reach new goals. The unemployed person may need a bit of encouragement not to succumb to depression but, instead, to rally around their identifiable skills and seek new destinations along the course of their life. While the state of being out of work may extract a profound and lasting price on the quality of the person's present life, it does not have to be so consuming as to quench the fire of passion inside the person's soul. Thus, bravery to examine obstacles and find ways to work around problems will serve the suffering person immeasurably. As an example of bravery in military combat, James Webb fought in Vietnam, was wounded twice, and was awarded the Silver Star, two Bronze Stars, and a Navy Cross. His citation for the Navy Cross read, in part: "For extraordinary heroism in combat operations against the enemy in the Republic of South Vietnam on 10 July 1969 while participating in a company-sized search & destroy operation deep in hostile territory, 1st Lieutenant Webb's platoon discovered a well-camouflaged bunker which appears to be unoccupied...Although sustaining painful fragmentation wounds...he managed to throw a grenade into the aperture and completely destroy the remaining bunker. By his courage, aggressive leadership, and selfless devotion, he..." (Brady, 2007, p. 17).

In essence, we live in a world of increasing hype. Working hard does not count for much unless it leads to proven and immediate results. That construct makes perfect sense in the business world from a capitalistic perspective. But the hard worker who still cannot achieve a satisfactory result and who gets outplaced (terminated) may develop feelings of irrelevancy. Dealing with that sensitively requires first to understand the issues and the external pressures exacerbating the problem. We want to help this person get back into the rhythm of life, but we don't want to do so out of pity. Instead, the objective should be to encourage the person to find new ways to capitalize on strengths while doing all he or she can to overcome weaknesses. In order to best accomplish the sometimes formidable task of reentry into the modern workplace, a person may need to submit to retraining or retooling of one's basic core competencies in order to attain new employment in an increasingly complex and challenging world. What is a worker supposed to do who has been trained, for example, on how to use a particular piece of machinery only to be outplaced when modern technological innovation turns that job into an obsolete construct? Such may be

enough to cause the person to turn inward and feel betrayed by their world or society and miscast as a worthy person because what they learned to do and do well is no longer needed or can be done better, faster, and cheaper by a machine.

Coping with profound change requires an inner spirit of resiliency that demands triumph over despair simply through the steady deployment of inner will to get through the struggle. Such a spirit may laugh at the challenge, welcoming the formidable odds. This spirit examines the situation from all possible angles and maneuvers the person into position to reinvent themselves in order to once again become relevant. But, why should someone care to remain or regain relevancy within a world where abrupt change has caused a disruption in the harmony of their life? Without relevancy, there can be no grounding to the world, only aimless struggle with no discernible purpose. We can refer to such a person as a drifter. Old westerns showed cowboys riding into the local town, strapping their horses' reigns over a post, and entering the saloon to be confronted by regulars who want to know who the "stranger" is that just rode in. The stranger may tell a few stories, have several shots of whiskey, flirt with the barmaids, but then, suddenly, ride off into the sunset toward the next town. They drift from town to town. No place appears as equivalent to home. They are relevant in their own saddle and in the world where they ride, working at whatever job they find acceptable and moving on when the spirit suits them. They may fall in love in one town, only to disappear in the dark of night. Such a person is difficult to categorize within normal social circles since their lifestyle is so uncertain. They may have no roots in the traditional sense. Perhaps they are running from something or someone? Whether continuing to drift is the result of an inner drive to see the country or in response to trauma or disappointment, the person may be labeled by the more consistent town folk as a drifter. This way of life relegates the drifter to be disregarded except when they are visiting and making themselves temporarily relevant with whomever they interact: the saloon keeper, the local prostitutes, the barber, the blacksmith, etc. In some measure, they will make their presence, hence their visit, notorious even if they avoid gun battle. People may talk about the person long after departure and may even create a legend based partly in fact and partly based on faulty recollection of fantasy-borne embellishments.

A person's place in society can change. For many, a change in societal position is taken in stride, but others may develop feelings of displacement where they experience extreme signs of distress and a sense of feeling "lost" in the world. Displacement can occur due to technological change, competition, changes in tastes of the consumer, or other factors, some outside of the person's control. At this point, the person's daily routine is disrupted, and there is a total shifting of daily routine from purposefulness to non-purpose. The longer this status remains, the deeper the person's feelings of loss of relevancy.

For example, a bright student who excelled in high school and who received a scholarship to a prestigious college makes it through the first semester but with very low, barely passing grades. What went wrong? Perhaps the requirements of college were much more difficult than the young student anticipated, or maybe extracurricular college life took its toll on the person's ability to concentrate on his or her academic studies. In such a case, the student (or the student's parents) may become

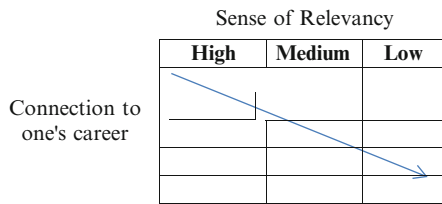
disillusioned and lose that sense of relevancy originally felt prior to starting college. Self-doubt and questions from faculty, friends, and relatives may overwhelm the student. The resilient student will recover from this experience and rally the following semester to, hopefully, excel at school. The person who does not have a resilient mindset may flounder, resulting in a further decline of grade or, worse, the need or requirement to drop out of school.

Adequacy in being up to date in one’s career or industry qualification is important to most people. Falling behind by not keeping up to date with credentialing can lead to loss of relevancy. The further behind one gets in his or her career, the greater the negative feelings. This may lead to a general feeling of failure and loss of momentum in one’s profession.

The further away a person gets from the current best practices in his or her chosen field, the more difficult it may be to get back. It is the desperate desire to get back what was lost that can create a syndrome of despair in a suffering person. While working hard to make new contacts and get back into the same field, the better energy might be spent on retraining and embarking on an entirely new career.

| |
|---|
| Sense of relevancy |
| High Medium Low |

Connection to
one’s career



Declining mood and reduced
engagement in profession

Declining mood and reduced engagement in profession

Loss of Relevancy Pathology Scale: R-Score

| | | |
|---|----------|----------------------|
| Person feels balanced despite problems and sets new goals following Disappointments with almost no impact of daily life | Low R | No treatment needed |
| Some experiences of low mood with the person struggling for ways to resolve the problems being faced | Medium R | Short-term treatment |
| Frequent experiences of low affect along with high degree of impact on daily life | High R | Long-term treatment |

Teleology is the power to will or the belief that individuals are guided not only by mechanical forces but that they also move toward certain goals of self-realization. While Adler's name is linked most often with the term "inferiority complex" toward the end of his career, he became more concerned with observing the individual's struggle for significance or competence (later discussed by others as self-realization, or self-actualization, etc.). He believed that, standing before the unknown, each person strives to become more perfect and in health is motivated by one dynamic force—the upward striving for completion—and all else is subordinated to this one master motive. Behavior is understood as goal-directed movement, though the person may not be fully aware of this motivation.

Adlerian psychology assumes a central personality dynamic reflecting the growth and forward movement of life (Mitchell, 2011). It is a future-oriented striving toward an ideal goal of significance, mastery, success, or completion. Children start their lives smaller, weaker, and less socially and intellectually competent than the adults around them. They have the desire to grow up, to become a capable adult, and as they gradually acquire skills and demonstrate their competence, they gain in confidence and self-esteem. However, this natural striving for perfection may be held back if their self-image is degraded by failures in physical, intellectual, or social development or if they suffer from the criticisms of parents, teachers, and peers.

If we are moving along, doing well, feeling competent, we can afford to think of others. If we are not, if life is getting the best of us, then our attentions become increasingly focused on ourselves; we may develop an inferiority complex: become shy and timid, insecure, indecisive, cowardly, submissive, compliant, and so on. The inferiority complex is a form of neurosis, and as such it may become all consuming. The person who lacks confidence may compensate by working hard to improve in the skills at which they lack, or they may try to become competent at something else, but otherwise retaining their sense of inferiority. Since self-esteem is based on competence, those who have not succeeded in recovering from this neurosis may find it hard to develop any self-esteem at all and are left with the feeling that other people will always be better than they are.

Speculatively, the fictional goal may be to pull oneself up by his bootstraps. In addition to serving the useful purpose of orienting the individual in the world, it is a compensatory defense; it creates positive feelings in the present which mitigate the feelings of inferiority.

As a further compensation, we may also develop a superiority complex, which involves covering up our inferiority by pretending to be superior. If we feel small, one way to feel big is to make everyone else feel even smaller! Bullies, bigheads, and petty dictators everywhere are prime examples. More subtle examples are the people who are given to attention-getting dramatics, the ones who feel powerful when they commit crimes, and the ones who put others down for their gender, race, ethnic origins, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, weight, height, etc. Some resort to hiding their feelings of worthlessness in the delusions of power afforded by alcohol and drugs.

Over 30 years of varied work experience has taught the author that the world is comprised of workers at every point on the success scale. This scale, for purposes of this book, is defined as follows.

The relative level of achievement of one’s stated goals commensurate with one’s innate and learned knowledge, skills, and abilities results in identifiable and tangible attributes. These attributes include, but are not limited to, wealth, job security, position, authority, advancement, experiences, and notoriety.

Obviously, not every worker reaches his or her potential. The US Army adopted the concept of self-actualization with its advertising slogan: “Be all that you can be.” But, then, why doesn’t everyone become what they can become? What limitations (internal and external) truncated their career growth? These questions will be answered in detail. Based on our involvement in numerous career-counseling discussions, performance reviews, employee disciplinary proceedings, promotions, demotions, and termination, we have noticed an intriguing phenomenon, namely, many people are afraid of success more so than they are afraid of failure. For purposes of this book, failure is defined as the final realization that one has not achieved an acceptable level of success based on one’s career opportunities juxtaposed to one’s knowledge, skills, and abilities. This failure results in little or no upward career mobility, depressed compensation increases, demotion, or termination.

Fear is a learned reaction to stimuli. People may decline invitations to attend events, suppress themselves from embarking on new career paths, or shun attention whenever they would otherwise have an opportunity to shine and be recognized.

The Powerful Commodity of Fear

Fear is a very strong emotional response to a real situation, event, or consequence or internally contrived situation, event, or consequence resulting in one or more of the following manifestations:

| Inward | Outward |
|---|------------------------------|
| Feeling of desperation | Nervousness |
| Intense anxiety | Sweating |
| Catastrophic thinking | Vocal or physical stammering |
| Immobilization | Stupor |
| Decreased motivation | Sadness |
| Depression | Anger and hostility |
| Use of alcohol and/or other drugs in excess | Require medication |

Goal Conflict

A conflicted person may think: “I want to move ahead, but inside I know I won’t be able to do the work at the next level.” Such a conflict can result in the person giving up and becoming complacent with their life as it is, giving up on loftier goals. In a way, such a conflict acts as an inner voice, the voice of the saboteur, saying negative

things to the inner mind of the person. Fear becomes the fuel that exacerbates such acts of internal sabotage. Keeping such feelings repressed may allow the inner voice to take a solid foothold on the person's life. Opening up to a guide, mentor, or therapist may enable exploration of the problem, leading to a workable mechanism of resolving the roadblocks.

Self-Development as the Key to Controlling Fear

Some people are more afraid of success than they are of failure. Success can be measured by promotions. Promotion to a higher position at work can lead to internal and external feelings of incompetence because of the increased work responsibility. Career plateaus are a healthy way to rise up the corporate ladder without suffering through success—fear episodes. The use of effective mentor relationships can control the harmful effects of the fear response. Effective use of outside guidance is an effective way to alleviate the fear response. Communication of career goals may not be aligned with one's true needs and wants but due to personal or organizational pressure.

This material is not so much about fear itself as it is about ways to overcome the serious debilitating impact fear can have on one's career and life. Certain management and psychological theories will be explored and related to the paradox that certain people (workers) have a much higher fear of success than they do of failure. Three case studies will be explored, adding a real-life dimension to this concept. Finally, a fear quotient will be suggested as a way for one to gauge his or her level of fear. Knowing this could help people discover ways to control the fear response and lead to more successful careers and lives.

Scenario:

Supervisor: "John, I have some great news for you—you're being promoted and the company would like to give you added responsibility and authority."

John: "Oh, this is wonderful! I've worked so hard. What are my new responsibilities?"

Supervisor: For one, you will need to present a technical seminar at an upcoming divisional meeting to be attended by about 1,000 workers.

John: *Outside reaction:* Really, sounds challenging.

Internal reaction: I am not good at public speaking, what have I gotten myself into?

Discussion: A common element of elevating a worker is that it flushes out inabilities and fears. The person being promoted may begin to display elements of the fear response such as nervous speech, and his face may turn red indicating anxiety. The worker may begin to think catastrophically and envision himself tripping on the stage or delivering a poor speech.

The employee recognized that being promoted involved managing in other areas of the plant but felt uneasy about asserting authority (fear). This manifested itself in self-inflicted career sabotage (increased error rate, increased absences, less motivation). After six months of meetings with several mentors, the employee felt more comfortable with the idea of diverse people management. The employee also was advised to attend a workshop on assertiveness and diversity. These activities resulted in a clear idea of the new job requirements, and the employee got back on track and earned the promotion.

Synopsis of Chapter

1. Happiness is possible if our abilities reach outlets in our work, play, and social life.
2. Grounded belongingness is achieved through connections in an involved and invested life.
3. Feelings of insecurity and fear can debilitate a person.
4. “Being” is rooted in common experiences and productive activity.
5. A defeated person needs encouragement to muster new energy toward seeking new destinations.
6. Bravery is needed to work around obstacles.
7. Coping with change requires resiliency.
8. Disillusionment can lead to loss of relevancy.
9. The resilient person rallies past negative experiences.
10. The natural striving for perfection can be derailed by failure.

Chapter 4

Exploration of the Construct of Meaning: Influences on the Person

Endurance in Attitude: The Key to Self-Improvement

“Most people define themselves through the content of their lives. Whatever you perceive, experience, do, think, or feel is content. Content is what absorbs most people’s attention entirely” (Tolle, 2005, p. 193). With many problems, the solutions are not available on an immediate or even a short-term basis. Instead, some solutions require consistent, long-term effort to reach a goal. For example, if a person wanted to lose 20 lb, he or she might start a diet or join a fitness club. After a week or so of good effort, the person may lose interest and give up after only losing, say, 5 lb. The problem here is a loss of drive to endure through the struggle. It is the breakthrough of one’s internal blockage that is needed to overcome the obstacles to success. It is the slow, steady effort kept up on daily basis followed over a reasonable period of time that produces not only a desired result but a sustainable one. “Pure awareness transcends thinking. It allows you to step outside the chattering negative self-talk and your reactive impulses and emotions. It allows you to look at the world once again with open eyes” (Williams & Penman, 2011, p. 31).

Diets fade, but a determined alteration of one’s eating habits developed over a year may prove to be lasting for life. Without sounding overly simplistic or sarcastic, cessation of a smoking habit cannot occur by a person giving up smoking a pack a day, but occurs by giving up the very next cigarette and then the next and so on until the habit dissipates. We fail because we take on too much of the burden all at once.

When I decided to transform from an overweight 40-year-old male, I embarked on a daily mission to run. On the first night, I ran a half mile and experienced significant pain and discomfort mostly due to heavy breathing and exhaustion. But, I did not give up. The next evening, I did the same route and extended the distance by one block. The same physical impact was experienced, but I endured, vowing to keep going. This pattern was repeated every day for 1 year, each day doing a bit more distance and, eventually, going faster. The running installments were requiring more time because of the increased distance so the devotion to the goal was met by allocating more time to the self-imposed challenge.

Eventually, the distance covered was about 25 miles and took over 6 h on a Saturday. The feelings were mixed: pain but triumph. My weight had reduced, health had improved, and resting heart rate lowered dramatically from 80 to 50. My doctor was impressed. Finally, a thought occurred to try running a marathon. And so, on a chilly September day in 2000, I did just that and ran the Yonkers Marathon in 4 hours and 16 min. The feeling of accomplishment was overwhelming. I experienced tears after the finish because of the emotional moment concurrent with reaching such a plateau of physical stamina or endurance. Being determined, I repeated the experience by running my second marathon in London, England, 6 months later. After that, I felt as if I could run forever. My weekly training regimen included about 50–60 miles of roadwork per day plus resistance training.

Moving ahead to the present day, I have completed 68 marathons and 16 half marathons or three-quarter marathons. The enduring spirit willing to suffer through the initial agony of those early days of starting the fitness regimen led to this record, mentioned only as an example of one person's struggle to overcome the internal demons of laziness and denial. What was learned in the process was that the resilient self may exist in all of us. Reaching that spirit may be more difficult. In theory, I propose that making a steady, long-term effort is better than any quick-fix regimen whether it be in the form of a diet, a fitness plan, or a life plan.

We all know the term “Down in the dumps (DID).” It usually refers to a person who is moody, feels they are at a low point in life, or has reached a turning point in life where things seem bleak and hope is soon to run out. Such a person may be inconsolable as much as we may try to coax them back to some form of positive thinking.

This “place,” the “DID” place, does not have to be valueless. It could be a time of great internal reflection and openness with oneself to take stock in life, review what has happened, and consider what could happen in the future. For example, if we see a mound of dirt on the ground with scores of ants busy coming and going to and from the tiny opening, we may marvel at its simple construction or we might sweep it away, step on it, or apply bug spray, sending the little creatures scurrying for cover. Few take notice what happens after the mound is upset, assuming some of the ants survive. What happens is that the survivors do not stop and mourn the dead or lament over the catastrophe (for them like a tsunami). Instead, the hardy ants begin again to both repair and rebuild the former structure or a better one, or they simply relocate to a different neighborhood, which may be all of a few feet away from the old place. Why do they do this consistently? Nature seems to have inbred in the ant the mechanism of survival, instinctively leading them to do what they can with what they have, regardless of what happened before or what could happen in the future.

Synopsis of Chapter

1. Not every problem has an immediate solution.
2. Consistency of effort is a key toward reaching a goal.
3. A sense of drive is needed to sustain effort.
4. Resolving one difficulty at a time is wise.
5. Endurance in attitude is enhanced through physical endurance.
6. Effort toward achievement of a goal is best done incrementally.
7. There is a power to positive thinking.
8. Introspection is a tool to reflect on past failures in order to transform one's response.
9. Replacing negative patterns with positive ones will have a good impact.
10. Instinct can be combined with learning to master many problems in life.

Chapter 5

Resiliency: One Solution Toward Transformation of the Suffering Person

According to Adam Blatner (2012) (Personal communication, 2012b):

Resilience can be hard to define. I'm not sure if there is a clear line between me getting tough and coping in a less body-armored way. I think many people with sufficient group support can just live with their religion, customs, and primitive defenses alive and intact, gritting their teeth and hanging in there. Most pioneers and most people lived this way. Is resilience that? What is it? Can a spirit of spontaneity help?

Spontaneity needs a quieting of the fear shame guilt rage centers of the brain, access to the creative input of the forebrain - almost the opposite. Resilience---when shamed, or scared, "don't let it get to you," "don't let it show," hang in there. Military training builds automaticity for coping skills within the battle; suspicious, pull the trigger without qualms. Spontaneity to me is the activity of the mind that opens to creativity, it is a bit fragile, cannot warm up if there are strong feelings present.

“As studies of resilient children suggest, even a single secure/understanding relationship may be sufficient for the development of reflective processes and may ‘save’ the child” (Bowlby, 1980, p. 8). “Mindfulness has been found to boost resilience—that is, the ability to withstand life’s knocks and setbacks—to guide a remarkable degree” (Williams & Penman, 2011, p. 53). Greenberger and Padesky (1995) developed a therapeutic approach to help people reorganize their thought process as way of altering their moods. “How can we make sense of our moods? By identifying the thoughts we are having, our moods usually make perfect sense. Think of thoughts as a clue to understanding mood” (p. 47). Moods are often situational based. “Sometimes a little bit of additional information shifts our interpretation of a situation 180 degrees” (p. 89).

Consider a former professional football player: Randy Rasmussen, #66 of the New York Jets. Randy played offensive guard for 15 years for the team including 1969, the year the Jets won the Super Bowl. Randy is also a balanced and very likable person. He found much success on the football field extending back to his high school and college days. In fact, there is a high school football field in Nebraska named after him. After his football career, Randy became an insurance salesman.

This transition was possible because of his prior education and his strong abilities to connect with people and meet their needs for various insurance products.

Randy is resilient in the sense that he was able to make a smooth transition from a decade and a half of playing football to becoming a businessman. His attitude, demeanor, and affect remained positive throughout, and he never regretted leaving his athletic career behind—there is a time to retire, and he knew that time had come. Rather than mope about or languish, Randy demonstrated the ability to move on to another form of success in his life.

The resilient spirit does not lie down when obstacles require movement in an alternate direction. Instead, the person who is resilient thrives with the new challenge and defines a new path in life seeking fulfillment and purposefulness without looking back negatively at what was, but forward at what is and what can still be. Additionally, the thriving person passes on learned skills to either his own offspring or to others in the form of mentoring. In doing so, the qualities of the successful person can be emulated by others.

In another example, consider the crippled person who desires to participate in a marathon event. Though the person's legs will not accomplish the feat, the person obtains a wheelchair designed for an athlete to propel the chair forward using only upper body and arm strength. More importantly, the person has a resilient mindset targeting the marathon in the only way physically possible. The struggle, then, of such a person is admirable because of the special dedication they show the world because they will not let disability defeat their will and that their inner sense of determination supplants any notion of withdrawal from the zest of life. They continue to compete despite the limitations. Pride, therefore, invades the spirit of the person who is able to persevere to the limit regardless of obstacles. Realistically, not all handicapped persons will have the fitness capability to accomplish an athletic goal such as a marathon, but, perhaps any handicapped person who has a sense of resiliency can accomplish more than if they were not so resilient. Taking this notion further, we can extend the thesis of relevancy into the domain of resiliency and claim that having the quality of resiliency can enable a person to remain connected, therefore remaining relevant and avoiding the mental abyss that can cripple the spirit of the downtrodden beaten into nothingness due to a life situation, substance, or attitude.

If a person who finds himself or herself disconnected to life, perhaps they can be guided to examine the lives of others who found ways to cope and deal with life's unexpected calamities toward the goal of finding new ways to rediscover a sense of purposed connection. The loss of relevancy can be muted with guided effort to rise above the darkness and enter new light through courageous effort to consider the best possibilities available. The key to self-improvement may be to look for the highest reachable potentials and not the levels of success or attainment in the world, which are, in practical terms, unattainable. For example, the author, at age 52, may have desired to be an astronaut, but that is no longer attainable. It probably was never attainable even at a young age because of a general fear of open heights, a middle-ear infection at age 5 that left a condition where certain fast motion can be debilitating, and probably a few other limiting conditions. Nonetheless, the dream

that was never realistically achievable becomes acceptable as a construct that was never possible because of a sense of acceptance of such limitations. However, that one limiting issue was not severe enough to derail the quest for discovery of other possibilities. So, the lack of ability to achieve in one area or more than one area does not have to distinguish the internal fire blazing inside the thriving person seeking relevancy in life.

The homeless person who does not have any financial means to embark on grand missions of opening up a small business or going back to school may not be so lost in society that nothing is possible for him or her. But how can such a person move in any progressive manner given the daily desperate struggle to survive? If the person is not hampered by drug use or severe psychological malady such as psychosis and has a reasonably average level of intelligence, then, if that person can be fortunate enough to find social programs established to help such marginalized people find shelter, learn skills suitable for today's job market, and locate a job, even if all these take months or years, then the person can start to make advances in his or her life—a slow emerging leading to new potentials, therefore, new connections to active society. We can assume that the homeless person who feels hopeless also feels a loss of relevancy. It may be that such a feeling of loss is self-perpetuating and actually may justify the person's largesse. If there can be found a way to help a homeless person regain their dignity sufficient to propel them into available programs, perhaps they will seek ways on their own to connect better with society. A person who feels nonrelevant may not even care to be reconnected to life if they have a bitter feeling about society in general. For some, it may be easier to remain on the streets where there are no requirements, albeit there are certainly numerous challenges.

Being able to snap back from a setback can be viewed as a native skill, and it can also be learned. Either way, it is the decision of the person to rely on their ability to overcome obstacles or setbacks that will define their relative success in doing so. Those who do not have a natural ability to overcome obstacles or have not learned this skill will be far less able to move past a negative experience or climb out of a negative place in their life. Instead, this person is more likely to dwell in the negative place, the abyss for much longer and experience a much more severe period of time.

Journaling helps a person express the present moment and provides a unique opportunity to add creativity to the process of living. "Every time a person writes, it is an attempt to understand where one has been, and where one is going. The writing serves as an invaluable compass in understanding the geography of one's life" (Reiter, 2009, p. 256). A New York Times article (May 22, 2007) states, "Mental resilience relies in part on ... this kind of autobiographical storytelling, moment to moment, when navigating life's stings and sorrows." "Despite the disorder and chaos that often comes with change, creative coping holds seeds for a new existence. Resilience or hardiness is the ability to adapt to new circumstances when life presents the unpredictable" (p. 256). According to psychologist Salvatore R. Maddi (2004), "Hardiness or resilience comes through commitment, control, and challenge." Reiter (2009) adds that the creative process encompasses these three elements. The challenge first is for the self to have courage to write from the soul. Self-defeatism,

from the perspective of the failed introspective thinker, may include unwillingness to explore the depths of one's own thinking. Perhaps there are hurtful thoughts that may surface in the process of journaling, but once they are in the realm of a second dimension, there is potential for enlightenment.

Viktor Frankl (1905–1997) exemplifies the definition of a person who survived extreme circumstances and found an internal sense of survival. “Frankl was cast into the Nazi network of concentration and extermination camps. Miraculously, he survived” (2006, p. ix). Frankl disagreed with Freud's view that man's search was for pleasure and with Adler's view that man's primary search was for power. Instead, he saw several sources of meaning: in work, in love, and in courage during difficult times (p. x).

In his vivid account of life in the concentration camps, Frankl (2006) wrote about the prisoner turning inward as a means to cope with the horror of being persecuted. “The intensification of inner life helped the prisoner find a refuge from the emptiness, desolation and spiritual poverty of his existence, by letting him escape into the past” (p. 39). Frankl witnesses many people suffering from loss of identity. “The majority of prisoners suffered from a kind of inferiority complex. We all had once been or had fancied ourselves to be ‘somebody.’ Now we were treated like complete nonentities. (The consciousness of one's inner value is anchored in higher, more spiritual things, and cannot be shaken by camp life. But how many free men, let alone prisoners, possess it?)” (pp. 62–63). Fyodor Dostoyevski (1821–1881), a Russian writer and essayist, considered by many as a founder and precursor of twentieth-century existentialism, is credited for saying: “There is only one thing that I dread: not to be worthy of my sufferings” (Tumblr.com, 2011).

Frankl believed that suffering and death contributes to a life being complete. “An active life serves the purpose of giving man the opportunity to realize values in creative work, while a passive life of enjoyment affords him the opportunity to obtain fulfillment in experiencing beauty, art, or nature. But there is also purpose in that life which is almost barren of both creation and enjoyment and which admits of but one possibility of high moral behavior: namely, in man's attitude to his existence, an existence restricted by external forces” (2006, p. 67).

Synopsis of Chapter

1. Spontaneity opens the door to creativity.
2. Our interpretation of a situation can change if we alter our mood.
3. The resilient person thrives with new challenges.
4. The competitive spirit works through limitations.
5. Connectedness is the key to building resilience and maintaining relevance.
6. Viewing a setback as a springboard to a comeback will keep a person positive.
7. Journaling is a way to help a person express feelings and concerns.
8. Having courage through difficult times will propel a person.
9. A person's inner value supersedes the external challenges.
10. Existence encompasses both suffering and enjoyment.

Chapter 6

Case Study of a Person Evidencing the Constructs of Relevancy and Resiliency

Case Study: Rex

Introduction

I was introduced to Rex (pseudonym chosen by the subject) in early 2012 by a mutual friend, a philosophically gifted attorney in New York City. After I described what my research entailed, I asked Rex if he would be interested in participating in a resiliency project that might include publication. Rex agreed and was, in fact, enthusiastic about participating. One of his stated reasons for wanting to participate was his wish to help other people who deal with life stressors similar to his. He hoped his story would help others learn to be less afflicted and adopt a more resilient persona. Rex hoped he would discover more about his inner self while responding to my interview questions. When you study something, you change it. This is an application of Goodhart's law—"The law was first stated in a 1975 paper by Goodhart and gained popularity in the context of the attempt by the United Kingdom government of Margaret Thatcher to conduct monetary policy on the basis of targets for broad and narrow money, but the idea is considerably older. It is implicit in the economic idea of rational expectations. While it originated in the context of market responses the Law has profound implications for the selection of high-level targets in organisations" (Doctorow, 2012). The law is implicit in the economic idea of rational expectations. Interviewing Rex, though largely to gather data, allowed the dialogue to create a dual-purpose relationship: researcher/subject and coach/client. While Rex considers me his coach, I stated from the start that the relationship was not therapy and that I was not Rex's psychotherapist. Rex was always mindful of this.

Rex is articulate and engaging. I began with a psychiatric interview. As described by Harry Stack Sullivan (1954), "As I see it, such an interview is a situation of primarily vocal communication in a two-group, more or less voluntarily integrated, on a progressively unfolding expert-client basis for the purpose of elucidating characteristic patterns of living of the subject person, the patient or client, which patterns he experiences as particularly troublesome or especially valuable, and in

the revealing of which he expects to derive benefit” (p. 4). I covered a lot of ground through discussions, each based mostly on prepared questions. White (1966) wrote: “Any attempt to study other people must rely heavily on interviews. There can be no adequate substitute for the obvious procedure of asking the subject to tell all that he can about himself and his environment” (pp. 96–97).

Background

Rex is a single, white male, 59 years old, and lives in Sarasota, Florida. He lives in a small house, in one inexpensive room, which he refers as the “bunker.” Several people rent other portions of the house. Rex is around people most of the time. He was recently acting as the full-time, primary caretaker of his elderly mother who had suffered a series of strokes and falls. Rex’s father, James, died in 2002. Rex’s relationship with his mother is good, but his father was emotionally abusive toward him. Despite the history of abuse, Rex reported that he had a “great dad” and that James “inspired him.” His father yelled and screamed at Rex and struck him a number of times. At age 25, Rex struck his father in retaliation. When his father was diagnosed with cancer, Rex became very attendant, telling him regularly how much he loved him. After James died, Rex began to feel as if he had a chance to start living again. He became contemplative and decided to resume his active life. His father’s death brought a sense of calmness to Rex, leading to his becoming more deliberate about life. I used an analogy of a blacksmith forging a piece of iron as being like Rex’s efforts to forge a new life. Rex said: “I don’t want to be an unconscious person.” Rex thrives on dialogue and interaction with others. While capable of living a solitary existence, Rex is sociable and prefers human company.

Rex has a younger sister, but their relationship is distant. Recently, Rex has begun rebuilding it. Rex has several close friends and active mentors. Rex exercises on a regular basis. His diet is especially good considering his modest weekly allotment of food stamps. He initially reported no current use of legal or illegal drugs or alcohol. Later, Rex revealed he did recently engage in binge drinking. He has been voluntarily hospitalized for psychiatric reasons and short-term use of psychotropic medication. There is no evidence of medication or nonprescription drug abuse.

Rex is impoverished—he has no savings or retirement investments. He has been unemployed. He indicates there are no other available forms of public assistance given his age and gender. Rex’s mother provides him a monthly subsidy to cover rent and living costs. She has been able to provide this extra support as necessary, but Rex knows she will not be able to continue doing so for much longer. She owned a home, which Rex helped her sell. Now she is living in an assisted-living residence expected to consume all her financial resources. His primary objective is to find full-time employment, but he has had difficulty obtaining and maintaining regular employment. I suggested to Rex that he could consider taking on two part-time jobs while continuing his quest for full-time employment.

Rex is a bright man, articulate, well read, and interested in many subjects, including law and philosophy. He has a good memory and is able to converse on a wide range of topics. He has an undergraduate degree in marketing and was a pre-med student before stopping advanced education, due to the difficulties with his father, who was not supportive of Rex's efforts. As a result, Rex's goals diminished, and he experienced a reduced career drive. His former goal, being a medical doctor, ended abruptly.

Rex has had many jobs, but not a career with advancement potential. Rex worked for 5 years answering telephones in a call center. He spent 3 years at a kiosk, selling language tapes for *RosettaStone*. He does not speak well of these jobs, but recalls more favorably his past jobs as a waiter or dishwasher. He enjoys being around people. Rex likely suppressed an internal sense of real capabilities, relegating himself to jobs significantly beneath his potential. He has been damaged by a toxic relationship with his father. Lack of a belief in the possibility of real achievement has contributed to a diminished life experience. Rex is more like a person floating through time, living a marginally challenging existence due to financial circumstances unable to make his life rewarding and fulfilled. The fact that Rex survives as well as he does suggests some element of natural resilience.

Rex wants to "fit in." He wants to be part of the fabric of society. Feeling like an outcast and apart from life's rhythm contributed to a lack of motivation to seek ways to accomplish what goals he has had. These realities form the backdrop of dialogues between me and Rex, a blend of data gathering, active mentoring, and coaching. This multifaceted role became increasingly important in my efforts to assess Rex's hidden abilities to overcome internal obstacles and achieve success in his own terms. Discussion topics varied: Rex began reporting improvement (or lack of improvement) with respect to his goals. My relationship with Rex evolved through vibrant discussions, resulting in perceptible improvements in Rex's mood, sense of self, goal-oriented behavior, and achievement. Efforts were made to avoid creating a dependency relationship with Rex, whose improvement was attributed to Rex's efforts. As an example, whenever Rex showed a breakthrough, I made sure to give him full credit for the breakthrough so as to keep him empowered.

Conversations were directed to Rex's past, current attitudes, and changing responses to situations. My self-disclosures to Rex helped build an environment of understanding and empathy, encouraging Rex to learn from my experiences. While not often as prudent in a therapeutic setting, mentoring and coaching are less restrictive, but if one is engaging in the functional equivalent of therapy, the same problems present; therefore, there is not much difference compared to the therapeutic relationship, only fewer boundaries. Work done to help Rex to understand his life has changed him. The types of challenges he has undertaken have helped him to begin to achieve modest goals. Rex feels better about himself, and he has begun to take responsibility for changing his life. This study reports on discussions with Rex and changes in Rex's life, relative to this book's central thesis.

The Case Study Method

This study adheres to the case study methodology wherein a life is examined in detail. “The case study method is the traditional approach of all clinical research...Much of the knowledge common to all clinicians today was discovered by the case study method” (Bolgar, 1965, p. 28). While the lives of individuals depicted using case studies largely rely on retrospective reports, this is not always necessary. “...case studies can, and often do (as in biographies), rely on the collection and interpretation of letters, diaries, observations by contemporaries, archival data, and so on” (Runyan, 1982, p. 123). “In psychotherapy practice, clients have always been encouraged to tell their stories” (Romanoff, 2001, p. 246). I used elements of the cognitive therapeutic approach as well as the behavioral therapeutic approach to help Rex (see Chap. 6) through the use of narratives as raw material for the analysis. “Often, the client’s telling of his or her story is considered a necessary precursor to therapy” (p. 246).

Presentation of the Case

Rex is pleasant and highly intelligent. He has excellent verbal skills. He is knowledgeable in many areas, including psychology and philosophy. His memory is excellent. A few presenting issues were identified with Rex’s self-awareness or stability. He states that he wants to identify a career path or, secure meaningful employment, increase his confidence and self-esteem, which he describes as “low.” He has a negative impression about the job market and, worse, understands his chances of finding work will require him to attain much improved skills.

Rex has been in therapy. One therapist told him it would take 6 months of therapy to help him. Rex did not want to go all the way back as the therapist wanted him to do, into all the issues of his life. Rex knew, at the time, however, that it would take time to get to the bottom of his issues.

Rex’s psychiatric history reveals voluntary hospitalizations for brief periods mostly due (according to Rex) to situational anxiety and depression, for which he has sought urgent help. He has received several psychological diagnoses, for example, attention deficit disorder, cyclothymia, bipolar disorder, mood disorder, personality disorder, and general anxiety disorder. He has been given Lithium, Elavil, and Zyprexa. He has received short-duration psychotherapy, involving different therapeutic approaches, for example, Rational Emotive Therapy and Gestalt Therapy. Therapy periods lasted between 1 week and 4 months.

Rex is not currently in a therapeutic relationship. He does not consider himself disabled or in need of therapy. He does not affix blame on others for his situation and is not malingering or morose in his attitude or conduct. He has not exhibited any sort of anger, outbursts, or inappropriate affect. He seems fully aware of his status and has been comfortable discussing his past, present, and future. He has allowed the conversation to be controlled albeit, at times, requiring a pause by me to remind Rex to stay

focused on the immediate issue. Rex occasionally appeared overly effervescent, but he is never manic or distorted. He has maintained a balanced emotional level through discussions with me.

I interviewed Rex by telephone at least three dozen times, each call lasting between a half-hour and 1 hour. Sessions were recorded with Rex's consent and approval. He has provided me with written consent to use his information in this research. Interviews consisted of data gathering through the process of questioning during open discussions on numerous topics. On a weekly basis, Rex was assigned various follow-up tasks or mini-projects in order to encourage him to more fully explore his quest for employment.

In his initial interview on January 30, 2012, Rex had a tendency to ramble. He remembered specific questions directed to him, but his responses were based on a much wider span of time than the question usually entailed. He often appeared scattered and not focused.

After a reintroduction of the purpose of the interview and my role, Rex stated: "I feel safe in this space." He later shared his perspective on life: "You live life like a movie." Rex stated early on that he wanted to share his story because he thought it might help other people avoid the same pain he has experienced. He wants to help other people with the "stress of readjusting," and to develop a greater resiliency. Rex admits he has had feelings of failure and despair.

Rex has had many jobs. He was an assistant media planner at age 25, referring to it as "a horrible phone thing." Rex's dream was to be a doctor. When I asked if Rex had had any psychological counseling, he replied: "I have had counseling in the past and it was excellent." He describes therapy as the "difference between concept and reality. Until one applies psychological techniques to life, they are meaningless." See Chap. 10 on Expectations and realities for an expansive discussion on the importance of this point. This comment proved to be a key to a breakthrough in Rex's thinking. He knew much theory, but avoided taking action. Rex realized he would need to shift from being an inactive person to an active one—a shift perceived would affect substantial changes, leading to the possibility for transformation in Rex's life.

Rex married a woman with two children, but they divorced after several years. "Divorce happens. It was not the end of the world," said Rex, adding: "The last 24 years have been difficult." In fact, he spent the last 3 years as the primary caretaker for his mother. Rex is now living apart from his mother, trying to be independent. For him, resilience is, primarily, learning to become "independent," which builds and takes courage, leading to increase in self-esteem and confidence.

Rex attends church services regularly, and he also meditates daily to deal with significant stress. "Am I crazy?" he has asked psychologists. They have told him he is under too much stress, but when he has tried to obtain employment, he has been frustrated, a main contributor to his stress.

Regarding the process of job hunting, "It is emotionally devastating to do the job career thing, to be knowledgeable, and to learn some things. There are no jobs out there." In speaking about people adapting to the world as it is, Rex stated: "People downsized don't adapt—can't adapt." Rex was once a waiter. "Being a waiter is one

of the best survival jobs in the world,” Rex added. He sold the language learning system *RosettaStone* in a kiosk for 3 years and is fluent in French. He used to learn things quickly, but now finds it harder to learn.

The friend who introduced Rex to me reported that Rex’s father used to yell and scream at Rex unpredictably and was emotionally abusive. Rex found himself yelling at his mom during the years he spent as her caretaker, but realized he should stop doing this, as he was emulating his father’s behavior, which attests to his advanced thinking.

Rex has a history of helping people. Annotated excerpts from the dialogue between me (“EK”) and Rex follow:

EK: “One goal of this process is to provide help through the dialogue.”

Rex: “This is very good. The thing to get over was not being a hero. Being the caretaker rips you up. Out of conversation can create the healing. I’ve returned to the Universal Christian Church.”

He is Methodist, but is going through a struggle and is now Catholic.

Rex: “My best wasn’t good enough.”

Once he realized this, it freed him up.

Rex: “Try being a human being on planet Earth—being real. Where will I fit in? My prayer is to be a loving productive man. My concern is to make my life valuable to be the best human being that I can. I over-analyze; always going over past failures. I don’t want to be a salesman. What is the perfect job?”

After his divorce in 1986, Rex went through a period of depression. He went to a psychologist who said having \$1,000 in the bank would do more for him than any therapy. Rex’s failure to live up to his expectation for himself created his lasting dilemma.

Rex: “My obsession is trying to find the right job.”

The psychologist told him that there is no right job.

Rex: “The healthy job—this is the hardest question to ask me; brings up all the nuttiness in me.”

EK: “What is the perfect job right now?”

Rex: “Right now—what would I do if I knew I couldn’t fail—work out every day, prayer and meditation; find a job with structure—goals—working for self and others. See how broad this is. The Perfect job at age 59 is me controlling my time, using my communication skills, using my empathy for people. My talent for objectivity would be respected.”

EK: “My offer is to help you.”

Rex: “I am willing to sit and listen.”

I suggested that he listen and focus more narrowly on the presenting issue. Rex’s points of reference were wandering and disconnected. After pointing this out, Rex realized that he is, in fact, all over the place. I expressed concern to Rex that he may appear scattered to others on job interviews, etc.

Rex: “How do I rein that in?”

I explained to Rex that “This is not a criticism, but a noticing.” Rex goes to Job Services, a state-run employment facility. I advised that he needed to

answer questions directly, and he agreed to focus on this issue. I challenged Rex—go to the library and use this computer to identify ten interesting job postings to review with me.

Rex: “Let’s do this as an exercise; does not matter if I have the skill.” This is an example of Rex taking initiative.

Rex wanted to be a physician’s assistant, but responded to my questions by reflecting on past problems. I suggested he stay in the present moment.

Rex: “From now on I will speak in the current.”

I suggested Rex would find circumstances less confusing if he stays in the present. We are often judged by what we are saying, not who we really are as a person. Rex sets goals and objectives, usually by writing them down in his “little notebook” as he refers to it. This could be considered as some sort of fixation or habit, or it could be useful as a therapeutic tool.

EK: “Do you have mentors and friends?”

Rex: “I’ve let go of a lot of friends.” “Yes, I do have a mentor.”

EK: “How would it be to let the answer go as either yes or no?”

Rex: “It would be more relaxing.” His tendency is to think of expanding questions into many areas. “I am going to relax with you more.” “I am not really a tense guy.”

EK: “Could you lift a fifty-pound barbell and eat a sandwich at the same time?” This was asked to encourage Rex to focus on one thing at a time within the conversation.

I provided a second assignment, regarding ways that Rex responds to his world. Rex was assigned to actively consider every interaction that he has and whether he is being pinpointed or going off into tangents.

EK: “The way you might respond better is to discern when it is good to say “yes” or “no” and when it is good to ask if the person wants more information.” “Be a monitor.” “Notice how you respond to the things that come at you in the world.” Rex would often ramble, not allowing conversation, just a series of monologues.

Rex: “It has been burning me out.”

EK: “No matter what comes up you have so many synapses firing at the same time.” A synapse is a structure in the nervous system that permits a neuron to pass an electrical or chemical signal to another cell. I asked Rex if he thinks he will run out of time to say what he wants.

Rex: “One of my coping things—making notes.”

EK: “Ask—can I answer this question the way it is being asked or am I being frenetic?”

Rex: “Yes, by being frenetic—pushes people away.” I pointed out that jumping in when someone else has something to say means you have stopped listening.

EK: “Take passion, bottle it up, put a cork in the bottle and take it out when needed—control the passion flow. You can get more out of life by giving to the world in smaller increments listening to the space between the thoughts. How do you think you deal with being challenged?”

Rex: “With you very well.” “That’s the saga of isolation—the jobs I have done have not been challenging.”

EK: “Jobs do not have to be boring.”

I described a human resource management study where researchers interviewed workers whose job was to pack newly manufactured lamps in boxes. They expected such workers would be bored, but they explained to the researchers that they packed each one differently, which, for them, kept the job interesting and challenging.

Rex mentioned his participation in the “Landmark Forum” several times. At the Landmark Forum, participants were told: “Your job is to listen.” In the past, Rex had a job dishwashing—he was “the best dishwasher.” I described the assignment of organizing chaos and the experience of organizing messy gadget isle in the housewares department of a store.

EK: “How does your interiority scream out when you look at job postings?”

Rex: “This is what hurts the most—what is going on in the inside. I have a lot of painful memories. The question is what to focus on and what not to focus on.”

Rex spent last year working out and taking care of his mother. Since December 2011, he has sought work, prayed, exercised, and has asked: “Where do I go to look for work?”

Rex: “I have to force myself to not be afraid and walk in and ask for a job to overcome fear.”

Rex wrote down five or six times: “Be done with fear and go in and start a conversation and see if you can work with these people.” Rex uses language that is poetic and which sometimes clashes with his prior statements. For example, he previously stated “the thing to get over was not being a hero.” Now he is saying he has to force himself to not be afraid. This shows the inconsistency on Rex between how he sees himself as caretaker of his mother and how he sees himself in the market looking for a job.

EK: Suggest “Do a search to see if any car dealers are looking for people.”

Rex: “I’m having lousy experiences in car dealerships—cross off one more item.” Rex convinced his mother to sell her house, which made good sense for her, but deprived Rex of a comfortable place to live in. He now lives (and pays for) a single, small room. He plans to get organized and to create a plan to help him find work. He makes lists obsessively, goes to job services, and then makes more lists of actions to take.

Rex: “Getting me centered. When I put things on paper I function very well. I need some help in the area—focusing.”

I provided Rex with an analogy—a funnel where you place all the event and ideas into the large end and filter these then communicating based on what comes through the small end. In Rex’s case, the big end contains all his thoughts; the narrow end is what people want to hear. I urged Rex to “funnel his thoughts” to more coherently communicate without bombarding or overwhelming potential employers with superfluous chatter.

Rex: “Well—taken. When I changed my way—being on purpose—sometimes people just want information.”

EK: “Try to be more succinct.”

Rex agreed. He agreed it would be “a lot less stressful.”

I suggested a third assignment—keep track of things during the week that go well and not well and see if they correlate to the way he communicates.

Rex likes to visit a local organic food store.

Rex: “It is delightful to get the food I need to be part of my healing—feeling a part of the community. I am here to buy something, but also here to see Jerry (store clerk) and create my experience.” Normal experiences, like food, help Rex feel that he is part of the community. Rex likes to say: The fabric is already made. He becomes part of the fabric.

EK: “Bring in fewer topics at the same time.”

Rex: “When I did this with mom it was far more purposeful. I could enjoy the day and not be resentful, but be slow and deliberate.”

EK: “Speak the way you write. Do you feel fully capable or partially disabled?”

Rex: “I’ve experienced many times when I come up against the wall and made a big error not applying for disability. I have to go with problem of lack of confidence and low self-esteem. This just jammed me. I believe I might be needing disability to adapt.”

Rex was previously diagnosed as ADD and suffering from anger management issues; Rex was diagnosed with cyclothymic mood disorder. Cyclothymia is a mood and mental disorder in the bipolar spectrum with both hypomanic and depressive episodes. Unlike some forms of bipolar disorder, people with cyclothymia may be somewhat or fully functioning, or even hyper-productive. Because hypomania is often associated with exceptionally creative, outgoing, and high-functioning behavior, both conditions are often undiagnosed. As with most of the disorders in the bipolar spectrum, it is the depressive phase that leads most sufferers to get help.

EK: “It is important to get into the rhythm of life. Everyone who is alive has the right to be here and there is a place in society for him, he just needs to find it.”

Rex is trying to learn who he is and to better comport his behavior to society’s norms, to better identify what does and does not work. When business slowed at *RosettaStone*, for an extended period, Rex decided it made no sense to continue something that was not working. He took jobs he did not like, but now believes it was a mistake to do so.

Rex: “I looked up resiliency and define it as keeping a routine.”

Rex often goes off on tangents, but eventually returns to the presented topic. He took all assignments seriously. Rex distinguishes “authentic stress” and “inauthentic stress.” Much has been written about authentic living and stress: “When you make the choice to live more authentically, it can be accompanied by an initial bout of stress and insecurity, like I’ve just acknowledged. Ultimately though, the delicious and highly fulfilling power behind a dream will render obsolete all those self-defeating habits you’ve developed to help you stay in the life you have now” (Biali, 2011, p. 2). When taking care of his mother, he “created order.” “Routine gives me a sense of order.” Rex described a situation with his friend Peter. Rex was a passenger in a car Peter was driving. Rex used the opportunity to practice his communication skills. He found that not only did his

friend Peter speak in a confusing manner, changing topics frequently, but Rex was able to practice using pinpoint communication—presenting singular thoughts with as much clarity as possible. He practiced his new method of communicating with his mother, as well.

Rex made an inventory of his relationships. He discovered that he often tried to play the role of hero by trying to teach things to friends who were having difficulties. Rex discussed his unemployment problem. After helping his mother, he concluded he needed to give up control. He had been her caretaker for 3 years, around the clock for the last 9 months. She fell and had three strokes. His father, as he was dying, asked Rex to take care of his mother, and Rex received validation from family members for his efforts.

Rex changed his communication patterns, answering in shorter sentences, finding it freeing and more enjoyable. He came to see his friend Peter as intrusive, someone who would “go on and on.” Rex saw Peter doing the same thing he was doing. It provided him an excellent firsthand example of the problems caused by frenetic speech. “I am pleased with my work and discoveries.” “Some communication is only informational. Some is more involved.” Rex stated his self-esteem is building up.

In 1984, Rex had what he described an acute psychotic stress reaction—a nervous breakdown. He was voluntarily hospitalized for 3 days. The event was triggered by use of marijuana, his wife telling him she wanted to leave him, and, after working 60–70 h a week, changing his job. He was given Lithium for 3 months, but it did not work. He was diagnosed as bipolar. He tried to find other work as he thought the job he was doing was contributing to his problems. He divorced in December 1984.

Rex moved to Long Island in 1985. A psychologist said he did not need to be on medication, just that he can’t handle stress well or was “experiencing fear.” In 1986, he moved to Florida, became depressed, and began to have suicidal thoughts. He voluntarily admitted himself to a hospital for depression. He was there for 2 weeks. His doctors suspected he was bipolar, but did not prescribe medication. He was depressed with the evidence of being diagnosed as bipolar I.

Rex reported that he has tinnitus, for which Elavil (Amitriptyline), an antidepressant, was prescribed. Tinnitus is the perception of sound within the human ear in the absence of corresponding external sound. The drug worked well. Amitriptyline is in a class of medications called tricyclic antidepressants, which increase amounts of certain natural substances in the brain needed to maintain mental balance.

In or about 1987, Rex met a woman and formed a steady relationship. He felt better, and all the symptoms disappeared. However, in 1991, Rex voluntarily admitted himself into the hospital, was diagnosed with a personality disorder, and told to “get away from dad.” He was in the hospital for 2 days. He worked then as a waiter in a four-star restaurant. In 1992, he had a hernia operation.

Between 1994 and 1999, he worked in call centers. He said it was “degrading.” In 2000, he worked in Publix grocery store as a bagger.

In 2001, he checked himself into an outpatient clinic for depression. He could not support himself at that time. Two mental health professionals saw him—one said he was bipolar and should be on disability; the other said he was not bipolar, but had an adjustment disorder and emotional abuse issues. He was not able to support himself; he lived in a friend’s house.

Rex received psychotherapy between 1982 and 2000.

In 1986, he saw a therapist for 6 months who said he had anger issues.

In 1988, he received vocational rehabilitation.

In 1991, he received Rational Emotive Therapy (RET) for 3 months and found it helpful, as it helped him understand what made him angry.

In 1993, he had further vocational rehabilitation and treatment for alcoholism. Eight months of counseling did not help him, and he was diagnosed with a mood disorder.

In 1996, a therapist told him he was not an alcoholic.

In 2004, he underwent 4–5 months of gestalt therapy, which he found helpful. In therapy, Rex went through the “Empty Chair” exercise. In this exercise, the patient sits in one of two chairs and speaks to the other “chair,” then switches position and responds. It is a way of engaging in a dialogue between two points of view within a controversy troubling the person. Rex was told by a therapist in the past that he was afraid of his power.

As a gestalt exercise, I coached Rex through what is known as the “Power Animal.” The communication follows:

Rex: “I suffered and want to be well.”

EK: “It is important to have trusted connections in life.”

Rex: “I agree with you.”

EK: “My goal is to help you build a bridge from the painful past to the hopeful future, using the tools of discernment.”

Gestalt Exercise

EK: “Picture walking into a forest, making your way through trees and coming to a clearing. Everything is calm, nothing to be afraid of. Picture an animal. Take your time and let me know when you have selected the animal.”

Rex: “A cougar.”

EK: “The cougar is no threat. The cougar is being absorbed into your body: its emotional energy and strength.”

Rex: “I am seeing it now.”

EK: “Slowly leave the clearing. Go back the way you came and leave the forest. When you are out open your eyes and let me know.”

Rex: “I exit as myself.” “I can see the water and the lake.”

EK: “Let me know when you are out.”

Rex: “Now I am.” “I am settled, the whole room is a lot clearer.”

EK: “The cougar is your power animal. Please write that down (reinforcing wiring positive things down). You might even want to find a picture of a cougar. It is an internalization of something powerful in contrast with smaller, weaker animals, e.g., a mouse or rabbit. The cougar has many powerful representations that we both know about. Because it came from you in this exercise, that’s where your power is. By absorbing the cougar emotionally and psychologically into your being, you regained your powers” (tool #1).

Rex: “One therapist said that I was afraid of my power. When I walked out of the forest, I feel very comfortable with that. I am the cougar. I can absorb that and feel what you just said.”

EK: “I want to draw a contrast: That, instead of being afraid of your power, if you absorb the power within you and become more powerful, there is nothing to be afraid of anymore.”

Rex: “Yeah, I’m comfortable with just being the way I really am. I am the cougar.”

EK: “Now, you are fully incorporating your power that you can now go forward as a cougar now that you are out of the forest. The forest is a metaphor of confusion. You are out of it. You have risen above the noise and confusion of life and are ready to take on the next challenge. The way you take on challenge—here’s the invitation—Before you take on the next confrontation, the next problem, before you get affected by it, picture the cougar, feel the power, and now take on the problem. We are talking here about tool #2 confidence.”

Rex: “Bingo.”

EK: “You’re a smart guy. In the past you have been weakened by some by your own doing and by people who have really messed with you. So, let’s accept that whole package and call it the past.”

Rex: “What I chose and what I chose not to do—I created that.”

Rex is internalizing the cougar beyond the concepts, which is, perhaps, a good beginning.

EK: “The future is what is at hand. So with the next situation that requires you to act or not to act, take a couple of seconds and feel confident. Use your toolbox. Use your power symbol.”

Rex: “The gestalt is to feel confident. You allowed me to be me, the inside of me right now.”

I provided Rex with an example—building strength through weightlifting. Rex can curl 50 lb. The metaphor helped him to realize that if he concentrates on a single task with all his energy, rather than diffusing his efforts, he has the ability to accomplish difficult projects.

Rex recently reported that he uploaded his resume to Monster.com, seeking a position as a law clerk. He posted his resume on a website called Florida Employ. Rex reviewed area job postings as an assignment I gave him. He prepared the list of occupations he would find acceptable, if offered:

1. Hotel concierge
2. Sandwich maker
3. Event manager
4. Phlebotomist (phlebotomy is the science of extracting blood)

5. Call center representative
6. Airport baggage handler
7. Voice-over provider
8. Law clerk

I suggested he might work as a clerk in a grocery store or health food store, or an outdoor farmers' market. Rex registered for temporary positions with Snelling and Snelling (Temp agency).

Rex's mother gave him her Mercury Sable so he is able to drive. I suggested to Rex that he draw a 25-mile radius on a map of where he lives and seek job opportunities within that radius. Rex agreed; however, shortly thereafter, he reported his back problems flared, and he went to see a chiropractor. Rex had previously turned down an opportunity to work in the store because the store manager could alter work schedules on a day's notice, which was then unacceptable to Rex. He returned to the Dollar General Store and explained that he reconsidered schedule issues and would like to work at the store, if the position was still available. They said it was and gave him an application, which he completed and returned to the store. He did not visit Snelling and Snelling, but says he may do so. Rex says he is doing better and feeling more confident. Rex decided to focus on Kelly Services instead because the agency's office was much closer than Snelling and Snelling.

Analysis

Rex has made substantial progress. His mood and attitude has become future oriented. He communicates more succinctly and appropriately. He sees how he used to communicate and now has become more focused. He has a renewed sense that he can succeed in life. The test will be whether Rex can sustain this new found ability to view current setbacks. This new resiliency will set the stage for future triumphs. Throughout weekly telephone sessions, Rex accepted responsibility for keeping scheduled appointments. If he needed to make a change, he was always respectful and initiated communication well in advance of the scheduled session. His sincerity and consistency seemed, on the surface, to be inconsistent with how ineffectual he has been in the employment context. Perhaps he has been unlucky in this part of life. More likely, he has shot potential in the proverbial foot each time he tried to break from his past to start a future. While he must take responsibility for his life, Rex's trials and tribulations are not unique. But the combination of an abusive father and the prolonged caretaking responsibilities he had for his mother has exacted a significant toll on him.

At this point, he has few choices. He needs to try to create meaningful dynamics to change his life while maintaining his health. He knows he will not be able to rely on his mother's support much longer. He would prefer to become part of working society. We must believe Rex and encourage him to earnestly strive for whatever success he can extract from his life. Rex is not lazy—he has been a long-term, consistent caretaker and has held menial jobs. His psychological record is, but suggests,

his depressed affect may have led to multiple, inconsistent diagnoses and multiple prescribed medications.

Some therapists have told Rex his real problem is to find a way to earn a living. Rex would greatly benefit from making new connections to people and organizational systems, which might facilitate him finding new strength and resiliency. Renewing his psychic energy may enable Rex to take charge of his life. Rex's potential should be measured in comparison to that of his earlier life. If he can sustain his positive energy, this may pay dividends.

Rex: "The world is very pleasant when I don't have to explain myself." He reports he is working on changing his "way of being." Rex stated that he has been overthinking things and needs to turn thought into action. A minister recently advised Rex to be more pragmatic and to respect his future employer's needs once he starts working.

Rex: "What does it mean to be human?" He later asked: "Is it human to want to be understood?" He realizes he needs to pick and choose which problems to deal with. When asked about the job application for the management position at Dollar General Store, Rex said he has started it, but realizes he has tremendous capabilities. He did submit the application, but the position had already been filled. His changes in attitude and communication have been noticed. Rex's mother asked him: "What happened? You are so different." Rex explained he has dropped his anger, feels calmer, and is now able to respond to the world in a healthier way. Rex feels relieved that his efforts are generating positive reactions. His sister told him she is proud of him.

Rex must work hard to maintain momentum and to avoid temptations to return to past behaviors (resilience). Moving toward connections, including full-time employment, remains challenging, and time management becomes more critical. Rex has become accustomed to a life with lots of free time. Though he keeps occupied with his fitness regimen, some continuing responsibilities toward his mother's care, and other routine tasks, Rex must establish a balance between his free time and work time. He needs to maintain a work schedule. He is not used to such a regimen. One test of Rex's resilience will be his transition from a relatively free lifestyle to one burdened by work and its sundry requirements. Can he handle the change?

Rex says he feels a growing sense of "aliveness." When asked about his future, he said: "I will do what I can do. I see myself as a man of change, letting go of false belief." "I want to show up on the game-board of life." The test will come in the months ahead when Rex secures employment where the workplace will be his "proving ground." My efforts were to coach Rex to change his attitude, develop his communication skills, and, thus, help him regain his foothold in life. Rex has been on the sidelines, not on the "game-board."

Rex has been participating in a program known as *Landmark Forum*, designed to help people overcome difficulties. Asked if he would ever consider becoming a speaker at these sessions, he said he had been approached to do so in the past and could see the possibilities of doing this in the future. The Landmark Forum program involves 3 days of intense sharing of issues as they affect the lives of the participants

who contribute their stories in front of the group. The theory is that sharing by participants will improve their lives. Research on this program yields mixed reviews, some call it a cult or a scam, but others, who have taken the program, feel it was helpful. Rex seems to benefit from his attendance and is, perhaps, the right kind of person for reaping such benefit. Because he is intelligent, thoughtful, and motivated to improve his life, this sort of program may be helpful. He refers often to inspirational phrases learned at these sessions, which may foster positive frames of mind, and there is no indication this program is harming him. His attendance provides him an opportunity to interact with people and be expressive.

Some messages are:

- We are all concerned with looking good and fitting in. Many people are too afraid of being judged and criticized. If they do judge us, so what? Everyone winds up in the same place eventually, dead.
- We are all inauthentic, lying and cheating through life, taking the easy way out, and blaming other people for our problems.
- Events in our lives lack intrinsic meaning; humans are “meaning-making machines” and construct meaning in their lives.
- There’s “what happened” and there’s “my story about what happened.” Assuming these are the same is a source of much pain and conflict.
- If we don’t “complete” the past, we bring the injuries and complaints of the past—that is, the meanings we create—into the present and future. We are literally “living into a future,” polluted with complaints and baggage of the past.
- Completing the past consists of the following: forgiving ourselves (even if it wasn’t our fault), forgiving those we blame and “making wrong” for roles in past events, and choosing to let go of stories and meanings previously attributed to those events.
- Language constructs our experience of reality. As we navigate our lives, we can use change-based language; we can transform what’s preexisting and “course correct.” Using possibility-based/transformation-based language completes the past, creating a future of excitement, optimism, and passion.

Rex enjoys humor: “Humor really counts; it helps.” Humor helps him relax and handle stress. Lightheartedness helps him feel more comfortable, helping to avoid excessive worry or, even, panic. Fear and panic may have impaired his lack of progress in developing career or finding a long-term fulfilling relationship.

A Setback or a New Opportunity to Overcome Weakness?

Rex contacted me and seemed unusually quiet and was upset. He reported feeling lonely. He had been drinking and smoking the day before. He felt he had disappointed me because he disappointed himself. I suggested the event merely underscored his humanness; it did not derail efforts to forge a new life and was not a “disappointment.” By treating him nonjudgmentally, Rex learned the importance of

not judging himself. Everyone remains vulnerable to setbacks, and he learned that he needs to consider what he does and with whom he does it. He also learned he needs to find healthier ways to respond to feelings of loneliness.

Rex's self-image creates the problem, and he often condemns himself for behaving in ways he later perceives disappointing to those he trusts and respects, especially people trying to help him. His negative feelings about his setbacks have impaired his effort to change in ways he believes would be helpful, thus damaging his ability to transform. "Transference" refers to certain unconsciously redirected feelings, fears, or emotions from a client toward the counselor that actually stems from past feelings and interactions with others and is transferred into the current counseling relationship.

A few weeks after the above setback, Rex started rallying, discovering new strength. He submitted a job application and approached several employers. He did not receive any offers of employment; he remained positive. Although he did not view the rejections as catastrophic failures. Instead, Rex viewed his efforts as a positive development.

Rex has deepened his connection to his sister, which waned over time. They speak by telephone or text each other weekly. Rex is more involved in her life and she in his, fostering stability through an important person in his life. Regular communication helps Rex avoid isolation, and his transformation includes movement toward greater intimacy. Rex is achieving this. He is developing a more positive attitude, and enhanced intimacy will enable Rex to present himself in a more authentic self.

Rex is paying greater attention to his appearance. He reported leaving his apartment to look for work wearing a "blue blazer and white shirt," a sign of improved outlook and sense of himself. He stated he "feels great about himself" and "is becoming the machine he used to be." He reports being more aware of how he uses his time. He is "managing his time well" and senses "the constraints of the past disappearing." I suggested that Rex view his "looking for a job to be his job," until he finds employment.

Rex sent his first email to me on Friday, March 23, 2012:

Hi Eric,

Thanks again for your time and effort in assisting me in discovering new ways to become resilient in my approach to living.

Your prescription of listing, coping, and dealing makes it easier for me to create a flexible routine within the constraints of my life. When I also create the possibility of living in fun, favor and freedom around my finding employment suddenly the experience of people and Sarasota became alive again. There were only memories of failure, sadness, and despair in the past. My energy is returning and sense of aliveness is occurring. The straining to make life work only proves that it is often not anything as our finite mind conceives in its struggle to keep us alive. In fact, we gain our newness of life only in our listening and communication.

Today I began making my calls and taking action to create the possibility of productive employment in my life. You suggested that I write my feelings in and around transformation. When I experience transformation it usually shows up first as a surprise. It feels light, and I feel alive. When it occurs, well after it occurs, I usually think "Was that really me?" When I feel a flow and continuity in my life

there is a sense that I do not have to figure it all out ahead of time nor be attached to the results. I feel I can speak and let the chips fall where they may.

Let's get down to it. I feel appropriate, able, and proud to be alive. All of my sufferings are burnt away in my resolutions to be a productive and loving man. I feel present—my senses are alive. I am in body. I feel my heart beating. I can see clearly. I am awareI am accomplishing tasks that I value on a moment by moment, hour by hour basis—only because I value it.

I value me. I know, without the chattering internal dialogue of the mind that I am worthwhile to myself and to others. Yes, I feel relaxed and proud. I truly am “performing esteemable [sic] acts in order realize self esteem.” Life is no longer is a concept but a measurable experience. There is satisfaction.

Actually transformation is most pleasurable and easy in working out. The body responds. It often occurs after others validate. My phrase is: “For me it does not occur in a vacuum for long.” It occurs in my communication with others. People show up differently for me. People's faces shift in appearance. There is something light about them. Language is easier. There's a community of souls, a communion of souls with joy with no pretense.

Rex—how does it feel? It feels beautiful. I feel safe, alive, happy, energized, complete, a part of humanity again. I feel whole, complete. I feel loved, I feel relieved. And wow it is okay to be smart. I no longer have to dumb myself down in order to get by as “a stranger in Paradise.” It is also absurd when my mind called me Aqualung (referring to a popular music album by the group Jethro Tull).

And then the sweet tears, the burning eyes. Honor your mother and father. It is a privilege. I did my duty for God, for me, and for my family and my neighbors. I received the flag, the inscription was done. I chose it and included my sister by phone. I kept my word. Taps were played. “Together forever” for Mom and Dad—their wishes after all. I put my head to rest last night. There will peace when you are done, the Wayward Son. “Carry On Wayward Son” is a progressive rock single recorded by Kansas and written by Kerry Livgren for their 1976 album *Leftoverture*.

I feel finally free. My eyes are bright and clear today.

Ten minutes left, one can live a lifetime in 10 min—resilient and responsible. Expect the unexpected.

Transformation occurs when the constraint of the past (our points of view, fears etc.) disappear and a new view of life emerges—a Landmark phrase.

I look forward to speaking with you this evening.

Rex

Analysis of the Letter

Rex's use of the phrase “Wayward Son” is enlightening. His father, an abuser, and his mother's medical condition necessitated home care, which Rex provided, compromising his ability to thrive. Without nurturing or discipline, he became a person

who could follow any particular rules or structure. Internal peace only followed fulfillment of his commitment to his father to take care of his mother. Now settled, her care addressed by others, Rex is free to begin life, again, if somewhat belatedly. Further in the song *Carry on Wayward Son*, the line “Once I rose above the noise and confusion...” rings true for Rex. He has been in a sort of mental war, only now returning to a state of relative calmness, but with continuing remnants of trauma left in his system because of his life experiences. According to May (2004, p. 52),

The upshot of the existential understanding of anxiety is to give the term back its original power. It is an experience of threat which carries both anguish and dread, indeed the most painful and basic threat which any being can suffer, for it is the threat of loss of existence itself.

Lingering “noise” in Rex’s mind, the scattered thinking and chaos, which he describes, seems to be subsiding. By controlling his flow of thoughts to speak in full sentences and make concerted efforts to make sense out of his speech, Rex can now engage the current world and bring himself out of the past and become more authentic.

Carry on Wayward Son—Lyrics

Carry on my wayward son
 There’ll be peace when you are done
 Lay your weary head to rest
 Don’t you cry no more
 Once I rose above the noise and confusion
 Just to get a glimpse beyond this illusion
 I was soaring ever higher
 But I flew too high
 Though my eyes could see I still was a blind man
 Though my mind could think I still was a mad man
 I hear the voices when I’m dreaming
 I can hear them say
 Masquerading as a man with a reason
 My charade is the event of the season
 And if I claim to be a wise man, well
 It surely means that I don’t know
 On a stormy sea of moving emotion
 Tossed about I’m like a ship on the ocean
 I set a course for winds of fortune
 But I hear the voices say
 No!
 Carry on, you will always remember
 Carry on, nothing equals the splendor
 Now your life’s no longer empty
 But surely heaven waits for you
 Carry on my wayward son
 There’ll be peace when you are done
 Lay your weary head to rest
 Don’t you cry (don’t you cry no more)

Rex has begun to sound energetic and motivated. He began his day with a drive to his local library. He notices a bus depot and flashes back to earlier emotionally

painful times. Something about the depot reminded Rex of past feelings. In the past, such reminiscing led him to feel debilitated. On this day, Rex stayed focused on the present. "That was then; this is now." This is a newfound resiliency. He refused to be overpowered, acknowledging the resources to keep the past from overwhelming his present. In doing so, Rex feels better about his life.

Rex and I have discussed how his abusive father impacted him. Those conversations have helped Rex accept what he has been through without excusing any of his conduct. He is no longer willing to be continually hurt by such memories. Rex understands the difference between frequent emotional destabilization, preventing development of a new method of living, and the need to look forward rather than backward in his life, with some remnants of past trauma as decreasing causal efficacy.

His later part of that day was different from many days in recent years. He contacted several law firms, seeking a law clerk position. One law firm set up an appointment with Rex for the following week, a breakthrough and positive result from his efforts. He recalled my earlier advice to feel that he does have a job, which is to find a job. He used that phrase when self-referring. Rex has a keen intellect and good memory and knows these are valuable tools in the job market, especially in a law firm.

Rex seems to have new resolve to use his time effectively, plotting the course for each day with activities centered on securing employment. He continues to plan meals using his small food budget (food stamps) in the most efficient way possible and managing his financial resources well (he had less than \$400 during a recent conversation).

Rex does not see himself as a disabled person or a troubled one, but rather as a person who has had considerable difficulty fitting in with modern society. He wants to become a productive member of society and be off public assistance. He wants to develop positive relationships with women. He has been attending a program (Landmark Forum) on sex and intimacy. Rex is working on refining his approach to several aspects of his life simultaneously. He is trying to revolutionize his life one step at a time with courage to make substantial changes in his life. He knows that he will have challenges in staying true to his revised goals, but is becoming more sophisticated, adapting to life's pressures. Rex remains vulnerable, but is learning to better control his use of time and make better choices regarding what he does, where he does it, and with whom he associates. This last point is important. Some of Rex's friends encourage him to join them at venues where alcohol is readily available. Rex knows he is better off avoiding alcohol altogether and does not like himself after excessive drinking.

Rex has been steadfastly looking for employment. While driving, he noticed a sign in a restaurant window that said "Now hiring." He parked and spoke with the manager, who stated there were a number of positions open. He gave Rex an application to complete, which Rex filled out and brought back. Speaking with the owner, Rex explained his prior restaurant experience and asked the manager about available kitchen jobs. This was astute. Rex understood the easiest way to be hired by a restaurant is to start in the kitchen and then work your way up. Rex, a foreman, dishwasher, cook, and waiter in a five-star restaurant, put his knowledge to good use.

Later that day, Rex went to a local supermarket where he also noticed a help wanted sign. He applied for that job. His mood and spirits were very positive the next time he and I spoke. Rex has transformed from a mostly negative-thinking person to a more positive, happier person. His goal of becoming employed (getting on the gameboard of life as he put it) might soon materialize.

I discussed the possibility of part-time rather than full-time employment. Rex clearly needs to work full time to survive because he will lose his food stamps once his income reaches even a modest amount. I discussed Rex finding two part-time jobs while continuing to seek a full-time job. He recognizes the importance of starting work at whatever level he finds it.

Rex maintained a high level of fitness, which he referred to as “working out and feeling connected to people.” He understood that he needed to pay attention to being more flexible in handling situations. He also has referred to his own emerging resilience by stating that regular rest and sleep is essential. Months ago, Rex required much more sleep than he does now. He now gets 6 1/2–7 h sleep, and he reports waking feeling rested and refreshed. Because he feels significantly less stress in his life, there is an inverse curve between the level of stress and the amount of required sleep.

Rex stated he would like to work as a law firm clerk, more than, for example, working in a restaurant, but his first priority is getting a job, even if it is not the best job. He has been out of the workforce a long time, however, and he must upgrade his skills, hopefully through on-the-job training.

Rex is far more motivated in seeking employment. He is busy calling potential employers; responding to ads; completing job applications, online and in person; and approaching business establishments, seeking employment. He was disillusioned recently after visiting the Florida employment website. It said there are far more people seeking certain careers than there are job postings for them. Many law firms, he learned, require some form of certification even for law clerk or paralegal positions so he has decided to make that a longer term objective while he works on securing full-time employment. Rex contacted Boston University and found its paralegal program would cost \$4,000. He does not have such funds. A certificate program seems a long-term possibility. His current career choices are law clerk, retail store assistant manager, and restaurant worker. With his current mindset focused on daily job-seeking activities, Rex knows he is doing what he can and that he must continue to be patient and handle rejection. His self-confidence is increasing, and he sees himself as a human being capable of working and entitled to respect.

Rex to me on April 9, 2012:

Hi Eric,

It is a new week. I hope things are moving smoothly in your world.

I stopped by Sweetbay, the supermarket and I spoke with the GM. She recognized me again and stated that they are reviewing resumes especially for a produce spot on a part time basis. I reminded her that I was open for all hours on a temp basis and would be open to filling in in different departments while I would pursue a

paralegal certificate online. It turns out her son in law just completed an online certification and the phone is ringing off the hook for duty. Again I have made good relations with the workers there as that is part of [Rex's] style in the community. They are all different ages and at different stages on the life journey. I am choosing to breathe in and breathe out move on to next.....

I am now at the downtown library after getting a printout at Chase re my checking account balance. I am sitting at \$699 rent and bills, gas can be managed by a regimen of no more than \$8 a day on personal items. I bought Mom an Easter lily. Her eyes lit up especially because I bought her a chocolate bunny I got some inexpensive mellow bunnies for the room-mates .It is fun to watch eyes light up and say Happy Easter and goodbye to petty grievances. The new woman—a nurses-aide asked how I could make such good food and stay in such good shape. The holiday was great. I spoke to Larry and Chris. I felt I belonged to a family of friends again. Yes seeing my little Italian priest and participating in services with everyone at St Martha's. It becomes a wonderful life even with the all the many uncertainties. I went to the Siesta beach as the sun went down and felt free. Yes it was a big thing to put myself first for a few days. I let go of some perceived obligations and reconnected with God and people I care about. Now I can feel at ease and energized to seek employment without feeling like a slave. I took command of my little life finally.

Well, time is short on this computer. Let me know which eve and time would be good for you from Wed thru the weekend. I would enjoy speaking with you. I welcome your coaching. I am moving forward toward five other law firms as targets. I used \$50 to gain 30 day unlimited service on Net 10, which gave me 50,000 min. (I provided Rex with a small amount of money to pay for Rex's cell phone usage during calls with me.) I am also beginning a file on elder care law articles.

So, please call or text me at your leisure.

Rex

Rex has an increasingly positive outlook. He stated in a recent call: "I'm happy with me—sober, smoke-free, strong, and I go to mass in the morning." Rex is spending his time more wisely than in the past. As he sees it, his town is saturated with people looking for jobs, and he has learned many are seeking paralegal jobs. Obtaining a certification is now a long-term goal. Rex visits his local library where he continues to explore employment opportunities. He now takes minor inconveniences in stride and makes the best of situations without overreacting to disappointments, an important coping skill. Employment will bring issues, inconveniences, and conflicts into his life, and to sustain employment, he must learn to adapt to change and not be flustered when confronted by challenges.

Rex is consistently aware of his primary goal—to be employed and productive. He is more aware of his own strength and is applying new concepts well. He now has a sense of urgency about his future. When he sees a job posting online, he immediately applies. His impression of the job market has improved, but he knows the importance of responding timely to new opportunities.

Parental Abuse

When Rex was a child, between 8 and 10, he was a “good kid.” His mother stayed quietly in the background while his father was “tough.” At age 12, he was “the best citizen and an A-student,” “wrapped up trying to impress his dad.” When his mother and father fought, he initially dismissed what he witnessed. Eventually, he tried to be a calming influence for his father. In a way, the parenting roles became reversed with Rex often taking the role of referee coordinating his father’s outbursts and his mother’s passivity. Rex saw himself as the “family hero,” a common theme for Rex. By age 14, his mother had increasing bouts of depression.

Rex witnessed his father’s abuse toward his mother, including one episode when his father “kicked mom between her legs.” Rex separated them, tried to act as a peacemaker, but he thought his father was “crazy.” He wanted very much to create a harmonious environment. Rex’s sister was not usually involved in forays with Rex’s father, and he is not aware of any instances when his father was abusive toward her.

Jung’s work on archetypes is worthy of inclusion in an analysis of Rex’s relationship with his father. “The archetype is essentially an unconscious content that is altered by becoming conscious and by being perceived, and it takes its colour from the individual consciousness in which it happens to appear” (1990, p. 5). “...a complex can be really overcome only if it is lived out to the full” (pp. 98–99). Jung thought of the deeper layer of the unconscious, the one resting underneath what he termed the personal unconscious, as the collective unconscious (p. 3). He viewed this type of unconscious as “collective” because “it has contents and modes of behavior that give more or less the same impressions everywhere and in all individuals” (p. 4).

Jung’s negative father complex is applicable to Rex. “It is true that Jung had a negative ‘father complex,’ as he himself would call it. He also suffered from a negative ‘mother complex.’ Jung’s father was a henpecked, passive, depressed Swiss parson, whom, as a boy, Jung perceived as weak, pitiable, ineffectual and somewhat feminine. Jung’s mother suffered from severe psychiatric problems, instilling in him a deep distrust of her and of women (and the ‘feminine’) in general” (Diamond, 2009).

Mattoon (1999) wrote about the emotional content of complexes. “Both ‘positive’ and ‘negative’ complexes consist of a collection of mental and emotional contents that are not under conscious control. Our egos can neither produce the state nor squelch it; they can only decide—perhaps—whether to *express* the accompanying emotion. Both categories carry value as well as difficulties. The examples here include a preponderance of the ‘negative’ perhaps, because such complexes seem more common and certainly are more noticeable, because of the accompanying pain” (p. 1).

Eventually, Rex overcame his fear of his father and would tell his father to “sit down.” His father did respond to Rex’s bold commands by calming himself. His father’s anger was triggered, once by Rex’s mother expressing her desire to seek therapy for her depression. Rex’s father objected vehemently. His father would scream at Rex’s mother over the slightest issues. Based on Rex’s reports, it would seem plausible that Rex’s father had an explosive personality. His father was diagnosed

with a benign tumor on his pituitary gland. It is not known if his father's bad behavior was exacerbated by this condition.

Notably, Rex's maternal grandmother was abusive toward Rex's mother. Rex's paternal grandfather was abusive toward Rex's father, creating the backdrop for rich clinical investigation, not possible in this book. Both Rex's father and paternal grandfather were both amateur boxers and very physically strong. Rex's mother was abused, physically and verbally, by her own mother who reportedly "came after her with an iron."

At age 18, Rex, in public, struck his father, who was screaming and yelling at him. His father punched him, and Rex told his father that if he hit him again, "he would hit him back." His father then told Rex that he was very angry with Rex's mother that it made him frustrated and excitable, though Rex's father never apologized for his conduct, including corporal punishment of Rex and his mother.

On another occasion, Rex's father pushed him, and Rex hit his father, who called the police, resulting in Rex being arrested. No charges were filed, and Rex was released. When he was 25, he had another violent incident with his father. Rex was wearing his father's leather coat, which had not previously been objectionable. This time, his father "started screaming," and he tried to "break my ribs." Rex hit him before he was hurt.

In a later incident, Rex (still 25) came home late, waking his father. He became enraged, and spit on Rex, calling him an alcoholic. When his father tried to hit him, Rex blocked the punch and hit his father. Rex's father often degraded him. In 1995, in the emergency room, suffering from diverticulitis, Rex's father became upset with him, insulted him and pushed him around. Rex told his father: "You're not going to hit me or my mother again." To restrain him, Rex held his father against the wall, holding his father's arm tightly behind his back. The police arrested Rex. Rex's mother witnessed the event, but stayed out of the fray. Rex pled "no contest" to the charges and received a misdemeanor and 6 months probation. Rex has expressed some concern about his arrest record with respect to applying for jobs, though, at some point, his old records may no longer be searchable.

When Rex decided to pursue a premed major, his parents were supportive of this decision, but Rex had difficulty with certain classes. His father complained Rex should have dropped classes sooner to benefit from the school's refund policy.

Rex had the feeling that his father was "obsessed with him." "He wanted to be an ideal dad." His father pushed Rex to excel—"Books are the gunpowder of the mind," said Rex's father. Rex understands that his father's abusive nature is a serious fault, but has, to some extent, reconciled—"He did the best that he could." Rex could be challenged about letting his father "off the hook" too easily. Such forgiveness came about following therapy. To move past his trauma, Rex determined to try to accept the past, salvaging what good feelings remained, letting go of pain related to his father's abuse and violence.

Five years ago, Rex's father was diagnosed with skin cancer, which eventually killed him. Rex was very sympathetic toward his father and visited him often, telling him he loved him and that he was "the best father." Rex's resolution of his issues

with his father suggests a balanced recognition of his history of abuse and forgiving nature.

Rex feels it is important to “get outside of the resentment.” In his past therapeutic relationships, Rex discussed his abusive father and passive mother and was encouraged to make a “violence inventory.” Rex still expresses love for him, but also vividly recalls the years of hurt. He tries not to allow it to traumatize him. Rex has been a good caretaker of his mother, giving up several years of his life to tend to her needs, which allowed him to justify not working as she supported him even though Rex can be challenged for not using the time to develop a career. Prior to his death, Rex’s father asked Rex to take care of his mother, and so he has fulfilled that mission.

May 2, 2012

Hello Eric,

I have had some positive outcomes on the domestic and flexibility front. My cousin cancelled out for the family get together due to rain on East coast on Sunday. I went and found a new barber and got a haircut to be more presentable. The unforgiving summer begins after May 28 and then the Olympics of being positive in the Florida heat continue. Yet, I have a greater sense of well-being this year to face things as they are. The technique of “cope and deal” with an inventory at the end—blue for tasks completed and orange for unfinished—shows that I am in action toward my goals.

Well, expect the unexpected. On Monday it was domestic and car day, then Tuesday I handled my Food Stamp Renewal without internal drama or drain. I found myself applying online for Panera Bread through Snag-a-Job (A local online employment source), which, at first, was no problem. I found it relatively easy now to type and focus, frankly by pacing myself, light exercise, and a commitment to simply show up at the computer. This process of searching for employment is becoming less daunting. Last Friday I let myself get so stressed that I had to crash. I made a decision to incrementally increase my time spent searching for a job each day as I develop. One hour and 30 minutes is phenomenal for me. And, be patient with [Rex]. Yes, sleep worked. Now it is different. On Monday after my workout, I went to the Food Stamps office and used a mental formula—that was then; this is now in a patient and task-oriented way. Hour by hour, I am regaining my power and confidence. I naturally went to the temp office and spoke to the people without reliving the failures of the past, no condemning thoughts. Now my mind is working for me instead of against me. Then, I went to another Dollar Store—nothing (employment) there. Then I filed the Panera application. When transformation takes place one is not aware of the process. I relaxed as the information was there. Then again, they needed their psychological test completed—more time—well, with the Public Library system the web page was not saved and may have been lost. No, I did not get resentful. I was happy that my head did not hurt, no urge for a cigarette, no thoughts for escape, no “poor me,” just another machine. The machine had a problem—not me. My sister is sending me a used lap top. I am getting my resume reconfigured and will have more computer assistance.

Eric, I am making progress. Nothing substitutes for me as seeing myself as cause in the matter of myself as opposed to being the effect. (Note: this is a very interest-

ing existential perspective seeing himself in the center of his own life, not a passenger on someone else's ship).

I would share this, the power of belief. Past experiences (employment) do not represent me. Rather, they represent things I have experienced; they do not make me into a better or worse person.

There is freedom in the exercise of this affirmation.

Nine minutes left (There is a time limit on use of computers in the library).

Give me a call—Thursday evening or Friday evening. Please let me know what is easiest for you. I do not know if I missed voice mail this morning.

Yours truly,

[Rex]

Rex reported on his emotional health: "Things are slowly getting better." He went on to say: "The world seems better because now I'm not in conflict or feel any conflict." He described stress as the "fear of failure; the fear of not getting things done." Rex often writes notes in a small notebook he keeps with him. "When I accomplish my plan for the day, I put a smiley face on the plan." Rex maintains a daily goal of connecting with at least three people. Doing so helps him feel more alive. He quoted Alexander the Great: "Face your fears and the death of fear is certain." Finally, he added: "Not living is the past. Create the prosperity in the now." Rex seems settled and realistic with the current labor market in his geographic area. He has submitted additional job applications, including one at Panera Bread where he completed an online psychological evaluation. His demeanor and attitude are very positive.

After approximately 3 months of dialogue between me and Rex, Rex's mindset has become completely positive with a definitive goal-oriented attitude of landing a job. His sense of grounding is exemplified by his statement: "I feel very healthy." He stated this following a text message from me wishing him "a peaceful and purposeful day." Such words of encouragement to someone like Rex seem to go over well as they serve to remind him that people do care about him and that he is fully capable of having a good day.

Rex also reported that he has been successful getting rid of the "I Should's." What he means by this is that he would formerly tell himself how he should feel or what he should do regardless of how he may have felt on the basis of a spontaneous response to a new situation. He was, in effect, boxing himself in to relive how he lived in the past. Now he is able to connect that his true lasting pathology was not based in psychological deficit or handicap, but in self-inflicted repetition of ineffective responses to life's situations and poor self-management of his own life choices. As an example of his newfound application of a changed attitude—his new computer—given to him by his sister, experienced some sort of problem. Rex said that such an issue with a device would have rattled him, creating a very negative mood state. Instead of reacting to the problem in that manner, Rex calmly brought the computer to someone who could quickly repair it. Thus, Rex accepts that he is doing the best that he can. He also is trying to remain flexible and has been resuming healthy routines.

When asked how he feels at the present moment, Rex stated: "It feels like I am coming out the other end of the nightmare." Probing this statement, Rex added that he feels he is now out of the nightmare. Then, I asked him how he intended to apply his self-discoveries. He said he felt "able and capable of self management," and "realizes that he is through with it," and has "no more conflict in my soul," and that he is "coming back to the good person inside," which, he then added, is the measure of resiliency. He equated "getting back into shape" with "finding your life" and the "capacity to get well."

Rex reported numerous and consistent efforts to pursue employment with concrete plans to follow up leads, ads, and his filed applications and also continued to search online job postings. I suggested he adopt a "competitive spirit." Rex stated that he "has less pressure than most." He says this because he is able to get by on what little he has between biweekly food stamps and a small amount given to him monthly by his mother.

May 24, 2012

Greetings to Eric,

I have had some fun using Google translator site. In fact it did help me in getting in touch with the competitive spirit. Somehow when I looked at each language it became that apparent that I was hiding from the reality that I am built to strive and achieve. No, I no longer think I have a "Success Motivation Disorder" (Rex has suggested an interesting addition to the DSM. In a way, we can either be motivated towards success or repelled against it. When internal pathology leads to repelling, perhaps it becomes a notable, coachable, treatable condition) yes a well meaning General Practitioner said that a long time ago. Again I will write it: "a diagnosis is not a disease," it is an educated guess, an interpretation. I see myself as cause in my life now and the proof will be in the results (This is a major breakthrough acknowledgement in Rex's communication to accept responsibility for where he is and how he arrived there. Poignantly, following such open and candid acknowledgement, he is in a good position to psychologically metamorphose). I have had to use a lot of techniques. I have learned to move myself forward. I use your techniques to sustain me and I rely on the power and mercy of the Creator, Landmark, and RET and all of it. Bruce Lee created a school of martial arts out of his experience. I am now using everything [I know] and allowing new styles to come in to my life, to be a productive man. Pick a direction young man. I could tell you all the stories of the Brits and others I have met but you are not asking [Rex] to write a book. I want to explore together what "resilience" means to Americans today. Actually, I would like to hear what the word means to you. I see it as a more necessary, every day concept in our culture.

Concretely, your acknowledgment of seeking employment as a noble quest in itself ignited me forward. The previous sentence says it all.

Well the actions I took brought me to two interviews and more. Of course today, there were challenges with the computer, yet I am surprised at how far I have come in the last two weeks. By reaching out to my ex Boss and friend, Kevin from RosettaStone, I was able to solve some computer problems. I also gained a sense of validation re: Sales Consultants in Sarasota. It was not crushing to realize that

they only hire for firms outside of Sarasota. Sarasota has been a dead zone for professional sales other than financial services for a long time. It is time to be brief. I have some irons in the fire. I would like to share about the Panera interview by phone. I truly enjoyed, felt present, appropriate, brave, and well able to handle what life calls me to do.

Pinpoint communication. Your coaching re: [filing] computer applications on a daily basis with follow up is completely on target. The openings are only there for a 2–3 day window. Early morning checking is necessary every day. Wow, the transforming question was: Who or what will I give up in order for my life to turn out the way I want it to? (This statement refers to Rex’s realizations that some members of his present circle of friends may be toxic for him and some of Rex’s former leisure activities may no longer fit in to his emerging lifestyle). I shifted my workout schedule and still got it in at night. I went to the library and I got the skill of filing applications, checking back and then interviewing. It does require computer and yes a cell phone or one is completely blocked out by the system. RosettaStone required 24 h availability of even part time workers. It is a different world. Yesterday, I went to Macy’s, filed an application on computer. Well, this is good to see in written words. I feel confident again to take action. I am wearing my blazer, walking in relaxed manner, focused, alive, and enjoying conversations with the workers. So much better sober, smoke-free. Yes little things sometimes annoy, but only briefly. [I am] grateful to be alive and free to be me. (In addition to the process of transforming, Rex is also becoming increasingly authentic.) I remind myself that I receive immense peace and purposefulness and use it whenever I need to: Affirmations, Intention and, most importantly, actions appropriate to one’s intentions. Thank you for all your gifts. Yes, I am the one applying them; still, I do appreciate your efforts, and appreciate [the opportunity] to grow and flourish.

You only asked for a paragraph, but the topic got me going. I look forward to speaking with you Sat. I hope you are having some victories moment by moment in your life also!

Wishing you health, happiness and prosperity in your life!

May 23, 2012

Eric:

Sorry for the delay on the writing of competition. It is important to face....

On the topic of the competitive spirit and competition, when you first mentioned it I actually felt saddened for I have often gone around in the past judging commercial rivalries as the cause of much suffering throughout the world for the control of trade routes .The commercial rivalry over wage and price competition will not end. Corporations are like organisms that want more for less in order to survive. The owners of businesses see them as little offspring.

From age 20, the definition of macro economics stills resonates: the study of the allocation of scarce resources amongst individuals whose wants and needs are insatiable. Yes, the dismal science... Yet economic history is a great pair of glasses to view the drama that and good literature more than other social sciences. Again, my guy Marcus Aurelius...Life is often opinion.

More importantly this exercise did reveal and ignite new energy within me. Somewhere after the breakdown I made a decision no one or nothing was worth pushing myself like that again at least with manipulative corps like Pacesetter I repeat, the focus on recovery and therapy took away the confidence and fire to a large degree, but deep down it never goes away the internal self image of the fighter never dies, the love of life itself and the one definition that I will now use. The competitive spirit lives in the person who is eager again to excel and achieve what he or she truly values. For me the goals must mesh with the values—maximum health and much more.

So what was the definition? Competitive spirit—a person who is eager (the mark of eagerness) to be more successful than other people, Sorry at a certain age one must realize (like 25) that one achieves more in cooperation than in just team sport rivalry.

I came back last eve after the final seminar on intimacy. I felt refreshed and proud (another component for the competitive spirit) that I was connecting better with others, seeing people as a beautiful again and [Rex] beginning to be appropriate to the concepts of life and hope.

Then I read the word I had not seen since 15: Arete, Arete excellence. Instead of settling for less, instead of just surviving; getting by. I read and I remember now how I loved the stories of the Olympics, to strive for excellence—that is the competitive spirit. *I had and lived by in my youth.... Then the computer said the one secret to competitive success in life, oh boy here we go again ... there is it was. The one trait that I have always had that can make me a winner in designing my own life again, the trait the old doctors always saw in me—Self Discipline. I feel alive again.*

Well I now realize you only asked for a paragraph. Nothing is missing. I am back in the game, only now I define being competitive as being eager to achieve more now than before, get ahead and stay ahead to do work I can feel proud of.

*I will write you soon. I have already begun early morn apps to companies. This strategy is appropriate, 7:30 a.m. survey on line companies offering employment....4–6 apps with two appt per day...Yes and at least two cold callsout of house is where the work is. I will tell you more. Monday I spoke to ex boss whom I worked for at RossettaStone. Workouts in the eve keeps me ahead jobs open and close in 3–5 days...Spoke to head of Sales Consultants and yes Panera Bread VP introduced me to Gen Mgr... I had to redo computer app. Today; got app submitted ...at library.....went to Macys got apt on computer submitted and possible interview in 2 days.... I am back in action... No longer afraid of this process ... I am making it fun and loving talking to people along the waypositive day. Bingo it is 6 p.m. time to feed the cougar... It is a lot more fun to speak of little victories over self and fear than to speak of failure or that impostor our minds call failure....Now it is time to stop ... 5:30 p.m.–6 p.m. that is enough ... DER COUGAR IST ZU HARDEIN!!!!!!
Wishing you miles of smiles, [Rex]*

June 1, 2012

Hello Eric,

Please email me or text so that we can schedule time to communicate again.

Well, today a small but significant accomplishment—I have an appointment 11 a.m. Sat. with Macy's for a PT sales spot at the mall. Breakthrough is AM computer efforts and face-to-face cold calls.

Panera Bread—I am still in the running. I stopped by; Ken (GM) stated follow-up in 2 weeks. I made a list with a 30-day time limit and got into action. Call me when it is comfortable for you.

The topic of Resilience intrigues me. With VETS coming back there will be need for even more adaptability. Anyway, I will be on the game-board again.

Eric, I hope to hear from you soon. Worldwide growth slowdown probably will make people in New York a little scared this weekend.

Hope to hear from you soon.

[Rex]

In a following telephone call on June 1, 2012, Rex stated: "I am handling stress a lot better." His relationship with his sister is also "getting closer," as he reports. I asked Rex what, if anything, has his sister noticed about Rex that might be different. Rex indicated that his sister told Rex: "You are getting flexible" and "You are so different; you are becoming the real [Rex]."

I advised Rex to be vigilant about his new resolve to communicate effectively and to stay motivated toward reaching his goals. Rex's actions of the past several weeks reflect changed thinking and an increase in activity pertaining to job hunting as well as relationship building.

Analysis of Rex's Psychiatric Evaluations

Rex obtained copies of his past psychiatric reports. In an attached letter to the package of reports, he wrote: "It was good for me to see the comments of ____ [the Social Worker]. She meant well." Rex asked one of the medical doctors: "What is the probability of success with medication even if I am bipolar." To this question, Rex was told: "We don't know. It is not a science. Less than 35% have any real change." Rex further said, referring to all the evaluations he received: "It was really startling and, yes, I confess, I did become angry with how much effort and time I've spent around this question and its cost to me. Life is not fair, it's just there; it comes at you."

Rex ended his letter with the following: "I now feel in the present, relieved that I can now adapt and will choose not to attempt disability as further records show the conflict in assessments of the doctors. One of the social workers was trying to get bipolar I in order to qualify [me] for disability. I desire accuracy." When asked about the accuracy of the diagnosis he received of bipolar disorder, Rex stated that the "system was forced to put him on psychotropic drugs." The person at the clinic who first suggested bipolar disorder told Rex: "If we can get you a bipolar disorder I, you can receive benefits." The conclusion, then, is that they fabricated a diagnosis in order to work the system, and they followed with the prescription of medication so as to be consistent with the diagnosis. In reality, it appears that Rex, while having

genuine anxiety over his life circumstances at the time, was more in need of counseling and coaching rather than psychologizing and drugs. Even Rex says: “People should face things in life.” Rex was told by a local minister, referring to the clinic where Rex was diagnosed, “The system will keep people trapped.”

Rex’s current mindset is positive. He reflected: “Past experiences (employment) do not represent me. Rather, they represent things I have experienced; they do not make me into a better or worse person. There is freedom in the exercise of this affirmation.”

Rex’s Psychiatric Profile

Many reports were written about Rex. He was diagnosed with substance abuse and has also been diagnosed over the years with depression and bipolar affective illness. Rex’s family history was reported as Rex having two uncles with mental illness. One uncle is schizophrenic, and the other had a nervous breakdown. His sister was suicidal, and there are also other people with alcoholism.

Rex does not agree with his past diagnosis of bipolar affective illness or the diagnosis of alcoholism. He went to the neurobehavioral health dept., where they told him that he didn’t really have alcoholism, but that alcohol was an adaptive disorder. He first started using alcohol at age 17. He has also used marijuana. He had a DUI at age 25, followed by another DUI. His past medical history included diverticulitis and arthritis. His DSM diagnosis was:

Axis I—adjustment disorder with mixed emotional features rule out alcohol dependency

Axis II—rule out cyclothymic personality disorder

Axis III—diverticulitis, diverticulitis controlled

Axis IV—financial problems

Axis V—50 (This number is interpreted as seriously emotionally disturbed. The score of 50 is the highest he could have received and still be eligible for benefits).

Rex was prescribed Buspar for anxiety—5 mg. t.i.d. p.o. for 1 week, increased to 10 mg. t.i.d. p.o.

In a later evaluation, Rex was evaluated as being quite dysfunctional. At this time, he was living at the Salvation Army. He reported that he moved 24 times, and had been unable to keep a job. He explained to the diagnostician that he was put in jail for 35 days after he grabbed his father and the father pressed charges, but later discontinued them. He was diagnosed with bipolar disorder and has been on multiple medications including lithium and Depakote which he claims were not successful.

His reports include background about Rex’s family, citing that although the patient currently has multiple family members living in Sarasota, it appears that he has a very poor support system. Additional medications were considered: a

neuroleptic as well as a mood stabilizer, namely, Zyprexa, in addition to Zoloft for his depression. The risks and benefits of the medications were discussed with him.

On his mental status examination, it was reported: "The patient is a well-developed, well-nourished, white male. He is alert and oriented as to time place and person (sensorium). His mood is euthymic. His affect is broad ranged. His thought process was quite tangential. Speech is mildly fast, but he is interruptible. He denies any hallucinations, delusions, or paranoia. He denies any suicidal or homicidal ideation, intention, or plan. His insight and judgment are fair.

Diagnosis—Rule out bipolar disorder."

In one of the latest letters from Rex (June 14, 2012), he writes:

Eric:

No excuses—I would like to stick to the four categories of resilient characteristics not five, or maybe just one—accept oneself unconditionally and the environment.

I marvel at the long distance runner. He is resilient in the face of perceived irrelevance; the weight lifter, it is irrelevant, but to whom?

A while back you wished me "immense peace and purposefulness." It stuck with me to the core.

A few mornings later I hit the gym. As I was lifting, purposefully letting go all thought of the past, it hit me, what it must be like to be a long distance runner, in this thing called life—so important.

Immense peace and purposefulness can be found in the face of perceived irrelevance. I envisioned being in a cathedral and it became almost effortless to lift weights. I went into curling 20 lbs more than my usual with no strain, no pretense. "H.A.L." the computer on *2001 Space Odyssey* is wired for survival. Our human mind creates the fear and stress as it tries to predict the outcomes based on past experiences.

It literally just hit me as I was writing this—The fifth characteristic of the successfully resilient individual, the wholesome psychologically resilient person has a long term perspective like a long distance runner, to be spiritually free, to see oneself as source of being, connected to all of humanity, not just a skin-encapsulated ego, the disease of the West is believing that you are your mind, no you just have one. Thoughts occur, you have conscious choice. The beast brain we now know as the amygdala shouts fear and senses danger at all most everything. The hippocampus helps people remember past emotional events and put things into proper perspective. That and the forebrain is what I prefer to listen to. What a marvelous machine. We are designed to flourish, but not alone.

I have that sense of the eternal when I am in the flow of the fabric of life and not in the dramas that my mind creates in reactive fear. So resilience lies in the sense of the infinite power, love, and mercy of the Great Spirit within—indestructible light, ever expanding, only fear constricts the being in its journey home.

My sister asks how did I get and maintain resilience. I responded by saying daily practice—the desire to be well and the rejection of the resentments and self pity. Prayer and meditation—wow. Just seeing these words on a screen and my many notebooks of writings makes me think.

I am glad I chose to take that trip to Ft. Lauderdale when it looked foolish and irrelevant with the lack of money staring at me, to see my poor crazy friend. I had a healthy desire to see my friend no matter how it looked to others—tension or no tension.

I choose. I have lived it and will continue to grow and allow new things to come into my life.

One key without writing volumes—what has worked is commitment, more than mere belief, and daily vigilance to grow and maintain, to conquer the self.

Alexander the Great said: “Face your fears and the death of fear is certain.”

Time for lunch,

Take care, [Rex]

Commentary by Rex Written June 16, 2012

I requested that Rex provide a commentary with his awareness and permission to incorporate it in this book. When asked, Rex indicated his appreciation for being given the opportunity to provide his views about the road he had travelled during the approximate 4 months of dialogue he had with me.

Eric:

This would be a first draft of commentary on our mutual dialogue of the past 5 months.

Today, I find myself more confident and in more control of the direction of my life. I like the man in the mirror and there is growing evidence that I am able and capable of competing on the game-board of life .Today, I feel free to be me. I have only begun on this road for I needed to eliminate that which was false in order to cope with the demand that I create a future. By eliminating the false diagnoses and weight of the past I can “come back to my original shape”—a definition of resilience. I knew in January that I had completed the next right thing in caring for my mother through-out 2011. I felt relieved that that mission was for the most part over.

When we first spoke, I literally had pushed myself to my limits and did not know what my next move would be. I only knew that I wanted to keep a commitment to see Larry. I had not seen Larry for over 20 years .I could not use the excuse that again. I lacked money, so I went with “riding with the Huns.” My friend Peter offered to drive me and help me with a free room as I had been very helpful in watching over his mother in the past. I was extremely uncomfortable being with Peter incessantly talking—that often drains me.

The point is that I am extremely blessed that I took this chance to meet up with you and get an objective opinion outside the box of Florida. Resilience is often described “as an ineffable quality.” Some people have to cope with stress and adversity. For me, I found that there was no way to bounce back until I could find new ways that I could drop the constraints of the past.

Now, I am:

1. Able and capable of interviewing for a job;
2. Alcohol and nicotine free—no withdrawals;
3. Maintaining exercise regimen with joy and flexibility;
4. Socially connecting and receiving positive feedback from community wherever I go;
5. Emotionally present; I feel comfortable in my own skin;
6. Realistic about my precarious financial position, but not living in fear.
7. No longer doubting whether I made an error by refusing to pursue disability in view of my atrocious job history. I did not sell out to a false dependency despite my weakened state and poverty. Happily, I do not qualify.
8. Not dependent upon groups or therapy to define me.
9. I am learning to go at my own pace and realize my limits to what I can now handle despite others opinions;
10. I have an experience again of my self reliance and my ability to maintain my standards within an extremely corrupt, impersonal society;
11. I am at peace with how I handled my Father–Son issues and the final funeral;
12. I accept that an enormous part of my life was lost during this nightmare and I no longer need to analyze it;
13. I actually am enjoying the process of finding where I can fit in today without worrying about how it was supposed to turn out;
14. I feel proud that I used my few dollars to get and use the anger and rage management books to seek out Easy way, AVRT, and SMART methods to end beer, wine and cigarettes independently;
15. Setting limits and boundaries with sister and Mom while enjoying harmony by accepting them as they are. This also comes from not holding others hostage to one’s story. Forgiveness creates the realm of divine harmony in a family. It heals the many wounds; and,
16. My family is now proud of me. I am healthy and moving toward new goals.

Now I realize that my suspicions re: helplessness of the eternal [recoveryism], psychiatric evaluations, vocational rehabilitation, kept me stuck. It keeps people stuck. People stay stuck in dependency and then are preyed upon by others in similar circumstances.

I will repeat it: nothing substitutes for worthwhile work (or even the pursuit of work) and being a contributor in loving relationships to maintain mental and spiritual health. No drug, therapy, escape or diversion will satisfy human beings, well this human being, without purpose and a sense of being fit for life with others. It requires a place to show up and participate. And that requires the exercise of responsibility and integrity in all your relationships. It is not a one-time thing for me. I am taking a stand, and my stand is this: I am willing to be the cause in the matter of my life. Either you create your own future or somebody else will design it for you.

My commentary on the process:

What worked for me and helped me approach a means of solution as opposed to panic (my definition about what is going through me when it is claimed I have

pressured speech or just anger) was when we worked on pin-point communication and you were empathetic with me in regards to the strain I had been under. Without jumping to a diagnosis, my previous employment record and multiple moves would shock anyone.

It was very difficult and painful to repeat the longstanding account of multiple medical evaluations of such a period. You really hung in there. I had done the work of writing it down. I now can see that I am more accurate in my history. I finally agree with Dr. A. _____'s view of that of a forensic psychiatrist and going through the past would make you crazy. Yet, I did need to let one friend know. How could you help me if you did not know the facts? Yes, it is quite a battering. That is the expression of my friend, the Iron Worker; long ago he once said I was like an emotionally battered woman around my Dad. My Dad was a very bitter angry man at the end. I am glad you walked me through that talk. Now I know he did not know what to do. And in the end I still show up as the peacemaker, the "Family Hero." My sister and Mom both need that now. The process of handing you [my psychological] records was fearful and painful. I knew I had to do it to be free—to see how that machine [the recovery center] goes on and not get sickened by my previous sorrow—simplicity—I fell into a trap. I am now free. I miss Dr. P. _____ from 1996 who said go be a physician's assistant—you are not bipolar or alcoholic. He taught at Albert Einstein school of Medicine. It was so sad in 1986, Dr. S. _____ said it so well—I wanted to be well, to recount everything perfectly that he could help me definitively, so I could understand and get along with my Dad and know what the hell was wrong with me—outbursts for a long time coming. I have stopped alcohol and cigarettes with no outbursts, no withdrawal. I have my own space and am not being threatened. I have friends and a direction to support myself. What is different here?

I began going to church again and practicing meditation, nature. So where is the man that needed to be on disability? While I was pursuing the idea of being a male nurse as a career, I interviewed for the possibility of being a part-time psychiatric nurse's assistant. I had nurse's aide documentation in 2003 and was introduced to a man through the church. Ninety percent of people, especially men, who come to the crisis center have symptoms stemming from loss of employment and home while not any long standing organic problem you can find in Diagnostic Manual. What is my point?

It is about work and securing love relationships for mental health. Since 1975–1984, there has been a systematic shake up of the major institutions that help define and sustain society ...I became ill in 1984 after eight deals fell apart, etc. Now I am recovered as I see the damage of poor job choices and unrealistic expectations. My story is I no longer have a story. I am a survivor. I even tell people now. If it is before January 28 when I met Larry, I do not want to talk about it. If it before last month, it is history. I now can reclaim my freedom by a vigilance to put myself first—a realistic self acceptance. I do claim that it did take a lot more effort and focus than I can write here.

The Process:

1. In February 2012, when I was doing my usual thing trying to rebuild myself and find a new career in 30 days while ignoring the increasing emotional pain.

Ridiculous, but, hey, that was [Rex] of Old. You greatly helped me when I got injured and had drank again and said: "Do not give it any power, it is a setback for a comeback." You asked me to rally. That tool I use whenever there is a perceived "breakdown" in plans or performance. Now, when there is a breakdown, when my best is not good enough, I know that it is the space for a breakthrough, something false needs to be let go of; a new skill must be learned, etc.

2. March 2012, the visualization of the energy of the cougar did work especially walking out and then on to an open road. After the Funeral of March 22, I began to regain a sense of pride and self control again. I noticed that Mom and my sister were so much more detached from it all. The funeral was for Dad and I had to secure a future place for Mom. Yet it appeared to me that I was the one that needed the sense of completion more than them. I am very proud and relieved. I would say now it energized me into more connection to Landmark and getting on with creating a happy life. Landmark gives me a place to grow socially without so called therapeutic labels. I am simply a healthy, compassionate, knowledgeable man who does not drink, drug, or smoke. Funny, no one really cares or really wants to hear the story of the past. Life is in the present and what can we create now.
3. The daily inventory of actions, being accountable, but finally your coaching to begin interviewing was what turned concept into real transformation. Catching me in my pain regarding the past and giving me the oil slick visualization to drive through the past was electric.

My old self returned and that got me on the road to resilience, back to old self, energized, using old skills, survival skills, social skills returned. What made it wonderful was that it felt natural, it felt authentic. I felt like me and not putting on an act. Then you had me use the ultimate weapon, the dictionary. Yes, we all yap, but never look at the meaning of what we are yapping about. Competition, honestly, I remember you said let us take it to another level. My movie changed now, it was "Enter the Reluctant Dragon." How do people get stuck? I had become adept at getting by, the "American Grunt." He can take anything you throw at him. Hey, it was a wake-up call. You want something better, you will have to compete. I had become complacent.

I see this as only a beginning of a new design for a more balanced life. For me, my strength comes from seeing myself as a conscious being of the Creator. I value my life and the life of others. Resilience lies in the eternal energy of the Creative Spirit of mankind, able to transcend itself in the light of love, not in the darkness of Fear.

In summation:

I feel able and capable now. I am more wary and value prudence over impulse. After all, this is my life. I am not going to live forever here. I just want to live while I am alive, great song to work out to! After all, I am still in process of working this lifetime out, a little wiser, more ready now.

Eric, there is an endless expansion to this.

Best regards, while wishing you Peace,

[Rex]

On July 25, 2012, I spoke to Rex about a sales position he was offered, but was unsure he would accept. His concerns had more to do with his past problems in sales and nothing to do with the new position he was offered. My challenge to Rex was for him to consider that if he was going to turn down the offer to do so after complete consideration of the plusses and minuses of the job offer.

On July 26, 2012, Rex called me to report “good news.” The news was that he accepted the job as a salesperson for a national merchandising chain store. Rex said he starts his job on July 30 and will receive \$400/week plus he is eligible for commissions.

Rex sounded very upbeat, saying proudly: “I know I have \$400 a week coming in.” Rex admitted that his initial fears were not rational. I suggested that he consider taking a lot of credit and pride in overcoming a final obstacle in getting a job. We talked about the new position, and I suggested that Rex bring success to whatever he does and wherever he goes. He has so much pent-up motivation it is unlikely that he will fail in this endeavor.

Rex now faces a common concern sustaining his employment. Because he succeeded in securing a job, his potential for duplicating this success is higher. I advised him to do his best in his current job, but to realize that several factors could upset his employment: further downturn in the general or local economy, deterioration of the company he works for causing a decreased need for employees, or problems with Rex’s performance. I advised him to do his best and not worry about factors outside of his control.

On August 1, 2012, I travelled from New York to Florida to meet Rex for the first time. My daughter Cathleen accompanied me to meet Rex. As Cathleen has a Master’s Degree in Marriage and Family Therapy, I asked her to contribute a commentary following the meeting. Rex agreed to meet Cathleen and welcomed her inclusion in the case analysis.

Though odd to finally meet face-to-face the person with whom I have been studying and also trying to help, it provided a sense of completeness to all the work done these past 7 months. Rex was very engaging in person, as he is over the telephone. As he had only started training for his new job several days prior, we discussed his experiences and early impressions. He seemed completely accepting of the new challenges ahead and is looking forward to doing the job well.

Rex’s philosophical perspective and clear personal growth over the past half year bode well for him to become very successful in his new career. Importantly, any hurdle that may come his way should be able to be resolved without causing unnecessary upheaval in his life or current occupation.

Conclusions

“At the top of the ladder is the gift of self-reliance. To hand someone a gift or a loan, or to enter into a partnership with him, or to find work for him, so that he will never have to beg again” (Salamon, 2003, p. 148). Even before accepting the recent job

offer, Rex has adopted a new sense of relevance and reports having mostly good days. Relevancy cannot be measured in proscribed terms, but is more a feeling or internal perception. Rex is building resilience, which, in turn, improves his affect and provides emotional energy allowing him to pursue getting a job he is undaunted by the normal frustrations people face in similar situations.

Rex is expressing a heightened sense of relevancy. He comments about how positive his attitude has become, and how much happier he is. His renewed optimism has enabled him to accept that even though setbacks will occur, he has the emotional resources to handle them. Rex appreciates being taught new skills and is very amenable to being coached regarding efforts to gain employment. Resolution of disturbances in attitude, improved self-motivation, and finally developing insights into the self are all important.

Rex has had more than his share of hardship and pain, but possibilities are there too. Rex has high native intelligence, good health, and strong internal motivations and drive. Rex was stalled for a number of years due more to lack of direction and lack of focus and was plagued by low self-confidence and low self-esteem. Rex is slowly blossoming as a more aware and sensitive person, and he will have a better chance succeeding in life as he will define success.

Rex's case history can be a useful tool to examine the concepts of resilience and relevancy. Even on the flight home after meeting Rex, while I was editing the manuscript for this book, the passenger next to me asked me if I was the author of the document that I was busy scribbling comments all over.

I explained about the topic, and she seemed quite interested. As she is an editor (itself a fortuitous coincidence), I offered for her to read this chapter about Rex. She did and then explained that she (at age 51) was recently widowed. We discussed how she was handling her loss. She said: "As Rex experienced, I too, feel that my potential has been limited due to perceived irrelevance from my past and the dynamics of my marriage. As fearful as I may be of breaking out of my 'safe zone,' part of me is excited at the opportunities and fulfillment my 'new life' can bring. 'Can' being the operative word. It's up to me to make that happen."

Her resolve to open up her thoughts to adding new dimensions in her life (new connections), while at the same time continuing to grieve the loss of her husband of over 20 years, shows the power of resiliency. It is the added element of coaching to grow from despair into the new light of potential that creates the insight and appealing dynamic, one very appropriate to share.

Commentary: Cathleen M. Kreuter, MS-MFT

After meeting Rex, I discovered how vibrant and personable he is. His warm and peaceful demeanor was a wonderful thing to witness coming from someone who has been through as much as he has. In conversation with him, it was obvious he has coped and overcame a great deal of sadness in his life, which has been replaced by optimism and a dedication to an improved self.

Throughout the conversation, Rex was able to focus on the topic at hand and answer questions completely. When needing redirection or being prompted, Rex was able to stop and think about what was said before continuing the dialogue. When improvement was seen, Rex was validated, which encouraged him to witness his progress, and he would respond with “thank you.”

It has been learned that Rex benefits from writing his thoughts down. This is a powerful tool to help provide direction and order in Rex’s life. The task of writing thoughts down can reinforce purpose and meaning in Rex’s life. Rex mentioned his writings in conversation, which ignited a spark in his eyes. Dr. Kreuter encouraged Rex to continue exploring his thoughts and ideas through the written and verbal word. As the famous poet, Emily Dickinson (1962), wrote:

He ate and drank the precious words.
 His spirit grew robust.
 He knew no more that he was poor,
 Nor that his fame was dust.
 He danced along the clingy days.
 And this bequest of wings,
 Was but a book-what liberty
 A loosened spirit brings (#1587, p. 302).

Synopsis of Chapter

1. An individual’s life history can be evaluated within the context of making a theoretical point.
2. Letters can be interpreted as part of the case study methodology.
3. Despite great sustained difficulties in life, Rex was able to maintain a sense of resilience.
4. The psychiatric examinations of Rex can be questioned as to their accuracy in understanding what was really going on in his life.
5. The absence of coaching enabled Rex to continue to experience the results of ineffectual existence.
6. Transforming a person’s weak communication skills may need to occur at the outset of therapy.
7. The interiority of a person can be ascertained over a short span of time through regular increments of dialogue.
8. It is important to ensure that the person being helped is credited with positive changes made in their own life.
9. The process of transformation is not limited to younger persons.
10. It is a useful tool to challenge patients to consider alternative ways of thinking about their world.

Chapter 7

Building Resilience Through Letters

Journaling is a way for two people to share thoughts and experiences through the power of the written word, developed asynchronously. I have been writing together with my adult children for years, and we share journals between ourselves. This shared writing adds resiliency to the relationships and adds significant relevance to the bonds between us. Whereas some adult children may slowly drift apart from their parents because of divergent interests and the age gap, the shared writing keeps the relationships thriving in a creative and unique way. The communal spirit, which is often present in such writing, leads to highly creative concepts, including poetic expression, even questions, and answers. All have been enriched by this process. As quoted in *Chicken Soup for the Father & Daughter soul* (Canfield, Hansen, Autio, Aubery, & Thieman, 2005), Euripedes wrote: “To a father waxing old, nothing is dearer than a daughter.” Perhaps no other mechanism than writing letters can better portray inner feelings within the relationship. This is especially true when the writing spans a period of time. Allport (1960) wrote on the psychology of love and hate: “The human hunger to give and to receive love is insatiable” (p. 199). Writing to each other is our personal approach to giving and receiving love within our relationship as father-daughter.

I believe that the concept of healthy human attachment is manifested through the thoughts and impressions within the individual dyad. Ian Suttie (1935) spoke about the flight from tenderness concerning the sidestepping of the problems of human attachment by psychologists. He felt that modern mental science overreacted and deliberately blinded itself to the tender relationships in life so strongly emphasized by Christianity. I believe that the psychologist should be able to join the poets, saints, or theologians in the study of affiliative sentiments, love, and personal attachments.

Why are people interested in the contents of letters? “Intimate letters, gushing forth from raw personal experience, have a unique fascination” (Allport, 1965, p. v). The journals shared involve the mutual study of father and child as well as between siblings, using letters to express part of the impressions formed about each other over the span of time. Sometimes days or even a week or more would pass before the respective books would change hands, always ceremonious events. The recent

letter would be read in a quiet place with an open heart and with the joy of sharing and learning more about the other. Such moments became the highlight of the day. The writings would sometimes be about everyday events and concerns and problems inherent in every life.

As Allport (1965) demonstrated, letters written over time provide fascination because they present the unfolding on a chronological basis of the inner narrative of a life. In *The Letters of Jenny*, Allport presents the letters of Jenny Gove Masterson where the story is told of a mother-son relationship, tracing the course of a life of frustration and defeat. In contrast, *Impressions* provides the reader with a message of fulfillment of the beauty and value of an intimate relationship between parent and child where the propriety of the sovereign relationship is maintained at the same time true guidance and nurturing take place. Discoveries of each other's thoughts become the urge to continue the dialogue, and, as such, the strengthening occurs from the sharing.

White (1966) wrote: "The initial facts of personality are the lives of people, and lives cannot be adequately understood unless they are described at considerable length" (p. iii). The study of personality is in part the study of the complexities of human difference. Drawing together common themes in people, we can also learn about them through examination of what sets each apart from the other.

Part of the process of creating such journals is the individual striving of each to reach their own personal identity. Carl Rogers wrote: "...it appears that the goal the individual most wishes to achieve, the end which he knowingly pursues, is to become himself" (1989, p. 108). Toward that wish, it is possible that each relationship is a fine and necessary component of reaching individual destinies as they provide the backdrop for discoveries and insights into human character, thoughts, and feelings. The mutual love and respect become an enriched transcendence in the sense that each has become more self-aware through the process of becoming aware of the other person. The aim of this effort is to provide a medium of expression in order to make sense of life's experiences. As a result, greater meaning is derived to life. Eventually, our lives, through shared meaningful experiences, lead to self-actualization. According to Spinelli (1989): "Phenomenological enquiry makes a clear distinction between the experience as it occurs and our interpretations of that experience. The former is commonly labeled straightforward experience, while the latter is usually referred to a reflective experience" (p. 24).

In an honest relationship, there need be no false fronts or pretenses. Thus, without pretenses we are free, just as a bird is free in the air. In a poem (and published song) by Eric, titled "Island Winds," he wrote of the feeling of a bird in the air: "Free in the air for wind and wing..." (Kreuter, 2009). There, the similarity between the freedom of unconstrained wind and the free movement of the soaring bird forms the vision that our souls can also strive for achievement of a taste of such free movement. Just as the words to this book are now being tapped out of the keys of a laptop computer, the writers distilled their considerations of the inherent beauty of life and portray their desire to contribute to each other and to the world the legacy of their relationships. Importantly, it is clear that in doing so, the individual persons themselves become elevated in consciousness and depth.

The journals exist because the writers exist, not just as separate people, but as part of the collective existence. Existential philosophy takes as its primary concern the existence of human beings (Ellenberger, 1955). From an existential perspective, a human being is inseparable from his or her social context.

As a motivator for change, an individual can "...discover within himself the capacity to use this relationship for growth" (Rogers, 1989, p. 35). Thus, the dyad allowed communication toward a forward-moving orientation. In effect, the constancy of the writing creates a type of accountability where individuals can feel happily compelled to document important thoughts, revelations, troubles, and plans. Knowing that whatever was written would be read in a caring spirit made the writing pure and nourished the souls of the determined writers. Further, Rogers describes how relationships can help people to integrate and become increasingly more effective. So, then, perhaps, we can view the transcendental meaning of the relationship as providing a witting catalyst for exploration of the interior of the self, which, then, fuels movement in the exterior of life (career, creativity, accomplishments, and success). Tied in to the equation of self-exploration through the shared writing is the courage to triumph over ones notable foibles and shortcomings. The trust relationship, where love is the hallmark, becomes the motivator to attempt self-improvement. A component of accountability toward each other leads to challenge, which serves to reduce ineffective patterns. There is a certain discerned therapeutic and beneficial quality to the ritualistic writing.

Tillich (1960) wrote of an interpretation of love, which is neither emotional nor ontological (ontology is the philosophical study of nature) but ethical (p. 4). In the principles of Judaism, Christianity, and throughout Western civilization, love is commanded with, as Tillich describes, the imperative "thou shalt." Yet, love, distorted or forced, becomes nothing more than artificial, therefore, meaningless. Perhaps, the concept of unconditional love, the love that carries with it a complete absence of requirements (attached strings), is the highest form of human love. This form is incomparable to the biblical concept of agape love, which is the unearned love God has for humanity. It is also different from two Greek translations of the English word for love: *eros* (sexual love) and *philos* (friendship or brotherly love). In the Old Testament, the Hebrew word for love is *ahab* and was used in the same broad ways as the English word (sexual love, spousal or child love, love of humanity by God, etc.)

One of Emanuel Swedenborg's (1688–1772) philosophical tenets was that truth is love in action. "Truth is the way love works. Most of us sense that. Actions we perform out of love are honest actions, genuine expressions in a physical form of what love means, or the truth of love" (the Swedenborgian Church). The transcendence of love within the dynamic relationship involves actively confirming each other. According to Rogers (1989), Martin Buber (Buber and Rogers, 1957) said: "Confirming means ... accepting the whole potentiality of the other ... I can recognize in him, know in him, the person he has been ... created to become ... I confirm him in myself, and then in him, in relation to this potentiality that...can now be developed, can evolve" (p. 55).

We are connected to each other in meaningful ways. “We live our lives inscrutably included within the streaming mutual life of the universe” (Buber, 2000, p. 29). While the relationship between friends and relatives can be expected to be close and lifelong, it is the dynamic relationship with any human being that involves mutual exploration of the soul of the other person through impressionistic interpretation of the thoughts, feelings, and actions of the other, documented through the written word and observed in action. Thus, the subjugation of oneself to the investigation of the other provides for a rich longitudinal evaluation of the inner portion of the life of the other. It is for this reason that those who journalize can freely write to each other in the form of letters over no specified time frame or preconceived deadline. Instead, the natural motivating flow of ideas are preserved, then later evaluated. The writing must never be forced or contrived.

According to Hegel (1892) as cited in Rosen (2000),

An opinion is a subjective conception, an uncontrolled thought, an idea which may occur to me in one direction or in another: an opinion is mine; it is in itself a universal thought which is existent in and of itself. But philosophy possesses no opinions, for there is no such thing as philosophical opinions. (p. 353)

Synopsis of the Chapter

1. Asynchronous sharing of written expression can increase the relevance of the bonds between people.
2. Letters are a good way to portray inner feelings.
3. Writing between close friends or relatives is a way to give and receive love.
4. Healthy human attachment can be aided through the process of written expression.
5. The inner narrative of life can unfold in a series of letters written over a long time span.
6. The interior of lives can be expressed best when described at length, as in through correspondence.
7. One goal in writing to others is to better understand the self.
8. By freeing oneself of pretenses, greater freedom is experienced.
9. Individuals can use relationships as opportunities for change.
10. Dynamic relationships can include mutual exploration of meaning.

Chapter 8

What Holds Us Back?

The Inner Saboteur in All of Us

Success is the result of either a sudden event or the product of long sustained effort. Applying this principle to the subject in my case study (Rex), lack of success is the product of a long period of nonfeasance, where little or nothing was done to stimulate dynamic changes in his life. Along the way toward reaching the highest point on the ladder of success, some people find great difficulty with one or more particular aspects of the challenges associated with their particular mission in life. Such impasses are normal and can actually be healthy to allow the person to take stock of where they came from, where they are, and where they wish to go. But, unfortunately, we can toss a hand grenade into the mix vis-à-vis unwitting self-sabotage in the form of self-doubt, giving up, making mistakes out of fear, canceling opportunities to reach higher by accepting greater responsibility, and other manifestations of the inner voice that says “You can’t do this” or “You are not good enough.” Giving up is always easier than trying.

When we incorporate self-doubt into the challenges we face, we become frozen in our ability to rise to the occasion. We tell ourselves that this is too hard or let somebody else do it. The obstacles inserted into life from pure catastrophic thought include people feeling as if they would choke if they had to speak in front of an audience. Some people feel they become less intelligent when facing some sort of intellectual challenge, such as an expert who wishes not to ever take the role of a testifying expert out of fear that they might become less capable when facing such a situation. Other people face such challenges head-on and welcome the pressure because they know they will benefit from it and, in the long run, will metamorphose into a dynamically more capable being. The only way, then, to realize how far you can go in life is to try to see how far you can actually go.

It is the growth from breaking out of a comfortable boundary where the best results of growth are found. A career coach or mentor would suggest that the person soon to face a new challenge be very prepared and ready for the upcoming event. As the persons embark on the process of preparing, they soon may realize that they

know their stuff and, eventually, look forward to the challenge. At that point, there is transformation from inner fear to outward motivation, all over the same issue. Notably different is the outlook and the value the person places on the elements of the challenge, which include risk and reward.

Helping a person gain insight will enable them to establish new goals and attain new levels of success. Kohler (1947/1975) wrote: “The term insight refers to experienced dynamics in the emotional and motivational fields” (p. 342). Throughout my sessions with the inmates (I ran a program on addiction at a women’s prison), he capitalized on “...windows of opportunity to introduce a positive nuance of healing” (Kreuter, 2005c, p. 98). This work of transformation is especially challenging with persons who have low self-esteem, are self-centered, or have a history of abuse. In Kohut’s (1972) theory, narcissistically oriented patients have chronic problems in maintaining a normal level of self-esteem and are highly sensitive to sights, rejections, or perceived criticism. Perls (1976) used a Gestalt therapy technique involving psychodrama, whereby the subject is directed to search for an image representing his or her Power Animal. This method is a way to boost self-confidence and a person’s inner strength to overcome addiction. I adopted this method with his prison group and found it helped to stimulate an increase in creative thinking, leading, hopefully, to further transformation. The exercise was followed by group discussion, which was always dynamic. Each person was invited to contribute their story to the group. Horney (1957) found that the person disclosing is helped along by the support of the group, often leading to an emotional release (i.e., tears), then an opportunity for resolution of the inner conflict uncovered by the person.

In my prison work, he developed a useful metaphorical concept to provide the inmates with a way of viewing their lives at three points in time:

- Who I was
- Who I am
- Who I want to become

The objective of this guided imagery was to motivate the women to examine their lives first in retrospect, then at the current moment, and, finally, to project their lives forward to vocalize a dream of who they wish to become. Each inmate was given an opportunity to consider this exercise and was given a few weeks to develop their response. There was no specific rigid approach to the question. Most prepared written essays to respond to the question. Some were very creative and used art to describe themselves at these three points in time. “Conflicts can be resolved only by changing those conditions within the personality that brought them to being” (Horney, 1957, p. 217). One inmate chose to do her essay in an artistic manner in the form of a series of drawings of various styles of shoes. Her drawings showed that the woman saw herself as a very complicated and confused person. As her imagery moved to the current moment and on to the future, the designs of the shoes became simplified, meaning she was regaining clarity of her life and could see herself being able to better manage her own life as she progressed in her transformation of the inner pain she felt.

I wrote several poems that incorporated the above concepts, inspired by his work with the inmates (Kreuter, 2005). I introduced these writings at appropriate moments within the group setting, and they have resulted in rich dialogue. The following poem specifically includes the three-points-in-time metaphor:

Then, I Was; Now, I Am; I Can Become

The loss of hope dwells within the abandoned dreams.
 Future tolled by the experience of present pain.
 In effect, the silenced soul has been compromised.
 Replaced only by the cold constant reality of loneliness.
 Between the whitewashed walls, free movement is stifled.
 Our minds tortured by daydreams of open fields and warm oceans.
 Suffering becomes the common muffled mantra.
 Even tears are muted by the deafening sounds of quiet agony.
 Allies only seem to exist amongst those similarly afflicted.
 Impersonal sentinels review our every move.
 Even our thoughts appear to succumb to monitoring.
 Escape made possible through discovered oasis of created memory.
 Books of fantasy turn our minds away from our presence.
 We portray an untrue picture of our developed uniqueness.
 Instead, our pretense becomes the witnessed common façade.
 We become a forced testimony of our powerlessness.
 Such tragic potency burns the listener's taste.
 We feel torn apart from our familiar world.
 Many witnesses turn away in discouragement.
 Thus, we are scourged by the discounting of our existence.
 Our humanness judged, doubted then mocked.
 Even our anchored spiritual essence is uprooted to drift.
 Spirits are shattered in the solemn storm of bondage.
 We drown in the daunting despair of predicament.
 Yet, then, I was, but now, surely I am.
 So, perhaps tomorrow, I can become new again.
 This, in the final analysis, is the only unshakable hope.
 To change bleakness into beauty, one thought at a time.
 Our reinvention depends on our willing energy.
 Thus, on the vine of thorns, we can grow a rose.
 So, too, we can project freethinking over the boundaries.
 And there are some who will respond to our call.
 In reality, the connection has not been severed.
 It is our courage that provides for new opportunities.
 Responsibility for growth can never be delegated.
 Others cannot rightly guard our destiny, but God.
 We must, therefore, remain vibrant and strong.

By asking group participants to write a paragraph that began “Then, I was; now, I am; I can become,” participants can explore their progress through difficulties and chart their continuing transformation. As part of the process, inmates were invited to read their stories to the entire group, thereby affording them the opportunity to share their quest and gain validation from other group members. The poem exercise allows the person to view their life in retrospect, then to become fully aware and accepting of their present circumstances and state of being, and, then, finally, to take responsibility for their life, its future, and the promise of a more fulfilling future.

Thus, in a very real way, we are, as Allport (1983) referred, in the process of becoming. For the person's acknowledgement of their existence from these targeted points, they are creating a perspective of him or herself. This area of self-psychology relates to "...the person's perspective of himself" (Kelly, 1963, p. 41). For those inmates serving a long sentence, it is important to guide them in their quest for transformation to work toward self-actualization within the prison environment through a process of refocused and realistic goals. Given that many incarcerated persons have a history of substance abuse, it is important that concurrent programs are offered to assist them with recovery from addiction. Similarly, those not incarcerated who abuse alcohol and other drugs must be helped by programs designed to reach the inner spirit of the individual, so he/she may regain control over life.

Seeing the World as a Sinister Place

When a person develops a feeling that the world around him or her becomes sinister, a syndrome is activated wherein negative thoughts breed further negativity. Such negative thoughts and feelings may include foreboding, gloomy outlook, bleakness, somber feelings, and cheerlessness. This syndrome makes it difficult to climb out of the morass because any possible positive thoughts are blocked by some newly expressed perceived harshness in the world. For example, a person who recently lost his or her job and is having a tough time even getting interviews let alone job offers may view minor discourtesies and annoyances as having deeper impact almost to the point of feeling persecuted by society. This, in turn, can lead to the feeling of disconnection in one's life.

Furthering the feelings of disconnection in the person experiencing loss of relevancy are unrelated factors experienced in everyday ordinary life that serve to compound the negativity. These factors include bad weather, a broken umbrella due to a gust of wind, missing a train, losing a wallet, bumping into something while parking a car, and receiving a traffic ticket. As these ordinary events occur, the flow of negative energy creeps into the underlying consciousness of the person; more negative events are perceived, even to the point of embellishment of their severity. A cold becomes the flu, the flu turns to pneumonia, and a sore knee requires surgery: these are symptoms of self-fulfilled prophecy attributable to the internal driving of negative energy felt and transmitted by the person. Thus, the 360 ° of area around the person are seen as purely negative by the person. What good may be actually there is blocked by internal recreations of attributes of bad onto what most would see as good. The person may be inconsolable. Those around them may be confused and not know what to say or do. Bystanders, coworkers, friends, and relatives, of course, receive no guidance from the suffering person who becomes entrenched in their own funk, perhaps comfortable with the situation because it equates to hitting bottom.

One of my attendees in his former program run at a women's prison told him that in jail, there are no responsibilities, no requirements except to fall in line, and be counted over and over again. She portrayed a person with no cares in the world

and acted as if time had stopped, and she was on some sort of horrible vacation. In prison, as in the general population, there are a variety of different types of women. Thriving and resilient incarcerated women used their time to attend as many programs as possible, including college-level classes leading to a 2-year degree. Or they would read and study or write letters to family and friends with the hope of earning their forgiveness, so there might be something good to look forward to after release. Some women treated confinement as punishment, and other viewed it as a temporary delay in their criminality. Some who were serving their second sentence expressed utter concern about being released, committing new crime, and being imprisoned a third time. This would mean being labeled a three-time offender earning a very lengthy sentence. Rehabilitation, as a concept, exists more in the mind and soul of the individual. They have to want to be different than their current selves for true transformation to take place. Without an internal sense of resilient thinking, there may be no lasting hope of a reformed life.

One definition of “sinister” is the person feels “unlucky.” Luck, however, is seriously overvalued. Some successful people say we make our own luck. That may appear quite easy for a self-made billionaire to say, but there is some credit due to a person who takes that much responsibility for their own destiny and who generates positive activity in his or her life to the point that great things happen frequently to them. It is said that the rich get richer and the poor only become poorer. If we accept this notion, then there would be little point in trying hard; if one were poor, any grand effort would be futile. But when a poor person becomes rich due to, say, hitting the lottery, but has no skills to manage finances, there is some potential the person may become poor again.

People who amass wealth may be very capable of sustaining themselves in a reasonably high lifestyle, yet they are also able to maintain their level of wealth due to prudent management. Others waste their resources, go on ridiculous spending sprees, become reckless in their money management, and find themselves in financial trouble. As a result of this mismanagement, the person may be forced to sell the yacht, move to a smaller mansion, or sell one of their five Picasso’s at a loss.

Of course, the very wealthy are also more prone to sustaining larger losses due to fraud, a.k.a., the Madoff scandal. One newspaper report immediately following the news report of the Madoff scandal included a reference to a woman who said that she used to have a cleaning lady, but now she had to become a cleaning lady. She lost a reported \$5 million in the Madoff scandal, substantially her entire net worth. Such a person was wealthy, but failed to maintain her wealth through prudent management. Who does she blame for this misfortune?

Some people take the risk of losing big. When they do lose, they are often bitter. Bitterness leads to callousness, which develops into a negative view of the world. Thus, there is no patent of feeling low or feeling disconnected to the world. A person formerly worth \$500 million who suddenly becomes a mere millionaire worth \$2 million is just as prone to feeling the impact of loss of a social circle and may have even more negative feelings due to the proportionate loss. In contrast to the millionaire experiencing loss, I visited a potable water project in southwestern Dominican Republic and noticed how happy and pleasant the people were, even

though the adults were subsistence farmers; the village had no electrification; there was little opportunity to do more than survive. Yet, they were happy with what they had and who they were. Such a life is demanding; on one level, they struggle to produce enough food to survive another day. On another level, it is not demanding; there was no sense of competition with neighbors or any disproportionate drive to become rich. Because of their relative isolation in the mountains, they really had little contact with the world around them outside their immediate village. When they did travel to the city, they returned and resume normal life because they find the city just as harsh as the mountains. But did they have hope?

Hope is one of those constructs that we have to be careful about using our own bias to create a notion of someone else's hope. How can we really know what someone else hopes for in their life unless we become that person? We could ask them directly, but do they even know themselves what they hope for? And if they do provide an answer, will we be satisfied with their response or will we judge them and determine that their hope is inadequate? A better view of hope is to allow it to be that element of awakened dream in a person who wishes for something more than what it is at moment, regardless of how attainable it may seem. We have no right to deprive someone of such hope and should avoid referring to it as "false hope." When we deem someone else's hope false, we condemn their dream thus condemning them. How would we feel if someone did that to us?

An interesting perspective on hope would be to place ourselves at the intersection of hope, opportunity, hopelessness, and loss to assess which direction we would choose? This decision may alter depending on the presenting problem or question. But if we take time to view the next critical problem as such an intersection with unlimited potential courses of inaction, inaction being one choice, we may find a new attitude of respect for those who fear such decisions. Braveness is moving in a direction without full information and full acceptance of failure. When there is, such movement risks abound. What results is a product of fortune and effort, ingredients some of which we control and some we do not. If we try our best and fail, we actually can claim we succeeded, but the success is only measured to the extent that we actually did do our best. Perhaps, then, the metaphorical intersection can guide a person with a sense of trepidation to reach deep into their soul and find the energy to decide what to do based on assessment of relative risk and the hoped for reward. With good insight, such a decision may be made well. The person with no hope or lacking connection may make a very unwise decision out of desperation in a quick, attempt to tempt fate and change their life course in one fell swoop. An example is needed: a person owes \$50,000 on a mortgage and has no income. They have \$5,000 in cash. They know they will run out of money and lose the house in the near future. They go through a period of extreme anxiety, finding it near impossible to regain employment, so they take the cash, all of it, drive to a casino and plunk it down on red at the nearest roulette table. One spin will mean either that their \$5,000 wager turns into \$10,000 or that they lose all of it. The odds are in favor of the bettor losing, which is necessary, so the casino can remain operational. In this example, let's say our person wins. But even \$10,000 is inadequate, so they leave it on red. They win again. Now they have \$20,000. They try one more time, feeling lucky and pushing

their luck. One more spin can almost wipe out the debt. If they step away and ponder for a few moments, would they take that next risk?

Perhaps at this point, the construct of relevancy comes into play. Have they lost touch with their reality by being in the casino in the first place? Was it a reasonable risk? Now that they won twice and turned \$5,000 into \$20,000, shouldn't they stop? This is the place where soul-searching and guided thinking through therapeutic intervention can help a person find new clarity. Otherwise, the spin of the roulette wheel metaphorically parallels their life spinning out of control. When will it stop? How can it stop? The gambling disease is the excitement of the quick fix to life's perplexing dilemmas; it momentarily provides relief from the mundane life and adds a thrill. It is one place where hope is kept alive. It is the risk that can be examined as to why someone would do it. But, without an ally, it may be difficult to expect the person in the moment to step away from what they are doing to examine whether or not they should be doing it. It feels good to win, so why not perpetuate the feeling? This is how casinos, racetracks, and hookers get people to take risks. When a person is better grounded, they might see through the plasticity of immediate gratification, properly assess relative risk, and find superior ways to work toward more sustainable solutions. When they do, they rejoin the harmony of the feeling of relevancy—relevancy to their own lives, not that borne of a pipe dream.

Relevancy After Death

While the constructs of fame and infamy are not the same, they each have qualities that can endure postmortem. Such enduring relevancy suggests the sense of its lasting quality. Despite this quality of achieving endurance, it may or may not have been realized during life.

For example, Elvis was hugely popular during his lifetime and was called the "king." His records were at the top of the charts, and his movies were popular. Elvis had 33 successful films, 14 Grammy nominations (3 wins), and honorably served in the United States Army; of his recorded music, he had 149 songs that were on the Billboard hot 100, 104 top 40 songs, 40 top 10 songs, and 18 number 1 hits. Elvis Presley's music, likeness, hairstyles, outfits, etc. continue to be popular long after his death on August 16, 1977. How many times have we seen Elvis impersonators? Elvis' former home, Graceland, attracts a constant flow of fans. In fact, his estate earned \$60 million in 2009, second among dead Hollywood celebrities (Bond, 2010, p. 1). Would it be fair to refer to the late Mr. Presley as relevant?

On another spectrum, is John Wilkes Booth relevant because of his infamous murdering of the 16th US President on April 14, 1865? Booth's name is certainly familiar to most Americans (as an assassin not for the way he lives his life) and researchers continue their quest to better understand his motives and whether he had coconspirators. Thus, his legend lives on, which is the relevant notion about him more than the person he was in other aspects of his life. Booth was an actor.

Even further apart from these cases is the instance of a person whose lasting relevancy was established years after their death, such as when they are beatified

(sainted) by the Roman Catholic Church, as was the case of Saint John Paul II (1920–2005). Some believe the Catholic Church rushed this process of sainthood.

John Paul II was famous while alive, which is in stark contrast to other Popes who did not enjoy such widespread popularity and who were not beatified. John Paul I led an exemplary life, but died early in his papacy at age 78. When a new saint is named, they are venerated in perpetuity, especially in the town or country where they were born. People pray to them to intercede, thus reinforcing them as very relevant beings.

Such cases (a musical icon popular in life and beyond, an assassin popular for an act, and a saint with postmortem popularity), all different, with countless others, are examples of people whose mission or deeds in life (good or evil) earned notoriety (perhaps negatively) either immediately or well after the fact, which seems to endure. Relevancy, then, can include postmortem fame or infamy in the sense that the legacy of a person (whether deemed good or evil) lingers and may even grow over time. Growth in postmortem popularity can occur when successive generations rediscover the person's greatness or evilness and continue to perpetuate their virtues or deeds.

It is what they did or what they stood for that makes legends stand out as iconic symbols and, for some, earning a place among the saints of an organized faith. During their lifetime, some may earn fame and fortune. Others become discovered for the greatness after death. As one more categorical example of fame earned more so after death than in life, certain classical composers, Mozart, a child prodigy, and, to some extent, Beethoven, became much more popular after death, even attaining legend status, though they both enjoyed some popularity during their lifetimes. There is also the case of Scott Joplin, a more contemporary American composer known as the king of ragtime who died in 1917, but whose music was rediscovered in the 1970s when he was posthumously awarded a Pulitzer Prize.

Making a name for oneself is certainly possible during one's lifetime. We can refer to Steve Jobs or Derek Jeter as people who earned or are earning fame (and, as a result, greater relevancy) in life. Exposure through the modern forms of media certainly does help to broaden a person's allure through widespread distribution of their talents and skills. Catholics will recall who John the Baptist is (endurance), but imagine if he had a Twitter account (iconic potential)? We all know who Neil Armstrong was, many watched in awe his first steps on the moon on July 16, 1969. Would he be as famous today if the launch of the first manned lunar mission was scrubbed due to some technical failure and he was replaced with a chimp? In a non-human example, perhaps the chimp would become as famous as the one in the show "Tarzan" had social media been as well developed back in the day this show was first aired. Maybe then, the chimp would have lasting fame. Social media is a major contributor to assisting a person gaining and retaining relevancy. Many Hollywood actors and actresses use social media to connect with their fans by feeding the fans' insatiable interests with daily snippets of their daily life. A person's accomplishments in one part of the world can become quickly exposed to the entire world. With facilities such as YouTube, impressions (instant replay, videos) of something done such as an athletic feat or breaking a world record can long be replayed and archived. Technology has played a key role in lengthening the longevity of a person's fame.

The ability to repeat viewing of something keeps it fresh and alive and enables it to be passed down to other generations.

Even a person famous in his or her lifetime may lose relevancy after death when there is a diminishing of interest in the person's activities, philosophy, etc. For example is the inventor of the modern plastic Hula Hoop in 1958, Arthur K. Melin (1924–2002). Of course, the original concept goes back to ancient Greece. The Greeks used grape vines and, later, used wood to fashion the hoops. Many remember the Hula Hoop, and some still use them, but who remembers Mr. Melin? Does relevancy become lost if we remember fondly the invention, but not the inventor? Benjamin Franklin never patented his significant inventions (e.g., the lighting rod), because he felt these belonged to the people and were far too important to be controlled by a single individual. A person of creative talent may become obscure even though the invention lives on. How often do we think of Thomas Edison compared to the frequency of turning on a light? A star athlete will enjoy the limelight, but after their career is over, there will likely be a dwindling of remembrance of the person. They eventually become relegated to a statistical footnote in some record book. Of course we can consider a sports figure retaining a certain degree of relevancy courtesy of Topps Baseball Card Company vis-à-vis memorializing them on a piece of collectible cardboard, though this pastime may be dwindling in popularity. A Mickey Mantle rookie baseball card from 1952 will fetch major money, and he will be long remembered for his prowess on and off the field. Does this give him relevance as a person or as an icon? Perhaps we can consider if a person attains a personal feeling of strong connection to their world during their lifetime and is remembered fondly through some artifact such as a baseball card, then their relevancy continues in the minds of living people, albeit there may be a limitation on the shelf life of this type of fame. Thus, they are, to a degree, idolized for their accomplishments, which may give them a type of symbolic relevance for what they meant to the world during their lifetime. As a possible role model for others, their achievements during life may inspire future generations; thus, their spirit retains relevancy.

Relevance to history or society is different from personal relevance. Napoleon is relevant as a historical footnote, but only significant to those who loved and served with him. On an emotional/psychological level, we are truly significant only to those who love us. On a professional level, we are significant to those who work with us. As Freud pointed out, the two major areas of importance are love and work. It is, therefore, no surprise that most obituaries highlight the person's career and their family status.

Transformation Requires Lasting Change

To transform is to become a different person in some aspect of life, be it big or small. Such difference equates to change. Temporary change does not lead to true transformation though it may very well be a necessary intermediary step along the continuum of trying to transform. For example, the alcoholic who goes "off the

wagon” and experiences a night of binge drinking may so dislike the aftereffects of the behavior that he or she may set out to try harder to quit, seek counseling, or join a support group to gain momentum for the desired change and help him or her handle future temptations. Just as the setback may aid the person into a deeper sense of awareness of their personal humility and vulnerability, moving past setbacks can fortify the person’s realization of hidden internal strength. This strength can be harnessed and deployed in the continuing fight. When we embark on a personal mission of change, we create a form of war or conflict within ourselves. The conflict arises when we say we want to transform, but we really don’t have any desire or intention to change. In a way, we are fooling ourselves. We may try to put on an appearance of trying to be different, but if there is no inner change, the adjustment will likely only be short-lived.

Since all science begins with the question “why?” it is only fitting that a person desiring transformation of one sort or another asks themselves that question. Once answered, the subsequent questions become vital, involving continuity or permanence. Further, humans have the ability to rationalize their way out of any real transformation because of misguided or distorted views of the world, their powers, and their true inner notions of becoming a different entity or keeping the status quo.

We also feel a sense of entitlement to continue being exactly who we are in all its manifestations, including the unglamorous ones. We make excuses for all sorts of conduct and dismiss any notion of the great hold such behaviors have over us. We like to feel pleasure, and we certainly wish to avoid pain. Pain is often involved in the process of transformation, and pleasure often needs to take a backseat to the attainment of a loftier objective. Any goal that involves curtailment of a prior, often repeated activity, or adoption of a new activity that requires time and effort on a sustained basis may be difficult to reach. How can a person facing these challenges and obstacles better cope with the hurdles encountered?

By becoming aware of the internal road-blocking potential of that sometimes overpowering internal voice that wishes to retain its stranglehold over us, we can declaw it by methodically altering its grip. This is done through the process of compounding the perceived benefit of a slight change and repeating the behavior many times until the new behavior replaces the old behavior. While that may sound oversimplified, it will work. As an example, if a person is in a dead-end job and wants to metamorphose into a more dynamic life, he or she must start with an inventory of their situation, including who they are and who they wish to become. This takes work and sustained effort to honestly and objectively face oneself and bravely face the future head-on. First, one must take stock of oneself at a point in time and look ahead to a high goal. In the process of reviewing the long road ahead, it can be broken down into smaller segments, so each milestone can be recognized and achieved within a reasonable timeframe.

Building success on top of success is the best way to achieve lifetime fulfillment of dreams and aspirations, especially when coupled with learning from failure. It is when we fail ourselves and acknowledge such weakness that we begin the process of transformation and in an enlightened manner. We can strike a balance between thoughts and actions that are groundbreaking in a positive sense and those that

acknowledge internal weakness and lead to negativism. Each witnessing of weakness must be challenged with positive thinking to adopt new ways to replace old ways—one decision at a time. Inarguably, the process of smoking cessation occurs one foregone cigarette at a time. So, if a heavy smoker was formerly used to two packs a day (40 cigarettes), setting a goal of cessation in 6 months (182 days), that would mean every 4.55 days the person could cut out one of the 40. So, on day 5 (rounded), the smoker allows him or herself only 39 cigarettes, day 9 reduced to 38, and so on. The pleasure center of the brain impacted by the nicotine is slowly starved of the volume, but over a fairly lengthy timeframe. Eventually, the urges pass, and the smoker budgets a decreasing quantity of cigarettes. Adding to the velocity of such a willful program, let's also say that each cigarette cost the smoker 15 cents. On day 2, the smoker deposits another 15 cents in a jar. On day 9–14, 30 cents per day and then the multiplier in accordance with plan. Eventually, by the time the half year is up, there will be plenty of change in the jar. The symbolism of this exercise is very important as the ritual of the deposit takes over for the ritual of the smoking habit. In time, the person looks more forward to the daily deposit than they will to the next cigarette, albeit there may be some discomfort in terms of withdrawal symptoms.

Starting an exercise program simultaneous with the cessation of smoking would also greatly benefit the person's health and provide an additional reinforcement. It is necessary to develop a good control mechanism in order to break the habit and suppress the urges to have that extra cigarette. This mechanism will enable the person to deal with unexpected stress of whatever other excuse may be available.

Synopsis of the Chapter

1. We all have an inner voice that provides the potential for feelings of self-doubt.
2. Whereas some grow from challenge, others shy away from such opportunities.
3. Development of the tool of insight will lead to establishment of new goals, leading to new levels of success.
4. Perls' Gestalt therapy, using psychodrama, specifically the power animal technique, can serve as a method to boost a person's self-confidence.
5. Guided imagery can help a person reach new perspective on their life.
6. Negative thinking only breeds further negativity.
7. Feelings of negativity can be compounded aspects occurring in everyday life.
8. It is important to take responsibility for your own life and not blame others or rely solely on luck.
9. We must not deprive a person of their hopes, dreams, and aspirations.
10. Strong connections in a person's life can help build resilience.

Chapter 9

Rehabilitation of the Internal Energy of the Defeated Person



Using the existential approach to helping a person deal with loss of relevancy, the therapist must start with a basic acceptance of the person wherever he or she may be at the moment they enter therapy. “The distinctive character of existential analysis is, thus, that it is concerned with *ontology*, the science of being, and with *Dasien*, the existence of this particular being sitting opposite the psychotherapist” (May, 2004, p. 37).

One potential for achievement of a sense of relevancy is to “find a healthy balance between doing for oneself and doing for others” (personal communication Meryle Kreuter, 2011c). Milkulciner and Florian (1998) found that “...secure attachment is an inner resource that may help a person to positively appraise stressful experiences,

to constructively cope with these events, and to improve his or her well-being and adjustment” (p. 143). Attachment theory has origins in the understanding of human and animal reactions to major life stressors, including loss and separation. Bowlby (1973) found that a sense of security develops from the early relationship with a nurturing adult who is responsive to the needs of the child. As such, these positive experiences lead to the creation of basic trust in the world and the self in the form of a secure base.

Encouraging a person who is stuck in neutral in their life to discuss their thoughts and express their feelings and emotions seems much better than holding back or being stoic. Stoicism is a school of Hellenistic philosophy founded in Athens in the early third century BC. The Stoics taught that destructive emotions resulted from errors in judgment and that a sage, or person of “moral and intellectual perfection,” would not suffer such emotions. Even though the stoic can endure pain and hardship without showing their feelings or complaining, there may be very little improvement this person can accomplish without sharing.

In Edward Bibring’s “Psychoanalysis and the Dynamic Psychotherapies” (1954), he enumerated five main types of psychotherapeutic interventions:

Suggestion consists of the induction of mental processes by the therapist in the patient, independent of the patient’s rational thinking process. For example, the therapist may suggest that the patient change attitudes.

Abreaction refers to the revival in memory and the discharge of tensions and affects that have been neurotically blocked. Examples are the patient’s expression of loving feelings toward the therapist.

Manipulation includes advice and guidance, applied not only to the external environment but to the treatment situation.

Clarification includes restating more accurately what the patient is saying or pointing out connections the patient cannot see. It refers to conscious or preconscious material and not to unconscious material. Clarification helps the patient to view his or her conflicts more clearly.

Interpretation is a hypothesis introduced by the therapist in an attempt to elucidate the unconscious processes active beneath surface behaviors, leading to new insights.

Viktor Frankl (1905–1997) developed an alternative to psychotherapy. He proscribed an existential treatment approach called logotherapy. “Logotherapy focuses rather on the future, that is to say, on the meanings to be fulfilled by the patient in his future” (2006, p. 98). Logotherapy is a meaning-centered psychotherapy. In logotherapy, “...the patient is actually confronted with and reoriented toward the meaning of his life” (p. 98). Frankl’s work shows that the primary motivational force in man is to work toward finding a meaning in one’s life in accordance with his ideals and values.

Frankl viewed a healthy tension with respect to achievement. “Thus it can be seen that mental health is based on a certain tension between what one has already achieved and what one still ought to accomplish, or the gap between what one is and what one should become” (pp. 104–105). Therefore, logotherapy involves challenging a person with potential meaning for him to fulfill and not accepting the status quo.

Frankl found a "...detrimental influence of that feeling of which so many patients complain today, namely, the feeling of the total and ultimate meaninglessness of their lives" (p. 105). He later referred to this as the "existential vacuum" (p. 105). What he described as the aftermath of the vacuum was an overcompensation seeking power, money, or sexual conquest. The logotherapist helps a person discover the meaning of his or her life by pointing out three possible ways: "(1) by creating a work or doing a deed; (2) by experiencing something or encountering someone; and (3) by the attitude we take toward unavoidable suffering" (p. 111). The treatment does not necessarily have to involve long-term care. A common misconception is that the lasting impact of therapy is positively correlated with the length of the therapeutic process. Gutheil (1889–1959) (1956) challenged Freudian thought that "...the more common illusions of Freudian orthodoxy is that the durability of results corresponds to the length of therapy" (p. 134). Buhler (1971) stated: "All we can do is study the lives of people who seem to have found their answers to the questions of what ultimately a life was about" (p. 378). In addition to the examination of the life histories of others, a person can self-examine what has worked in his or her own life and what has not worked so well. Then, incorporating the process of change through volition perhaps including some outside influence, such as mentoring or coaching, the person may be able to reshape past behavior into more effective behavioral patterns.

"As sense of self broadens, definition of in-group membership (potential collaborative group) expands to ever-widening, more diverse circles of inclusion and care, which increases capacity for creative *collaboration*. Individuals may begin to experience states of collective consciousness more frequently in transpersonal stages" (Kenny, 2010, iii). "Experiences of communion, especially if repeated, may lead to changes in identity, of how I conceive who 'I' am and, therefore, who 'we' are, however 'we' has been previously defined by an individual" (p. 44).

Can We Restart Our Internal Clock?

Waking up to the shrill sound of an alarm at 5 a.m. on a Monday of a new workweek can strain the mind and body that would prefer a longer period of rest where new dreams may occur. While music or radio may be a more pleasant alternative to the abrupt buzzing noise of a traditional alarm, the aftermath of being forced into a state of being awake is much the same. Yes, we can hit the snooze button, but that only prolongs the agony of the defeat of sleep now truncated. But what about our internal clock—the one that sets the tone for our lives? This "clock" is the mechanism by which we operate functionally. It is represented by the drives and actions of our daily life. The movement of the clock establishes patterns and the velocity of our life endeavors.

Is there a snooze button for life? If we are willing to examine the construct of life and break it down into manageable segments, we may be more able to cope and deal with both the everyday challenges and the unexpected hurdles that arise in life.

To do so will help us to better understand the dynamics of choice along with the notions of acceptance, chance, and, frankly, the consequences of terrible things that may happen to us or around us for which we have zero warning or control and develop healthy strategies for coping overcoming disabling actions, thoughts, and attitudes. This examination is, of course, not easily done and may not be easily maintained as a tool. But we can do better at trying.

We can reasonably break down a life that is structured over an average life-span into stages: infancy, adolescence, young adulthood, adulthood, middle age, old age, near death, and, finally, death. At many points along this continuum, we have opportunities to make new pathways vis-à-vis decisions to embark on new projects or changes in lifestyle. An example is a person taking on a new project in middle age. Some changes are forced on us. For example, someone forced to make new choices due to handicap status can learn to navigate using a special wheelchair, a modified automobile, or other specialized equipment designed to improve the quality of life of the disabled. Ramps are constructed allowing ingress to homes and public spaces, making it easier for the wheelchair bound to navigate their surroundings. To do so requires resiliency. But how do the personality, attitude, behavior, hopes, dreams, and aspirations modify to suit the inherent limitations of disability? As another example, the middle-age spouse who was recently widowed considers, for the first time, taking charge of her life, returning to school, and entering not only a new and exciting career, but a new chapter in her life. The death can partly be credited as a catalyst for the forward movement in the woman's life. These are aspects of resiliency that portray the importance of a will-directed life—one where we maintain status as the “pilot of our own life,” regardless of limitations. Even the disabled can accomplish a marathon, for example. During my now completed 68 marathons, I witnessed countless brave souls persevering in various forms of wheelchair devices or with guides for the blind. These individuals have not given up or given in to their limitation. In fact, it could be said that their triumph is even more impressive because of their achievement concurrent with their suffering. The same can be said for a blind person performing a concert (Stevie Wonder). Such persons “see” not with their failed eyes, but with their other senses, and, really, their hearts and souls that capture vibrations from life that the sighted may often take for granted. Even non-disabled people who are struggling can adopt an ability to change their internal clock to reset their lives in meaningful ways.

If we consider the potential for creating a turning point in our own life simply by making a decision and following a new path, we have, in effect, reset the internal clock. The change in direction or pace or environment comprises outward symbols of our will to maneuver through life, looking for greener pastures, greater challenge, or a respite from a chaotic life. In a sense, we can rescue ourselves from the hidden enemy: ourselves. We can become cage-bound in our own lives through acceptance of mediocrity or settle for complacency. We can acquiesce to limitations where breakthrough is possible because we are not willing to make the extra effort. Just as the blankets are pulled over the head to drown out the relentless noise of the alarm, we can bury our minds in the life currently at hand, refusing to embark on the potential to change the direction of our lives. Hitting the snooze button once may not be a

problem, but doing so repeatedly and staying hidden under the covers may be completely unproductive. One little change can make a big difference if we respect the power of the compound effect (see previous example—smoking cessation where the triumph is seen in one foregone cigarette at a time). The same is true in the ripple effect where one action has a multiplier impact on several aspects of life. Power of mind reinforced and strengthened with one or more coaches, friends, mentors, etc. can make the difference and pull us through the weaker moments when we are tempted to give up.

I put myself through almost six dozen 26.2-mile challenges—each self-imposed and each bringing with it unique circumstances and hurdles. Some were much more difficult than average. The will to complete the course was not always 100%, but all were completed. Some marathons took place when I was physically ill and others during extreme weather conditions. Each could have been seen as impossible, but instead a resilient attitude kicked in and shattered any negative image, which was eventually replaced by a wonderful feeling of accomplishment. The willingness to start each event was a greater success than the finish. This is because the preparation and the beginning of the day of the event led to its own mental, physical, and spiritual dilemmas. Perhaps not many people look forward to waking at 3 a.m. to board a bus to be dumped off on top of a mountain in freezing temperatures felt for the first mile only to experience extreme heat from mile 2 to mile 26? This experience is known as the Mesa, Arizona, marathon. This marathon challenged the weary will to accept the agony of discomfort one step at a time. The fact is that the choice of giving up or not starting in the first place did occur, but was rejected because doing so would have exacted a long-lasting toll far deeper than the temporary problems of the climate variation, dehydration, and mental fatigue atop physical depletion. The deeper toll would have been a feeling of remorse for quitting, which might have ended or suspended the internal will to continue these types of athletic endeavors.

Thus, one element of building fortitude is to know you can at least try to reach some level of success despite specific challenges. It is when we fail to set hurdles (goals and benchmarks) that we risk complacency and then are doomed to repeat patterns that might not be optimal. In complacency or the repetition of bad patterns, the internal clock spins because of the normal aging process, but there is no growth along with the passage of time. In this regard, we are stuck in our own mind.

Finding the Power of Internal Leadership to Drive Internal Goals

Though there may be very worthy internal goals and even carefully scripted plans and strategies mapped out, without internal leadership, the process of activating a plan to an action may be difficult to achieve. Just as a Broadway stage production requires a choreographer to establish the specific moves in sequence and in partnership

with the other actors and the music, internally we can also greatly benefit from careful orchestration and leadership. Being one's own leader means accepting full responsibility for the results or non-results of every decision, every movement, every pause, especially our own thinking. When we see ourselves in the driver's seat we reinforce the impression that we can and should be in charge of ourselves. When we abdicate this responsibility to others or to nobody, we become lost and absorbed in chaos within our lives, thereby losing relevance.

First, we must believe in ourselves. We must know that we have the capability to lead and do so. It could be a simple action, like rising from bed at a predetermined hour to work out or to become immediately productive on one or more aspects of our life on which we choose to expend energy. An unemployed person may rise early to check the morning paper or online bulletin board for new job postings or revise his or her resume. An overweight person may choose to go for a long walk or jog. A depressed person might read something uplifting or call a friend for support. An alcoholic might attend a meeting offered by Alcoholics Anonymous. Actions lead to increased potential. Inaction only reinforces lethargy and hopelessness. Irrelevance is closely related to hopelessness, and inaction fits in as a close cousin of both. Therefore, reawakening the leader hidden inside and trusting such leadership to fuel plans of action created the new spark in life. If enough sparks are created, there will be fire (read as passion, interpreted as achieving). I suggested to Rex (Chap. 6) that he listen to the "burning torch" of motivation inside himself as a way to move forward in his life.

Letting Go of False Beliefs

In life, we walk around with the weight of our internalizations. More than mere impressions, these internalized thoughts ferment into wholesale belief systems, which can detour our effectiveness when they are built from seedlings of erroneous or distorted views. In a way, we bring a sense of bias into the way we analyze new situations and how we reanalyze old situations; overanalyzing becomes the bane of decision-making. As an example, if we have previously been unable to develop new relationships, instead of remaining stuck, we can use self-discipline to propel ourselves into new domain, perhaps joining a club or starting a new hobby. Thus, we place masks of add-on dimensional thinking atop what might be truth. From this process, we give birth to distorted thinking, which become accepted truth because we repeat it to ourselves often enough. Plainly, we talk ourselves into what we believe; then we agree with ourselves because how can we be wrong? Instead of having a healthy internal debate or, better, discussing it externally with a trusted person, we remove the burden of investigation to find real truth and accept the shallowness of reactionary acceptance of what we superficially take as fact.

When moving through life with the burden of false beliefs, we mature awkwardly. A tree can manage to grow around an embedded rock, but it will look weird at the

base and may not be as straight or sturdy as it might be otherwise. Similarly, false beliefs can undermine us when we are caught facing the true so proved in the many forums life provides. At least, we can look at the power false beliefs have over us as they propel us to convince ourselves and others that something is true even though, in reality, it is not. The process of jettisoning such false beliefs can only begin with a willingness to simmer down the internal stubbornness that keeps a tight grip on the false system. When we do this letting go, we may be exposed to superior paradigms and accept some of them as replacements for those beliefs that we convince ourselves have lost their worth. A refreshing feeling can then take hold when we incorporate this new way of thinking into our existence. Once we embark on this brave new approach to life, we can look for other false notions inside us that need to have a spring-cleaning.

The loss of relevancy can seem endless, as though the problems are simply without resolution. The “daily grind” or “burnout” is accompanied by a feeling that our essence is being ground up. Our real priorities become subordinated to that which causes the loss of relevancy in the first place—the necessity to earn a living takes the place of living. And we know what we “should” be doing what we want to do until we believe that it is too late. Is it ever too late? It is never too late to improve and feel relevant to ourselves.

A respite “from it all” is just that—a quick diversion which, even if we can enjoy it for what it is as we should, does nothing to relieve the persistent, pervasive feeling of loss of relevancy when the break is over. And a break we all need. It’s so nice. It just doesn’t seem like enough because it isn’t. The break is temporary; the loss of relevancy is not—it may not be, and is hopefully not, permanent. But it is not fleeting.

Ruminating may lead to prolonged negative thinking. According to Nolen-Hoeksema and Jackson (1996), ruminating first enhances the impact of depressed mood on thinking, leading to more negative thoughts on the current situation.

Expectations and Those Who Are Content

The issue is thus not what others think. He or she has a family, a career, a home, and for whatever reason he/she should be content or happy. What matters is what you think about yourself. You cannot just snap your fingers to change it or wish it away. It takes thought. I think, therefore I am. Because, at bottom, no one can take away your thoughts. They are yours to keep.

There is one of the three ways in which, ultimately, expectations can be resolved. One way, possibly the best way, is to achieve them, in whole or part. The second is acceptance of what you have achieved and what you may not have been able to achieve. The third is an integral part of the first two where you accept some form of compromised achievement.

Controlling the Inner Voice of Fear

Deep in the crevices of the mind, we may come in contact with what seem to be little “voices.” These “voices” announce negative messages to our active brain that challenge our willingness to try something new and delude us into thinking we ought to not try something or that we are not good enough to reach a certain level in life. The impact of this noise is to add confusion of the motivated element and other driving forces that also run through our minds like rivers crossing paths. Too many conflicting streams of water (thoughts) can become torrents that can drown out our will, leading to settlement for mediocrity at best. How can we withstand such internal pressure?

To combat the voices that threaten to overcome our will, first we need to be aware of the existence of our inner demons. This is possible through reflective thought, reviewing events in terms of our reactions, impressions, and our feelings about each specific event. By reflecting and taking a second look at our own actions and behaviors, we take command of which behaviors worked well and which failed. We can reshape our repertoire and learn to become more effective and more purposeful and connect to our current aspirations, hopes, and dreams. In the ever-changing landscape of life, we are more able to face the hurdles ahead of us and adapt to changing pressures of competition, requirements, and other forces outside of our control.

Importantly, we must never succumb to the pressure of giving up because it seems too hard or too challenging. It is counterintuitive to repress movement toward what is clear as a destiny. We may choose to alter our thought path. Having this unique life existence of Earth, we must consider the vitality of the present moment and how each communication or silence and effort or non-effort contributes to success or failure in terms of reaching our maximum potential. There might be failure, but failing informs our thinking to re-strategize. We also must consider the possibility of self-sabotage. If something or someone has the power to hold us back, we may have to accept the limitation so imposed. But, if we hold ourselves back, that is altogether different. We must look internally to unlock some additional secret strength kept formerly imprisoned by the lockable mind.

We don't really like to expend effort without guarantee of reward. This lesson is learned as an infant. We search for the nipple because it provides both comfort and sustenance. Once we are weaned, we must create future nipples in the forms of career development, personal relationship building and strives toward self-actualization. In the review of our own life, it will be the grand moments where we did some lasting good in the world will be more satisfying than the mere assemblage of wealth. Wealth building for its own sake can consume one's being to the disadvantage of other life endeavors. It may be that our focus should be less on accumulating that which we cannot take with us after we die and more on what we leave behind for successive generations in terms of guidance, nurturing, and all things altruistic.

Thus, looking at fear head on means becoming increasingly aware of its power and influence over us and still doing whatever it takes to declaw its fangs. Facing

fear means accepting the risk of failure and still moving forward. This is done through trial and error and persistence. We face ourselves when we face our fear to become greater representations of our former selves in the process. It is often said that more can be learned from failure than from success. Assisting this process is a willingness to fail, which provides the potential for success. A boxer who never steps inside the ring can never earn the champion's belt. Similarly, the attempt to reach success is made worthy because of the risk of failure. Without the contrast, we would likely never value success. Just trying harder can be misunderstood. Learning from failing and understanding failure is a necessary component of what success is. But it is the wise person who first wrestles with the inner alligator that learns to fight better. Once we control inner self-deprecating notions, we begin to gain momentum to overcome external obstacles. It will require change, sometimes massive alterations, but, if we have the courage to at least consider the power of control we have over ourselves, we are one step ahead of many. And in the game with chances to move forward, we also should never fear competition.

Can it be said that second place in a race where 50,000 compete makes someone a loser? Yet the person did not win. In a way, though, even the person coming in last can say they did more than the spectator, and the spectator can enjoy the event more than the person who stayed home. Even the person who stayed home has more potential than the person who died that day. The point here is that while we are alive, under most conditions, we have potential to get away from all cloistering environments: to approach the game, to enter the race, to start an event, and to try to win. That is real winning. Each step in any direction is part of the process, not a stand-alone event.

Workers who are having trouble at their jobs can try harder, seek some mentoring or retraining, or, possibly find alternative employment. Floundering occurs when a person is lost in a cocoon of uncertainty fearful of making changes, any changes. Courage is to do the opposite—to triumph with new energy and revised effort. Resilience provides the ingredient to muster the internal resources to fight complacency and move forward in whatever measures possible. In fact, sorting out what is possible from what is futile is an excellent starting point for a mission to change status quo.

I selected the following success quotations as the most fitting to add to this book:

- Bertie Charles Forbes (1880–1954), who founded Forbes magazine, wrote: “The man who has done his level best...is a success, even though the world may write him down a failure” (B.C. Forbes).
- “The difference between a successful person and others is not a lack of strength, not a lack of knowledge, but rather in a lack of will” (Vincent J. Lombardi).
- “Success consists of going from failure to failure without loss of enthusiasm” (Winston Churchill).
- “Many of life's failures are people who did not realize how close they were to success when they gave up” (Thomas A. Edison).
- “No one can cheat you out of ultimate success but yourself” (Ralph Waldo Emerson).

Why Setbacks Can Lead to Success

We may think of setbacks as failures or bad luck or even devastating for one reason or another. The particular setback may lead to a person choosing to give up trying, referred to as “throwing in the towel” among other metaphors. Take the sport of boxing, for example, the manager of a prizefighter has a difficult decision to make when his fighter is being badly beaten in the ring and, if the fight were to continue, the fighter might sustain excessive injuries. In such cases when recovery does not seem at all plausible, the manager may take a small towel and toss it into the ring at which time the referee will stop the fight and declare the other fighter the victor. When this happens, the losing fighter may express anger at his manager for giving up on him even though he, himself, must have some notion how badly he has been doing. Still, there can be a difficult aftermath when one side gives up or concedes victory.

Such a setback, in the career of a professional athlete, may be momentary and lead to redoubled training effort, which could lead to future victories. It is the quality of being relentless coupled with opportunity that can lead to such outcomes. Quitting is, perhaps, easy, but may have devastating psychological effects on the person. In business or the scientific fields of invention, setbacks may be normal and even healthy if they are seen as catalysts for a change in direction or the commitment of additional financial or nonfinancial resources.

According to Willie Jollie (1999),

I believe that we must get a new way of thinking about our challenges, real and imagined. We need to view our setbacks as situations to be accepted rather than circumstances to be rejected, because if there were no setbacks, consequently there could be no comebacks. If we want to have a comeback, then we must come back from something. In other words, setbacks are prerequisites for comebacks. (p. 15)

This theory has been explained with good success to Rex (see case study—Chap. 6), who learned to accept his failures and take them in stride to grow from them. Through a more humble viewpoint, Rex was able to bounce back from his moments where he let his guard down and slipped to once again resume his road to positive change and true transformation.

A person that is relentless will persevere through the difficult times, learn from failure, and resume an effort to succeed even at the risk of further failure. If you step on an anthill, the survivors either rebuild or relocate. Many businesses that experience a calamity, such as a fire, if financially feasible, may rebuild. A college student who fails out of school may seek medical or behavioral help to then regroup and return to school. The life lesson from the humbling experience of failure may provide sufficient motivational fuel as to help the student achieve high goals in life. It is, therefore, the mindset of the person who experiences failure to try harder the next time, until either the objective changes or the effort matches the test or hurdle.

The exploration of a person’s interior self stimulated through the experience of failure can be quite rewarding but also understandably depressing. What if looking deep inside yields facts that are troubling to consider? Can we always accept

such self-awareness in a positive way or might we be repulsed by the reflection in the mirror?

True change may only be possible if either forced or strived for. If a coworker keeps coming in late to work due mostly to bad habits, a direct threat of termination may be enough in attitude, thus resolving the problem.

A person who cannot seem to get ahead in his or her career may enroll in a program designed to teach or improve a skill. For someone with self-awareness of a psychological problem, embarking on a course of therapy may lead to discoveries, which, in turn, may propel a person into a transformed state. Any lasting impact is the result of the person's active participation in their own therapy and a commitment to change some aspect of their life. Here is where the person's value system may help or hinder programs with one or more life goals or personal initiatives (i.e., New Year's resolutions).

A diet goes well until the first life issue takes hold, sending the person in retreat from their new habits and back to their old familiar ways. A smoker quits for a month, then enters a bar and is overwhelmed by the plethora of secondhand smoke. The habit returns with a vengeance. It is not too surprising that many attempts to control one's own behavior fail miserably, but why is this so commonplace?

The inner will may be composed partly of genetic predisposition influenced by acquired knowledge and experiences, both positive and negative, and reoriented by substances such as drugs, including alcohol, and a person's expressed or repressed preferences. For example, not everyone has the same sense of danger or risk tolerance. A young man may choose, assuming he is able, to engage in unprotected sex with numerous people. The primal instinct will usually be satisfied, but the inherent risks linger. If the man contracts a sexually transmitted disease, can he really complain?

Stubbornness adds to the dilemma in cases where a person is warned about the risk of certain behaviors, but may choose to discredit these concerns in order to satisfy internal drives. Absorption in one's own desire-seeking behavior may lead to voluntary or involuntary suspension of either one's own sensibilities or inflate the normal level of risk tolerance. While a mode of being, it is worthy to confront a person who is courageous enough to ask the question of why they get into trouble with a reflective view of who they are and who they have become. A person truly tired of seeing themselves in places that have severe consequences can spark a conscientious effort to initiate change. A guide or catalyst can help.

What Evidences Transformation?

A person may appear to the observer to have changed in some small or large way. But is this the definitive sign of transformation? Since true and lasting change is a continuous, long-term, and multistep process, change can be brought about in various ways and can be measured through different methods at various points of the change continuum.

One measurement of such change is when other people who know the person realize that the person has changed based on their observations of the alteration of the person's behavior patterns, for instance, someone who has history of being notoriously impatient and short tempered and who now patiently responds to a bothersome yet ordinary occurrence, such as commuting delay with reason. In the past, such an event would have set off an agitated rant about everything going wrong in the delayed person's day and even life, but now the situation is handled with a newfound calm demeanor. When a person exhibits a demonstrable change in behavior and the new manner in which they conduct themselves is noticed and remarked on, these remarks can actually help someone along the continuum on the road to lasting change. We hear the comment made to people: "You've changed." That can feel good to a person who has been trying to change in some way. Being noticed for having made such deliberate change is validating. People, generally, like to be validated for their efforts. Therefore, encouraging others by pointing out subtle or not so subtle positive changes in their behavior or conduct can go a long way toward reinforcing the change. For someone going through such change, it is the introspective view of the person that is triggered by outside comments and that becomes more definitive as a tool for ensuring long-term maintenance of positive change. The reason these remarks are significant is because the way we see ourselves becomes reinforced and is influenced by reactions we receive from others. If we care about how others see us, we will pay attention to their comments, looks, actions, and words and be motivated to respond so that they view us favorably.

Both validating comments regarding changes already visible and remarks meant as constructive criticism can serve a positive role in the road to transformation and contribute to lasting change. While caring what others think of us can be a useful tool in creating and maintaining positive change, there is another side to this coin. It is possible to lose sight of the true objective of long-term lasting change by getting caught up with performing in a way so as to meet the expectation of someone else, without really internalizing the change. This type of change may be visible or anecdotal and may even be complimented and reinforced by someone observing the seemingly new behavior, but, this change will almost inevitably be transient. Ultimately, we need to be responsible to ourselves and our personal self-improvement; we cannot live our lives based on pleasing others. Similarly, there are going to be scenarios where our behavior has improved and change is sincere and should be noticeable, but the people in our lives are unable or unwilling to reinforce our good behavior. Or in some case, people in our lives might act in a way to encourage us to undo what we have done. People do not need to demonstrate to others that they have transformed in order for them to have done so. Judgment is needed to distinguish between helpful sensory input and unhelpful input.

Taking advantage of information that we regard as constructive will enable a person to shape his or her efforts to change using the feedback from others as a gauge. Sometimes, this step requires bravery and a strong will to work through difficulties making whatever change a person deems worthy. The bravery is needed to face the internal obstacles of laziness or lack of worthiness, preferring to just give up or give in to self-defeat. It is a delicate balance we must strike; if we ignore

the outside world, we may nullify potential change by overlooking helpful information readily available. If we rely too heavily on what others think, we also risk compromising successful and lasting change, by performing on the surface to please others, rather than the brave act of responding the areas inside of us where specific change is needed.

It is important to note that while the use of feedback and guidance can certainly be helpful to the process, transformation can certainly occur without that influence. Feedback and advice are not always going to be available. It takes humility and resolution to admit the need for change, discipline and courage to make the changes, and determination and strength to continue with or without challenges that are inevitably along the way. We are best served to identify people and/or scenarios that will help us at any point in the process. We must develop and learn to respond to our own internal vision of successful change.

Use of a guide, coach, or mentor can help tremendously with gaining a focus on the outside perspective. Using this information, a person can better shape his or her behavioral repertoire to become more precise in the engagement of others. In this way, the relative effectiveness, expressed in terms of achievement of goals, of a day of life can increase by taking advantage of prior feedback and increasing ones sensitivity to the outside world. Part of coping and dealing with challenging situations involves making changes based on new events or perceived roadblocks.

Change often involves dealing with the unexpected. We do well to expect the unexpected and to plan as well as we can. We live in the world and, as such, must cope with what the world has to offer. We can be our own person and do not have to become a slave to fads and cults or be shoved in any specific direction against our will, but we also can become a better observer of nature and the nature of other humans as we strive to forge our own life.

Self-Imposed Pressure

We often place enormous burdens on ourselves, some borne out of fictitious notions or misplaced feelings of responsibility. The danger of this is the potential for self-condemnation, even in subtle ways, for failing to meet such impositions. They are, in a way, convenient tools to guarantee failure—a form of self-sabotage. As an example, take Robert, who feels he must reach a certain earnings level by a certain age. Robert goes to college, studies hard, and lands a great job in a lucrative field at 21. Yet, the imposed threshold of earnings seems daunting after the first few years due to a spiraling economy and increased competition. However, Robert does not retract or lower his goals. He begins to feel like he is letting himself down and those around him who have cheered him on. Depression sets in and he begins to spiral downward in mood and energy. What went wrong?

While goal setting itself is inarguably an effective tool to help define the pace and measure progress, taken in the extreme, it can be psychologically dangerous.

As a way to prevent self-injury, it would be better to examine periodically ones internal goals, which can then be compared to the current reality present in the world and taking stock of the cumulative life experiences, successes, failures, likes, and dislikes. Reaching the preestablished goal of an income level at the expense of inner peace may have short-lived benefits and long-lasting contributions to bitterness and self-resentment. For example, a person who considers later in life that they have wasted their life (or a part of it) on a goal that had no lasting value will be unhappy. What is the point of achievement unless the time period of activity is appreciated as a life so lived well and that at the end point of recognition the person sees achievement merely a bonus?

As there is no life without pain, the pain of resetting goals should be considered an acceptable way to adapt to the changing world and the changing self. Therefore, missing a target in one area does not guarantee crisis. The failure itself can be used as a tool to discover more about ones limitations and lead to new decisions to either find innovative ways to overcome the limitations or reorient ones goals in more achievable directions. This does not mean we have to always compromise our goals and settle for lesser aspirations. It does mean being fully realistic juxtaposed to self-examination of what it is we really want out of life. Perhaps life teaches us the ultimate concept of the trade-off. We can't have this, but we can have that. We did not make a million dollars, but we are comfortable. We don't live in a mansion, but we are not homeless.

It is in the process of living where we need to stop and taste the wind to determine what is changed around us and, more importantly, what is changing inside ourselves. It is an act of courage to face the inner voice that screams out to move in a certain direction that happens to be in contravention of a former preestablished goal may need to be made, perhaps a vastly different career direction or relocation to a different city or country. Rebellion may be due to a notion of seeing ourselves as having failed if we cut back on former lofty goals. It could happen the other way, of course, and we could realize that our former goals underestimated our emergent abilities and we should have set the bar even higher. What is then abundantly true is to respect the concept of change as a true constant in life. We can thrive on change if we accept the challenge of new directions and new horizons, which just might lead to even more happiness than formerly possible by being rigid.

Fear of Success More than of Failure

Many people fear failure; still others fear success. Such fear can debilitate the will to step up to the plate and take a swing of the bat, for fear of striking out. The fear of failure can be debilitating. Despite its reality, we must take small steps to combat it and make progress. Staying with this baseball metaphor, I am sure even Babe Ruth himself, the Sultan of Swat, would agree that you cannot hit a home run unless you present yourself at home plate. Life, then, must not be a spectator sport.

We need to enroll, engage, and involve ourselves if we are to have any hope of success. But, are we more afraid of succeeding than failing?

I was training for a marathon with an acquaintance (Roger). Roger was able to become very fit over a period of time. I suggested he try the full marathon distance, to which he replied that it would be too much for him. Despite initially expressing hesitation, he completed not one, but two 26.2-mile marathons. I had the pleasure of running in the first race with Roger and seeing his growth in athletic capability. Now that he has two completed marathons under his belt, he has the confidence to know he can do it. But not everyone takes that step and enters a race or seeks a job or enters a matriculated academic program or goes on a long journey. Some element holds people back from that ultimate step. Not everyone who is on the precipice of something new is able to take that step and move forward, be it entering a race, accepting a new job or program, or starting a new journey. What is the solution?

I have seen people in the business world earn and accept promotions only to fail miserably at the higher position. In some instances, they wanted the promotion more than anything and lobbied heavily for it. But still, even though they were highly capable of performing at the former level, which naturally suggests readiness for the next rung on the ladder, they failed. One explanation is that sometimes there is unspoken anxiety inside that person where fear lurks and tears at the person's sense of self-confidence. This damaged confidence affects performance. Once in the new position, there is potential for long-term success and also of failure, which can lead to self-sabotage. When there is such fear, the person may feel worse than if they never were promoted. This fear of success takes the form of freezing the creative energies inside the person, which makes them shudder each time they have to perform in their new role. It is similar to stage fright. Fear of failure is subtle on the surface. The person wants success, but deep down, the unexpressed anxiety takes a toll manifested in depressive feelings. The metaphorical bright lights, shining on the person, make them like a deer on the road at night in headlights. How can we help someone avoid becoming roadkill in life?

Through the use of dialogue with a trusted person, these internal fears and anxieties can readily be dissected, which in itself can ease the anxiety, and a strategic plan put into place for handling the predicted pressures and, also, to consider development of mechanisms to handle unexpected pressures. By forecasting what may be up ahead and preparing better, a person should be less prone to disaster. Such planning creates a stronger foundation. The same is true of building skills. These are used in preparation of deployment in future situations that are either predictable or come as a surprise.

This fear of succeeding also is buttressed by the person's awareness at the time of promotion of the heightened requirements of the new position. They may not have processed all that is involved in the higher post. Though the nice windowed office, new business cards, and higher compensation are all factors leading to betterment of existence, the intrinsic factors of the actual hard-core requirements that go along with the goodies must also be contended with. Not everyone is prepared to take on these new burdens. Some get lost in the psychological struggle to be noticed for doing a good job with the expectation of natural progression along the food

chain of competition. One solution is for companies to have quality mentoring systems to help employees understand what type of work responsibilities are in the future through regular guidance.

Those who have internal anxiety over their future career responsibilities going in high gear may hold back on the throttle and underperform in hopes of staying mediocre in their present post so as not to attract attention from others where upward progression is mandated. The US military depends on a certain amount of internal promotions (called “pinning”) to create the personnel necessary to handle leadership positions in the ever-changing landscape. Some are able and ready; others may not really be, but will get promoted anyway. Some may retire from service early because they just do not have the confidence to keep moving up in terms of responsibility. They fear their own capability outpacing their confidence. It is thusly urgent to incorporate humanistic programs within our organizational systems to coach people to acknowledge their internal issues in conjunction with the normal trajectory of their career. By continuing to mask this phenomenon, it will foster mediocrity and promote anxiety in persons who hold themselves back. How much collective happiness is lost because of this one factor alone cannot be estimated.

Use of an Intermediary to Create Change by Catalyzing Our Inner Strength

Left to our own devices, we may not be able to overcome either perceived or hidden weaknesses. Such weaknesses may involve low self-esteem, lack of confidence, fear, or other psychologically debilitating feeling. But, with a trusted catalyst, we may be able to understand ourselves better then be willing to orchestrate the process of change. Change is relevant if maintaining the status quo means having a less fulfilling life. Change does not have to be a new “four-letter” word. It is healthy and can invigorate the inner self to revamp oneself in positive ways. Positive change may take the form of newfound courage directed at pushing through formidable barriers or taking on new directions that in past never would have been attempted. Mostly, change involves drawing on strength formerly hidden and gaining new capacities through training, adapting, trial and error, and, sometimes, sheer will.

The trusted catalyst can be in the form of mentor, teacher, rabbi, priest, guru, friend, supervisor, human resource professional, or other person. The person need not be older. Confidentiality is critical as a necessary component, but trust is supremely vital.

Most people are equipped with inner strength to deal with the difficulties and challenges that life throws their way. But, left to our own devices, it is difficult to access that inner strength and overcome these challenges. Often change is needed to overcome these challenges. This is where a trusted intermediary can help as a catalyst to help orchestrate the process of change.

Change is a valuable tool. Even when you know change, having someone to advise and encourage you toward actualization is very effective. Further, just knowing the intermediary is aware that modifications or transformations are taking place can help someone draw into their inner strength and apply it in innovative and new ways, thus building character and gaining new insights.

A trusted catalyst can be a person who opens up new channels of consideration in the other person's mind. Their age, social status, or profession is less important than their sincerity and willingness and ability to help. A younger sibling can be just as effective as an older person. A blue-collar worker can help a CEO and vice versa.

Realistically, you will have to ask for assistance. Communication is a key ingredient. Allowing the intermediary to see your vulnerabilities and strengths is critical. Once you can see your own weaknesses and have someone who can remind you that those weaknesses are not defining, you can access internal strength to change.

The Inside Counts

What comes at us from the outside world cannot, itself, inflict us in a way that converts who we are into something we do not wish to be. It is, however, what is sent forth from the inside of a person that leaves behind an impression of that person in terms of character. Thus, our thoughts and inspirations compel us to act or not act toward the myriad of stimuli in the active world. We perceive and we respond; we observe and we act or we refrain from doing so. Either way, we are part of the moving fabric of society, one thread among innumerable threads, woven together that form something larger, leading to a different shape. But who are we and how do we convey that?

Our interior motives serve as drivers, guiding our actions. We use the powers that we feel and our collective experiences to cope and deal with what happens in the world, specifically, our world as we see it. While we may be forced to do something or not do something, we remain free to consider what it all means. Thus, we are free to form thoughts in private and, later, choose which thoughts to share with others, whether verbally, in writing (texting), or in some other form of communication.

The world can throw people challenges, but, despite the powerful forces of nature, the outside world on its own cannot affect us in a way that converts us into something we do not wish to be. A person's true character is drawn from the way they respond to internal and external forces. Our free will leads us to choose to go toward the path of our choosing and recognized destiny or to rebel against it.

The challenges of life create new responses. Our experience changes the way people interact with the world. For example, a person who has been a service worker may be kinder to the waitress or waiter who is a blue-collar worker. Similarly, a victim of crime responds to what the world has thrown him or her. Yet we still maintain a certain level of control over our communications.

Guiding Your Thoughts

Thoughts come to us after purposeful deliberation and also form the result of subconscious underpinnings. We may experience fleeting thoughts of rage, lust, concern, fear, anger, greed, etc. It is when we channel our thoughts into a purposeful narrowing of content that we become a greater master over ourselves. There are different ways of guiding internal thoughts: meditation, sharing thoughts with trusted friends, exercise, and being in a calming place, perhaps listening to music. It is perhaps unwise to think of this as controlling our minds as much as a process of sequential guiding. Thoughts, to be effective, lead to action. Coming through the process of experiencing job loss, for example, one option can be stuck in fear or anger. We can channel productive thoughts having to do with improvement of skills, discernment of past errors, and, most importantly, reformation of damaging habitual behavior. Habits are learned behaviors borne of repetition. We form useful habits when we steer our thoughts in a positive direction, harnessing and translating their good decisions. An example is a person who has a history of a bad habit like excessive drinking. That person would do well to guide their thoughts to avoid situations, which involve heavy drinking and peer pressure to participate. When we identify, admit, and face how we can be tempted, we can use the superiority of mindfulness to make better choices and conduct ourselves in a healthier manner.

Still, the stray thoughts will come into mind, certainly. We do not have to fear these stray thoughts. However, we do need to keep these thoughts from becoming damaging habitual behavior, which would cause direct interference with our chosen paths. We may notice the young woman wearing a tiny bikini on the beach, but we can limit our thoughts to only a passing glance, assuming we are married, instead of leering, and we do not have to feel compelled to pursue that woman just because we find her attractive. A person may be in a place where there is alcohol, but resists the temptation to resume a former drinking habit. It becomes more important to possess the real estate occupying our head (our mindfulness) than trying to challenge the thoughts and decisions of other people. We can start by considering our own life plan and our manifest destiny, which may involve establishment of our own standards. While that may be a heavy topic for a Saturday afternoon at the beach on a warm sunny day in the summer, our collective investment of time exploring our deeper character to choose preferences in terms of life choices available to us will pay off long term. Such exploration will fuel our willingness to use power of mind to deflect thoughts that are unhealthy, impure, dangerous, or wrong for whatever reason. When we are in touch with our internal motivations and thoughts, we can better act in a healthier way. It is when we have no greater goal, no exploration of internal choices, and no lofty dream to aspire toward that we become vulnerable to allowing invasive thoughts to form bad habits inside our lives. Yes, we should want to explore all means of happiness, but not foolishly. Recklessness risks much for the hoped-for little gain. Thus, urges should be kept in check as following them can lead to development of bad habits.

The colorfulness of our life should be measured by how well we use our natural gifts and how well we develop them or other talents within the confines of

physical, mental, and preconceived emotional limitations. We may or may not overcome some of these limitations, but the very act of developing talents within the confines of limits may be enough. In the opposite vein, the augmentation of life by constant pleasure-seeking behavior without caring about consequences and the avoidance of pain through artificial and, perhaps, illegal means (drugs), creates a falsity of life that may compound into a significant downward spiral, leading to early death and the destruction of relationships. The potential for every life should not be wasted or taken away. Extreme situations such as where the soldier who kills out of a duty to protect his or her country or a person who kills in self-defense are exceptions.

For those in recovery, medication may act as a helpful and necessary catalyst to kick-start the process. For long-term recovery, some change in attitude will be necessary.

Moving from Despair to Destiny: In Daily Increments

There is much to be said for the potency of the feeling of despair. Despair can be characterized by intense sadness and hopelessness. The word “despair” is an intransitive verb that has no object. One example of the impact of despair is to lose all hope or confidence. There is no direct object receiving the action of despair. Aside from the grammatical segue, the potency of despair manifests in the actions of brooding and inaction. The energy taken to perform this activity of despair can place a person into a darker place than even they realize, making it difficult to emerge. How can a person extricate him or herself out of the dark, gloomy place that despair builds?

The cycle of despair can lead to even worse scenarios. A person feeling down-trodden because of a certain event or a long-standing morass may continue to decline in mood, requiring intervention, or, in severe cases, lead to suicidal ideation.

It is important for a person facing despair to believe in the possibility of better days and comprehend that the despair is temporary. If there is hope, then there can be activity to compensate the despair. Gloomy moods should be considered temporary and should be compared to happier times. When we do this, we remember vividly what it feels like to be happy internally and exude happiness externally. There is much to gain by reflecting on the importance of appreciating the cold stormy weather because of the memory of our past witness to the contrasting delight of warm sunshine and cool summer breezes. We can tolerate the storm because we have faith that it won't always be stormy. If we apply this temporary principle to the emotional roadblock experienced within the framework of the feeling of despair, we can learn to accept the temporary detour on the road to happiness. The acceptance can open the door to learn new coping skills to strengthen our ability to withstand setback and build resiliency needed to propel ourselves out of the dark emotional cave of despair and back out to the light of the active world. Realistically, when we expose ourselves to the world, we become newly vulnerable to future pain and

suffering. But, the alternative is worse. If we hide from life, there is no “real” life, but a state of emotional hibernation. In hiding, there is no potential for interpersonal growth.

Protecting ourselves from known or predictable sources of harm is wise. Doing so does not interfere with a brave and critical reentry into the active world from despair. The person who leaves an abusive relationship does well to explore how choices were made of partners, but does self-harm by perpetual avoidance of new partnering potential. Similarly, a newly blinded person who becomes a shut-in out of fear or embarrassment misses out on a portion of life. Instead, a resilient person becomes determined to learn to engage the complex world with the handicap, can break free from despair, and accepts the learning curve in the form of slowness or stumbles until the point of confidence takes hold.

Once confidence happens, it becomes possible to not only thrive in life as a blind person, but also take on new and exciting dimensions with newly developed coping skills applicable to other facets of life. Eventually, the blind person regains a foothold in his or her life and strikes out in new dimensions to become productive and satisfied with life as it can be and becomes possible to grow and thrive. The loss of one sense does not impede the other senses from their role to aid the person throughout life.

Assisting a person who is presently residing in the deep morass of despair must be done gently with measured guidance to help the suffering person take incremental steps toward hope and doing so can lead to development of a new sense of empowerment. We cannot take over their life and lead them down any path, but the act of encouragement can encourage them to perceive other paths while awakening the inner self to become unstuck. For example, the agoraphobic who won't leave their room or house because of some trauma can be gently encouraged to look out the window for a brief moment and talk about or write about what they see or hear. Similarly, with a person who has withdrawn from the world because of depression, job loss, or overwhelming life events, the window may hold the key to new resilience. The window can be opened just a bit so they take in the smells of the outdoors or feel the freshly falling rain on their hands. Slowly, as the outside world becomes a bit less sinister, they can be encouraged to dress and go outside for a brief moment to taste the morning air. Eventually, the home bound loses the compelling urge to remain bottled up and starts to engage in life that incorporated the outside world.

It is in the reconnection of the engagement of others with a newfound spirit that helps a person metamorphose into a capable being. Then, goals can be considered, and actions can be planned better. But first, the helper needs to respect the impact and emotions of whatever trauma has taken place. We cannot make light of someone else's pain, nor can we avoid challenge. If we go at it with good intention and with patience, allowing the person to take steps at their own pace, we may be able to catalyze their internal energy and help them move from inaction through debilitating despair to engagement in the active world with reasonable levels of caution.

Rebirthing the Inner Power Animal

Inside us exists a strength that can be muted due to attitude and circumstances or by failing to dig deep into such wells of fortitude. “Shamanic Practitioners believe that when a person suffers from a trauma, a part of the soul splits off and no longer contributes to the person’s whole being” (Balance Point Energetics, 2009, p. 1). By reconnecting to the internal source of strength (the power animal), a person can reinvigorate his or her life. Such energy, once restored, can assist in all types of situations enabling the person to more ably address situations and handle problems. In essence, the power animal is the symbolic inner well of strength, which becomes lost to individuals who feel a sense of loss of such power. What they are experiencing is a form of character weakness, a disabling of the inner spirit, which cripples the will and suppresses internal drive. Such a state appears to the observer and also to the aware self as low self-esteem or, at least, diminished energy. See Chap. 6 for an actual example of this approach.

Emotional Alchemy

From the time of antiquity, practitioners of the philosophical tradition of alchemy claimed to have significant and strange powers. Whereas the goal of the alchemist is the transmutation of common metals into the noble metals, gold and silver, or the creation of a cure-all remedy for disease, there can be transmutation of elements inside the emotional core. Such a process occurs naturally through the process of maturation, but also can occur through self-directed or guided stimulus to change one’s outlook on life, or at least part of it. The reason for doing so is to make one’s existence happier or more relevant inside the substructure of modern society. “Alchemists realized that the mystery they sought to solve was not outside, but in the psyche” (Bennett-Goleman, 2001, p. 7). It is further beneficial as a way of coping with the extreme pressures often encountered in life by a person attempting to fit in with the present culture. Analogous to the charlatan’s attempt to turn lead into gold, personal transmutation is a theoretical means toward purification and perfection (Ronca, 1995, p. 96). “Our emotional reactions often distract us from another time and place, filling our minds with relentless thoughts about another time and place, filling our bodies with turbulent feelings” (Bennett-Goleman, 2001, p. 33).

While one common capitalistic objective might be defined as the amassing of wealth and another might be the attainment of power and societal position, perhaps a goal available to just about every member of society is to improve the self. An illiterate person can learn to read; an obese person can embark on a weight-loss program; a person lacking skills can attend training courses, ask a knowledgeable friend for tutoring, read a book, or look online for the necessary information. Today, using the amply available information within an increasingly digital world (what

has been called the “infosphere”), remaining ignorant or deficient is not mandatory. Knowledge is attainable by all.

The ultimate metamorphosis occurs inside the mind of each person where an outlook on life or predetermined view of the world shatters because of some catalyst that can either be a sudden instinctual idea or learned through trial and error. Symbolically, the process of shedding one’s emotional baggage can be like a freight train where the conductor decouples the last car because it is no longer needed or the hiker abandons an item because the pack is too heavy. We can off-load portions of emotional energy by devaluing them to zero and replacing the emotional void with new energy or new emotional underpinnings. Risk must be taken when any new approach is considered. Without risk, there can be no potential for reward because the step that could be taken may not be taken due to fear or another factor.

It may take quite a bit of time to attain this ability to see the world anew and with a fresh emotional panoramic perspective, but the possibility must be at least considered. We could just will it into being and destroy past horrible images where they are disabling if we have the skill to do so. As an example, take a young man in his early twenties just starting in his chosen career. He had a serious relationship that broke up suddenly, leaving him emotionally devastated. He laments constantly over losing the woman of his dreams—his soul mate. He stops eating and starts down the slippery slope of despondency. It affects his work. He is emotionally torn. He decides 1 day to devalue the loss, which does not mean the love was not amazing, but that the fact of the loss itself, instead of being a permanent scar in his emotional core, becomes an accepted part of his development. He accepts the loss and learns to examine what it was about the relationship that became toxic, causing it to implode. He deconstructs the event or the issues that led to the breakup from his sense of his own self-confidence. He takes a measure of responsibility for the loss and changes his approach in meaningful ways. But he chooses not to self-harm through overly critical negative thinking. In a way, he has benefitted by the breakup because it led him to consider what he needed to do in order to be more successful with the opposite sex in the future. Subsequent relationships should be easier for this man because of the prior experience and the introspective thinking that he did.

If we consider the case of a man who is intellectually gifted, but who has had a pattern of life experiences that have not contributed to any type of traditional success, we may make a quick judgment that there is something terribly wrong with this person. Such judgment can only come from a predetermined bias that is used to measure the person against some benchmark. The interiority of the man himself must be carefully considered if we are to have any chance to theorize what went wrong in his life or in his thinking to have resulted in such an absence of outward marks of success. We can also be tempted to form excuses for the man such as blaming his lack of success on alcoholism or other substance dependencies or on a painful childhood, perhaps one involving an abusive parent. When we do this, we may miss the fact that the person we are analyzing is still alive and still with some opportunity for a brighter future. If we just notice and judge, we may also be, in effect, condemning the person or subconsciously blocking any effort to help.

Additionally, people do not become our projects just because we want to help them achieve more out of life. Even if they welcome or request our help, we cannot rightfully take over and direct them toward any specific action unless we respect their sovereignty and dignity. The mentor, coach, or therapist must be free of his/her own need for power, control, and the agenda to “fix” another human. Humans cannot be fixed like broken machines. A good therapist, coach, or mentor acts as a catalyst to reawaken or energize the latent resilience in the client. His/her tools are compassion, respect, and a persevering belief in every person’s potential and power of self-determination. A client’s continuing failure does not reflect on us having done anything wrong. We also would want to avoid patronizing the person or offering false compliments.

Thus, starting to help someone who is clearly demonstrating frustration with their life as being ineffective, unrewarding, and no discernible purpose requires patience and a willingness to observe the person continuing to fail. We can start by valuing the person as an equal human being and validating the person for how they think and for communicating whatever they wish, even negative thoughts. By using whatever energy the person has and examining the person’s resources, we may be able to guide the person to consider an exploration of new potentials, previously overlooked or rejected.

More difficult are situations where the person is suffering from dementia where it is uncertain how much information can be absorbed or recalled. As an example, my mother had a serious accident late 2011 and was unable to speak for nearly 2 months. She was relegated to helplessness, lying in a hospital bed hooked up to machines, dependent on medical staff and monitors to help her survive and, hopefully, recover, at least to some degree. Visitors observed her and had pity on her. Family members grieved at the sight and worried about how she could be coping. The following poem is an attempt to internalize the imagined torment felt by a person in such a situation:

Entombed in silence

Lost in the deafening sounds of machines.
 Afraid of shadows and those milling about.
 Who is this, what is that?
 Unsure of anything except mere existence.
 A reassuring touch is witnessed, but not felt.
 My words fall out absent decipherable meaning.
 There is no sleep, nothing to do, but fatigue abounds.
 All I want is to be understood; such a simple request.
 Lips dry, throat scorched, lights blinding my senses.
 The hands of the clock race slowly around, going nowhere.
 I am moved and moved again, but to where? Is there hope?
 Memory flickers like the candle in slight wind.
 I am nobody, but who have I become?
 Will my soul climb out of this tomb to meet God?
 My family appears; then disappears.
 I cannot cry out for them to stay or leave.
 Frustration chosen as the ally of choice.
 I need a doll to hold. I’ve become a child again.

Tears form in my eyes, someone wipes them away.
 But the pain of unknowing stabs my heart relentlessly.
 Do I pray for death or beg for life? I am confused.
 Time and space are meaningless like an endless ocean voyage.
 My cherubs smile and caress me, I know they are there.
 My husband holds vigil; the love remains vibrant in his eyes.
 But, I will survive and thrive again.
 I will accept limitations without lamentations.
 I am strong and will grow stronger.
 More to do in life so must get busy being happier.
 There's the nurse with the needle – damn the needle!
 I'll mock the pain today and devalue misery.
 Won't feel sorry for myself or complain.
 I shall go dancing today, at least in my mind.
 I hear music, my favorite song.
 A waltz to life; a toast to the surgeon.
 Heal me Lord if healing is on your agenda today.
 I trust those who will deal with my ailing body today.
 But it is me whom I must trust to heal my own mind.
 I've got much to do today.
 No distracting thoughts of remorse; no self-pity.
 Let the cold remain outside; I am warm in my thoughts.
 Where's the nurse? I want to challenge her today.
 Maybe I'll go for a walk and let them find me.
 At least I can reawaken peace inside this tomb.

 For Bernice Floer (Mom) – a loved person
 By: Eric (Son) – you gave me life
 January 20, 2012

Creating Insight to Apply to Life

Insight can be developed as a way of applying technique to various aspects of life. Being aware of how you respond to life's pressures, including the everyday mundane stimuli, such as walking amidst crowds, experiencing the annoyance of a broken umbrella in a storm, or receiving an unwelcome call from a bill collector, can open up keys to self-improvement with or without therapeutic intervention. Such awareness may generate as a result of dialogue with a trusted friend or mentor, or it can emerge through self-examination and introspective thinking. Ingredients required for enlightenment to occur and impact our lives include personal integrity, courage, patience, and, most importantly, the willingness to take difficult or uncomfortable experiences and value the lessons learned to apply these lessons to future behavior. Those changes are pivotal to successfully navigating the road to self improvement.

Mental Imprisonment

We can lock up our minds in many ways. Drawing from the many inmates encountered in my prison work, it became apparent that while the physical bodies can be locked up, the minds cannot be unless we allow them to be. We can refer to this state as a person being “close minded.” Therefore, what is really the state of imprisonment and is such a state somewhat optional for the non-incarcerated being? The following poem (Kreuter, 2003, p. 71) is based on my work with female inmates, explores this concept:

The mind cannot be imprisoned
 Our physical bodies can be detained.
 But our minds will always roam free.
 Movement is not always discretionary.
 Yet we are free to mentally travel.
 Walls, bars, and locks protect and guard us.
 Though creative thought provides the key to release.
 Fences and barbed wire marks the landscape.
 But we envision green pastures and waterfalls.
 There are definite reasons why we are here.
 Yet, we can make a difference with the time.
 Some on the other side of the fence don't care.
 Others are aware and do not judge.
 Our attitudes can turn negative if we choose.
 But it is also possible to engender optimism.
 Outside, we are a uniformed name and number.
 Inside our beauty and uniqueness can shine.
 Every new day begins our future.
 Self-improvement leads to capitalized opportunities.
 Our minds can be fed with knowledge.
 Knowledge provides hope and potential.
 We can replace anger with happiness.
 This can be shared with others as our returned gift.
 We can affect others and be affected.
 Such risks are well worth taking.
 This part of life surely is filled with struggles.
 Yet the challenge can energize our internal strength.
 We do remain important to our world.
 No person is better or worse than us.
 Each can find their best destiny.

This poem was read to the inmates in several groups who expressed their appreciation for the words. While some remained silent, others contributed to a lively dialogue about the topic of mental imprisonment. The resilience of some inmates allowed them to freely engage in the topic expressed in the poem; others, perhaps more bitter, were not willing to share their views. What became evident over the course of several dozen groups is that some inmates continued to feel relevant and others used their time of incarceration to shrivel emotionally or to become hardened.

Fighting the Tyranny of Complacency

It is easy to keep the mind and body at rest. This is, of course, much more challenging if you are being chased by a lion or if you are starving, or if you have goals and are fighting apathy. This book will not help you if you are being hunted by the king of the jungle, but may help you if you feel beaten down, depressed, oppressed, or demoralized because of life's events that you perceive are beyond your control. Therapists can use these concepts to create new channels of enlightenment with their clients. The concepts herein may help motivate you to find new creative ways to regain a foothold in the world and will probably help you crystallize your goals toward achievement of greater success and improved mood. But, first, we must examine what holds us back from our own success.

Complacency, as an art form, may occupy our being much like a parasite slowly depletes our health as it feeds off of us. Borrowing from the laws of physics, an object in motion tends to stay in motion, so too, an object (a person) at rest tends to want to stay at rest. It is for this reason that we invented the snooze button.

Complacency sometimes takes a seemingly positive form—a release to the denouement of tension, from however important an issue that causes the pressure. There can come a time where, for objectively good reason or not—perhaps as a defense mechanism—a calm replaces the storm. Is it “really” avoidance or a needed respite? It is released, for however long. But until confronted and resolved, the issues do not go away—they are only sublimated.

Adding the concept of tyranny to the equation, we can view the external force as caused by our own deliberate pattern of inaction, poor decision-making, and a lack of focus or feeling of failure because of setbacks. It is different from the tyranny spoken of by Thomas Jefferson concerning the oppressive power of a nation over its people, but the effect is the same—control and stifling of freedom. When we do this to ourselves, we internalize what is external to us—the overwhelming constriction and feeling of helplessness operates and infiltrates our spirit and seems to numb or paralyze the wish to become more than we are. Laing (1990) said:

The isolation of the self is a corollary, therefore, of the need to be in control. He prefers to *steal* rather than to be given. He prefers to give, rather than have anything, as he feels, stolen from him; i.e., he has to be in control of who or what comes into him, and of who or what leaves him. (p. 83)

Such tyranny of complacency is fueled by daily doses of disappointment. We may fail an exam, become embroiled in an unsolvable controversy at work, lose our job, or become seriously ill with nobody ready, willing, or able to help up, even for the short term. As such, people become homeless or become bored or worse become severely depressed. How can we turn back the tide of destruction caused by resulting complacency?

We must start by viewing ourselves as valuable and important human beings, equal in every real respect in terms of basic human rights. It is not a factor of financial net worth or fame or talent, but starts with existence, merely being a breathing person. From there, of course, the stakes rise. We can (all of us) take stock in ourselves and consider ways to apply who we are, what we know how to do, how

fast we can learn to adapt, and how much we want to succeed. Then we can choose missions to embark on and take appropriate risks. For the person who cannot get out of bed due to lethargy borne of regular emotional beat-downs, fighting the urge to succumb to failure, he or she must rise, shake off the dust of sleep, clean up, and fight and claw for some minute measure of success in the 24-h period we call a day. This may mean a mini triumph of obtaining today's want ads and circling a few that look possible and then contacting one or two and, at least, making an effort to get an interview for a new job. If we look at finding a job as actually the job (until we get a paying one) and attend to that well, the potential for success increases. By using the power of compounding (the effect of repeated positive behavior), we must apply a consistent effort to forge our own new destiny.

What this means is a new attitude applied to an existing dilemma. We are not new, but our attitude can be new. We can select an attitude of the day or week just as we select which socks to wear. Choosing a positive attitude more often than not should result in more positive events in our life. At the very minimum, the removal of gloom of a poor attitude will put people off less, resulting in greater attention in return. If we smile, the chances are someone will smile back. If we speak confidently, the chances are someone will recognize that we have something to say, and some will actually listen. Getting people to listen is half the battle in creating a better world for ourselves. But when we rebel against our own best interest, we allow the fate of tyranny to become more powerful. This is different in the case of physical pain. Williams (2008) wrote:

Physical pain, however, the example for simplicity (and not for any obsessional reason) I have taken, is absolutely minimally dependent on character or belief. No amount of change in my character or my beliefs would seem to affect substantially the nastiness or tortures applied to me; correspondingly, no degree of predicted change in my character and beliefs can unseat the fear of torture which, together with those changes, is predicted in me. (p. 188)

Self-sabotage and the internalization of forces that seem overwhelming tend to numb, paralyze, or hinder the will and place in neutral our "get up and go." External messages of "not good enough," thoughts that feed on self-doubt and lack of efficacy in the competitive world of money and outward attainment of success, all affect the will and spirit.

The Storm Before the Calm

We often fail to appreciate the importance of the chaotic moments in our lives as being the contrast to the times when our lives move more smoothly. When a piece of an asteroid breaks off in space it becomes known as a meteor. The meteor is in complete chaos as it hurtles through space. When a meteor reaches the earth (the ones that don't burn to a crisp and disintegrate upon entry into the atmosphere), it becomes known as a meteorite. Unlike its chaotic predecessor, the meteorite is in a completely calm state once it is on the ground, whether it lands in a lake or swamp or has crashed through the hood of a Lincoln Continental. Upon landing, it will have

cooled and can remain undiscovered for centuries, but there is no longer any chaos associated with the object. Similarly, our inner selves can metamorphose from a state of anxiety and reenter our own active world in a calmer state having gone through the stages of management of a particular crisis. After surviving a challenging event in our lives, it is easy to recognize that we have come through a climactic event in our lives and, while it may have been difficult, traumatic, etc., we are now past it and can use new resolve to create a better harmony in our lives. The experience itself must not lose its value as a catalyst for change. Such an event can inspire us to create profound change in our lives.

A person who experiences a life-threatening illness or is rescued from a burning building may come away with a newfound tranquility in their life. What bothered them before the life-changing event no longer seems as potent. The person may establish new goals and find added energy to go out and take that next step, the one long put off. This is resilience. But this resilience is a voluntary act that starts with allowing the energy of the past challenges to be converted into fuel for new projects or profound thinking.

The state of “calm,” then, is not passive or dull. It is, instead, a state of readiness to move in a different direction or two, through volition. The transformed person, newly baptized from the recent experience, becomes unstoppable. How does this happen?

We can say that the chaos is felt as an unwanted collateral impact from some event or circumstance. Normally, such chaos is seen as bad, and we want it to end. Yet, the chaos itself is part of our life whether we like it or not. Let us experience the wrath of the chaos, accept its existence, harvest its energy, and use it to innovate and navigate into better times.

Take a young man struck by a car while crossing an intersection on a bicycle. He is crippled in the accident. As the captain of his high school football team and one of the more popular seniors in school, he is initially devastated. He goes through expected periods of anger, lamentation, and bitterness. He may withdraw from his family, his social life, and even his own thoughts. But some momentary inkling occurs to him to rise up from his predicament and become greater than he is despite the ambulatory limitation. He finds new resolve and starts to create a new life plan.

Our young man eventually graduates with honors from a top school and goes on to become a respected professional, meets a woman who loves him for his soul and mind, and they start a family. Life renewed, but what happened to the energy of the bitter pill this man swallowed every day since the horrific crash?

The single thought that occurred to him was to become triumphant despite the limitation even though he could no longer walk. He made a decision, one decision, to become better 1 day at a time, one incremental step at a time. And he did. But there are many who do not. Can some of those people who do not move on after a difficult experience be coached and guided and led to their own transformative beginnings? If there is harmony in a moment when any downtrodden person meets an inspired being who recognizes the opportunity to devote some measure of time to help the hurting person, will they respond to the old ways of being and see past his or her own dilemma? If the person who wants to help accepts the challenge of

possible rejection and also considers the ethics of not creating an even worse dependency, then there is an environment ripe for change. By creating inroads to the hurting person, over time, the coach gets through and can instill thoughts meant to renovate the destructive underpinnings within the thought process of the other person. There will surely be setbacks and difficulties. With an intrepid spirit, the willing guide can persevere and assist the weather-beaten person into a state of potential transformed from a state of despair. The success, importantly, must rest with the transformed person, not the catalyst. The opportunity to deploy skill and goodwill should be reward enough for the already enlightened person. Using this process, one must be wary of dependency. If, dependency is created, the hurting person cleaves to the strength of another and finds no self-awareness of their own ability to recreate their own lives. They live for the coach; they thrive to make the coach happy, but they crumble once separated from the guidance of the teacher or guide, which has become a crutch. This is the corruption occurring in the dyad when the focus is mostly on the guide dictating steps to be taken by the other person. Such demanding overtures are the antithesis of mentoring and can become the cure that is worse than the disease. Instead, the approach is best defined as working with the other individual to help them help themselves through an assortment of methods, including guided imagery, appropriate Socratic methodology, encouragement, and occasional challenge. Pointing out the root cause of mini-successes as coming from the core of the transforming being is essential to keep the mentee individuated from the mentor. The goal is to help the person be able to stand erect without the need to lean on any other person, especially the catalyst. Persons in the capacity of helper are wise to stay mindful of how the other person is managing to stay in command. This is aided by providing validation for the good efforts made and by advising the person to recognize their emerging power.

There is no such thing as pure unhappiness, or pure happiness. But as soon as we put sadness into a story, we give a meaning to our sufferings and understand, long after the event, how we succeeded in turning our unhappiness into something wonderful. (Cyrulnik, 2011, p. 4)

“The fact that resilience has not been studied even though most if not all practitioners are familiar with the phenomenon says a lot about our culture, which still views survivors with suspicion” (p. 11). “Toward the end of his life John Bowlby, one of the founders of the attachment theory that now enjoys such popularity, expressed the hope that more work would begin to be done on resilience” (p. 12). “In that sense, resilience is a natural process: what we are at any given moment obliges us to use our ecological, emotional, and verbal environments to ‘knit’ ourselves” (p. 13). “Misfortunes are never wonderful. A misfortune is like black, frozen mud or a painful bedsore. It forces us to choose: we can either give in to it or overcome it. Resilience defines the spirit of those who, having suffered a blow, have been able to get over it” (p. 24). “Once the anguish of making a spoken or written admission has passed, we often experience an astonishing feeling of calm” (p. 153). “When we talk about our past we are not reliving it but reconstructing it. This does not mean that we are inventing it. It is not a lie. On the contrary, it is by using elements of the past that we tell our stories. But not everything that happens in our lives constitutes an event. Our memories store only those things to which we have

been sensitized” (pp. 158–159). “A life is not a history. It is a constant resolution of the problem of adaptation” (p. 164). “...resilience is a sweater knitted from developmental, emotional, and social strands of wool” (p. 51). “Resilience is a mesh and not a substance. We are forced to knit ourselves, using the people and things we meet in our emotional and social environments” (p. 51). “Let’s be clear: Some pain is inevitable—suffering is usually optional” (Hankin, 2004, p. 108). “You can combat feelings of victimization and self-pity by doing what’s right as you know it, acting responsibly, capitalizing on your strengths, and relying on your own good head while not trusting all of your feelings” (pp. 110–111). “Self-pitying complainers have a *habit*. Their lives are not the problem, their feelings are. They set themselves up to feel like victims” (p. 124). “Procrastinators put off doing what they have agreed to do or what they know they should do” (p. 125). “When we have some pattern buried deeply within us, we must become aware of it in order to heal the condition” (Hay, 2004, p. 49). “What was done in the past is done, and it is over now. But this is present time, and you now have the opportunity to treat yourself the way you wish to be treated” (p. 61). “Personal power is the ability to find your own individual truth and then create your life around it” (Gershon & Straub, 2011, p. 40).

Gershon and Straub (2011) discuss three primary ways of experiencing power, comprised of the act of doing, the state of being, and in relationship to others (p. 41). To sustain power, commitment and discipline are required. “Commitment requires much and gives back even more. It gives us pride—the pride that comes from making good on our inner promises to ourselves” (p. 42). “Discipline is the hands-on aspect of commitment; it’s the daily dedication to our vision. It is rhythm with a purpose” (p. 43).

Intentions can be harmful, beneficial, or neutral. Intentions are the seeds you plant to produce the eventual yield of your life. When an intention is repeated time and time again, the groove created by that intention becomes a habit or sometimes an addiction. (Altman, 2010, p. 61)

Paradigmatic Revolutions in the Fertile Mindset

Why do we hold to our beliefs and refuse to adapt when confronted with well-reasoned counterpoint? Is this pure stubbornness, or could it be righteous ego-driven attitudinal baggage that can sometimes clutter up our otherwise open mind? Some things that we believe were learned as a child. Our parents, aunts, uncles, older siblings, ministers, and trusted friends may have influenced us greatly during our formative years feeding us with a myriad of notions, principles, dogma, history, truisms, etc. Surely we collected a fair amount of biased thinking along the way. The support of parents is very important. “Parents foster a sense of self to the extent that they avoid appropriating or exploiting the child’s achievements” (Rockland, 1989, p. 51). There was likely a sifting process even as a child where we accepted certain acceptable ideas and chucked others into the dustbin. This process is startlingly relevant to the topic of this book. Let’s explore why.

When we engage the world on any new day, we may start by listening to the radio or television or grabbing a newspaper (more frequently done today using an iPad) or conversing with someone nearby. We may leave our abode at some point and head for an office, a factory, a shipyard, or the unemployment office. We may decide to take some cash out of the ATM or stop off at Starbucks and plunk down more than a few bucks for the latest latte creation, waiting a very long time for it to complete production and assembly. We go on our way.

Something happens at 9:01 a.m. that intrigues us. We read or hear something that actually resonates in a sensible way. We process that all of a sudden this revelation is something we find extremely useful, which runs completely counter to what we formerly believed and have believed for decades. As an example, if we used to just ignore a person at work who has acted in a pestering, almost abusive manner toward us, we hear from a trusted friend that it is much better to report the issue to the Human Resources Dept. We listen and we absorb and we consider. Yes, the way we saw that aspect of life is the way we saw it for 20 years. Stubborn behavior keeps bad behaviors lasting. We were taught to always be kind, but, in reality, we didn't bother until we needed kindness; then we started to see the change and experienced the impact of change. The new way of thinking seems better. Are we just drunk on caffeine, or is there something here that compels us to pay close attention?

We choose not to react immediately, planning just to archive the issue for later digestion. Yet, during the day another problem arises and we remember the newly "discovered" concept. We can use that new idea of our fallback method. The crossroad is here. We go for broke and apply the new paradigm and walk away dumbfounded that it worked and worked brilliantly. We can now claim to own that paradigm. To do so requires disassembly of the old way of thinking to make room for this new intellectual gizmo. We settle in and forget the long past not judging how ineffective our prior thinking was. We've become paradigmatically improved through the consequence of listening and absorption followed by willing application, review, and final adoption. We are born-again in our thinking on one aspect of life. Big deal, or is it really a big deal?

When we examine ourselves to understand how we process information, it is how we process new and improved information that opens our minds to the fertility of paradigm alteration. According to Thomas Kuhn (1922–1996), a change in the basic assumptions, or paradigms, within the ruling theory of science is referred to as a "paradigm shift" (1962). Like the revolution in scientifically discovered anomalies, we face our on challenge each time there is a cerebral tinkering with long-held notions in one form or another. The process of replacement and reshaping of our beliefs and theories, done voluntarily, is healthy and provides stimulus for interpersonal growth. Required in the process might be to disband an ego-driven hold on our past beliefs because to do otherwise might be too humbling. When we declare such pig-headed thinking as intellectually bankrupt, we begin the process of new growth just as springtime brings light green shoots to plants.

For some people, change is made for the sake of change, perhaps out of sheer boredom or to create some variety and newness in life. It could be something innoc-

uous like rearranging the furniture or something more personal such as adopting a new attitude toward an old construct. The very act of doing something different may actually serve to open doors and make room for lasting change. The concept of trial and error works in this manner. We try different possibilities until we identify one that works well; then, we accept it and work it into our repertoire. Over the course of time, the compound effect of orchestrating small changes in this way can have a profound impact on how we cope with life and respond to a competitive world. As an example, if a person who lacks self-confidence and loses his job decides to embark on a self-improvement program, he might consider several action steps: entering therapy, joining a support group, or sharpening his skills. After a few months, he feels much better about himself, looks good, and is ready to tackle the job market. He does well on his first round of interviews and lands a great job. He worked on himself before he worked in the world. Sometimes, it is necessary to retool and regroup by taking stock of the weak points through close examination using a mirror and through open dialogue with trusted allies.

Why Setbacks Can Lead to Success

We may think of setbacks as failures or bad luck or even devastating for one reason or another. The particular setback may lead to a person choosing to give up trying, referred to as “throwing in the towel” among other metaphors.

Such a setback, in the career of a professional athlete, may be momentary and lead to increased training effort, which could lead to future victories. It is the quality of being relentless coupled with opportunity that can lead to such outcomes. Quitting is, perhaps, easy, but may have devastating psychological affect on the person. In business or the scientific fields of invention, setbacks may be normal and even healthy if they are seen as catalysts for a change in direction or the commitment of additional financial or nonfinancial resources (Jollie, 1999).

A person that is relentless will persevere through the difficult times, learn from failure, and resume effort to succeed even at the risk of further failure. If you step on an anthill, the survivors either rebuild or relocate. Many businesses that experience a calamity such as embezzlement may recover in time. A college student may seek remedial or behavioral help to then regroup and return to school. The life lesson from the humbling experience of failure may provide sufficient motivational fuel as to help the student achieve high goals in life. It is, therefore, the mindset of the person who experiences failure to try harder the next time until either the objective changes or the effort matches the test or hurdle.

Whether looking for a job or beginning a relationship, we are all actors, putting on a performance of some sort or another. “When an individual plays a part he implicitly requests his observers to take seriously the impression that is fostered before them” (Goffman, 1959, p. 17). Therefore, to remain in the moment during a job interview, for example, may mean that the person is trying to portray not only capability, but a certain persona that he or she feels is suitable for the particular job.

The inner will may be composed partly of genetic predisposition influenced by acquired knowledge, experiences both positive and negative, reoriented by substances such as drugs, including alcohol and a person's expressed or repressed preferences. For example, not everyone has the same sense of danger or risk tolerance. A young man may choose, assuming he is able, to engage in unprotected sex with numerous people. The primal instinct will usually be satisfied, but the inherent risks linger. If the man contracts a sexually-transmitted disease can he really complain?

The very concept of hedonism involves the primary goal of seeking pleasure. The name "hedonism" derives from the Greek word for delight and pleasure. Carvings in ancient Egyptian tombs have been found with hedonistic elements. Democritus (ca. 460 BC–ca 360 BC), an ancient Greek philosopher, seems to be the earliest philosopher on record to have categorically embraced a hedonistic philosophy; he called the supreme goal of life "contentment" or "cheerfulness," claiming that "joy and sorrow are the distinguishing mark of things beneficial and harmful" (Taylor, 2005).

Stubbornness adds to the dilemma in cases where a person is timely warned about the risk of certain behaviors, but may choose to discredit these concerns in order to satisfy internal drives. Operating excessively in such a mode of absorption in one's own desire-seeking behavior may lead to voluntary or spontaneously involuntary suspension of either one's own sensibilities or inflate the normal level of risk tolerance. While regret may follow such a mode of being, it is worthy to confront a person who is courageous enough to ask the question of why they get into trouble with a reflective view of whom they are and who they have become. A person truly tired of leaving themselves in places that have severe consequences can spark a conscientious effort to initiate change. A guide or catalyst can help.

In a study done by Professor Fausto Massimini of the psychology department of the University of Milan, a group of paraplegics, accident victims, were evaluated. "The unexpected finding of this study was that a large proportion of the victims mentioned the accident that caused paraplegia as both one of the most negative and one of the most positive events in their lives" (Csikszentmihalyi, 2008, p. 193). This is an example of how people endure tragedy yet continue to thrive despite the handicap. In the study, the victims learned how to deal with their limited choices, but felt a "clarity of purpose" (p. 193). Some people who survive tragic accidents are able to muster the internal resources to regroup their current abilities and exploit the remaining existing potentials rather than limit their determination based on remorse over the handicaps. The difference may be in the choice of taking on a positive outlook of what remains possible rather than focus retroactively about what was possible and is no longer.

In Kreuter's (2006a, 2007b, 2010, 2012a, b) study of a former commercial airline pilot, the victim of an elaborate crime involving a psychopathic predator first exploits his identity and then his gentle, helpful nature. The victim lost not only a sizeable amount of money but also his career as an active commercial pilot. He was devastated at the impact the bizarre criminal activity had on his life, an impact that continues to harm him both financially and emotionally. The victim's

response to the crimes and the aftermath was to embark on a mission to both understand all the details of what happened to him but also to work with trusted allies to find ways to ameliorate the harm. This effort is ongoing and has produced some results. The victim has been successful recouping some of his financial losses through a settled lawsuit against a psychologist, a settlement with a disability insurance carrier and a casualty loss claim filed on his personal income tax return. While these victories pale compared to his sustained aggregate loss, they do represent some degree of validation of the credibility of his claims, which have been proved multiple times.

The resiliency of the airline pilot can be seen in terms of his maintaining a consistent good nature, absent of bitterness or overt anger expressed toward the psychopathic criminal who abused him or the professionals and governmental agency who also failed to do their respective jobs in an ethical, accurate, and complete manner. He has not been able to resume his flying career as a direct result of the harm, but, over time, has adopted a relaxed and accepting stance on the matter. Because of his connectedness to a number of people in his close circle of trusted friends and family, the victim does not conduct himself as a beaten individual. He continues to feel the anguish over what happened, but is also quite able to live a fairly normal existence, not overly impacted by the past events. His ability to separate his life outside of the past victimization enables him to set new goals. He acts responsibly in the role of uncle, son, and brother with respect to management of his reduced net worth and modest disability income. He has not moved forward in the sense of starting a new career, which is due mainly to his view that his training as a pilot does not easily transfer to other occupations.

We cannot judge the pilot victim in any negative way because of the way he has been responding to the events in his life. He is free to study his case and discover new facts. These actions do not break laws or hurt others. He has been criticized for refusing to embark on new career trajectories, but can anyone really justify such criticism? We can imagine what it must feel like to have been abused the way he has, but only the victim himself is able to live daily with the global impact of the crimes. Even the perpetrator herself has blamed the victim by saying things such as “It was only his money” or “He should go get a new life.” See Kreuter (2007) for citations of the perpetrator’s statements, which were quoted subsequent to email and instant messaging between me and the psychopath. Interestingly, the perpetrator exhibits what appears on the surface to be a casual attitude toward the victim while affixing some of the blame on him. Her antisocial nature and complete absence of any sense of guilt or remorse for her actions is evident. Such lacking earns her the label of psychopath (Hare, 2008).

How do we define happiness? Why do we seek greater happiness? “While happiness itself is sought for its own sake, every other goal—health, beauty, money, or power—is valued only because we expect that it will make us happy” (Csikszentmihalyi, 2008, p. 1). Most humans seek to diminish pain and attract happiness wherever we can find it. Without some source of happiness in a person’s life, depression may take hold or other malady. The relentless pursuit of a happy existence can become obsessive if not easily obtained, at least in periodic increments.

Quality of life and the attainment of a sense of work-life-family balance are concepts connected to the pursuit of happiness, something protected as an inalienable human right.

The achievement of personal goals can be one means of extracting happiness out of life. “The best moments usually occur when a person’s body or mind is stretched to its limits in a voluntary effort to accomplish something difficult and worthwhile. Optimal experience is thus something that we make happen” (p. 3). “When a person seeks the way to Enlightenment, it is like an ox carrying a heavy load through a field of mud. If the ox tries to do its best without paying attention to other things, it can overcome the mud and take a rest. Just so, if the mind is controlled and kept on the right path, there will be no mud of greed to hinder it and all suffering will disappear” (Bukkyo Dendo Kyokai, 1996, p. 120).

Attitude toward major events in sports competition, not unlike those in business or other forums, can have profound effects on success. Milos Raonic, who lost his tennis match against Lleyton Hewitt at the 2012 Australian Open said: “I need to work on how I deal with the [big] moments” (Sports Illustrated, 2012). In an article by Wertheim (2012), “So often, matches are won because of will, not skill; nerve, not serve” (p. 28).

There are valid reasons why pursuing more challenging endeavors yields greater happiness than mediocre approaches. In a way, each of us starts out life with equal potential based on natural gifted abilities. However, the background of growing up are factors that can add or subtract to potential. With the notion of born equality, every new life may 1 day achieve amazing feats. A universal cure for cancer may be discovered by the next baby born in China, or a future world leader capable of inspiring generations may be growing up right now in New Mexico. We cannot and should not judge the value of any life in comparison to another life. Thus, there is not automatic irrelevance simply based on either socioeconomic status or ethnicity. We may never feel the impact of a particular person born yesterday in Vietnam, but we also cannot rule out the potential to be impacted. Knowing this can help a person with an inflated ego feel more appropriately equal to someone of otherwise lower status.

How we cope with stressors can also be a determinant of how resilient we are. “...it is also clear that the same stressful event might make one person utterly miserable, while another will bite the bullet and make the best of it. This difference in how a person responds to stressful events has been called ‘coping ability’ or ‘coping style’” (p. 198).

Actively Engaging the World

The world can be a haven of activity and provide countless connections to people, organizations, causes, and ideas. Some people accept many or all invitations to become involved can become overprogrammed. Others shy away from involvement, rarely if ever volunteer, and are hard to be drafted, regardless of the worthiness of the

cause. Experiences through active involvement in committee, clubs, organizations, groups, etc. can be positive, negative, or neutral. The energy put in to the activity can make a notable difference in the benefits reaped from involvement.

Creativity can be limitless when a person fully exposes himself to possibilities. “Impulses arise to give up one’s individuality, to overcome the feeling of aloneness and powerlessness by completely submerging oneself in the world outside” (Fromm, 1969, p. 29). Part of being connected in life means active association with others. This is not to take away from those who choose to isolate themselves for whatever purpose. Hermits and those who cloister themselves for whatever reasons may find peace and happiness in the maintenance of an isolated existence, and we should not negatively judge such persons for this type of personal choice. Their connection is to disconnect and be alone in their thoughts and prayers—to develop deeper self-understanding, to get escape from issues, or for some other purpose. Aside from those who live alone and stay away from others, the majority of people in civilized society require involvement as ways to define their purpose in life. Take, for example, a wealthy person who could easily afford to live on a private island or yacht for many years. Such a person may do so for awhile but may also seek new connections in the world whether through starting or buying businesses or organizing new charitable or civic causes, running for public office, or volunteering their time in some other way or ways.

Betty White is an excellent example of a professional actress who has made a solid name for herself and who continues to accept new roles in shows and theater not just to keep her career going, but to keep that alive feeling she continues to move forward and develop. Why slow down in the absence of a medical or psychological reason to do so?

Age, today, is not a reason to quit one’s career or even to curtail activities to fit some staid model of the common duration of an active life. Unfortunately, mandatory retirement rules within organizations may force an otherwise viable person to leave their career after 30-plus years of dedicated effort. Even when this occurs, prior to retirement, the person can plan to embark on new missions in life or volunteer their valuable services, or even continue as a consultant in activities similar to their prior role. The very notion of “retirement” may need to be changed. What are we retiring from and why do so? If we must leave a job because of mandatory retirement rule based on age, then so be it. But the career does not have to end that way. Instead, the freed days and weeks can be deployed in new ways in the same profession or occupation, if possible, or in some other field. Hobbies may take over precedence or travel. Either way, the life lived does not need to slow down even if the details must change.

Therefore, the choices remain up to the individual. The commonality may be in the reasons why any of us create connections to others. These connections provide or amplify the feelings of relevance in the world.

The world can throw people challenges, but despite the powerful forces of nature, the outside world, on its own, cannot affect us in a way that converts us into something we do not wish to be. A person’s true character is drawn from the way they internally process and respond to external forces. Life’s challenges create the environment

where new responses are possible, while experiences change the way people interact with the world. Planners do better than those who wait for events to happen and then, simply, react.

In the final analysis, it could be that an individual looks to live their life in a way that they can look back on and feel fulfilled that they accomplished some meaningful things in life and made some measure of contribution toward the common good. Or, they can end up embittered that life has passed them by and they are no longer relevant and may be saddened to think they were never very relevant even during the more active part of their life. That may sound noble, but we cannot take wealth with us, so there is limitation to the value of amassed wealth in life if it is the only benchmark a person is to be judged by after death.

An actualized person is one who takes stock of the years past and feels satisfied that life was good and opportunities existed and the results were notable. For a person who experienced a lot of failure in life, they may still accept the look-back assessment as long as they feel good about their effort. It may be that life is not best measured by how well we succeed as it is in how hard we tried and how well we used the gifts we were bestowed through birth and training.

But what about a person who feels that they accomplished very little and experiences a sense of bitterness? Such a person may truly be lost in life at that point of reckoning and be unable to accept their life lived as being anything but negative and disappointing. There may be no real way to counsel such a person to feel better about their life if there is truly little to say about it. In such a case, maybe the approach would be to guide the person to accept the failure and to take responsibility for it and then to use the remaining portion of life to establish whatever new goals are then possible. It is one thing to lament over the past, but quite another to dwell so much on the past that the future is drowned out. Doing that is to create a self-perpetuating syndrome of negativity with no end in sight. Maybe the person has something to say to others who may be headed along the same path? In this case, giving some time to help others prevent mistakes may provide the means toward some measure of fulfillment, albeit later in life. It is how we face the obstacle of internal bleakness that sets the tone for how our life is to be defined.

Living within the confines of accepted limitation seems reasonable. Certainly, any such boundaries can and should be questioned, but the final realities may be set due to circumstance that simply cannot be changed. A criminal-minded person or, worse, a psychopathic individual may choose to exact harm on others as a means of survival or as a way to live. There may or may not be any attempt to justify the criminality. In the case of the psychopath, there is not even a hint at guilt or remorse (Hare, 1993; Kreuter, 2006, 2011, 2012). Victims are often despised by the psychopath, even blamed by society for even being a victim (Kreuter, 2006). When a person is removed from the confines of lawfulness, additional possibilities and risks abound. The person may accept themselves as a lifelong criminal and may relish the notion of their guilt, feeling satisfied not being apprehended or even discovered. It is more than a game; it is a lifestyle. For the non-psychopath, there is usually a good bit of rationalization thrown into the mix. The person feels amply justified for stealing because of being denied earlier in life or as payback for some previous injustice.

The Impact of Financial Devastation

Financial problems, leading to notorious solutions, such as filing bankruptcy, can have profound impact on a person's future. If they were in a position of trust, the negative notoriety may taint the person's ability to regain the level of trust formerly enjoyed. Sports agent Leigh Steinberg filed for Chap. 7 bankruptcy protection in January 2012 (Sports Illustrated, 2012). "...he had struggled with alcohol abuse but has been sober since 2010, and that he 'just lost track' of his finances while in rehab" (p. 17). Because of his bankruptcy filing, Mr. Steinberg lost prospective clients, which creates a vicious cycle of inability to earn new money doing what he did before, which could have helped him repay the debt.

Neuroscience: Impact on Behavior

"When the mind works well, when our brain functions as an integrated whole, our relationships thrive. But sometimes, we 'lose our minds' and act in ways we do not choose" (Siegel, 2011, p. 23). Siegel goes on to say that "...no matter how hard you try, you are only human and your mind will remain full of vulnerabilities and rough spots" (p. 23). Siegel also poses the question: "What is a healthy mind? Is it simply the absence of symptoms and dysfunctions, or is there something more to a life well lived?" (p. 64).

In a discussion about one of Dr. Siegel's patients, "In brain terms...the chemical messenger dopamine...plays a central role in drive and reward" (p. 192). "All addictive behavior, from gambling to the use of drugs such as cocaine and alcohol, involves activation of the dopamine system" (p. 192). "The reward circuits take over, and our conscious cortical mind becomes a slave to the addictive drive" (p. 192).

A View of Irrelevance

In my interview of a financial advisor, Gerald Gladnick, some interesting notions about irrelevance were discovered. According to Gladnick, "One definition of irrelevance is the quality or state of being unrelated to a matter being considered." This definition lends itself to argument or evidence in a debate to prove or disprove an occurrence, scientific conjecture, or philosophical hypothesis. The concept can and is often used to describe a person or a person's feelings about themselves. Most people derive their relevance from activities that lend themselves to progress, either personal or societal. Examples are homemakers or people who work outside the home. The common thread to relevance is participation with the group. The homemaker benefits their family for the good of society, and the worker contributes to the

company for the greater good of society. However, personal relevance is mostly derived from the immediate recognition of those nearest to the person, for example, a homemaker who gets a compliment on a tasty meal or a worker getting a compliment from his boss for job well done. A person becomes irrelevant when their participation in the activity from which they derive their satisfaction is no longer needed. Examples are divorce for a homemaker and layoff for a worker. The impact has shown itself to be quite severe in some cases, manifesting itself into despair and, in extreme cases, suicide. Though everyone seems to look forward to retirement with great anticipation, it can be a devastating transition. The worker realizes that he spent more waking hours with his coworkers than he did with his family for his entire adult life. Now that he's retired, the bonds with his peer group have been broken. And just like a soldier who must be left behind as the army marches away, the loss is deep and frequently devastating. In the case of the soldier, the reality is so important that his peers will risk the loss of many to save the one. With the retiree, how many retired and died 6 months later? "Resilience from irrelevance derives from the experience of loneliness encountered by being removed from the comfort of closeness with one's peers. After that experience, a person will do whatever is necessary, including making personal changes long resisted, to insure that they are never separated again" (Gladnick, personal communication, 2012a).

The Feeling of Being Lost Due to Outdated Computer Skills

Today we have a plethora of technology available for every need or form of entertainment. The clunky desktop computer has been replaced by the lighter and more versatile laptop computer, which is currently being edged out to pasture by the tablet—a sleek device with enormous capacities. The original car phone became the cell phone, which morphed into widespread use of Blackberry devices and Apple's iPhone. The new term "app" defines an application for one of the devices and may include business information, calculators, or game programs. With the advent of "texting" these apps have joined the chorus of possibilities. People are connecting playing games such as "Words with Friends," which is a version of the time-tested board game called "Scrabble."

An older person somewhat fearful of modern technology and apprehensive about the new ways of communicating may resist the idea of racing to the local Radio Shack in their Buick LeSabre and picking up a new iPhone. One immediate level of resistance is that the devices are comparatively small and older people may find the letters and numbers difficult to read and the device hard to operate. Other issues are the concern of losing the device or misplacing it.

Venerable John Henry Cardinal Newman (1801–1890) was a convert to Catholicism from the Church of England and one of the great minds of the nineteenth century. As a Roman Catholic priest, he became one of the greatest Catholic apologists in the history of the Church. He was a prolific writer and persuasive preacher. Cardinal Newman was beatified by His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI on

September 19, 2010, in Birmingham, England. His theory was that living means changing. He was quoted as saying “To live is to change, and to be perfect is to have changed often” (acquinasandmore.com, 2012).

“Intentional characteristics represent above all else the individual’s primary modes of addressing himself to the future” (Allport, 1983, p. 89). Allport cited that empirical investigations have shown that “personal values” steer perceptions, judgments, and adjustments (p. 89).

Every man, whether he is religiously inclined or not, has his own ultimate presuppositions. He finds he cannot live his life without them, and for him they are true. Such presuppositions, whether they be called ideologies, philosophies, notions, or merely hunches about life, exert creative pressure upon all conduct that is subsidiary to them (which is to say, upon nearly *all* of a man’s conduct). (pp. 95–96)

One’s personal goals may be met over a lifetime. Some people fail to establish goals because of diminished drive to work toward achievement over relatively long period of time. “Success in life could be defined as the continued expansion of happiness and the progressive realization of worthy goals” (Chopra, 1994, p. 2). According to Chopra, “the first spiritual law of success is the law of *Pure Potentiality*” (p. 9). Attributes of consciousness, he wrote, include pure knowledge, infinite silence, perfect balance, invincibility, simplicity, and bliss (p. 9). Finding one’s way in the world includes, importantly, discovering one’s essence, inclusive of dreams and aspirations. How terrible it would be to be at the end stage of life only to realize that nothing meaningful has happened and there is no mark left on the world on account of a person’s existence. Discovering and nurturing one’s potential can lead to flourished ideas and creative expression of a person’s uniqueness. Courage is also necessary to take the risk of failure as a possible consequence of succeeding.

Being aware and sensitive to the true inner self is essential to achieve one’s potential. “This true essence is beyond the ego. It is fearless; it is free; it is immune to criticism; it does not fear challenge. It is beneath no one, superior to no one, and full of magic, mystery, and enchantment” (p. 19).

A person, according to Rogers (1964), tests, “within his own skin, the inner hypothesis which he forms. Anyone who has experienced psychotherapy will have lived through this way of sharpening or of contradicting previously held inner hypotheses. Often an example of it in psychotherapy is the way in which the client searches and searches for the word that will more accurately describe what he is experiencing, feeling, or perceiving” (p. 111).

What we become aware of has the potential to both change us and be changed by us. Scientific study has been found to alter the subject being studied at least in some small way. “It is noteworthy that our most decent human specimens often believe in little that is given, coming instead to an understanding of things based on awareness and transience rather than graven images, guidelines, or gurus” (p. xiii). Lao-Tzu (Chinese mystic and founder of Taoism) said: “He who knows others is learned, he who knows self is wise.” “As keeper of the ancient archives, Lao Tzu was well-versed in the wisdom and knowledge of China’s greatest sages before the time of the Yellow Emperor (2697 BCE). His official position in the government was historiographer” (Tzu and K. Le Guin, 1997, p. 3). In an excerpt of Tzu’s work:

4 Gentleness and Frugality http://www.humanistictexts.org/lao_tzu.htm

When the intelligence and emotions are held together in one embrace, they can be kept from separating. When one gives undivided attention to the breath, and brings it to the utmost degree of pliancy, he can become as tender as a child. When he has cleansed his imagination, his insight becomes without a flaw.

But I have three precious things which I prize and hold fast. The first is gentleness; the second is frugality; and the third is shrinking from taking precedence of others.

With gentleness I can be bold; with frugality I can be liberal; shrinking from taking precedence of others, I can become the highest of men. Today people give up gentleness and are all for being bold; they give up frugality, and are all for being liberal; they flee the hindmost place, and seek only to be foremost—all of which are fatal.

He who knows other men is discerning; he who knows himself is intelligent. He who overcomes others is strong; he who overcomes himself is mighty. He who is satisfied with his lot is rich; he who acts firmly has will.

Exploration of the Deeper Meaning of Basic Happiness

There is a joke that says happiness does not buy money. Happiness means different things to different people. Disingenuous statements are deceptive, for example, “I am happy if you are happy” and its corollary: “I am not happy when you are unhappy.” These types of self-serving, potentially manipulative statements place the recipient of such statements in an awkward position at best. If a person is unhappy, then there is concern that his or her unhappiness is contributing to the unhappiness of the other. If the person pretends to be happy only to appease the other, then there is the potential for mistrust to develop should this façade be found out. If the person states that they are, in fact, unhappy, then the listener may feel inadequate or to blame. Questions may eventually arise such as “why don’t I make you happy?” Possibly, the entire relationship may sour over this issue.

In marriage counseling, the distressed couple is told that they are each the custodian of the other person’s dreams. This is not, though, the same as commanding that each is responsible for the attainment of happiness by their mate. There might not even be self-knowledge about what happiness would look and feel like. It is the proverbial moving target. We might want to think that any person in any situation could easily define what happiness is. Aristotle wrote that “For many think it is something obvious and evident, for instance, pleasure, wealth, or honor. Some take it to be one thing, others another. Indeed, the same person often changes his mind; for when he has fallen ill, he thinks happiness is health, and when he has fallen into poverty, he thinks it is wealth” (Aristotle, 1999, p. 3). Aristotle (384 BC–322 BC), a Greek philosopher, is one of the most important founding figures in western philosophy, who wrote about ethical principles.

Using Aristotle’s notion, we can readily see that happiness is a relative concept easily juxtaposed to the present situation or perception. His definition is fluid rather

than fixed, dependent on the disposition or needs of man. I might want wealth, but would rather have my health. I like being single, but I want to raise a family so marriage seems preferred. So, perhaps happiness includes compromises with one's complex package of preferences, not always capable of being met in simulcast. Therefore, a person may be heard to say: "I am relatively happy or happy for the most part. "We live in a world where there are societal forces that demand we compromise. I want to get to my appointment in midtown Manhattan quickly, but if I run across Fifth Avenue, disregarding traffic, I may be struck by a taxicab. This, however, may happen even if you are careful.

In a way, happiness is an ideal state. Working toward happiness, we can improve the likeability of our life. Maybe the betterment of certain of life's constructs is an achievable goal, whereas the achievement of utopian and permanent happiness may be unreachable. Dweck (2006) cites Jackie Joyner-Kersey's words: "For me the joy of athletics has never resided in winning. I derive just as much happiness from the process as from the results" (p. 98). The training regimen for an athlete brings much resolve to the person in terms of development of capabilities and building confidence. The actual event is the proving ground, but the results of the event should not dwarf the internal positive feelings brought about through the training process. I have completed 68 marathons, but the year I spent training before the first marathon stands as the most important part of the prior 12 years: the year when I began to run daily, not in preparation for the marathon distance, but for improvement of my health, which was a pivotal decision in my life. During that year, there was no thought of entering a distance event. The goal was not to run 26.2 miles to receive a medal and finisher certificate (though, most assuredly, these are nice), but to change the style of life toward healthy living and cardiovascular fitness. The addictive quality of prolonged distance running certainly took hold of me, who quickly discovered the benefits were significant and the risks small.

The steps we take to change aspects of our own life, even if only partially achieved, will be instrumental in providing stimulus for sustaining the change and reinforcing the reason we embarked on change in the first place. The suffering along the way toward realizing the full goals becomes the price we pay for success. Without the price, we might not respect the goal. I experienced countless times where the agony of the climate or other race-related issues threatened to derail his self-imposed mission to keep running marathons as long as possible. Now, at age 53, I can still run the complete marathon distance, albeit at a bit slower pace than at age 40. It is the internal decision-making about the way we push ourselves that becomes a key mechanism of thought. When we rebel against this process, we achieve almost nothing and will feel increasingly depressed and lethargic. Maintaining the necessary fitness level to keep doing what one loves (skiing, running, fishing, dancing, etc.) becomes an ongoing mental struggle. Not every day, week, or month will provide the same level of opportunity to further one's dreams. However, when freedom of choice over the use of time is involved, we can always consider the value these increments of time have on achievement of our goals. This is the preferred mindset—the one based on disciplined use of time to better ourselves.

The Role of Belief and Attitude

Attitude and belief, as constructs, make formidable difference in the ability of a person to move through periods of despair and difficulty. “The role of belief in healing can work both ways—a well-developed worldview is sometimes the best medicine against illness, while at the same time overly rigid habits, especially those involving lifestyle choice, can become the chronic cause of illnesses that are a long time in the making. In these terms, our beliefs can become a life-and-death matter” (Taylor, 1997, p. 46). Jayson (2008) wrote: “That belief has long been conjecture, but in recent years, scientists studying the mind-body connection are finding that an optimistic outlook can improve more than just mental health.” There is a link between stress levels and outlook. Various treatment modalities have come into the mainstream thanks to alternative medicine.

Transactional analysis was first theorized by Eric Berne in the 1950s. Berne wanted a theory which could be understood and available to everyone. As a component of social psychology, the primary emphasis of transactional analysis is to help a person improve communication with others. The theory is grounded in the principle that people can change and that we have a right to be accepted for who we are (Businessballs.com).

Transactional analysis is a contractual approach. A contract is “an explicit bilateral commitment to a well-defined course of action” (Berne, 1974/1966, p. 362), which means that all parties need to agree:

- Why they want to do something
- With whom
- What they are going to do
- By when
- Any fees, payment, or exchanges there will be

Use of a Mentor to Build Resilience

At certain points in a person’s life, crossroads appear on the horizon. Choices need to be made that will affect the future. Such choices can have positive or negative results. They can be made with the utmost consideration and care, or they can be made hastily and without regard for alternative analysis. These crossroads can occur as events that appear to be barriers, but really are a form of a crossroad as what can be perceived as barriers or obstacles. There can also be revelations of another set of options and choices. Death is, of course, the final event, but even death opens up potential for either permanent nothingness or a chance to enter another existence, depending on the person’s faith and the timeless construct of the afterlife. But here, we will focus on the crossroads that appear in the course of life, for example, the plight of a teenager who loses his sight through injury, which would appear as a barrier; this teenager now has different choices, but, still, has much potential

dependent on how he copes with his handicap. For example, Bethany Hamilton—13 years old—suffered the loss of an arm in a shark attack but had a triumphant return to competitive surfing. “My only real fear was that I would not be able to surf again because I was concerned that I would not physically be able to do it. I knew that if I wasn’t able to surf then my life would really change.”

One universal truth is that no human life is devoid of challenge. Regardless of socioeconomic status or genetic endowment, every living person can experience the range of immutable awe over life itself. Many will be affected by the tragic onset of disease or life-altering accident in addition to the time-tested factor of the aging process. Universal experiences include birth, maturity, aging, and death. No class or category of person is exempt from the potential of such tragic onset. However, not everyone should or need to experience disease. Possible experiences include the benefit of education, embarking on a career, having a family, achievement, and disappointment. In modern times, a human being can be expected to live approximately 80 years. “The average life expectancy at birth in high-income countries rose from age 78 to 80 between 2000 and 2010, U.S. health officials said” (UPI.com). This average length of time provides the average person innumerable opportunities for self-development.

Going through life’s challenges can be guided by mentors: trusted individuals who dedicate their time and effort to help another person set and achieve meaningful goals in their life. The establishment of goal setting enables a person to better cope with everyday and also rare life experiences through the compound effect of skill building in terms of coping and dealing with life’s stressors and addressing obstacles (real and falsely perceived). The process of mentoring, done well, creates a solid bond within the dyad and may last a short while or many years. A dyad is defined as a communication between two people through their ongoing relationship and interaction. People can have multiple mentors for varying purposes. The discussions that take place during the mentoring process can help the person build resilience against self-defeatist attitude and also ineffective thinking, a form of self-sabotage. A good mentor can act as a knowledgeable guide and challenge the mentee, but will not superimpose their own preferences or superimpose their will onto that person. To do so would be to take over dominion and sovereignty over another, which would likely serve to debase and debilitate that mentee’s internal capabilities and initiative.

Through trust, honesty, and communication, the mentor can help a person analyze the facts of life’s challenges and sort out new possibilities from the present moment. As well, the discussion can result in an exercise of rethinking what happened and what was done and said as a way of exploring various scenarios to see if an alternative approach would have had greater efficacy and can be applied to future scenarios. Once new approaches, styles, and other attributes of common human interaction are brought to light, the person seeking guidance can opt for acceptance of modified way of being, thus embarking on a certain path of willing transformation. The point of mentoring is not to direct, but to guide. The outcome hoped for in the dyad is enlightenment and change, which can only help to increase the person’s

resilience. The very engagement of thoughts of the act of changing may be enough stimuli to effect positive transformation.

In cases where the mentor-mentee relationship wanes in value or serves its temporary purpose, there should be change, resulting in the informal closure of the mentoring relationship, which certainly can transition into lasting and invaluable friendship where both can benefit from each other's wisdom and counsel. New mentors can be identified along the continuum of life since there will always be room for improvement and, as new corridors of opportunity open up, new people will enter into the person's universe, creating the backdrop for entering new relationships.

Fraudulent Relevancy

A person who enjoys a sense of relevancy, but based on false pretenses, may be subjecting himself, unwittingly, to potential future harm once the true facts become known. An example is a person who lies about who they are. Such a person who has achieved a false sense of relevancy faces the consequences of being found out, which might propel the person into a deep sense of personal failure, one found out. Falsity based on illegal or surreptitious means can never speak well of the person. Instead, such pretense may backfire on the person through driving the person even lower than would have happened had the pretense not occurred.

Shallowness is the state of a person's personality devoid of any sense of depth. This state creates a sense of vulnerability for the person who may be unable to overcome this issue.

Loss: Its Forms and Prejudices

Sometimes we are too quick to conclude as a response to some occurrence that whatever happened is bad or negatively affects our life. This can be viewed as a form of self-imposed prejudicial thought, which can be self-defeating. Assuming we could add more facts into the analysis, which might alter our perception, we might slow down the process of judgment based on prejudgment and think more carefully before issuing a response.

Taking a fresh, unbiased view of something seemingly negative can transform the situation into a net positive event if we dare to explore the seemingly negative event through a different lens. Fear, often negative, can be portrayed differently as a commodity that can be deployed toward learning about the often unharnessed greater power in us. Fear by itself, instead of driving us away from the source of fear, can sometimes impel us to run toward it as a mechanism to fight its power and enable us to conquer what was formerly a limiting of our existence. An example is a person with a fear of flying who joins a program designed to help people conquer

the phobia. After a series of exercises, most people are able to overcome their resistance and will take a plane ride. This is not to say that all fear is based in irrational thought. If we were alone in the deep woods and a huge bear were lunging toward us, a sense of fear seems very appropriate. The possible fight would trigger a change from fear to horror, but we might keep aware of our senses and find something constructive to do to extricate ourselves from the situation. Or, if we passed by a dark alley on an unfamiliar street, we might experience a sense of danger or trepidation. Such an unenviable experience certainly warrants some measure of fear response, perhaps even justifiable panic. Management of this situation, if even possible, demands quick, but clear thinking and immediate action. We might choose to attempt to flee the scene or to stay and fight, using whatever resources we can quickly locate.

Regrettably, in these types of settings, involving nature and natural instincts for survival, the people want to escape to live another day, but the bear needs to survive and defend its territory so we can somehow justify the setting for battle or chase or a combination. We may very well escape or kill or maim the bear. The bear may catch what it perceives as prey and then have a meal. In a small group, some members survive and flee to safety, but the unlucky one perishes in the attack. We lose a friend, relative, peer or even the guide leader who brought us out to the woods in the first place. A memorial service is held soon after and stories are embellished concerning the great battle in the woods. The deceased is thought of in heroic terms for giving up his or her life to give the others a better chance of escape. The survivors move on and probably avoid the woods forever. What can we take away from this example?

Contrast to the case of an attack by a wild creature, an attack can never be justified if based on greed, vengeance, or reasons caused by other humans—something never justified in a civilized society. Loss can be simply defined as being deprived of something we once had or suffering a detriment, disadvantage, or deprivation. It can be temporary or permanent. It can be small or larger. It can be monetary or otherwise. Loss can be caused by tort, theft, accident, purposeful injury, absentmindedness, or due to unknown cause. We only consider the concept of loss as a bad thing because it usually means something that was before that was desirable to us is no longer available to us. A common relation to loss, blame helps in this regard to attribute responsibility for the loss as a way of externalizing energy toward another person or thing or Mother Nature. We may choose to blame an innocent person or a scapegoat. We may think the blame will compensate for what is lost and be happy again, but blame can serve to marginalize the opportunity for personal growth and acceptance for some responsibility to learn from the loss and improve our outlook based on current understanding. Further, it is best to avoid emoting hatred toward the victimizer because, in doing so, there is ongoing debilitation for the victim who must continue to devote energy toward the feelings of hatred.

What loss does to us is important for this book. Are there ways to bounce back from loss and regain momentum to make a comeback? Can a person who loses all their money in a small business work toward rebuilding financial wealth and use the experience to start another new business? Perhaps, if there is learning, adaptation, improvement in approach, or a better way is found to do something, a better result

will be possible the next time. In this case, the loss may be instrumental to propel betterment in approach. Thus, if we dissect the life of a successful person, we might be shocked to find that the person experienced significant failures in life prior to reaching the point of success and realize that those failures just may have been instrumental in the eventual success.

Having a person act as a sounding board or guide in a setting that need not be formal is mentoring. More than basic philosophy and catchphrases, the rounding out of simple directives to grow from disaster, learn from error, and rise from the ashes of despair with validation of the person who has experienced loss, defined as the victim, and placing proper levels of optimism on the value of the person's future potential. Such advice amounts to giving the person time to see their own future as including ample time to fix what went wrong and find new ways to reach goals, perhaps setting new goals, more attainable.

One common major fear in life is the idea of public speaking. The art of public speaking can become a developed skill through coaching courses, practice, and determination to become a successful speaker. Preparation and deep knowledge of the subject area are essential to enable a person to be more capable of speaking to an audience. Coaching from an organization such as Toastmasters can be an effective way to deal with this fear. But, what happens to a person who was formerly comfortable speaking to groups and suddenly experiences a loss of ability? A negative speaking experience can devastate a person's confidence, which could lead to a lack of interest or willingness to accept or seek out such opportunities. In such cases, it is best if the person openly discusses the experience with trusted people or mentors in their circle of allies. Perhaps there were events occurring in the person's life that impacted on the speaker's ability to concentrate. Also possible is that the person's mood was so deflated by the negative experience that they were unable to perform in that particular moment, which is important to evaluate as the particular experience does not need to impeach the person's overall capability. It is in this respect that one experience can alter self-perception of abilities. People can feel very judged and graded on all aspects of performance with a buildup impression that what seems like failure could undermine an entire career. Such catastrophic thinking can derail a person's career trajectory, for example, if not placed in a healthy perspective. It can also have social consequence. Through dealing with the person holistically and accepting failure along with success, a sense of appropriate humility may emerge, which will help the person see others in a less judgmental light. Therefore, it is the power of momentary humanness equated to less than perfect performance that can help a driven person slow down enough to realize that life's problems and dilemmas may interfere with the rhythm of life prior to the negative experience.

By using a guide to sift through the wreckage of self-inflicted catastrophic impressions, what may survive is a much improved person now newly sensitive to the fact that they will not always be great and may even fail, but that failure may have net positives instead of purely deleterious impact, for example, in a business setting, say an employee meets with a client and says the wrong thing, resulting in the client becoming upset and ending the relationship with the employee's service and his organization. The impact of the statement could be as minimal as a discussion

with the person's superior or a harsh lecture or, worse, termination. Thus, the aftermath may, in fact, be very severe. If the punishment fits the action and the employee accepts what happened, they can move on and learn to improve so the same type of error does not recur. If the person chooses not to accept personal responsibility and, instead, blames others, the result is likely to be bitterness and nongrowth. Therefore, in the scenario where others are blamed, the experience has no value because there is no benefit. A way to alleviate this problem is to accept the ramifications for the actions for which personal responsibility is taken and create an environment where evaluation can freely take place enabling interpersonal growth. This effort is not easy and may even be too difficult when the feelings are raw from a fresh experience. Again, here is where a trusted person can be enrolled to deconstruct the events and help reorganize the problem and the potential responses, which can include remedial action to prevent recurrence. Thus, the resiliency of the spirit applied to situational failure matched by appropriate and dynamic steps to first evaluate and then to transform the self can help even the most defeatist personality to become a thriving being capable of growing even from seemingly negative experiences. It does take strength and a strong will to muster the resources to go through such a process of self-exploration, which can lead to self-improvement.

By admitting one's vulnerabilities to trusted persons, it becomes easier to cope and deal with the notion of imperfection. Even at the cost of an entire career, acceptance of result of past effort that involves active learning and improvement becomes far more effective than dismissal of the problem and/or affixing blame on others. The alternative then is the recognition that life may deal a tough card once in a while, which can result in the lowering of their impressions of us because of the failure. But, that impression represents the inherent reality of that moment. A professional baseball player gets up to bat in the bottom of the ninth inning with bases loaded, two outs, two strikes, and three balls with their team down one run. A hit to the outfield is all that is needed for victory. All eyes are on the batter. The pressure must be enormous for the batter to do what is necessary for a solid performance (a hit). Should the batter strike out and the team suffers a loss, the impact of the loss may be unfairly placed on that one batter. But, such a person may become haunted by the experience and may lose a measure of confidence. By talking this through with a trusted ally, the feelings engendered by the batter can come into focus better in order to create perspective so the weight of the loss is not borne on the one person. Regardless of how cruel the press might be or the number of times the networks replay the strikeout, in the right circumstances, the batter can continue to rightfully feel proud of their abilities and past accomplishments despite the recent event. The power of the strikeout for the batter comes in the form of acceptance, which may lead to more robust practicing and improvement in the skill of hitting a baseball. Even the superstar players would surely agree that practice is necessary regardless of how good they are statistically. After all, a .300 hitter means failure 70% of the time. In life, if we succeed 30% of the time, we may feel like a total failure. So why is baseball different?

Limits are also good and instruct us to stop feeling invincible, a problem of ego that can lead to a person becoming cocky and irreconcilably obnoxious. People like

to knock down such cocky characters that seem to be above personal failure. However, the humble in spirit may be helped up from the ashes of failure and given a new vote of confidence with understanding so the failure does not undermine the total person for the long term. It is the ultimate test of a person's will to strive for success in any domain despite a history of failure. The internal attitude of a person will make a considerable difference in how they are viewed and treated by others. For some, not being the best will yield a lifetime of miserable feelings; for others, coming in second or third could bring the highest sense of personal accomplishment. It is only the close minded, egoist who thinks he or she must be the best or is the best that ever will be. There may come along someone in the future to run a faster mile, hit more home runs over the course of a career, or excel in some other way. Records are temporary and made to be broken.

High scorers in sports are revered certainly during their active career and remembered by some long after retirement. But there is also potential for being forgotten, which could have something to do with new players coming on the scene who match or surpass the former record holder's achievements. Baseball fans continue to refer to home run records by Hank Aaron and Babe Ruth even though their records have been broken. The Hall of Fame does a fine job keeping their names in the public eye. Boston University's coach, Dave Rose, knew replacement was needed. "In the situation we were in, we were very fortunate to get him" (Greene, 2012, p. 30). Matt Carlino was brought in to work with Fredette during the remaining season and performed so well he became viewed as the heir to Fredette. "BYU fans haven't forgotten a certain high-scoring point guard, but his replacement, UCLA transfer Matt Carlino, is making it easier" (p. 30).

Bleakness Behind the Curtain

We sometimes choose not to reveal our innermost selves to anyone or to the public at large possibly to have masked the public self while healthily dealing with troubles. Thus, the preference may be to prefer to mask true feelings and exhibit a happier outward persona. There may be a number of factors that can account for this phenomenon. The reality of a situation may be so terrible that we block it out of our consciousness altogether, for a brief time or over extended periods. Someone who has blocked his or her own true feelings will almost naturally put up a charade and may disconnect from his or her feelings resulting in sleeping longer and using sleep medications (prescription or otherwise) to assist in the numbing process. Someone who is aware that they are experiencing some conflict in their innermost selves may sleep for long periods of time.

One opposite reaction to stress and situational anxiety or crisis is action. Action involves a deliberate attempt to deal head on with the presenting problem. A more outward person may be more able to adopt a new strategy. We may be unable or ill-equipped to resolve the dilemma, but some feel better to at least try. There are differences among people with some choosing action and others choosing inaction, suppressing or masking feelings.

The passage of time may resolve certain life issues, which are not always able to be solved in the present moment. Relatives who were upset over family squabbles or rifts, for example, may have interpreted what was said as insensitive or cruel and may, therefore, diminish their anger over time, possibly resulting in forgiveness, with or without an issued apology. This can be understood in a sense that what once seemed insurmountable can dissipate over time. A wound or break of a bone will heal over time, allowing us to resume our golfing, hiking, or other enjoyed endeavor. Long-term healing can also eradicate past pain such as coping with the death of a loved one. Memories of an event, such as a fire or victimization through the war or the Holocaust may linger in perpetuity, which is a way to handle both types of pain/conflict. Acceptance comes in to help a person deal with something that occurred. One form of acceptance—successful incorporation of a tragic event, for example—occurs when a person learns to live productively despite the circumstances and aftermath, such as a person crippled in a car accident where the person eventually learns to function with a wheelchair and goes on to thrive again in career and relationships. A widow whose spouse was killed in the attacks on the World Trade Center buildings in New York City learns how to cope and deal with the lasting memory of their mate by balancing their attention between memorializing the person and moving on with their own life. Ultimately, in the case of remarriage, the deceased is not forgotten or made irrelevant, but the living person continues on living the fullest life possible.

A person who laments overly long in duration or excessively deeply may be inflicting self-harm in the form of self-pity, which, in turn, may debilitate the mind more than the body. This type of self-pity can be self-effacing. Such a state of harm can equal a disability. People can become quite complacent feeding into their disability, even using it as an excuse not to expend any great effort in any life endeavor. A blinded person becomes a recluse; a person who lost their job gives up and settles on entitlement payments for as long as possible, becoming increasingly bitter in the process, falling deeper into the despair of getting entrenched in the system. The blind person may become too overwhelmed by vision troubles to fraternize even with established family and friends, who in turn start reaching out less. Can these people be helped? Can we help build their resilience either after tragedy strikes or, better, before? Where are such lessons learned optimally?

Coping strategies can be best developed prior to the onset of strife. If this is done, small inconveniences and major calamities can activate learned or natural internal mechanisms of clever ways of dealing with the situation, taking some of the sting out of the situation. Intervention, defined as caring people stepping forward to confront the person, can also be effective in providing the person with replacement responses to past situations to then be used in hindsight to determine if they would have been more effective and if such skills can be adopted for future use when the need arises. Such sessions can serve to reshape ineffective responses into more effective methods of handling situations. A person very receptive to learning new skills will adapt quicker. A more stubborn individual may not respond as well to guidance. Lingering bitterness and remorse, even vengeful thinking, may create impasse in the self-help or therapeutic process. Some people would rather get even than take a lesson from

tragedy and move forward despite the loss. One of the bitter pills to swallow in life is the hurt to pride or the loss of faith by a loved one. Recovery from deep emotional pain may be much more difficult than coping with financial loss. If a person carried around a diamond in his pocket worth \$50,000 and after 2 years of doing so the stone was somehow lost, the person will most assuredly be upset. But how long will it take for the person to resume active living and not reflect often about the loss? Will the person realize that carrying around such an item was foolish?

Synopsis of Chapter

1. It is important to fully assess where a person is at the outset of therapeutic intervention.
2. Encouragement of the person to discuss his or her thoughts and feelings is essential.
3. Using Frankl's logotherapy, a person can be guided toward reorienting the meaning of their own life.
4. People can alter their inner clock and reset it as a metaphor for changing negative patterns of behavior.
5. Creation of positive turning points can help a person overcome their own internal resistance.
6. Building a sense of fortitude will help a person strive for some level of success despite specific challenges
7. We can awaken the leader inside the hurting person to enable them to have greater self-belief;
8. A person must learn to question their own belief system when challenged by new, perhaps healthier, paradigms
9. We must become aware of our inner demons, the voices that tell us we are no good or cannot do something.
10. A persistence approach to problems, using trial-and-error methodology will lead to greater potential for success.
11. Thoughts can be channeled toward enhanced productivity.
12. We can move past despair toward achievement of destiny by taking daily incremental positive steps.
13. Transformation can include a metamorphosis from one outlook to another.
14. The potential to see the world from a new perspective always exists.
15. Persons who are stuck in their lives require a patient attitude on the part of the helper.
16. Fear can be turned around and used as a mechanism to fight its power and move toward less limiting existence.
17. Loss and failure can help catalyze a person toward new energy to reach their full potential.
18. Action is the antidote to stress.

Chapter 10

Expectations Versus Reality: A Humanistic and Practical Perspective

Kenneth M. Moltner Esq.

Introduction

Expectations, explicit or implicit, are pervasive, confronting us in almost every area of life. Expectations can shape our lives—from one moment to our overall perceptions of ourselves. Satisfying, or failing to satisfy, our expectations can have a dramatic effect on our feelings of relevancy. Depending on how meaningful the expectation, the failure to satisfy it can cause the feeling of loss of relevancy; in other words, the chasm between expectation and reality is important to defining our feelings of loss of relevancy. When influenced or aggravated by factors described in other chapters of this book, the feelings of loss of relevancy can appear to overshadow all else in our lives.

Our expectations are conscious or subconscious—those expectations that we actively and affirmatively think about, as compared to those that we do not. From what you expect when you get out of bed in the morning, for the next moment, let alone the next hour or day, you have chosen which expectations you will consciously consider as compared to those that you will unconsciously accept (or implicitly reject). In our world, and the world outside of us with which we interact every day, we take actions based on our expectations and predicate our expectations based on our actions. But we only affirmatively think about certain of our expectations. For certain persons, depending on their worldview, their expectations dominate their existence—their life expectations are the driving force. For other persons it may not because their expectations are sublimated to a single ultimate goal based on instinctive action at the moment (e.g., survival in combat, rescuing hostages) or they are not similarly motivated.

Expectations are conclusions that we ourselves draw and are largely based on our history of experiences as well as our dreams and fears. Expectations are individualized, internalized, and, depending on the situation, and too often, influenced by others. As people, we inherently are influenced by how we process information and stimuli and that which we take to heart. Expectations can thus be greatly influenced by those and that around us simply because we allow it or perceive that

we have no choice in the matter (such as a boss' expectation of her employee). Ultimately, we are, and must make ourselves, responsible for our expectations.

Expectations are the sign posts used by people to predict the future. Expectations are forward-looking. Reality measures expectations with hindsight.

This chapter focuses on expectations that are not rooted in sudden, critical determinations, but rather those that are not of an emergency nature. We discuss the pervasiveness of expectations in everyday life, what an expectation is (compared to, e.g., a hope or dream), the root of expectations, the effect of expectations, and the resolution of expectations.

The Pervasiveness of Expectations

Seemingly every step of your day, and every step of the way, is predicated on an expectation. You may not, and in fact probably do not, consciously think about it, but you have an expectation if you have any plans for the next day let alone the following week. You expect to be alive to fulfill those plans. When you go to sleep at night, don't you expect to wake up the next morning? There are those in hospitals or like facilities who have no expectation (assuming they are conscious enough) of living to the next day. Some go to sleep with the expectation of passing away, as demonstrated, albeit in 20–20 hindsight, by a change in routine, however seemingly slight but in retrospect significant.

You plan your day on the expectation that you will fulfill your plans. You do not plan your day on the expectation that you will be in the doctor's office with a broken foot, or, worse, due to an unforeseen event. When you get dressed in the morning, you do so based on your expectations of the weather. When you cross the street, you expect that you will make it safely to the other side. When you have an appointment or go to work, you leave a certain amount of time to get there on the expectation that you will be on time. When you go to work, you do so expecting the employer to be in business that day and to still employ you. Many businesses have been forced to dissolve or layoff hundreds of workers, including law firms in the 1990s to the recent case of Dewey Leboeuf. "Too big to fail" is another manifestation of an expectation. When you eat food, you do so with the expectation that you will enjoy it and it will not make you sick (the letter grades that New York City places on restaurants for [complying with sanitary laws] may lead to a certain expectation). When you have a cold, you expect it to get better in a certain amount of time. When you purchase an item and pay more than the advertised price, you expect to get change. Why do you become frustrated? Likely because you expected your computer to work (or work faster), but it did not.

Expectations also have social, economic, and political ramifications. When you date, let alone get married, you do so with a certain set of expectations about your partner. Our interaction with others is in large part predicated on expectations. Do you expect your loved ones to act in a way that others will not? Do you expect your friends to return your call? Do you expect the servers at a restaurant to be

accommodating? Do you interact with your boss or fellow employees the same way you interact with your friends or relatives?

Our very laws are reflective of societal expectations (reflected in the judgment as enumerated in the legislation passed by our elected officials) of how people should behave or how they can accord their behavior to what is acceptable within the ambit of the law. The very purpose of the law, whether civil or criminal, is to set societal boundaries (read expectations) of how society should behave, that is, what is acceptable behavior and what is not. Underlying the law is the expectation that it will be followed. In order to follow it, people must be able to predict with some level of comfort its interpretation. Hence, arises (at least in American jurisprudence) the principle of *stare decisis* [Latin: “to stand by things decided”]. It is the doctrine of precedent, under which it is necessary for a court to follow earlier judicial decisions when the same points arise again in litigation (Black’s Law Dictionary, 2004). Generally speaking, it is necessary for the courts (which interpret the laws passed by the legislature) to follow earlier judicial decisions so that people in like situations will be able to behave accordingly.

Penal laws reflect a society’s punishment for what it deems to be a crime or viewed slightly differently, society’s expectation of the punishment (or possible punishments) that result from a given action. Different societies have different expectations of their people. The philosopher Emmanuel Kant stated that a society has the right to express its moral outrage. Prostitution, for example, is legal in the “Red Light District” of Amsterdam, but not legal in, for example, New York. Marijuana is legally sanctioned for medicinal use in California, but not in New York. The May 21, 2012, *New York Law Journal* (p. 1) reported on this issue in an article entitled “Justice’s Disclosure Highlights Medical Marijuana Debate.” The article deals with Brooklyn Supreme Court (which in New York is a trial court) Justice Gustin Reichbach’s revealing in the May 16 *New York Times* of his “illegal” use of cannabis “to cope with the debilitating effects of cancer.” The death penalty is sanctioned in Texas for certain crimes, but not [Connecticut] for any crime. So while the same type of activity is criminalized, that is, societal expectations of how people should not behave is the same, the punishment is different.

Civil laws can be viewed in a like prism—society expects people to act a particular way lest they face non-penal consequences. Underlying the law of contracts is the expectation that people will adhere to their agreements. In contract law, a party can be awarded “expectation damages”—that is, damages that seek, upon a breach of contract, to put the breaching party in the same position as she would have been but for the breach. This can be looked at as satisfying the expectations to the contract of the non-breaching party. Of course, laws, and their interpretation, change. For example, the judicially and government-sanctioned racial discrimination of “separate but equal” enunciated by the United States Supreme Court in *Plessy v. Ferguson*, 65 U.S. 537 [1896] was legally displaced 58 years later by a unanimous vote of that same court as *Brown of Board of Education*, 347 U.S. 483 [1954]. Strict application of precedent to the *Brown* case would have arguably mandated upholding *Plessy*. What changed? Societal mores changed and, with it, fortunately, the law. The vote of nine would not have been as meaningful if the

underlying expectation that the court's decision would be followed by this county as a whole was not realized.

Certain societies maintain order by laws that control and suppress expectations so that their leaders can remain in control. For example, in the United States we have the right of free speech. Therefore, we have the expectation that if we protest (within the boundaries of the law) against the government, we will not be sanctioned. In North Korea, for example, the right of free speech (as far as the authors can ascertain) is limited. The expectation of what may result from a protest against the government is assuredly different.

Society is constantly trying to establish our expectations. The guides, Zagat's, Yelp, and movie reviewers, are examples of media that influences or seeks to set expectations. Have you gone to a movie or a restaurant with high expectations? Why? Is it because you've seen another movie directed by the same director? Or it's a sequel? Or it stars a performer that you like? Is it a play written by a playwright whose works you enjoy? Is it a restaurant whose chef was at another restaurant that you loved? Or is it that you've been at the restaurant before? Or is it because a friend whose taste you trust recommended the restaurant, movie, play, or vacation spot? Or is it because many people wrote about it, and you accepted the crowd's view although you know no one personally who has written about it? How do you feel while you are at the restaurant, seeing the movie, or vacationing in the recommended spot? And, as importantly, why did you make that choice?

Expectations dominate in the political sphere. A politician seeks to convince his or her constituents that he or she (the politician's) can satiate if not satisfy those expectations in order to get elected. How often does the mantra "he doesn't have a chance to win" influence donations or an election outcome? A politician's popularity approval rating is a primary example of reality as contrasted with expectation. When a politician is voted into office, his or her constituents have certain expectations—that they voted into office a person who will be, do, or obtain x or y . As he or she continues in office, the constituent's perceptions of how he or she has met their expectations are reflected in opinion polls. Someone once facetiously said: "There are lies, grand lies, and statistics." Consider what an influence statistics has on our expectations. The very essence of statistics is expectations—the mean and the median can be seen as summaries of people's expectations.

Expectations predominate in entertainment as well. Gambling, such as on horse races, is predicated on expectations. In sports, a certain team is expected to win its division or the championship. A certain team is expected not to do as well if its star player is injured. When a person or team that is favored loses, it's called an "upset." And for good reason, expectations are "upsets." Reality has not met expectations. For some, this is a good thing in cases where you are a fan of or have a wager on the underdog. For others, it equates to disappointment. How many times have you heard the expression that a certain team "has the momentum?" The momentum carries with it the expectation that the team will do better.

Business is the same. A certain company is expected to earn a certain bottom line and its stock price drops if it does not, or a certain company is expected to lose a certain amount and its stock price increases if it loses less. A company's stock moves

because of what the new CEO is expected to do based on his past track experience. People buy a certain stock investment, invest in a certain mutual fund, or leave their money with a certain money manager because they have an expectation of performance.

When you buy an item of a certain make, quality, or price range, be it a car or an apartment, your expectations of it (e.g., how that car should function, the service in an apartment building) go with, and into, the purchase price that you pay. Would your expectations be met or offended if you saw an advertisement for “X” and it turned out to be “Y?” Would your expectations change based on how credible you thought the source of the advertisement was or who the person is who recommended it to you?

People stand on line to buy the newest technological gadget because of their “supped-up” expectations. They stand on line for hours prior to the opening of a Black Friday sale because they expect that they will be able to partake in the hunting for bargains.

We expect good performance to be repeated (an off year might be tolerated as long as many good years preceded or follow).

The back cover of “The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make A Big Difference” (Malcolm Gladwell, 2002) describes the book as follows:

The tipping point is that magic moment when an idea, trend, or social behavior crosses a threshold, tips, and spreads like wildfire. Just as a single sick person can start an epidemic of the flu, so too can a small but precisely targeted push cause a fashion trend, the popularity of a new product, or a drop in the crime rate. This widely acclaimed bestseller, in which Malcolm Gladwell explores and brilliantly illuminates the tipping point phenomenon, is already changing the way people throughout the world think about selling products and disseminating ideas.

Mr. Gladwell’s book can be viewed from the perspective of people’s expectations and instances of how these expectations are molded or substantively influenced. The “small but precisely target push” that causes “a fashion trend, the popularity of a new product, or a drop in the crime rate” has, we submit, its foundation in people’s expectations.

Expectation of the norm, implicit acceptance without consciously acknowledging or confronting an expectation, provides comfort. Adaptability to the unforeseen or that which suddenly arises provides the essence of certain professions and certain attributes in life. Do those in active military combat and those on a mission, to take extreme examples, have “expectations” for the next day? They have a plan, but they likely do not have expectations; rather, their “expectations” must adapt to the reality of the contingencies that they face, moment to moment, if not second to second. There are other professions that must adapt their expectations to suddenly changing circumstances. Doctors who are performing surgery may be met with a sudden, unexpected emergency, changing not only their day but their very moment. Consider what it must be like for a doctor and nurse in an emergency room when a patient is wheeled in. We daresay that their expectations are not to have expectations. Tragedies such as Katrina and the Voyager are unthinkable for the shocking loss of life and destruction, and because they belie our expectations. They belie our

expectations of the human ingenuity in both cases and capacity to respond in the case of Katrina. We have lulled ourselves into a societal expectation of being able—being able to put people in space and returning them safely, building buildings that do not fall and dams that do not break, being able to spend money without limit and without consequence, being able to do almost anything. That is not intended as in any way pejorative—it is an observation of how far our expectations have come and how easily they are shattered. Expectations are omnipresent in our lives, and society places a premium on those who can predict and satisfy expectations.

Expectations, the Manifestation of Feelings of Loss of Relevancy, and Influencing Factors

The feeling of loss of relevancy created by the gap between a person's expectation and her reality can manifest itself in many ways. As human beings, we believe, sometimes with objective reason, sometimes not, that we "should be," or we "deserve to be," in a different (read "better") place based on our background, experience, who we know, or perhaps more importantly who knows us. Feeling of loss of relevancy can manifest itself in the perception that others appear to have "gotten where they are," whereas we have not even though we have the same means or traits that they (apparently) possess. It is unclear what the difference maker is between them and us. Why are they where it appears that we want to be? It can manifest itself in the feeling that although we "play by the rules," we try hard, we care, and we feel unrequited. Leaders have broken out of society's imposed boundaries. They have gone beyond apparent reason; they are conditioned not to simply accept. They have a persistent, abiding belief that they belong more than society says—a drive, a self-actualization—the spiritual self (which is very different from a religious self). To some, stories of perseverance, such as Abraham Lincoln who was fired from several jobs, however inspiring in their own right, ultimately ring hollow because they are just that—stories without practical applicability to our daily living and problems. They may remind us of our expectations, but they are not our reality. To others, reading biographies of famous people can steer us in positive directions especially when there is a handicap to overcome, one shared with a famous person who triumphed.

It can manifest itself in the knot in our stomach Sunday night, because we so dread Monday morning (even if we haven't worked over the weekend), we feel overworked and quite underappreciated, if not undercompensated and underappreciated. It should be different, shouldn't it? We look back and see our perceived mistakes with 20–20 hindsight.

We cannot rid ourselves of that nagging, gnawing feeling: Why has life not met our expectations, why have we not met our own? We want to feel that the world owes us something just because we are alive. The more we want it, the more we convince ourselves and the greater our hopes, dreams, and, possibly, expectations. The less we perceive that we have obtained it, or can obtain it, or have obtained it, the greater the chasm and resulting feelings of loss of relevancy.

It is the moment that connects us to a present sense of relevancy. The past may define or certainly help define our sense of relevancy. But the present is, by definition, our current relevancy. The future, on a global scale, represents our expectations, our hopes and dreams. Do we as people too often look forward or back and fail to capture the present? Even those who feel a loss of relevancy have a present relevance, but to those that live with the feeling of loss, the present fails to suffice, let alone satisfy. The connection to the moment is not to those who feel a loss of relevancy a satisfactory alternative to what lies ahead or the “bigger picture.” The present loses its separate identity from the past or future because of the feeling of the loss of relevancy.

Why can it be so difficult to focus on the moment in the midst of the continual feelings of loss of relevancy? Why is it so difficult to overcome? It is, at least in part, because of the gravitational-like pull of the past. More than “those who do not learn from the past are condemned to repeat it” (George Santanya), we are being pulled back into the past, like being sucked into a black hole from which we cannot pull ourselves out. Positive has too often become to mean to us not negative. We exist now, but we too often do not live, at least not in the moment. Our expectations and the gap between our feelings of loss of relevancy are caused by many factors.

Our expectations are influenced by numerous factors, including the past experiences that we choose to bring to bear in a particular situation, the outside influences we choose to accept or internalize, compared to those that we reject, emotions—anger, fear-suppression, and our moral compass. The varying influences on our expectations have varying degrees of importance to a particular expectation. There is no “black and white,” but there is plenty of gray.

The past, viewed as 20–20 hindsight, often embellished in retrospect (the definition of 20–20 hindsight) is too often used as the guidepost of current expectations. Decisions made “then,” particularly large ones may seem curious, if not downright ill informed. Even “small” (relatively speaking) “mistakes” can tug at us. There was a story in which people were surveyed and, in effect, were disconcerted that they had not predicted the stock market actions correctly. Why does the past, retracing our steps, have such a pull even though we cannot change it? It is because the past had, if not has, a direct bearing on our expectations. The past may have formed our expectations. We are born and raised in a way that creates commentary on our potential for performance. School grading is an example of tracking performance at an early age with regular meetings with teachers for the purpose of discussing how a particular child is doing compared to expectations influenced by notions of the child’s potential. If a child is underperforming, the teacher may suggest that there is some sort of behavioral or psychological problem within the child and recommend consultations with professionals. A student whose parents are both accomplished medical doctors may be expected to perform at a much higher level than a student with lower-achieving parents. Some of us can just not forgive ourselves for failing to meet, or thinking that we have failed to meet, them. In contrast, meeting expectations, sometimes however seemingly relatively minor, bring satisfaction. One of the authors took an exam in college, studied for it, but acknowledg-

ing to him that he would be satisfied with a B. A grade of B is what he got, and satisfied he was—regardless of how he tried not to be (gee, I could have done this or that differently, this will drag my GPA down, or he or she got a higher grade). To this day, the author recalls that he was at peace with himself over what he did. That he met his expectation is only a part of the story. The expectation, to him, was “objectively” (see the reference “to him”) realistic. He therefore was satisfied with the grade—even though his expectation was three or four tiers below the highest grade. And not even the thought that he “should have done better” was able to move him off that perception. It is self-flagellation at its finest. It is somehow comforting, even though it is uncomfortable. It is not merely trepidation of facing the moment; he risks ignoring the future and, therefore, losing the future and its promise.

Without expectations, how do we judge life? Is the quality of life dependent on meeting our expectations, “large” or “small?” Are expectations “legitimate” because they are our own? Ultimately only we can characterize our expectations. And only we can resolve them.

The Conundrum of Expectations: Expectations Are Based in Reality

Expectation has a basis in reality. How much one’s expectation is based in reality, and how important that expectation is to the person, is proportional to the feeling of loss of relevancy if the expectation is not met. In a way, we set ourselves up for failure on occasion—the ultimate trick is to “know when to hold them, know when to fold them” (from the song, “The Gambler” by Kenny Rogers, written by Don Schlitz), and know when to modify them. There may come a time when it becomes apparent to ourselves that an expectation will not be met or, for whatever reason, is no longer worth pursuing. Do we accept “defeat?” Maybe we do. Defeat may not be complete defeat, however. If there is something meaningful to us that we can take from the failure or inability to fully meet our expectation, then we should not (versus cannot) feel a total loss of relevancy. Particularly is this so if what we have taken from that “defeat” advances us toward meeting another expectation.

Searching various online dictionaries, “reality” is defined as “the quality or state of being actual or true” and “a real event, entity or state of affairs.” In turn, “real” is defined as “being or occurring in fact or actuality, having verifiable existence.” “True, not merely ostensible, nominal or apparent ...” In comparison to reality, expectation has been defined as “presumed degree of probability of an occurrence,” “the act or state of expecting: anticipation,” “a strong belief that something will happen or be the case in the future,” “a belief that someone will or should achieve something,” “the belief that something will happen,” and “a belief that something *should* happen in a particular way or that someone or something *should* have particular qualities or behavior.” In turn, a belief is defined as a conviction of the truth of some statement or the reality of some being or phenomenon especially when based on examination of evidence.

Note in particular the tenses that define “real” as compared to “expectation.” Real invokes the present, expectation invokes the future. A fundamental tenet of an expectation (discussed *infra*) is that it is predicated on the future forward-looking with all of the vagaries and contingencies that entails. An expectation must be contrasted to a hope, a dream, a fantasy, or a delusion. A hope has been defined as “to cherish a desire with anticipation; to desire with expectation of obtainment.” A dream has been defined as “a visionary creation of the imagination.” See also the definition of fantasy—a creation of the imaginative faculty whether expressed or merely conceived. In contrast, a delusion has been defined as “a persistent false psychotic belief regarding the self or persons or objects outside the self that is maintained despite indisputable evidence to the contrary.” One could hope to win the lottery (and at least one of the authors do), but the expectation of winning it better be pretty low (one in over 80 million for the US Powerball Lottery). We can dream or fantasize about the homes, cars, or other items that we would buy if we won the lottery, but we are not going out and making those purchases—or planning our lives—in the belief that we are going to win it. Doing so would be a delusion. Viewed on a spectrum, an expectation is more grounded in reality than any of its cousins hopes, dreams, fantasies, or delusions. We intuitively understand that a hope or dream has less importance to us precisely because, by definition, it is less likely to occur. When a hope or dream is not fulfilled, there should thus be less of a feeling of loss of relevancy than if an expectation is not met. Sometimes, however, a hope or dream has equal importance to an expectation and leaves the unrequited desirer feeling the loss of relevancy as well as being frustrated. This is because the emotional pull of a hope or dream overrides the logic, the rational realization of how unlikely the hope of a dream may be fulfilled in the first place.

There are thus three defining factors to understanding the feeling of loss of relevancy caused by the gap between expectation and reality: The extent to which we perceive that the expectation is based in reality including the level of certainty we have that the expectation will be met, how important meeting the expectation is to us, and, of course, whether the expectation is satisfied.

In this regard, according to expectancy-value theory, behavior is a function of the expectancies one has and the value of the goal toward which one is working. Such an approach predicts that, when more than one behavior is possible, the behavior chosen will be the one with the largest combination of expected success and value. Expectancy-value theories hold that people are goal-oriented beings. The behaviors they perform in response to their beliefs and values are undertaken to achieve some end. However, although expectancy-value theory can be used to explain central concepts in uses and gratifications research, there are other factors that influence the process. For example, the social and psychological origins of needs, which give rise to motives for behavior, which may be guided by beliefs, values, and social circumstances into seeking various gratifications through media consumption and other non-media behaviors.

“Dr. Martin Fishbein is credited with developing the expectancy-value theory (EVT) in the early to mid-1970s. It is sometimes referred to as Fishbein’s expectancy-value theory or simply expectancy-value model. The primary work typically

cited by scholars referring to EVT is Martin Fishbein and Icek Ajzen's 1975 book called *Belief, Attitude, Intention, and Behavior: An Introduction to Theory and Research*. The seed work of EVT can be seen in Fishbein's doctoral dissertation, *A Theoretical and Empirical Investigation of the Interrelation Between Belief about an Object and the Attitude Toward that Object* (1961, UCLA) and two subsequent articles in 1962 and 1963 in the journal *Human Relations*. Fishbein's work drew on the writings of researchers such as Ward Edwards, Milton J. Rosenberg, Edward Tolman, and John B. Watson" (*University of Twente*, www.utwente.nl/cw/theorieenoverzicht/Theory (expectancy-value theory)).

If the expectation is important to us and we have a high level of certainty that it will come to fruition, the fact that we perceive that the expectation is based in reality makes it all the more difficult to cope with if that expectation is not met, and all the more satisfying if it is.

The Extent to Which We Perceive the Expectation Is Reality Based

The extent to which we perceive that an expectation is based in reality is the foundation upon which the difference between expectation and reality, and thus the resulting feelings of loss of relevancy and frustration, is based. If we believe that the expectation is realistic, then we become confident (if not assured, albeit self-assured) that our expectation will be met. If it is not, then we feel the loss of relevancy, presumably proportional to how confident we were that our expectation would be met. The extent to which we perceive that an expectation is based on reality is oftentimes based on factors outside of ourselves partly because we cannot know what the objective reality is. In turn, this is because (as mentioned) expectations are forward-looking. Analogous to the lyrics in the Carly Simon song "Anticipation" — "We can never know about the days to come But we think about them anyway, yay, ... Anticipation... is keepin' me waitin'."

Because expectations are forward-looking, there is an important temporal aspect to expectations. The further in the future that you expect the expectation to be fulfilled, the more potential there is for intervening factors to affect the expected outcome.

For example, if your expectation is to be able to safely cross the street, the time to satisfy that expectation is probably around 30s. Within those 30s, there are likely a limited number of factors that will likely influence the desired outcome. Contrast that to the California Angels' (presumed) expectation that Albert Pujols will be worth (to them) \$250 million over 10 years and the Florida Marlins' (presumed) expectation that Jose Reyes will worth (to them) \$106 million over a certain number of years. Upon what are these expectations based? The team's expectations are based on their analysis of their particular needs, how the decision makers perceive that the players will help the teams in the future, including, one would assume, attendance and other revenue streams, which are, in part, based on the relative success

of the team measured by how the team does in the playoffs. Baseball analysts have analyzed whether these will be good deals or “bad” deals for the teams. They have employed factors, including the age of the players, productivity based on age, and, of course, how the players have performed in their careers. All of which serve to highlight the fact that many factors come into play, particularly with the passage of time. Should we also be asking, what are Messrs. Pujols’ and Reyes’s expectations of themselves?

The same basic analysis applies equally to when an employer hires a worker and the worker agrees to work for the employer, as it does to Messrs. Pujols and Reyes. An employer will hire you based on her expectations of your performance, which, in turn, is based on your education and past experience juxtaposed to the new job description and needs of the employer. The most notable exception to expectation-based hiring is when the employer does a favor for a friend. A sort of, optimistically speaking, scientific-based lottery—what has happened before is a predictor of what will occur in the future. Put differently, the steps you take now will lead to a certain result.

But in fact is that so? To what extent is anything in the past a precursor, let alone a guarantor, of the future? When you have an expectation, especially an important expectation that is a question that you need to ask and answer.

In what we term the control factor of expectations people believe that they have control over certain things more so than others. Control, in an ideal world, would be if one could guarantee with 100 % certainty the fulfillment of an expectation—it is a basis for comfort that the expectation will occur. The issue is at what point does it become a false basis?

Let’s return to our crossing the street example. Just because you have crossed the street 1 or 1,000 times does not mean that you will make it safely across the street the next time. But you expect (probably subconsciously) that you will otherwise (all things being equal) you would not cross the street.

Let’s break it down. You look to see if the light is red and if cars are stopped. This equates to as much control as you have in that situation. Let’s compare to that the Los Angeles Angels and Mr. Pujols. What “control” does Mr. Pujols have? What “control” do the Angels have? Let’s throw injury into the equation—Mariano Rivera of the New York Yankees injured himself shagging fly balls (a routine that he apparently practiced for years). Undoubtedly, Mr. Rivera did not expect to injure himself doing his routine—a “freak” injury is unexpected.

The subjective perception of reality weighs heavily in our expectations. As we observed previously, expectations, by definition, have a basis in reality. Analogous to beauty being in the eye of the beholder, the perception of reality upon which an expectation is based is in the eye of the holder of the expectation. This is because people perceive subjectively. Granted that reality is not always a known quantity, because we may not know all of the facts. But expectations can only be based in reality as far as we know the facts. The issue here is whether our perceptions distort the facts and, therefore, distort our expectations—how we perceive the facts upon which our expectations are based, objectively for what the facts are or subjectively. There is a deeper level—the relevance of meaning of the facts to our expectation.

Even if we perceive the facts objectively, if our perception of the application of the facts to our expectation, for example, the impact of the facts on or their relative importance to our expectation, is subjective we will still do ourselves a disservice. Facts may of course change; therefore, the path to fulfillment of one's expectations may require flexibility to adapt accordingly. That assumes a realistic understanding and interpretation of the facts. The beauty, or perhaps challenge, is that facts and their application are rarely black or white. Rather, there is usually judgment involved, but perfect judgment is not always necessary; rather, at times a solid strategy (with some luck) suffices.

The combination of subjective perception, the fact that expectations are forward-looking or futuristic, and the potential for intervening factors, can form a formidable challenge to the fulfillment of one's expectations.

Some fans of the baseball Angels may expect Mr. Pujols to bat .300 and hit a record number of home runs. But other fans will be satisfied (read expectations met) if Mr. Pujols performs merely adequately with less stately statistics. Why the difference? Some Marlin fans may expect Mr. Reyes to win another batting title, have a superior fielding percentage, and steal his fair share of bases. But other Marlin fans may be satisfied if Mr. Reyes does not post more than an average set of statistics. What are the expectations of the decision makers who hired the ballplayers? How are they measured? Likely, they are measured differently than the fans.

Another factor is what we call the societal normative aspect of expectations. Actions occur in the usual course to the point that expectations are subconscious. You give more money than the advertised price you expect change. You say hello, you expect a response. You turn on an appliance you expect it to work. You cross the street you expect to make it to the other side. You eat and you expect not to get sick. Of course, this does not apply to our grander expectations. And here again, there is a temporal factor. Many of these are of short time frame.

Why are, or should, certain expectations be perceived as more tenuous than others? Because of the variety of factors and the potential effect that one or more of these factors has on the prospect of fulfilling the expectation, some of these factors cannot even be perceived when you are road mapping your plan toward the expectation. Another reason that time is such a critical element.

The Importance of Our Expectation to Us

The importance of the expectation to us is an exacerbating, or complimenting, factor to the extent to which we believe that the expectation is based in reality. For example, we do not expect to drop our BlackBerry when we take it out, let alone to lose it down the sewer or leave it on the seat in the subway. Dropping a mechanical gadget would likely have no importance to us so long as it continued to work. Dropping it onto the subway tracks, however, might well engender a telltale reaction in contrast to dropping a piece of gum. On a grander scale, if it is important for

one to become an astronaut, and he or she has engaged in a course of rigorous study to do so, failure might well be a significant blow.

John Greenleaf Whittier intoned “Of all sad words of tongue and pen, the saddest are these: what might have been” (Garret, 1897, p. 4). We are attracted to “what might have been” because “what might have been” are, or more poignantly were, our unrequited expectations, sometimes what we thought of as the very essence of ourselves that we did not meet. We look at ourselves in the mirror, wondering: “what might have been.” The world of what might have been is a comforting one, and that is why we are attracted to it. Because, although it is not real, it is, curiously though that is, somewhat fulfilling.

Henry David Thoreau poignantly put it this way: “The Mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation and go to the grave with the song still in them” (2008/1854). This quote captures one of the essences of the loss of relevancy. It is worse than “what might have been,” because the desperation is quiet and unchallenged—we are not doing anything about it; rather, we are accepting it—“it is what it is” is not comforting; rather, it is a malaise from which we cannot escape. To not have “a song within [you]” is a great frustration; to have never (or without real effort) tried to find the song within you is even more frustrating; to have contemplated, but not have found the song within you is possibly a greater frustration. But to have identified the song within you and have not—to your satisfaction—at least tried to sing it is probably the greatest frustration, even more so than having tried and failed. Lord Alfred Tennyson said, “It is better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all” (1850). And this is another essence of expectation. George Elliot said, “It’s never too late to become the person you might have been.”

The following poem by Eric Kreuter illustrates these points:

Realities and Aspirations

The cold, stark realities of life exist.
 They wake us up to a world of greed and wealth.
 Bitter and angry people surround us with a stare of suspicion.
 Yet freedom is just over the horizon, if we know where to look.
 We wake daily with beauty and warmth.
 First in us, then in others.
 Family and friends wait patiently, burning the candle of hope.
 Some of us will change our paths of life, others won't.
 Brought to believe that grief
 Comes in different shapes and forms.
 We can be transformed from a living death to life lived well.
 Longing to be free, opening our minds to the travel of dreams.
 In the end analysis, love shines abundantly within our souls.
 Our eternal brightness
 Illuminates the world as no mere sun can do.
 We thus aspire to inspire the uninspired
 Through our uniqueness.
 As such, we resound the majesty of the trumpet.
 No hurdle in life will ever be too large to climb.
 Active thriving replaces the passive notion of merely coping.
 Existence, therefore, requires us to succeed.
 As such, we must meet our destiny through process.

What we are today leads to tomorrow's discovery.
Plans will never substitute for spontaneity,
But good thinking always wins the battle over greed.

(Kreuter, 2005b, p. 1)

A Contrast Toward the Resolution of Expectations

Without expectations, how do we judge life? Is the quality of life dependent on meeting our expectations, “large” or “small?” Are expectations “legitimate” because they are our own? If one cannot satisfy one’s expectations, then what does one do? Is there a palatable substitute? Does “having tried and lost” suffice? There are those who adapt and a view of how one can change, but what about those who have not created their life choices or the path with which to achieve them? Is it ever too late? Is there another way? It is relatively simple to write about the problem, but what can be done? What can be done about it when one feels the black hole that is the loss of relevancy and perceives no long-term solution? When one feels that he or she no longer has a choice in career or personal life, but is instead trapped by it, the syndrome of dissatisfaction continues.

Expectations, Complacency, and Faith

We feel the loss of relevancy, but why then do we hesitate to do anything about it? Do we seek instant gratification or the desire for an immediate solution? We have not taken ourselves to where we want to be in our lives, but if we perceive that we had, we would not feel the loss of relevancy to the extent that we do. So we question the choice that we are about to make—what assurance is there that it will not lead to the same “dead end?” There is no such assurance. And in one sense that is the beauty of trying something as long as it fulfills us. Trying something so that we can sing the song before we go to the grave unfulfilled.

Too often we become complacent. It is easy to keep the mind and body at rest. This is, of course, much more challenging if you are starving or if you have goals because it may help motivate you to find new creative ways to obtain the foothold in the world that you want, or help you regain it, and will probably help you crystallize your goals toward achievement of greater success and improved mood. But first, we must examine what holds us back from our own success.

Complacency, as an art form, may occupy our being much like a parasite slowly depletes our health as it feeds off of us. Borrowing from the laws of physics: An object in motion tends to stay in motion; so too, an object (a person) at rest tends to want to stay at rest. It is for this reason that we invented the snooze button.

Adding the concept of tyranny to the equation, we can view the external force as caused by our own deliberate pattern of inaction, poor decision-making, and lack of

focus. It is different from the tyranny spoken of by Thomas Jefferson concerning the oppressive power of a nation over its people, but the effect is the same—control and stifling of freedom. When we do this to ourselves, we create an outward force invading our will and hurting our spirit's wish to become more than we are.

Such tyranny of complacency is fueled by daily doses of disappointment. We may fail an exam, become embroiled in an unsolvable controversy at work, lose our job, or become seriously ill with nobody ready, willing, or able to help us, even for the short term. As such, people become homeless or become bored or, worse, become severely depressed. How can we turn back the tide of destruction caused by such complacency?

Complacency sometimes takes a facially positive form—a release to the denouement of tension, for however important an issue that causes the pressure. There can come a time where, for objectively good reason or not—perhaps as a defense mechanism—a calm replaces the storm. Is it “really” avoidance or a needed respite? It is release, for however long. But until confronted and resolved, the issues do not go away—they are only sublimated.

Fundamentally, we must view ourselves as valuable and important human beings, equal in every real respect in terms of basic human rights. It is not a factor of financial net worth or fame or talent but starts with existence, merely being a breathing person. From there, of course, the stakes rise. We can (all of us) take stock in ourselves and consider ways to apply who we are, what we know how to do, how fast we can learn to adapt, and how much we want to succeed. Then we can choose missions to embark on and take appropriate risks. For the person who cannot get out of bed due to lethargy born of regular emotional beat-downs, fighting the urge to succumb to failure, he or she must rise, shake off the dust of sleep, clean up, and fight and claw for some minute measure of success in the 24-h period we call a day. This may mean a mini triumph of obtaining today's want ads and circling a few that look possible, then contacting one or two and, at least, making an effort to get an interview for a new job. If we look at finding a job as *the* job and attend to that well, the potential for success increases. By using the power of compounding, we must apply a consistent effort to forge our own new destiny.

What this means is a new attitude applied to an existing dilemma. We are not new but our attitude can be new. We can select an attitude of the day or week just as we select which socks to wear. Choosing a positive attitude more often than not should result in more positive events in our life. At the very minimum, the removals of glumness of a poor attitude will put people off less, resulting in greater attention in return. If we smile, the chances are someone will smile back. If we speak confidently, the chances are someone will recognize that we have something to say and some will actually listen. Getting people to listen is half the battle in creating a better world for ourselves. But when we rebel against our own best interest, we allow the fate of tyranny to become more powerful.

We are taught “rationally.” People are preoccupied by what can be proven. But science, even logic, cannot always disprove. We always want answers—and we want them now—but there is not always an answer to everything (e.g., we do not

yet know how earth was created or into what the universe is expanding, although we are advised that it is).

Life doesn't necessarily, or even often, portray as a linear, mathematically neat package. Neither should our expectations.

Faith does not teach us to fully understand; it teaches us to accept, especially when there are no answers. Faith that provides a person with insight into their soul may enable him or her to enjoy the present moment and strive to accomplish in this life because of a deep-seated sense of purposefulness and faith.

Faith can provide the person with a grounded sense of belongingness which may, itself, lead to a happier, more consistent life. The risk of losing one's spirituality may lead to feelings of loss of relevance.

Everything changes when a child finds out there is no Santa Claus. A child said to her parent one day, "Someone told me that there is no Santa Claus—is there?" To which her mother responded, "Do you think there is honey?" "Yes," the child replied. "Then there is," her mother said. "Yes, Virginia, there is a Santa Claus" represents hope.

Is tomorrow worth it? With tomorrow there is hope. Spirituality is a hope—humanity is certain. When a person loses hope, he or she loses everything. "The role of belief in healing can work both ways—a well-developed worldview is sometimes the best medicine against illness, while at the same time overly rigid habits, especially those involving lifestyle choice, can become the chronic cause of illnesses that are a long time in the making. In these terms, our beliefs can become a life-and-death matter" (Taylor, 1997, p. 46).

How does this help the parents of children who do not have jobs and do not know where the next meal may come from? What is it about words in the face of adversity—is it comfort, is it support, is it real, is it anything? Dollars are real but so are words. A place to live is real but so are words—so long as we give them meaning or at least work toward that end. For in this context, words themselves do not have meaning—our actions give them meaning. Words are the vehicle by which we communicate current thoughts, with possible lasting implications because those who act on the words give those words life. Pain is real, as John McCain knew all too well but so is spirit as he proved. We do not have to, and perhaps should not, set our expectations that high. But we can use words as the springboard for a purpose that is meaningful to ourselves.

People live lives based on expectation, desire, dreams, and hope. Hope uplifts the spiritual side, but hope must be supported by action. There is a poem entitled "Don't Quit" (Author unknown) that poignantly makes the argument that hope is necessary, but hope without effort is complacency and, therefore, bankrupt:

When things go wrong, as they sometimes will,
 When the road you're trudging seems all uphill,
 When the funds are low and the debts are high,
 And you want to smile, but you have to sigh,
 When care is pressing you down a bit,
 Rest, if you must, but don't you quit.
 Life is queer with its twists and turns,
 As every one of us sometimes learns,

And many a failure turns about,
 When he might have won had he stuck it out;
 Don't give up though the pace seems slow--
 You may succeed with another blow.
 Often the goal is nearer than,
 It seems to a faint and faltering man,
 Often the struggler has given up,
 When he might have captured the victor's cup,
 And he learned too late when the night slipped down,
 How close he was to the golden crown.
 Success is failure turned inside out--
 The silver tint of the clouds of doubt,
 And you never can tell how close you are,
 It may be near when it seems so far,
 So stick to the fight when you're hardest hit--
 It's when things seem worst that you must not quit.

The Expectation of Entitlement

Expectations are too often based on our belief that we are entitled to have them fulfilled even if we cannot fulfill them ourselves, that we are entitled to have that which we expect. We would not feel a loss of relevancy, or at least not feel it to the extent that we do, but for our feeling of entitlement. We have become accustomed to guarantees that, in turn, we allow to form expectations. If we did not have a level of belief that we should have something tangible in the first place, we rationally cannot decry its loss. The fact that we had something tangible a moment ago, let alone yesterday, provides no objective reason in and of itself that we should or are entitled to have it the next moment let alone tomorrow unless we own it.

But even “ownership,” given life’s realities, can be fleeting. The vagaries of life are too great. We prefer to perceive life’s vagaries through our subjective prism instead of external reality. “It can’t happen,” read it shouldn’t happen, is a relic of the past. Human tragedies in unthinkable levels have occurred; major institutional firms have gone by the wayside—it “can’t happen?” It has happened. The unexpected is the new reality.

If we have lost a job and cannot find another one, we feel a loss of relevancy. But let us examine more closely why. The only job that we truly “own” is one from which we cannot be relieved of by someone else and that does not exist. What if you are self-employed or the owner? Your bosses are the consumers of your product or service and they can relieve you by not buying it. Because we have lost something we had? Because we lost something that we need as a means to an end to provide sustenance? That is a very real, harsh, and practical consideration. It certainly may contribute to the feeling of loss of relevancy, but is not the loss of relevancy itself. Because we failed by someone else’s standards?

Or more importantly because we failed in our own mind—that is the true feeling of loss of relevancy—that we feel that we have lost relevancy to, or because of, ourselves. We have primarily not met our own expectations and, at least what should

be secondary, expectations of others. We have aggravated the feeling of loss of relevancy by permitting the expectations of others to influence our sense of loss of relevancy.

What do we “have?” Do we already have what we need? How does that form our expectations? And to what do we believe we are entitled? We have bought into a notion of entitlement. As well, we have permitted a sense of societal normalcy to influence (aggravate) that sense. By what right am I entitled to anything? Who wrote the book of guarantee?

There is a marked difference between fairness or “rightness” and guarantee or entitlement. As with most things, men make the rules as to who is entitled to what. The politician who does not bring home the pork if not the pig is the rare exception because we vote in our individual perceived self-interest. We are not here concerned with whether it is fair or right to be entitled to anything. Whether we are or are not does not necessarily inform whether we obtain it and thus meet our expectations; however, whether we think we are is quite relevant to the extent to which we perceive the expectation will be met, particularly if we have a sense of entitlement. Thus the resolution of expectations must come from elsewhere.

In one sense, it is not difficult—“it is what it is” may not be satisfying but it is reality. To be sure “reality” may at times be unclear, but in terms of the feeling of loss of relevancy, it is clear enough. We know it because we feel it, and we know why. The trick is to make an individual choice about whether one can do something about it.

We observed that people in the Dominican Republic subsist on bare necessities but are happy. Is this an example of being happy “for no reason?” Or is it an example of being happy to be able to experience life as it is? Life that appreciates things for what they are, which is a concept that is different from passively accepting that which does not make us happy or affirmatively makes us unhappy but about which we do to little or nothing. No one has the right to judge someone else’s contentedness, to say whether a person should or should not be content under her or his own circumstances. That is an individual feeling and an important point of satisfying an expectation and feeling relevant. It all depends on one’s priorities. One person may find true contentment from a bigger house or car or more money in the bank. Another may find it from a conversation with a friend. But so long as we are truly content, he or she cannot feel a complete loss of relevancy. It’s a truism, but time goes fast. Life is short. Appreciating the moment is underestimated, if not ignored, in our go-go, 24-h news, pressure-packed society, to our detriment. There is a common request interestingly made during an exercise class and at spirited musical religious service—bring yourself into the room, leave your problems at the door, they don’t affect you now.

Our problems nag at us. We feel better when we can truly let them go, even for the moment so long as we truly let them go and are completely absorbed into the moment—when we dance with our children, when we look up at the stars with our child in our arms, when we marvel at the wonder that we’re here, and when time slows down and we appreciate the moment. Is this overly emotional, unrealistic, or a way to appreciate life?

The feeling of loss of relevancy is ultimately based upon how YOU feel toward you. Your feelings toward society and how YOU believe society feels toward YOU certainly play a critical role. Note however the “you” in the equation—it begins, and ends, with you. It has to. You don’t have a job; you don’t have friends; you are destitute.

People crave companionship. Depending on how much you want it you will feel a loss of relevancy if you do not have it. How many times have we heard someone bemoan that someone else—their child for example or in particular—is unhappy, does not “have a life?” Society not only accepts that it is good to have companionship but expects it. The term “loner” or the approbation that comes with not being married or being first married “later in life” is exemplary. Being married later in life does not carry the stigma it once did. Likewise, for generations, it was a particular type of companionship that “society” accepted. Historically, parts of our society have heaped scorn and violence on homosexuals and interracial relationships.

How “bad” your situation is becomes relative to what your expectations are and what your sense of entitlement is. We spoke previously of life’s most basic expectations, like waking up the next morning and making it across the street. If you expect nothing then you have everything. So what do you “have?” You have yourself and right now and whatever else it is that you can build on toward fulfilling your expectations. That is all anyone has.

Are you not entitled to have expectations? You are entitled to think what you will and believe what you want. But that does not address the issue. And therein provides a point. What “society thinks” is constantly changing. So why should society’s mores necessarily be yours? Why should society’s changes be allowed to change your inner moral foundation? There is a vast distinction between laws that we are bound to and should follow to have a civilized functioning democratic society, but even then courageous people through civil disobedience ultimately affected societal change. That is not what we’re discussing here.

The issue here is your being comfortably in control of that universe called you. That is the essence of landing on your own two feet. Well “shouldn’t” I have it—companionship, for example, “that is an accepted part of life,” but whose life? Companionship is but one example of a societal expectation. We are not suggesting that anyone avoid companionship. We are suggesting that each person must make a considered and conscious decision where to draw the line on societal expectations and how they affect or impinge on your own.

Weighed upon by the sometimes seemingly constant pressure of society, there can be a very thin line between a sense of self, of internal calm, and the demon that is a feeling of loss of relevancy. We must constantly fortify ourselves against the loss because it can strike suddenly and from any direction.

Ultimately, only we can characterize our expectations. And ultimately only we can resolve them. We may have assistance and look for guidance in resolving them, but it is we who must resolve our expectations. I think therefore I am (Descartes) is the essence of the resolution of expectations. Our expectations are a product of our thought, our essence, the journey into self that comes with trying to find self-actualization

and fulfillment, including the fulfillment of our expectations. And that no one can take from you that which you do not wish to freely give, at least in terms of our inner identity. The question you could answer is whether the power of thought overcomes the power of expectations.

When we do have expectations, they are conscious or subconscious—those expectations that we actively and affirmatively think about as compared to those that we do not. From what you expect when you get out of bed in the morning, for the next moment, let alone the next hour or day, you have chosen which expectations you will consciously consider as compared to those that you will unconsciously accept (or implicitly reject). In our world, and the world outside of us with which we interact every day, we take actions based on our expectations and predicate our expectations based on our actions. But we only affirmatively think about certain of our expectations. Certain persons may, with a worldview, depend on it. Certain persons may not because their expectations are sublimated to a single, ultimate goal, based on instinctive action at the moment (e.g., survival in combat, rescuing hostages). Expectations are individualized, internalized, and, depending on the situation, influenced by others because, as people, we allow ourselves to be influenced by how we process information and stimuli.

Synopsis of this chapter:

1. Expectations confront us in many ways throughout life.
2. The failure to satisfy an expectation, subject to severity of importance, can dramatically impact our feelings of relevancy.
3. Expectations can dominate one's existence.
4. Reality measures expectations with hindsight.
5. Expectations have social, economic, and political ramifications.
6. Laws, and punishment for violating laws, are reflective of societal expectations.
7. Society tries to establish our expectations.
8. The feelings of loss of relevancy created as a result of a gap between a person's expectation and reality can manifest in many ways.
9. Some aspects of quality of life must be measured in the form of meeting expectations.
10. Expectations as contrasted with hopes, dreams, fantasies, and delusions.
11. According to expectancy-value theory, behavior is a function of the expectancies one has and the value of the goal toward which one is working.
12. Expectations are forward-looking, thus intervening factors become more prevalent the further in the future you look for expectations to be fulfilled.
13. Complacency can interfere with the process of striving to have expectations met.
14. It is important to apply a new attitude to an existing dilemma.
15. Faith can teach us to accept that which we cannot understand.
16. People live lives based on expectation, desire, dreams, and hope.
17. A sense of entitlement can lead to expectations, equating to false guarantees.
18. Only we can categorize our expectations.

Chapter 11

Application of the Enduring Attitude as a Key to Self-Improvement

The Experience of Emotional Pain Is Necessary

“It’s all too easy to become locked into a cycle of suffering and distress when you try to eliminate your feelings or become enmeshed in over-thinking” (Williams & Penman, 2011, p. 34). Emotional pain is often manifested in the experience of the void. When a person is not feeling relevant, such pain is normal and necessary. This pain provides a contrasting picture of what it feels like to be in a state of rhythmic harmony with the person’s world. “To experience joy, one must also be able to feel deep sorrow” (Morinus, 2011, p. 63). This is to say that the feeling of joy that is experienced by someone who has previously experienced feelings of great sadness—that joy can be sweeter and more intense, thus valuing experiences equivalent to richness.

As a bittersweet example, imagine the case of a woman giving birth to her first child in the same week when the woman’s parent is suffering a life-ending illness and is expected to die that same week. Joy and sorrow are not eternal enemies, nor are they common bedfellows, which exist in simulcast within a life. Instead, these polar opposites can be experienced in most people at different points in their lives, but also in fairly rapid succession, even within a single hour or day. For example, a person who is fired from his or her job at 10 a.m. on Monday morning may win the lottery that afternoon. The extra joy would be then directed related to the job loss. Similarly, a person who just landed the biggest deal of his or her life could be struck dead by lightning. That will certainly ruin the person’s day! “Being at peace and being who you are, that is, being yourself, are one” (Tolle, 2005, pp. 114–115).

Aside from sudden annihilation, the turning point from joy to sorrow or vice versa can be tricky. To some, being rich equates to happiness. However, even the definition of “rich” is different for different persons. According to one of the books making up the Jewish Oral Law, *Pirkei Avot* 4:1 answers the question in a surprisingly human way: “Who is rich?” is “The one who is happy with his portion.” “*Pirkei Avot* transmits the favorite mortal advice and insights of the leading rabbinic scholars of different generations” (Telushkin, 1991). Judaism and Christianity both

teach that happiness cannot be achieved through mere attainment of material things. In fact, Christ specifically explained to His disciples that it would be easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than it would be for a rich man (King James Bible, Matthew 19:24). An example is happiness without material things where the person's basic needs are met. Even the United States Declaration of Independence considered and promulgated life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Richard Cumberland, a seventeenth-century philosopher wrote in 1672 that promoting the well-being of our fellow humans is essential to the "pursuit of our own happiness" (p. 523). This theory is a science of finding happiness in non-material things.

Therefore, what we might wish to encourage the downtrodden is to pursue any improvement in their happiness by legal and moral means, using their own initiative and cunning to pave a new path through the dark cavities of an uncertain life. No mortal being can be assured of any particular future, even a future of 1 day by virtue of our common human mortality. Thus, the poor may outlive the rich, the unemployed may find sources of nonmonetary wealth not even within reach of their wealthy counterparts, and those feeling a current sense of nonrelevancy may rally to discover awakenings in their spirit sufficient to propel them into new dimensions in their own lives. The true mark of success, perhaps, may not be what a person accumulates in terms of possessions but may be measured by how much the person triumphed over their own despairs, foibles, and setbacks.

Commentary on Being 60+

Gerald Gladnick, a stockbroker, wrote the following (Gerald Gladnick, personal communication, April 22, 2012b):

When you are approaching and become over 60, the things you notice most are a drop in testosterone levels and aches in muscles you never knew you had. It's interesting that when you get older your sex drive dissipates. You tend to internalize this as it's only you.

To a lesser extent, a person 60+ has to admit that he doesn't have a future. The things you looked forward to from one week to the next years ago don't show up on the RADAR anymore. The cars, boats, motorcycles you wanted to have are no longer desired. You couldn't care less what kind of car you drive from an ego point of view. However, it may make a difference from the comfort viewpoint since your back hurts.

You reach 60 and finally have the money you always wanted, but nothing to spend it on. So you give it to or leave it to your kids. This always reminds me of the expression, "It's a shame that youth is wasted on the young". I look at the inverse and say, "It's a shame money is wasted on the old." I can't help but feel our liberals in Congress will wake up to this and somehow confiscate old peoples' money and redistribute it to the young, many of whom would prefer not to work for it anyway. This is why young people are irresistibly attracted to movements that want to redistribute wealth. Everybody's but theirs, of course.

Another drawback to aging is lack of purpose. It's easy for me to spot a guy who got laid off from a good career and can't get back on track. In desperation to work at anything to make money, get benefits and continue to have something to do with the productive human race is working in Burger King or Home Depot. They are extremely helpful and attentive almost to the point of being annoying. They also tend to speak a little louder than people who normally work in these places. They don't wish to be overbearing, but only want to regain the dignity and recognition they previously enjoyed.

Lack of purpose dovetails with the friends you've made over the years. When you stop working, it comes crashing down on you that all your friends were business related. Remove the career and you remove the commonality. There's no boss, subordinates or company to complain about. As I've told many a difficult person at work that you spend more time with your co-workers than you do with your family. The message being that they should be more pleasant and cooperative.

In summary: getting old often sneaks up on you. I have an uncle who led a very exciting and dangerous life. He was retired in an over 55 community. He once said to me that he discovered, in hanging around with the old guys, that those most afraid of dying were the ones who never lived at all.

Perhaps living a full life includes the necessary reductions in physical capability and loss of some portion of cognitive ability although some reaching levels of dementia separating them from their prior levels of normal existence. Living a day at a time may mean, optimally, deriving the maximum value of that day's existence, appreciating the very opportunity to have such a day, and taking in the good and the bad as both, still, being alive. Even the bad days set the stage for the next new day. Of course, in cases where the bad day is really a very bad day, tomorrow and the day after tomorrow may be predictably negative experiences, but it is still living. When one considers the contrast between death and living a bad day, the vast majority would find the bad day superior to the death state.

This concept of living in the happiness of the moment of just being alive and taking advantage of what is possible while suffering through the rough spots as a noble soldier of fortune in your own life may be enough to relax the soul to try to make bad into good, good into better, and better into best. However, in some cases, the enemy of "good" is "better" in the sense that we can be unhappy with the state of something even if it is if there is any meaningful potential for it to be even better.

Synopsis of Chapter

1. Emotional pain during feelings of loss of relevancy is normal.
2. Joy and sorrow, as experiences, comprise a full life.
3. The turning point from joy to sorrow or from sorrow to joy can be complicated.
4. Happiness is not guaranteed, but a rightful pursuit of all humans.
5. The true mark of success may be measured by how much the person triumphed over their own despairs, foibles, and setbacks.
6. A full life may, naturally, evolve into one where the person experiences reductions in physical capabilities and loss of some portion of cognitive ability.
7. Even a difficult and challenging day is still life.
8. The potential for something to be better should not downplay the positive aspects of that same thing being only good.

Chapter 12

Conclusions

Individuals can break free of their morass and get through the void in order to triumph and learn to thrive again. Rex (Chap. 6) refers to this as getting back on the “game-board of life.” Commitment is necessary to change, desire for transformation, and, in some cases, the need for intervention from a skilled therapist, a motivated mentor, or an effective coach. A person may be able to achieve substantial and sustainable change on his or her own. However, a professional helper may add the element of accountability to ensure the continuation and the transformation. In my volunteer work with incarcerated females, I discussed at length the importance of creating a healthy support network in order to help the released “ex-prisoner” to navigate through the many predictable hurdles new freedom will doubtlessly bring.

“What does meaning mean? It means being able to make sense of an event or situation. It means that one can eventually find some logic, coherence, or rational reasoning about what has happened” (Boss, 2006, p. 74). Beyond the questions asked in this book about resilience and relevancy, perhaps the overriding question must be asked about connections to one’s God. “It appears that during luminal moments—times when a human being comes to the edge of regular experience and senses the boundaries of life—God’s presence is most often felt” (Shapiro, 2012, p. 36). Creating new solid grounding in one’s life may involve connections with one’s acknowledged God. But even the atheist will do better forging lasting connections to other people.

What runs counter to helping a person regain his or her forward momentum is his or her own degree of pessimism. Through adaptation of the therapeutic ideas presented in this book, whether administered by a friend, a mentor, a coach, or a trained therapist, some aspects of the person’s pathology can be attenuated. The desirable outcome of partial transformation is movement toward complete change, as life involves living as a process. At least, achievement of the level of change a person would be happy with can be considered “complete.” Without doubt, every person is equally deserving of effort to help them along this process.

The internal struggles will always be present in any life. It is how effectively we deal with them that will define us and will evidence our resilience. By increasing resilience, we can more ably resolve life's persistent problems. In turn, forging deeper connections to others, groups, causes, and other endeavors, we can improve our sense of relevance. It is the relevancy that matters most.

Chapter 13

Afterword

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In a world of constant change, the experience of loss is inevitable, but disastrous psychic consequences arising from it sometimes are not. Although felt loss may give rise to a sense that meaning and relevancy, too, are gone, some people manage to find an inner strength that allows them to weather the storm and reintegrate into life's flow. Other people, in contrast, become paralyzed. They may be further traumatized, moreover, by their observations of more resilient people who, having experienced comparable loss, nevertheless, move forward with their lives.

What determines whether a particular person will find the strength to recover after suffering a profound loss? What allows one person to extricate himself from despair's grip, but not another? Are the psychic resources upon which the resilient rely capable of being developed by everyone and, if so, how, and in what circumstances? We introduce some thoughts on this topic with two poems, the first addressing the experience of loss of a child and the second the loss of a lover.

A Fly's Eye View of Somalia

The disease wind swirls, fly black, enveloping
The nameless, skeletal mother
Close to breast, she holds her small, brightly colored
Rag-wrapped someone
Beneath the red-stain tatters, wiping away the ineluctably
Ravenous grains
Still silently caressing, with twig-weak limbs and
Hopeless loving glances
Soon only the flies will be left here, their million
Fly-eye images
Reflecting a sea of wind-whipped
Shreds of rag – and
Sands that have absorbed countless mothers'
Half-waterless tears
Beneath their own, final
Suffocating
Embrace.

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Only Her

Wanderer of your endless corridors of memories
 With their cracked and angular realities
 Their shattered mirrors and
 Columns of impenetrable mist
 The ancient cathedral still rises before your
 Inward eye, there, in the midst of delirium, where
 Subjectivity dissolves, erasing your name
 But not her name, no, never hers
 Adrift in the endless
 Blue of crystals
 Adrift in the transparencies of
 Fountains
 Wanderer of the halos of being your eyes still
 Strain to pierce the petrified smoke
 As echoes of her nearly silent
 Footsteps emerge in your oblivion
 And there, as the mist begins to glow
 There as the ground begins its slow thaw
 There as the intractable slowly becomes
 Tractable
 In the deepest delirium of your
 Nearly forgotten memories . . .
 In the purple guilt of the night
 You still see only her . . .
 Only her.

Philosophical and Psychological/Sociological Problems of Meaning

Preliminarily, we distinguish solutions posited by philosophers responding to what is sometimes referred to as the “philosophical problem of meaning” from what we refer to, here, as the “psychological-sociological problem of meaning.” The former arises from the intuition that human beings are fundamentally distinct from the world, alienated from it and each other, completely alone. Separation from the world, in this view, is a structural feature of reality. Our lives lack meaning not because of the loss of objects or people but because nothing does or should be understood as providing any real meaning, in the first place.

The psychological-sociological problem of meaning focuses on psychological difficulties arising from aftermath of the loss of a valued person, object, or condition, one who or which may have been largely constitutive of the person’s day-to-day reality. From a therapeutic perspective, the most important question is what steps, if any, can be taken to bolster such a person’s resilience? How can the person having suffered loss regain a positive sense of himself, his life, and role in the world?

From the perspective of the philosophical problem of meaning, efforts to address the psychological-sociological problem may seem a specious “quick fix” covering,

not resolving a deeper problem. The person suffering a loss of meaning or relevance might feel “better” in response to a therapeutic program, for example, but a recalcitrant, structural irrelevance lies just around the corner. The best to be hoped may be an understanding of the human condition, and, perhaps, finding a means to deal with the realization that reality is, at bottom and at best, utterly neutral to human existence.

Our thesis, however, is that solutions to the philosophical problem of meaning may positively inform discussion of practical, therapeutic strategies designed to help people suffering a sense of lost relevance. We outline well-known positions of several philosophers in the theistic and nontheistic traditions of European existentialist and American pragmatic thought, as a prelude to discussion of how their insights may inform certain therapeutic strategies.

Four Philosophers on the Philosophical Problem of Meaning

In the nontheistic existential tradition, the early existentialist, Friedrich Nietzsche, argued that because there is no God (he famously declared in his major work that “God is dead”), there is no ultimate foundation for meaning or values, especially not the type institutional religions proffer. Nevertheless, he argued some people can, by virtue of their creativity, personal gifts, and superior biology, create their own values, independent of the systems of meaning societies impose on members. As creators of their own standards of good and evil, the godless universe is, for Nietzsche’s “superman,” a canvas on which those capable of transcending convention can paint their own affirmations of existence. Such men would, as he put it, dance on the edge of the abyss, with the quality of their lives intensified by dint of their own efforts, allowing them to transcend a “herd morality.” The death of God that Nietzsche announced would be, as he said, the springboard for the “superman” to leap to a higher form of human, overcoming man and nihilism in one single act of self-creation.

In the Christian existentialist tradition, Soren Kierkegaard worried that if God does not exist, all values lack ultimate meaning. If one’s values turn out to be transient, human creations of no cosmic significance, then every person’s life, too, will be meaningless. Christianity presented a unique solution to Kierkegaard’s “fear and trembling” and “sickness unto death.” Posit the existence of God. Freely choose to passionately believe in God, particularly if doing so flies in the face of human rationality—take a “leap of faith.” The true “knight of faith,” Kierkegaard thought, would be driven to make that leap to seek solace for a soul tortured by the possibility that existence is utterly pointless.

The solution for the Christian is God’s mystery, the Trinity, specifically, his commitment to something beyond and inconsistent with logic. Because the logic of the Trinity is contrary to reason, the believer’s act of faith intensifies his “inner passion,” his psychic experience allowing the believer to deal with a profound sense of dread arising from the possibility that God may not be the ground of being. When the believer makes Kierkegaard’s leap (hopefully into the arms of a waiting God),

he, of course, knows God may not be there to catch him. If he falls, the abyss will swallow his existence, and life will turn out to have been as meaningless as he thought. Intensification of the Christian's inner passion, brought into being by a freely chosen act of faith, allows the believer to deal with the possibility his worst fears are true.

In the nontheistic pragmatist tradition, the American philosopher, John Dewey, viewed meaning (and meanings) as functions of shared, community values. Dewey believed the benefits religious people attribute singularly to religious faith are present in the experience of people living in close, humanistic relationships in their communities. Meanings, for him, do not derive from sources outside the natural order of human experience and are not found in "leaps of faith." Human experience, itself, has an "aesthetic" quality which is a potential source of meaning in reflective individuals' lives. As people grow to adulthood, their values and meanings, evolving over time in response to changing circumstances, help people address the concrete problematic situations they face each day. Lack of an ultimate, nonnaturalistic foundation for value or meaning was not a problem for Dewey. Lack of an absolute foundation allows meanings to evolve and aid in the development and continuation of communities and entitled to a presumption of current, practical usefulness. Like natural organisms evolved to better respond to their environments, extant meanings and values, having survived so far, have a historical pedigree. Similar to legal systems which require respect for and application of legal precedents, society's meanings and values have proven their worth. As with scientific hypotheses that inevitably will be superseded by theories that better accommodate new data and replace falsified theories, instrumentally superior meanings and values replace those in current use, not a fact to be bemoaned but applauded.

William James was a psychologist, philosopher, "radical empiricist," and philosophical pragmatist. Like Dewey, he believed instrumental knowledge derives from human experience, but his concept of "experience" was "radical" in that he believed mystical or religious experience (of God or other supranatural objects) could be just as valid a source of human knowledge (and meaning(s)) as traditionally understood sensory knowledge. James argued that the individual could be rational in accepting a religious hypothesis (e.g., the existence of God, heaven, or transcendent meaning(s)) if that belief worked in his life. "Working," in the pragmatist tradition, is broadly understood in psychological and philosophical terms, and pragmatic "truths" are not absolute statements of fact corresponding to a "state of affairs" in the world, but propositions the individual accepts because they allow him to effectively deal with changing, experienced conditions. Because meaning(s) serve a pragmatic function, they are, for Dewey and James, "instrumental hypotheses." For James, meanings and values one adopts will be "true" for a person where, in a broad sense, they "work" in that person's life.

Summarizing, Nietzsche argued creativity in defining one's meanings and values, regardless of society's views, allows the person suffering existential anxieties to find a self-created meaning in a godless universe. Kierkegaard's leap of faith, in

the face of contrary evidence and logic, is Christianity's proposal for dealing with the realization that God may not be there to save man or his values. For Dewey, provisional acceptance of society's values is a rational, naturalistic solution to the problem of philosophical meaning, whereas, for James, faith in the religious or nonreligious object (or hypothesis) may be justified so long as the beliefs in issue remain "workable" within the believer's global corpus of beliefs. So creativity, the ability to act in faith, notwithstanding risk, acceptance of values and meanings as rational guides to future action, and the rational ability to believe, where doing so has instrumental value, are their solutions.

The Psychological-Sociological Problem of Meaning

Hierarchies of relevances structure human lives, helping to define who we are and what commitments we make. "Relevance" connotes importance and what we perceive as "important" is a function, broadly speaking, of our own life histories. Because societies self-organize in ways which facilitate their continuation, society's members are rewarded when they are perceived as contributing to a community's continuation. Self-perception of relevance has a social and pragmatic basis as one is likely to perceive himself as relevant and important to the extent he perceives his contribution to the community comports with the community's ideas of what conduct is valuable. A sense of relevance is a likely by-product on one having internalized society's values, in this regard.

The loss of one's means of support and one's inability to replace it, for example, may impair or destroy the individual's sense of self-worth. No longer contributing to society, the jobless person may view himself as a drain on its limited resources. Under American cultural norms, including its long history of rugged individualism and its lauding of the person who provides for his family and succeeds or dominates in business, careers are largely constitutive of who we are.

When a career is lost, it may have devastating consequences. It may, for example, result in severing business and social connections, derailing forward momentum in one's career, and impairing the effective use of one's resources to alter the current situation. Rather than feeling a sense of integration in society, the person may experience detachment, a sense of being alone and a stranger in the world. Life may seem an aimless struggle, a floating through time where the individual, adrift, is unable to take what might seem to be reasonable steps to try to change the status quo. No longer perceiving himself important to society, his previous sense of relevance disappears, connections attenuate, and meaning, as a consequence, unsurprisingly, dissipates.

"Resilience" connotes a person's capacity to recover from loss. Resilient people seem to be able to continue to feel connected and relevant even where circumstances suggest feelings of detachment might predominate. How can someone suffering from feelings of a lack of relevance or meaning arising in such situations be helped? We discuss several therapeutic strategies in light of the philosophical

insights discussed above and suggest ways in which they may inform and enhance the effectiveness of therapeutic strategies discussed below.

Achievement and Self-Worth: Attitude, Goals, and Actions

Feelings of self-worth and meaning arise naturally from our experience of love, friendship, and the fruits of our creative efforts. The setting, pursuit, and attainment of goals contribute to the development of feelings of self-worth, and such feelings are fostered by accomplishing goals we set. Achievement makes patent that positive change is possible, regardless of current adversities. Acceptance of the serious possibility of success may, in fact, be a first step to increasing resilience. Nietzsche lauded the concepts risk, creativity, and danger. Kierkegaard viewed the risk and danger of his leap a necessity for Christian salvation. For both of them, risk-taking was both a sign of strength and a source of joy, notwithstanding an omnipresent possibility of disaster. For Dewey and James, creative, instrumental solutions are how we rationally approach fashioning strategies to increase the chances of attaining self-directed goals, notwithstanding the omnipresent risk of failure. Encouraging creative solutions and problem solving, bounded by pragmatic knowledge, and as the title of one of James' essay says, the "Will to Believe," may help the person suffering a loss of meaning realize his situation is not hopeless.

Trying new strategies, creating new solutions to current problems, and taking risks will likely be part of the afflicted person's recovery. Helping to identify solutions most likely to result in incremental successes is critical as success frequently breeds success, and more ambitious goals may be pursued with some sense of optimism if initial success is achieved. Dewey and James were, as indicated, believers in rational problem solving. Dewey wrote of man's experience in nature as a series of efforts to solve "concrete problematic situations," and his pragmatism, generally, is optimistic and goal directed.

The mentor, coach, or friend should encourage the person suffering a loss of meaning to develop a pragmatic program to accomplish short-term, relatively easily accomplished goals. Small accomplishments may help rebuild self-esteem and, with it, feelings of relevance and meaning. Focus on the past should not be overemphasized as these may be counterproductive; however, the past cannot be ignored, entirely, as consideration of past failures may facilitate avoiding unworkable, past-tried strategies.

Because the ability to exercise control over some significant domain of one's experience may impel action, it is important that such areas be identified. If we feel competent in our lives, we can afford to think of other people, but if fixated on our failures, a sense of paralysis may result.

The idea should be to foster efforts to rationally and actively effect change, inside and out, and to help develop a positive attitude regarding the possibility of effective action, in pursuit of reasonably attainable goals.

Identity and Self-Worth, Independent of Achievement

To describe a person as “resilient” is to attribute to him a personality trait that describes how he has responded historically to negative experiences. It usually means he has shown sufficient resources to effectively address adverse events and the psychic, economic, or social consequences to which they give rise. Loss, to the resilient person, does not define him, and irretrievable damage, in many cases, is no necessary consequence of experienced adversity.

People’s worth in society is often defined by what they do and what they earn. Other sources of value obviously exist, but empirical data indicates material well-being is and has been an increasingly dominant factor in the way American society and its members assess other people’s value. This has been the case for decades, and for this reason, unsurprisingly, it has become an increasingly important factor, generally, in the formation of one’s sense of personal identity. From a therapeutic point of view, it is important for the person suffering from a loss of meaning to understand that while goal-directed action in the world has a strong tendency to generate positive feelings, the experience of being conscious and a member of society has value, regardless of what a person accomplishes. But how does the person who has suffered a loss shift from a likely abstract assent to the proposition that value and self-worth exist independently of material success (or the persistence of cherished objects, including people) to a causally efficacious realization that life itself has meaning, when meaning has already disappeared?

Focus may be directed on past contributions or future possibilities of productive action, but effort should focus on enhancing the recognition that the ability to experience life, in and of itself, the ability to help others, if one so chooses, and the capacity to reach beyond the confines of one’s own subjectivity are valuable, in themselves. The past does not wholly determine the future, and return of a sense of meaning and relevance is not irretrievably precluded merely because current circumstances are problematic. Focusing the person who suffers loss on his potential to act in and impact the world, in positive ways, independent of material achievements (or lack of them), may help avoid a naturally narcissistic focus on current, severe problems. It underscores the present possibility that meaning may yet be found, regardless of past success or failure, in a manner not contingent on the outcome of life’s vicissitudes.

For Kierkegaard, the free choice to engage in self-directed action creates the possibility of salvation regardless of the state of his current anxiety, and for Nietzsche, human choice creates meaning by an act of will. Their solutions derive from the subject’s identity and consciousness, not achievements. For Dewey and James, all people have inherent value. In “The Will to Believe,” James argues man’s willingness to believe, even where a particular outcome is underdetermined by traditional sensory experience, can be the means by which he saves himself.

From a therapeutic perspective, the potential for meaning inheres in human creative capacities and the possibilities it creates. Recognition by the person suffering loss that such capacities exist should be encouraged and focus on creative problem

solving, and potentiality can provide a source of optimism, even in particularly adverse, current circumstances. Because such potential exists in everyone, it should be a cornerstone of efforts to repair a lost sense of meaning.

Accountability of the Individual

Accountability for one's conduct is a form of connectedness bridging the gap between one's inner experience and the world around him. Kierkegaard's so-called knight of faith, the person who makes his leap, was fully accountable for his own act of faith in affirming God's existence. For Nietzsche, every individual is accountable for either accepting his culture's morality and inauthentic values or creating his own and whether or not he will transcend society. For Dewey, the individual bears responsibility for realizing his potential as a member of society, and for James, every person has the freedom to rationally decide what he will believe, guided by beliefs that have worked for him in the past. Fostering accountability should be a primary goal of any program designed to foster a sense of relevance and meaning. The person suffering from a loss of meaning and perceived irrelevance may be inclined to blame other people, organizations, or events for his situation. Where such a person comes to understand he is accountable for his life and to take steps to address his circumstances no matter what adversities life's vicissitudes present, he will be more likely to recover what he has lost.

Conclusions

The following poem addresses the subject of lost meaning, the possibility of optimism, and the limits of human reason.

A Chained Melody

Endless array of thoughts -- Eternity's
 Cold embrace locks 'round you like a tomb
 But in the womb of your mind
 Behind your blackest mirror
 Behind the ice-images of derelict ships
 Half-sunk in your own stagnant seas
 Eternity's endless liquid still flows there
 Like sunlight, through darkest green crystal
 Souls quench their thirst there
 Impossibly free
 And as the perfection of imprecision
 Becomes your own lyric
 And as time's terrible torment becomes
 Your own-chained melody
 Wonder -- if all motion is illusion, as Zeno says,
 Time and change, too, must be illusions. . .

Do you hear the laughter at all our
Quantifications?
Can you string-along your own
Chained melody – in eleven dimensions?
The bells chime without reason
How attenuate human cognition.

Appendix A

Stage Play: Convicted Transformation

Every human being is an artist and in the moment of creation, we are at our most sane, most healthy, and most fulfilled. – Robert Alexander, founder of Living Stage Theatre



CONVICTED TRANSFORMATION

A Stage Production written by Eric Anton Kreuter and Cathleen Marie Kreuter
Original music by Mathew Kreuter

Overview of production:

This is the fictional story about five female convicts at Brookside State Prison, who have a chance to transform their lives from a pattern of criminality to one of good citizenship, where they can contribute to society. Their process of transformation is aided by a counselor at the prison who opens up their awareness of their inner strength and helps them develop a more dynamic approach to life. The story also depicts several guards and a Lieutenant, who themselves are going through a process of transformation along with the women.

The stories are individually-based combined with a rehabilitative element as seen through the group process. The play combines direct dialogue, short narrative readings and is designed for musical accompaniments to the prose, all describing the struggle to change. But one of the women does not transform. Instead, she rejects the notion of change and is denied parole.

Artwork

Prior to Act 1 – Introduction with the scene being the outside barbed-wire fence surrounding the ugly gray-washed concrete and steel prison building. The inmates who are getting ready to be released are roaming in and out of the opening in the fence with the guards watching over them. A song plays, written by Matthew Kreuter – “Serenity:”

Now I feel free
High on clouded dreams
Vision brings clarity
Flying high on broken wings
I hear the song I live to sing
Freedom when truth begins
A calm comes over me
I can feel the energy
As I Escape serenity
Contrast it lights the screen
The vision in my dream
It breeds uncertainty
The light that's shining through
Forever glowing bright as you
Now I feel free and true
A calm comes over me
I can feel the energy

As I escape ...
 As I escape serenity
 Whoa...serenity

Act 1: In the Classroom

Musical theme: Dark, haunting melody – orchestra

Backdrop:

The stage lights focus their beams in sequence on each of five female inmates. Each woman introduces themselves, not aware of the presence of the others. They tell their individual stories as to how they got to Brookside State Prison.

The opening scene takes place in a classroom building near the prison yard, just before dusk at the end of a warm spring day. It is peaceful and the guards stand around muttering to each other, looking bored and playing with their weapons. The women are dressed in unattractive dark green shirts and long drab-green pants. Their prisoner number is worn as a patch on the top left front of the shirt.

Each woman is illuminated in spotlight and begins to briefly tell her story, followed by a song or spoken word. Everyone is silent as the women share their story. After each woman speaks; the spotlight slowly fades; then illuminates on a different inmate.

Cephelias – age 27, third parole violation. Crime: prostitution and drug possession; original sentence is 2–4 years. Served 3, however, she received a new charge and now has 2 years to serve. (Serenely): I was born at home and raised in a cramped apartment in a rundown row house in a poor neighborhood. My mother was unemployed. My father was only able to get odd jobs. Both of my parents didn't even complete High School. My father was a dope-smokin' addict. I think he may also have sold drugs. My sister and brother each had different fathers. Hell, not that either stayed around to support momma. We weren't just poor; we was dirty! We had nothin', but we did have hope. Why? I don't know.

Cephelias:

Song: *This ain't no way to heaven*

While this ain't the way to heaven, I hope it's not the way to hell.
 I got nowhere else to go, so I'll just stay where I am, oh well.
 Life on the inner streets is rough enough, too much to really tell.
 The lesson I quickly learned from momma is – I got a body to sell.
Note: she has her hands on her hips while saying this.
 One day I got busted for doin' drugs, just like my daddy did.
 I had no place to go, just drifting along ever since I was a kid.
 My life in the can is a complete horror and shock.
 One option is to just die right now. I am stuck just like a rock.

Dorothea – age 32, Crime: burglary; sentence is 4–12 years. (Sarcastically): My sad little story takes place after I married a low-down loser, two-timing prick. He set me

up to clean rich people's houses and taught me how to clean them out of jewels at the same time (Note: said with a sly grin). The thing that pissed me off is that he kept all the booty for his-self. I just got the rap and a state bid of 2–4. I should have known better. Why did I marry that bum?

Dorothea:

Song: *Then; now, and how*

Then, I was, and what I was – was bad.
 And I was *very* bad.
 People used me and made me very mad.
 And I was very mad!
 I stole and lied and all it made me was sad.
 And I was so *very* sad.
 All I wished for was a stable mom and dad.
Was that too much to want?
 But now I am and that is pretty great.
 I hated my life, but that was another state.
 I can appreciate my life now, at any rate.
 Rules are followed and I am never late.
 I wish life will become what I wish it to be?
 A better me and then some, you will see.
 Educated, calm; no longer about me.
 Someday I will reach my chosen destiny.

Lynda – age 40. Crime: DWI (repeat offender). Serving 3 ½–6 years. (Angrily): I was the cool child of more uptown-type folk. Sure, I had good threads, and a nice home, but I had to get me some action. I got a DWI and 2–4 years in the can. They tell me I have a drinking problem, but I don't agree. I also like to steal. No discrimination: I took from everybody and anybody. I was restless. I found out where the bad homies hung and snuck away to find me some boy-trouble. I soon learned that they would pay for sex. They would pay a lot for sex (smiling). And I sure supplied their needs. And drinking was a way for me to release that wild child in me. I could drink all night. Not everybody agreed with my attitude, but who cares what they think, telling me I can't drink and drive. I'll show them. They don't know who they are messing with. I'm better than all of them. They are all so beneath me. But at least I can still score some pills and get my sexual needs fulfilled up in here.

Lynda:

Song: *Dormancy*

Dormant like a lifeless, frozen, useless pond.
 Unyielding to the warm midday sun.
 Spring is not so near, but just beyond the view.
 The spider rests now, its web not yet spun.
 Feelings hardened by winter's harsh weather.
 Embraced by icy tranquility with no respite from the cold stares of others.
 Snow-covered fields of golden heather cover-up what was once beautiful.
 Proven thoughts of my iniquity – reminders of the hell I am in.
 A broken spirit may not quickly mend.

Thorns may not yield full truce with a rose even blooming.
 Blue skies give way to what clouds will send and send fiercely.
 Ant hills remain in flattened repose, which when rebuilt to be torn down again.
 When will the fragile tulip pierce the softened surface?
 Life's vulnerabilities are vast and devastating.
 Can the robin find its new purpose despite the loss of the nest?
 Will it produce young just like the past?

April – age 38. Crime: grand larceny-first degree, serving 6–12 years. (Curiously): My life was stable and happy until my son got into trouble. He needed real help, but nobody ever cared or offered to do anything. I had a good job as a clerk in a jewelry factory and stayed late most days. My boss thought I was a great worker. He stared at my butt a lot, must have thought I was a big asset to the company (said while turning around and patting herself on the rear end). I soon discovered that the keys to the vault were kept in an unlocked drawer. I thought about taking some of the goods, but was afraid to get caught. I couldn't go to the cops because they would arrest my boy. But, 1 day they threatened to beat him up so I did what needed to be done, and now, I am in this place. Go figure!

April:

Spoken word: *Who am I inside?*

Reflecting the true me requires courage.
 I seek approval of others, but do I really need their approval?
 Can I be my own person?
 What is this urge I feel inside?
 It comes from a deep place.
 This struggle consumes so much energy in my life.
 Do I get closer to it or move farther away and hide?
 Can I control this urge and find a better way?
 Will I become aware of whom I am?
 I want to see the real me.
 I can face whatever I find in the mirror.
 My self-worth is borne of my own attitude and feeling.
 With sight I can make the required changes.
 Not blinded by repression or defeat.
 I can reinvent myself if I choose.
 The main voice I listen to is my own.
 I can also choose to listen to my Higher Power.
 My path may be set, but I choose the steps.
 Each one brings me closer to destiny.
 I exist and I can be happy.
 Nothing will shackle my mind against my will.
 I can create wherever I am.
 I will make a good choice today.

Brenda-Li – age 34. Crime: grand larceny. Serving 1–3 years for her first conviction. (Thoughtfully): I was just a child when I learned the con game. My older brother showed me how to boost so I'd go to stores and take home many items I thought were free for the taking. I never thought this was wrong because he made me think of it as a game. What I did not consider is that the cost of those free items was my own

freedom. I never learned a lesson from running in and out of county jail. I figured just don't get caught next time! I've never done time like this. I don't know how I'm going to make it through this state bid. If I get out I'm never coming back.

Brenda-Li

Song: *Choices*

When there are choices in life, which to choose?
 Good ones are okay, but bad ones mean you lose.
 How do you tell the difference, I only abuse.
 Hard lessons in life are much more than a muse.
 Find me a way, oh God of mine.
 I pray for new life, ask you the Devine.
 I lost my way, no reason to whine.
 Keep me straight when I get out of line.
 Which way to turn, this or that?
 What to wear, a scarf or a hat?
 I don't want to think; it's too much work.
 All this temptation, I'm going berserk!

Song (all inmates):

Repair Turns to Hope

I.

How can I ever hope to live
 When all I do is die?
 Inside this place I can't survive.
 Each day I wake and cry.
 Ref.

I turn deep within myself
 When the season turns to rain.
 Turn to me in true hope and say.
 I want to share your pain.
 I will survive.

II.

I will survive.
 Can't lose my hope – no way!
 Hope is on the other side
 Of times forgotten, yesterday.
 Through the test when time elopes
 I'll turn despair to hope.

III.

When I can see the shining light
 Perhaps I'll find my way.
 One thing I know I've got to try.
 I simply cannot stay.

Act 2: In the Cells

Backdrop:

The count is over and the officer just unlocked the doors and the women are preparing for yet another night in the prison system. The inmates are near their cold,

stark cells. They are each doing different things with the little time they have before lights out; some grasp the solid metal bars and look forlorn. It is the end of another long and boring day. Lynda decides to take a shower before going to Rec. Dorothea and Brenda Li decide to go to Rec. for an hour to shoot pool. Cephelias is going to watch TV in the day room. April is in her room, feeling really depressed. And it shows.

An officer yells: Movement option! (There is a 15 min period for movements throughout the jail).

Dorothea and Brenda are signing out to go to Rec. D asks B where's Lynda I thought she was going out? B says she's in the shower and anyway she talks too much let's just leave her.

(Just as they were walking out, Lynda walks by in her robe saying, "Wait don't leave me," and they just laughed and kept walking)

Cephelias is on her way to the day room when she passes by April's room and stops and asks her "What's wrong?" April says : "Nothing, I'm fine" and Cephelias says "Ok" and as she walks away she bumps into Lynda asked April the same thing Cephelias asked and April says "I'm ok, just fine, now leave me alone" (then April goes into her poem):

Meanwhile Lynda is in her room thinking what she regularly thinks every night. "They all hate me because I'm beautiful," as she gets dressed in her state greens. (Then she goes into her poem)

Cephelias is in the day room not even watching TV just staring out the window (then she goes into her poem).

Dorothea and Brenda Li are walking back from Rec. when Dorothea says: "You know you still owe me two packs right? I need them."

Dorothea: You know, you still owe me two packs.

Brenda Li: two packs of what?

Dorothea: The two packs I lent you a month ago

Brenda Li: "Oh those; well don't worry about me I'm about the only one that pays you back."

Dorothea: What do you mean by that?

Brenda Li: Just keep walking or we'll be late for the count.

All inmates:

Song: *How will I ever be free?*

Dorothea (once inside her cell):

Every dull day seems the same to me.
Wake up early for counts, stand in line.

Lynda:

Do my boring job, one day I'm free.
Meals are simply the same all the time.

Cephelia:

When will I see the light of the moon?
Count the bright stars across the sky.

Brenda-Li (while walking):

My final days here can't come too soon.
What did I do for this; I ask why?

April:

Freedom's elusive feeling inside.
I'm stuck in here, behind walls of steel.

Cephelia:

Drab green outfits I can hardly hide.
Don't know how I am supposed to feel!

Group:

How can I truly be free,
When despair is all around?
When Will I finally see?
My feet are off solid ground.
Time stands deathly still for me.
What I did back then was wrong.
But my heart sails on the sea.
Will I ever just belong?
Lost inside, no rock of hope.
Over the wall; hard to see.
No way for me to elope.
I can't become, so why be?

Backdrop:

Each inmate prepares for bed. The prison is deathly quiet. The lights are dimmed. The guards are walking the halls. The rhythmic sound of heels clicking across the floor reminds the inmates that there is a difference between incarceration and freedom.

Brenda-Li remembers a poem she read as a child (flashback):

Read poem (Brenda-Li as a young child – age 11: she is in a field by a pond in a dress with a braided hair doll): *A bird sings in winter*

A bird sings in winter

Even though it is cold outside, there is life.
Harsh environment, but the hardy survive.
Life is full of hard survival lessons.
Amidst the cold wind, sleet and fog, a sound is heard.
It is a bird, chirping a happy song.
Why has this bird not gone to shelter?

Perhaps because it is strong enough to survive.
 The sound causes happiness all around it.
 Somehow it affects everything and everyone.
 What are we in this life?
 A resilient bird?
 A hiding person?
 Afraid of shadows?
 Perhaps we need to try to sing in the winter.
 Maybe discover what we are made of?
 Maybe we can impact others with our song?

After the song, she skips off into the distance, showing her youth.

April remembers a song her boyfriend sang when they were dating (flashback):

Song: Male (age 25), the scene is off to the side with her and her boyfriend sitting in a park having a picnic and he gives her a rose and starts to sing to her: *Special light*

Special Light

Night falls by the heat
 Of the day.
 Rise, old moon,
 And light my way.
 No worries, to take their toll on me.
 True love finds its destiny – find it.
 Oh yeah!
 Now time,
 Reaching high, no ends.
 One act of kindness,
 That's the beauty of friends.
 Through time,
 And our sentiments.
 Adorns the lasting
 Special light my friend
 Light it.
 Special light.
 Stars shine like strobes in the sky.
 Special light.
 Some questions arise, but don't respond to why.
 Special light.
 I've got this special light.
 Light.
 Oh yes, I do now.
 Cleansing tides.
 Wash away my fear.
 Romance lights up.
 And flames our heat.
 Dance with me.
 Create new rhythms.
 True abiding souls.
 Never to part.
 From this special light.
 Ah, the light.
 Flowing waves of water,

Calm my soul.
 Friendship bathed in nature's harmony.
 Deep embrace.
 Finds a lover's cry.
 Real and lasting love
 It takes you an I to try.
 Try it now.
 Special light.
 Stars shine like strobes in the sky.
 Special light.
 Some questions arise,
 but don't respond to why.
 Special light.
 I've got this special light.
 Oh yes, we do now.
 Light,
 We've got this special light.
 Special light.
 I got this special light.
 Our special light.

Cephalia recalls a time when she was walking along a quiet path in northern California (flashback):

Read poem (younger Cephalia – age 19). The scene changes to reflect the imagery of the poem: *Winter whispers*

Winter whispers
 The rush of the wind announces the storm.
 Birds find refuge in the vacancies of trees.
 Snows drift, creating sloping landscapes.
 Children bring sleds to challenge the hills.
 Skies fill with engorged clouds.
 Chimneys deliver proof of the warmth of homes.
 Icy roads torment intrepid travelers.
 Snowmen appear as sentinels in neighborhoods.
 Winter whispers in the ears of children.
 Soon, Christmas presents to open.
 Peace becomes the message of hope.
 Remember the poor as they suffer winter.
 The old coat becomes the gift of survival.
 Hearts open to the differences between people.
 The uniqueness of snowflakes reminds us of variety.
 Omnipotence gives way to humility.
 Focus is upon the manger where true hope is born.
 From simple beginnings come profound effects.
 Embittered souls soften to bells and lights.
 Cherish the abundance as the snows melt in spring.
 Soon the New Year brings forth renewal.

Dorothea recalls dancing with her husband on their wedding day (flashback):
 Backdrop:

Dorothea sings in her cell while a younger version of herself and her husband dance under a spotlight – song: *Timeless dance*

Timeless Dance

Take my hand.
 Walk with me.
 We're in a timeless dance
 Trust my lead.
 You're my love.
 You are mine.
 I love you with endless passion.
 So divine.
 Chorus
 Timeless dance.
 Drifting smoothly along the floor.
 Strobes like moonlight in the air.
 Love shines without a care.
 Timeless dance.
 The dance of life.
 Our harmony, our steps.
 Timeless dance.
 The music stops.
 Hold me close.
 Open my lips, with your touch.
 To sing me through.
 Timeless dance.
 Timeless dance.
 Timeless dance.

To end the scene, she slumps onto her bed and they both fall asleep at the same time.

Lynda mutters to herself, pacing in her cell as a nightly mantra to help her sleep as she gets ready for bed: *I don't care*

I don't care

I don't care what they do to me.
 I will never become part of this place.
 I can do my time, this is easy.
 When I get out, I'll show them.
 I should not be here in the first place.
 Everyone is out to get me.
 I did nothing wrong.
 It was his fault.
 Why did they put me here?
 Her fault.
 Their fault.
 Not my fault.
 Never my fault.
 The trial was fixed.
 The judge was on the take.
 The prosecutor is a bum.
 My lawyer screwed up my case.
 My mother is a tramp.
 My father was a tyrant.
 I did nothing wrong at all!
 I am the real victim.

They all did me in.
I'll show them.
I just don't care!

Backdrop:

The lights in the cells go dim. Each inmate drifts off to sleep. The guards roam the hallway with the looks of satisfaction in their faces. Alex is a husky, body-builder type, but is sensitive inside.

Dorothea to Alex: Hey, Alex, why not do something to help me sleep, baby?

Alex to Dorothea: Go to sleep, girl. You got another long and boring day tomorrow.

Dorothea to Alex: Yeah, you got that right.

Alex is searching for his own answers to internal questions of the purpose of his existence. He remembers a poem and says quietly:

A delicate flower

In the desert, the landscape proves desolate.
Life often yields to inescapable elements.
What creatures survive, only due to genetic marvels?
Flora struggles against the harshness of nature.
Heat penetrates the soil, scorching all life.
Yet, amidst such desolation, a lone flower exists.
It is hidden from the ruinous light of self-criticism.
Its beauty contrasts within the bleak boundaries.
Neighbors are the rocks and the windblown dust.
These, like sentinels, guard us from discovery.
Color radiates the flowers' mark of distinction.
It stands tall despite the inclement environment.
Such unwelcome intrusion challenges tough co-inhabitants.
But, from where does this flower emanate?
Its purpose not yet revealed to the world.
Such incomprehensible beauty is found in the soul.
Its chariot is the earthly body corrupt by pain and anguish.
Daily reminders of bleakness prevail over joy.
Moments of hope are crushed by the onslaught of tragedy.
Conflict resounds in the minds judgmental eye.
One can see the flower only through a beautiful heart.
In doing so, life is transformed, optimism reborn.
The oasis of love overcomes the mirage of anger.
Wants falsely portray as needs; then can dissipate.
It is important to look for the flower.
The flower always exists.
We are delicate just like the flower.

Lieutenant Harper prepares to go home and turns out the light in her office, looking satisfied that another day in Brookside State Prison has ended without incident. "A job well done," she says to herself, as she pats herself on the back. This place is harsh, but I'm in control, so I guess it will be okay.

She recalls a poem from her youth and recites pensively, as she walks slowly through the prison:

*When the wind of life is stilled
 Nature's elements prey on its subjects.
 Trees bend arraying their appendages.
 The wind- chilled air upsets the lashing limbs.
 Movement and constant change are the response.
 Chaos perhaps, but also a delicate symphony.
 Fallen leaves disrupted from their security,
 Seeking restful haven on the soft ground beneath.
 Liberated from their involuntary attachment.
 Free to roam as the elements provide transport.
 Only to be covered up by winter's snowy blanket.
 Refuge, if only temporary as new purpose awaits,
 To provide energy towards earth's renewal.
 In life, we are moved by the winds of change.
 Yet, sometimes the wind is stilled.
 We enter an internal hibernation of spirit.
 Somehow, we are rendered unable to move.
 Covered by the quieting elements of suffering sadness.
 Our eternal energy is tolled if only for the moment.
 Stored for eventual new use, then we find purpose.
 The supreme struggle is to regain the wind.
 To sail successfully through the next chapter of life.
 Without, we flounder and float, perhaps even drown.
 Yet, this subile solitude is not dreary death.
 Contemplative, but not frozen in thought.
 Only the movement is suddenly static.
 Existence is not constant movement.
 Direction discovered in the winds of the soul.
 The passage of time will bring back the wind.
 Will we listen to its whisper or ignore the call?
 Will the wind always be stilled?*

As soon as Lieutenant Harper leaves and walks past Marva, providing a gentle wave, Marva reflects on a poem and reads with determination as she walks towards a group of guards:

*Perseverance of the stars
 The twilight sparkle of night reveals hope.
 Each resident of the sky joins in the harmony of light.
 Such illumination pierces the inner soul.
 Feelings of love are nurtured by the stars.
 Dreams created, borne of the inspired glow.
 Immortal thoughts supersede all forms of doubt.
 Souls connected by the shared experience.
 Celestial bodies dance in the moonlight.
 Affection portrayed as enlightened anticipation.*

Marva stops and chats awhile with the other guards; then she continues.

*The new day awaits the symphony of night.
 The solitude played out in chorus with the wind.
 Waves crash to share with the changing tide.
 Deep pangs of desire fill the void of space.
 Soon the kaleidoscope of night will fill dreams.
 Inner peace once again triumphs over turmoil.*

Act 3: The Guards Tell Their Side

Backdrop:

It is dawn of the next day. The prison office is sparsely furnished and drab. The guards sit around and look very bored; the Lieutenant looks distracted. On a Monday morning, they are ready to endure another weekly briefing by the Lieutenant. Each guard is spotlighted and talks while the others are focused on something else.

Marva: These ladies, no saints are they. Day after day it's the same old thing. We count them five times a day and that is such a bore and chore. Some give me lip so I use my stick. That usually keeps them in control – ha! For those that don't learn their lesson, there is a special place for them. It is called keep-lock and boy, does that sure work. They can get a day or a week or a month, sometimes more. Just try me ladies, see where you'll end up!

Alex: I like it here because I am the “boss.” They listen to me and some are “my girls.” This group flirts with me and I flirt back, but don't want old lady Harper to know because that would cost me my job. I walk around here like a king. This place is my castle. The ladies are my subjects. I tell them what to do, where to go, and what they can and cannot do. I change the rules from day to day so they have to learn to obey. I like it here because I am the “boss.”

Lieutenant Harper: I am really disgusted with this place. The women – they don't listen. The guards – they don't respect my authority. I am small and weak, but I am smart and have good connections. I wear my uniform, always tailored and pressed. I walk around confidently and want everyone to know I am in charge, but I hear that both the inmates and the guards make jokes about me behind my back. I'll show them. I just don't have a plan yet.

Marva and Alex each receive orders from Lieutenant Harper:

Lieutenant Harper:

“Alex – Watch Lynda carefully today; I don't like the way she has been acting.”

“Marva – Keep the ladies separated. I don't like when they congregate at meals or in the yard. They should not be congregating. This is prison after all. We don't need any trouble from this bunch!”

Marva and Alex:

Song: *Do this; not that*

Do this, not that.

We bark orders and demand their respect.

They are dumb, but we have high intellect.

This is just a job, though we want more.

Do this; go here; stop that – what's in store?

Go here, not there.

Where are you going? Where?

Stop that, it is wrong.

I'll report you before too long.

Rescue me, from this job of bondage.

Bring back a sense of women suffrage.

This place rots, from the inside out.

Don't do that; you can't go there; what's this about?

Do this, not that. This job sucks.

Lieutenant Harper stares out the window, watching the raging storm outside. She looks pensive, reflecting on her life and the future.

Read poem:

The process of destiny

*Outside the window, rain pours from the sky.
Like translucent pearls, each drop reflects unique light.
From each, refreshment is delivered.
Collectively they pool, yielding only to resistance.
Survival depends on the product of the clouds.
In excess, devastation can occur.
We are like raindrops; our souls like windows.
The effect on others is to nurture or to destroy.
Some succumb to the resistance of each dilemma.
Others find a simpler path of lesser force.
It is rare to make charge against such resistance.
To willingly encounter opposition is to find one's character.
The ultimate carving is not borne of the wood.
It is birthed through the hands of the maker.
It existed always, but the excess needed elimination.
Yet, we are responsible for our own visions.
We can use our power to help or hinder.
Life's lessons help to chisel away the roughage.
Poor attitudes make the process yield to delay.
Lack of courage tolls completion of destiny.
Growth and apathy prove their incongruence.
Where the spirit is the knife, fear dulls the blade.
Through vigilance, we can remain sharply focused.
We can handle rain and identify its nurturing.
The soul's eye is only blinded voluntarily.
True sight is found when freed of oppression.
No key is needed to walk through an unlocked door.
As the vine climbs, we can also emerge to new heights.
What is taught by the rose is reinforced by the tree.*

Act 4: Visitation Day

Backdrop:

A large room is set up for the inmates to have visitors with two long tables and wooden folding chairs nailed to the floor. Visitation days are twice a month, always on a Saturday. A flurry of activity occurs with children and other relatives as they were busy going through the entrance, being frisked and passing through the metal-detector.

April and Cephelia's visitors are at one table. Dorothea and Brenda-Li's visitors sit at the other table. Lynda is not present because she has no visitors:

Song: *I can't wait to see...*

Cephelia and April's visitors:

Momma, when you comin' home?
 I need you. It's not the same without you.
 Darling, I don't like to be alone.
 I want you and will see this time through.

Dorothea and Brenda-Li's visitors:

Waiting: it is such a chore.
 We wait and wait and wait some more.
 No way to shorten the time ahead.
 Just living life, but feeling dread.

Cephelialia and April's visitors:

Momma, when you comin' home?
 I need you, it's no fun alone.
 Daddy just can't be momma.

You're not the only one in trauma.

Dorothea and Brenda-Li's visitors:

What if she doesn't get parole?
 So what she robbed, she stole.
 Others do bad things outside.
 They are free because they lied.

Act 5: The Counselor

Backdrop:

The women are seated in a semi-circle, waiting for the new counselor to appear. They are restless and bored and are bickering amongst themselves. In comes Eddie Jones, a good-looking guy so they sit up straight and adjust their hair and clothes.

Cephelialia to Brenda-Li: Hey, this guy is cute!

Brenda-Li: Nice bulge too; let's see what he's got.

Eddie Jones: Good afternoon ladies. How is everyone today?

Group: Muttering

Eddie Jones: Well, I am a volunteer and am here to talk with you about a new way to live, a way to transform.

April (interrupting): Transform us the hell out of here Eddie. I bet you know how too.

Group: Laughs

Eddie Jones: You must be April. I've heard about you. Can I share something with you, April?

April: Yeah, go ahead. You can share anything you want with me, baby. I got nothin' else to do.

Eddie Jones: Well, let me read something to you that made a difference in my own life:

A man's struggle

A man journeyed to the top of the mountain hoping to find his destiny. Instead, what he found was a struggle between his motivation and his will. Despite the formidable obstacles he faced, he did eventually reach the peak. However, once at the pre-observed zenith, he realized that his original goal had quickly been surpassed. A new objective had taken hold: to find inner peace.

Within the discovery of the man's higher purpose was an incriminating element of self-doubt. He viewed this phenomenon as a hurdle in his life, one requiring clever orientation in order to overcome and not detour his trajectory. However, his mortal capability proved insufficient in combating the formidable obstacle.

Contemplating his dilemma, the man realized his mere existence paled in comparison to the universe. Yet, somehow his life had to serve more meaning than what pure suffering would account. There were options to consider. He could consider his journey to have come to an end and accept the glory of destiny reached albeit in an artificially truncated way or he could forge new resolve to surpass the pressure of the immediate blockage and seek even more lofty achievement.

But he considered his role in the world. Was he of the world or in the world? When he considered the placement of his Higher Power into the equation of the meaning of his life, somehow he developed a calmness of purpose. Through such revelation, renewed energy was instilled into the man's essence. This enabled him to tarry forth and locate the venue of remaining peaks to be reached in his life. Thus, what was discovered was not that he needed to achieve omnipotence within the context of his earthly life, but to live his life as fully as possible and leave behind as much remnant good for others as he humanly could.

In following this new resolve to live his remaining time unencumbered by the false requirement to become anything greater than what God had intended, the man rested, finally, on the palatable notion that his human existence was, in fact, supremely valuable only in the discovered context of his part in the master plan of his maker. There is nothing greater than his best effort that could be inscribed as a requirement on the man's life, nor any strength superior to his then capacity be required of him.

Song: *The way to life is straight*

Some of you can find a way.
 To change your life this very day.
 It won't be easy and may be rough.
 But in the end, I know you're tough.
 Just think of who you were before.
 And start to think what might be more.
 You are not who you were then.
 You could look back and say that was when.
 In the distance are your dreams.
 You can reach them or so it seems.
 Have faith in yourself and in God too.
 It will bring you new destiny out of the blue.

Eddie Jones asks Cephelia to share what is on her mind. She walks around the room and looks out the windows as she says:

When the whippoorwill whispers

Some sounds require no effort to discern.
 They shout in deafening and unpleasant tones.
 A cacophony of unattractive noise ensues.
 Others demand attentive listening.
 They are musical and gentle on the soul.
 The whisper of a little bird is beauty untold.
 Its meaning is conveyed only on the most delicate ear.
 What is this precious creature trying to say?
 In substance, this bird has wisdom of the ages.
 It knows when to make the audience attend.
 The target of its intent is to reinforce the bond.
 There is no time to delay the impact of the message.
 Love cannot toll while the harvest is gathered.
 Hurried is the recipient of these magical sounds.
 The future must begin before tomorrow is at an end.
 The whippoorwill knows its way through life.
 Its sounds do not require clashing cymbals.
 The inherent beauty is the soft notes of sound.
 Lean closer and hear the message of the whisper.
 For it whispers love in all its majesty.

Eddie Jones asks Dorothea to share how she feels as she says:

Retrospection on life's purpose

As we age, our vision becomes clearer still.
 We notice subtleties missed in earlier times.
 Our values alter with the changing tides.
 Suddenly, the measuring device is not years.
 Instead, we look to whom we have impacted.
 To what degree has our interaction been effective?
 Where has our mentoring been a catalyst?
 Where has the help been unselfishly given?
 Did we listen when helping would be toxic?
 It is not what we have taken, but what has been offered.
 The reward is the happiness we provided.
 Our joy is the removal of others' suffering, not to ourselves.
 In our midst exist ever-present opportunities.
 Did we gather wisdom from the aged and pass it to a child?
 Did we remove the stone so there would be no fall?
 When did we act without knowing the beneficiary?
 Did we dispense prudent justice when we were the court?
 We will be judged by trials accepted and declined.
 Who did we teach to become a teacher?
 Where did we help someone traverse a difficult pass?
 Did we sacrifice a desired thing out of pure love?
 What internal gifts were shared amongst the world?
 Have possessions become the cornerstone of our mark?
 Or, did we choose the better portion and discover prayer?
 Has our acknowledged God become supreme?
 What did we start and refuse to stop?
 Where has our courage inspired others?
 Do we allow infirmity suppress our finer abilities?
 Did we reach the roadblock and turn back in fear?

It is the hurdle to overcome that becomes our success.
 Where was the more difficult path taken with confidence?
 What risks were embraced in uncertain environments?
 Only the soul can see the vision of true value.
 Have we allowed the soul to be our beacon?
 Do we fit the cosmic role that makes us a star?
 Have we permitted others to shine more brightly?
 Do we allow some to fall and others to rise higher?
 Have we relinquished control over the universe to the Creator?
 Our hindsight shows the potency of considered decisions past.
 Yet, let us not pass on the present chance to live well today.
 Tomorrow is mythological and can never be visited,
 even with Warp drive and hypersonic speed.
 We can thus become alien to our ignored dreams.
 Optimism, then, is the fuel to propel us to new creation.
 It is thusly our new attitude that defines what we have become.
 Our altitude measured by strength of internal will and conviction.
 In doing so, all judgment will be kind and sweet.
 Even in our twilight we shed warmth on others.
 All light, even weakened light, remains light.
 We need only keep the switch turned on.
 That is the only discretion afforded to mortals.
 What we waste will be our judgment.

Eddie Jones asks April how she feels:

Sometimes

The warm rain dries the salty tears of sadness.
 Refreshment brought from spent clouds.
 Sunshine crashes through the endless storm.
 Bars are removed from the locked gates of repressed thought.
 Dark internal doubts become illuminated paths.
 The enemy of forgiveness is the cruel judge.
 Harshness tempered by resilient thoughts.
 The dagger of kindness pierces the barrier of hardened souls.
 The heart sees what the eyes have overlooked.
 Joy becomes the welcome residue of muted pain.
 Clarity develops within the bluing sky.
 Healing begins with contemplative perspective.
 At daybreak, all possibilities are renewed.
 Spiritual awakening lights the beacons' torch.
 Evening stars of hope give way to certain sun.
 Night winds subside as trees dance in celebration.
 All fear washed away with the cleansing tide.
 Waves of peace overflow the depressed warrior.
 Covert Scorpions recede, creating safe passage.
 The demon of self-judgment turns to acceptance and change.
 Disdain felt from the stares of others disappears.
 Survival extends the silent process of triumph.
 Goals unreachable are only those never set.
 Optimism unleashed from the gripping bond of despair.
 The work of fireflies converts to the timeless task of bees.
 Energy renews through the generator of motivation.
 Achievement is borne of the belief in dreams.

Hearing the whisper of the moth is optional.
Sometimes life sounds the trumpet of happiness.

Eddie Jones says to the inmates: Let me read you a story about challenge.

Momentum versus self-capture: An existential challenge in life

Backdrop:

The scenery changes as the story is read; first boats appear to be floating on stage.

The miniature sailing ship, having been constructed, is compressed so it can be fitted into the small opening of the bottle. Then, a string attached to the mast is pulled, causing the sails to unfurl and appears inside the small bottle as a tall ship. The string is then cut and the bottle capped. We are the ship. Our self-limiting is the bottle. Our fear is the cap. *But who have we become?*

Perhaps we have become too much like the ship. We have capacity to sail the seven seas, yet we allow ourselves to stay the narrow course. We could roam freely and find more interesting waters, but we choose instead to settle for the more limiting, safer, less exotic sea. *Why is this so?*

We grow up with wide eyes, thinking we will solve the world's problems. Dreams fill our minds and aspirations take hold of our senses. But one by one, these are shattered by the experience of failure, the annihilation of negative statements made to us, the disintegration of our spirit through the challenge of disappointment, and intermittent anguish in our lives. *Can we change?*

We can certainly become vibrant again. First, we must navigate our ship to waters that appear more thought-provoking and stimulate our senses to the point of lighting the way towards our greater destiny. Once we take hold of the wheel, we need to blast through the bottleneck of falsely appearing fear and race bravely onward to our journey, intrepid of spirit, hard-core in pursuit of triumph, and boldly face the oncoming waves of strife. Even the ensuing let downs and failures can serve as motivators of renewed energy rather than as intolerable ballast that can sink our mood and upend our keel. *Then why do we fear?*

We yield to the common denominator of listless momentum because we confuse concern with growth opportunities. Yet, when we answer the call to raise the mast high and sail into the winds of change, we face the unknown often far better than we could have imagined. Here, once we see just how far we can travel from sheer will, we eagerly face the new challenge of what to do once we face the new opportunity. At the very least, we can try.

Brenda-Li reads:

God loves even the sparrow

When the tinniest of creatures becomes vulnerable, we must give it our power and help it to survive its potential tragic end. Only when we do so do we truly earn the right to call ourselves enlightened beings. Thus, to kill for sport or for excessiveness is ethically wrong as no life should be considered less vital than any other life. Even life absent a cerebral cortex is capable of manifestation of some form of feeling. As such, the weeping willow may actually be able to weep and the bird of paradise may not always feel bliss. Yet, the humming bird may actually be happy and the

owl may really be apathetic. The bear in winter may truly be fatigued and the squirrel may desire nothing more than to run across busy streets in an erratic pattern. Perhaps we can choose to celebrate the way creatures are and make a better effort to stop crowding them out of their natural habitat. But creatures of all kinds can and do suffer. It is when they do so at the hand of man that we become more savage. In the alternative, perhaps if learn to respect all inhabitants of the world, we will also learn to respect our fellow humans. Thus, problems are least solved with guns and other forms of force. Yet, they are best solved through reasoned thought and introspective dialogue. If we all answer to our acknowledged God, there would be less need for wanton killing and certainly no room for abuse of any type.

Eddie Jones reads:

The challenge of the crossroads: An existential dilemma

There are certain times in a person's life where an intersection is reached, a crossroads. At each of these points, confusion can take over, therefore, an existential crisis. Upon careful reflection, we can reach clarity within the analysis. Decisions often require consideration of significant change. Such change can seem daunting. However, it could also stimulate our courage and create new optimism for improvement in one's life circumstance. When we see the curve up ahead in the road, we should accept the formidable challenge, muster our finest internal strength, and forge ahead in the direction of choice. Whatever way we select, we should have confidence that the new road will lead to net benefits. Fear, while ever present, should be quashed by our empowered soul, itself nurtured by the encouragement and faith in us by others. It is the existential dilemma that provides the platform for the possibility of achievement. Even the potent commodity of pain can be respected, but it should never stop us from reaching our destiny. We can meet the challenge. We just need to have faith in ourselves and try.

The group reads (soft dramatic music plays in the background; the lights are dimmed):

Realities and aspirations

The cold stark realities of life exist.
 They wake us up to a world of greed and wealth.
 Bitter and angry people surround us with the stare of suspicion.
 Yet, freedom is just over the horizon, if we know where to look.
 We wake daily with beauty and warmth, first in us; then in others.
 Family and friends wait patiently, burning the candle of hope.
 Some of us will change our paths of life; others won't.
 Brought to believe that grief comes in different shapes and forms.
 We can be transformed from a living death to life lived well.
 Longing to be free, opening our minds to the travel of dreams.
 In the end analysis, love shines abundantly within our souls.
 Our eternal brightness illuminates the world as no mere sun can do.
 We thus aspire to inspire the uninspired through our uniqueness.
 As such, we sound the majesty of the trumpet.
 No hurdle in life will ever be too large to climb.
 Active thriving replaces the passive notion of merely coping.
 Existence, therefore, requires us to succeed.
 As such, we must meet our destiny though process.

What we are today leads to tomorrow's discovery.
 Plans will never substitute for spontaneity.
 But, good thinking always wins the battle over greed.

Eddie Jones says with confidence:

The Flow of Dreams

Within the vivid soul flows a mighty river.
 Turbulent at times, yet quiet in others.
 Few have traversed such formidable paths.
 After the difficult navigation, sight is clear.
 Unstoppable intrepid spirit survives the falls.
 The idealistic romantic rests on the shore.
 Find me in the depths of these un-chartered waters.
 Your place of refuge exists around the bend.
 Persistent pursuit of love supersedes inaction.
 There can be no rest during such struggle.
 Dangerous obstacles appear formed in doubt.
 Sincerity marred by previous potent pain of past.
 Perhaps in time the imagined becomes real.
 The poetry merges into the poet's existence.
 In contrast, the trauma of life is tolerable.
 Hopes, dreams and wishes resurrect from sadness.
 Walk with me through my river of unspoken fears.
 Climb the mountain ahead as two become one.
 There is no end to possible accomplishment.
 Limitations succumb to the sound of triumph.
 We should, thus, encourage loftier dreams.

Act 6: The Count

Backdrop:

The inmates line up in their cells. The guards walk by and count off the numbers on their uniforms. A guard with a clipboard marks down the presence of each number called out. Brenda-Li winks at Alex while Lynda spits at him. April whistles.

Marva and Alex:

Song: *One more day; one more count*

Prisoner 4692843. [Cepheia]

Present now and I can see.
 She is in her cell and very quiet.
 Keep an eye of her and avoid a riot.

Prisoner 2875412. [Dorothea]

Present now with nothing to do.
 Keep her locked up so there is no worry.
 This one's trouble, always in a hurry.

Prisoner 9734867. [Brenda-Li]

Present now, but this ain't heaven.
 She is gentle and follows every rule.
 Maybe she will be okay, even go to school.

Prisoner 8943265. [April]

Present now, barely alive.
 She is always sick and counts the days.
 Her attitude is clever, she has her ways.

Prisoner 1429372. [Lynda]

What she says is never true.
 Watch her carefully, don't let her go.
 After release, she'll be back I know.

Alex reads:

Sporadic existence

Its 5p.m. on this beautiful Wednesday afternoon
 Where has the day gone?
 To work, to play, to yeah- work
 Everything I do goes by like the blink of an eye
 And I not focusing on what I should
 Do I disregard the important things in life?
 Or is there just not enough time in the day
 My days are short, my nights even shorter
Life holds every beauty

Life contains so much pain

Will I look back on my life with regret?
 Does my presence hold power and success?
 Do I wish to much, or not enough?
 Do I break the rules, or follow them
 All these years down for the count
 What does my future hold?
 Will I have one, will it be happy
 Will I leave this world tomorrow with respect?
 Or will my unfinished business haunt at me?

Life is un-expected

Life is complicated

What seemed simple is no longer simple, but a hurdle
 Hurdle, after hurdle, after hurdle
 Each day presents me with a new one
 One I conquer over and over again
 So many things to accomplish, to see
 Will my time run out, or be abundant
 Can my heart be fulfilled and my freedom protected
 With I marry thee in front of me
 Or run with tears for fear of commitment
 Will I experience the birth of my children?
 Or will my plans in life be altered?
 Will my health prevail?
 Or decline in a constant fail
 Will my family find comfort within their own?
 Will our generation fad into the sky?

Life embraces no guarantees
Life an undeniably necessary
 Confusion, stress, drama
 Fills live and makes it complete
 Without, everyone would perish
 With, success for all
 Not sure where to go from here,
 For that I STOP
 Should I dare to complete?

Act 7: The Transitional Contrast

Narrator: There is a contrast between hopelessness and hope, of pessimism and optimism. Often these concepts are mirror images of each other. Perhaps a shift in mindset is possible with some encouragement.

Backdrop:

Before a class is ready to begin, the room is empty. Eddie Jones looks pensive as he walks around the room, looking at each desk as if the inmates were seated. Eddie does not realize that the inmates are hovering behind the door and can hear him speaking softly, yet with a determined spirit.

Eddie Jones:

Spoken word: The loss of hope

The loss of hope
 Loss of hope dwells within abandoned dreams.
 Our silenced soul has been compromised.
 Now, the cold, constant reality – loneliness!
 Whitewashed walls – movement stifled.
 Minds tortured by visions of fields and oceans.
 Tears muted by deafening sounds – quiet agony.
 Impersonal sentinels review our every move.
 Even thoughts succumb to monitoring.
 We pretend, depicting a common façade of vacancy.
 We are forced to testify to our powerlessness.
 The observer's taste is burned with tragic potency.
 Torn apart from our once familiar world.
 Our very existence is discounted by many.
 We are judged, doubted, mocked and scourged.
 Our anchored spirit is uprooted to drift.
 Shattered in the storms of bondage.
 Drowning in the despair of predicament.

The women pile in and take their seats, which are arranged in a semi-circle.

Eddie Jones to the group: I'd like to share a message with you. Life does not have to be a series of disappointments. You can realize your hopes and dreams if you first work on your awareness of who you are and who you wish to become. By looking back to the person you were you can also realize that you are no longer that person.

You must live in the present moment and use the gift of life to make consistent efforts towards positive change wherever change is possible.

Eddie Jones:

Spoken word: *The renewal of hope*

The renewal of hope

Yet, then, I was, but now, surely I am.

Perhaps tomorrow I can become new again.

This is the only unshakable hope.

Thoughts can change bleakness into beauty.

Our willing energy fuels reinvention.

We can grow a rose on a vine of thorns.

Freethinking can be projected over the boundaries.

Some will respond to our call.

The connection with people has not been severed.

Our courage provides new opportunities.

Only God can guard our destiny.

We must remain vibrant and strong.

Group speaks in turns:

Cephelina: Hey, we get it!

Dorothea: It's not that we are bad.

Lynda: We just did bad things because others hurt us.

April: Made poor choices.

Brenda-Li: We can make better choices.

Cephelina: Doing so will make us different.

Dorothea: Being different makes us change.

Lynda: Our struggle is all we have.

April: We want to be different and to change.

Brenda-Li: We can become powerful.

Eddie: "Nice session. They all bustle out of the room, except April, who stays behind and talks with him."

April: Hey Eddie, I think I want to be different.

Eddie: You can be what you aspire to be, April.

April: I want to dance and be free.

Eddie: Do so in your mind and heart; then in life. That is how freedom works.

April: Thanks, Eddie. You're okay.

Act 7: The Change of Heart

Narrator: Winter approaches as the inmates grow gloomy. The skies become grey, the days shorten, giving way to night's power, and spirits depress.

Cephelina and Brenda-Li are together in the yard.

Cephelina and Brenda-Li:

Song: *Discoveries*

My past does not condemn what future stores may hold.
 Today's enlightened triumph can be bright and bold.
 In the new light of tomorrow, my renewed soul shines.
 I can be powerful and never again cross the lines.
 When I stumble I will have the strength to move ahead.
 New challenges ahead will not be rejected, but accepted instead.
 I will turn my heart from the inner darkness to light.
 Finding new ways to tackle the pain that is in sight.
 I will face the predicted temptation with all my strength.
 My quiet quest is pre-determined to go to any length.
 My true image will be fully adequate for any test.
 Never to abandon hope or allow my guard to rest.

Act 8: The Hearing

Backdrop:

It is early morning and the inmates are arriving at the dining hall for breakfast. Cephelia, Dorothea, Brenda-Li, and April are on line with their trays selecting various food items. They are talking amongst themselves. Lynda is at the other end of the room and is unhappy. Her hearing is later today and she has a bad feeling that she will be denied parole.

Cephelia: Lynda won't get out. She has a bad attitude. They won't release a bad attitude girl back to the street. She got a lot to learn that girl.

Dorothea: She never learned any lessons or even tried to help herself.

Brenda-Li: We learned so much from Eddie; too bad she never tried.

April: She will never change. It is not part of her makeup to try.

Though they can't hear her, Lynda says:

Why do they mock me so?

I am just like them.

Stuck in jail; no way out.

Why am I in here anyway?

Nobody likes me, but that's okay.

I like my life alone inside.

Why do people hate me?

What did I ever do to anyone?

When's dinner anyway?

Backdrop:

A small hearing room is ready with a long wooden table and three chairs. The hearing officer and a guard are present. Lynda is brought in and is seated in front of the hearing table.

Hearing officer to Lynda: What have you learned since you've been in prison?

Lynda: That I did wrong and need to change (She says so with a smirk on her face and negativity in her voice).

Hearing officer: Have you changed?

Lynda: Of course I have. I am a new woman today.

Hearing officer: And why is that?

Lynda: Because I was told I have to be different. (Said with a mocked tone in her voice)

Act 9: The Day of Release

Backdrop:

Outside by the front prison gate, the soon-to-be released inmates gather in street clothes, ready to board a bus to the train station for their individual destinations home. They talk amongst themselves, mostly about Lynda.

Brenda-Li: She is such a bitch.

April: I'm glad she is stuck in that place.

Lynda is in her cell and says to herself: "They are all gone and I am really alone again. Good. I like it this way; nobody to bother me."

Narrator: Cephelia, Dorothea, April, and Brenda-Li are all being released. Lynda was denied parole because of her criminal record. This is her eighth prison sentence for larceny. Her record reveals that she is anti-social and a habitual criminal. Though she went through the motions of rehabilitation, she faked her sincerity too much. This was noticed by those around her.

Cephelia, Dorothea, April and Brenda-Li:

Song: *My new life has begun*

Freedom – that feeling of cool breeze and warm sun.

No shackles or counts any more – we are done here.

Life is renewed and we are far from done.

We must go far away and never return near.

Even in the darkest days, hope is on the other side.

Our time is now, not the times forgotten, yesterday.

Respect for the law and rules to abide.

We've found a new attitude, a brand new way.

Convicted – yes; now- transformed.

Leave the memories of here behind.

Internal change of will reborn.

Connected heart with active mind.

We accept new responsibility.

Strive to find our purpose in life.

And look ahead to creative utility.

Cope and deal with each new strife.

The group reads parts while the others embrace their families:

Memories of Healing

Cephelia:

Mother's love.

Emptiness without them.

Pride within.

Love and affection.

Everlasting.

Tower of security.
 Confident cure.
 Depth and satisfaction.
 Only time will tell.
 If we have a chance to savor it?

Dorothea:

The depth of our teachings.
 Like a rose that buds from a seed.
 The destiny of our life.
 The emptiness only I can see.
 Mysterious shortcomings.
 The happiness of the future.
 The hand I long to hold.
 The day will come.
 A blind eye to our mistakes.

Brenda-Li:

The true meaning of lessons learned.
 A lost soul.
 Walking in the shadow.
 Darkness of love.
 The salty taste of tears.

April:

The love of a mother with a child in her arms.
 Crying with the river.
 Come into my life.
 Remembering those special moments.

Backdrop:

The four inmates have been released and have returned to their homes. The scenery changes to a rural farm. Dorothea looks back and recites:

Dream Plantation

*Only in my sleep do I wish to dream.
 My destiny is the present where I choose to live.
 The dream is only an important idea.
 But life is the harvest of the dream plantation.
 Come with me to the edge of my dreams.
 Walk through the valleys of wakefulness.
 Share your thoughts borne of a new day.
 Don't live your yesterdays in fantasy.
 Inspired acting on creative thought.
 No preplanned movement can be adequate.
 The desire is for reality in every sense.
 Not a contrived notion of distorted perfection.
 Don't live in entombed romanticism.
 Yet, there is a strong appeal for the ideal.
 Will you step away from the past?
 Can you enter the domain of my existence?
 Where can the connection be true?
 Love and trust become the only subsidies.
 Quest for me, but do not take what is not offered.
 Neither abandon nor condemn or judge.
 Within the complexity is the solution.
 Will you pierce my armor and find the soul?*

*You can reach me on the surface.
I am not hiding underneath the storm.
My presentation is my daily statement.
I have no elaborate hidden agenda.
No need for clandestine subterfuge.
This is the fullness of who I am.*

April walks alone and considers her son whom she longs to have back in her life:

Entombed in Silence
When will the silence end?
Will I hear the birds sing again?
I have drowned in my tears.
Lost in the abyss of internal misery.
My feelings have numbed.
Blood barely trickles through my veins.
The scars of loneliness are evident.
Darkness is my only sanctuary.
I am starving for the sight of his eyes.
Warm and kind, where are they?
What has happened to this special love?
I am in endless torment.
Given to him borne of respect.
Yet it depletes my energy to suffer.
I've brought this pain onto myself.
I loved and now pay the penalty.
I love still, yet have no recourse.
Trapped in life, lost in love.
Will death end the crisis?
But that seems selfish.
I can barely cry.
There are emotional cataracts in my heart.
This battle is lost.
Moments that could have been shared, now gone.
I am in mourning, does he realize?
Can she sense the growing dilemma?
I can feel his tears and sobs.
I can see his face and anguish.
But why must we suffer so?
What meaning has this for us?
No solutions have appeared.
Dare I break the vow of silence?
Yet honor requires continuance.
I pray for an opening of his heart.
Even a glimpse of him.
Depression is eclipsing my soul.
I may fall too far to be found.
Even he may not recognize the remnant.
But suffer on I must.
This love requires me to give.
I have only my life for him.
To be laid down willingly upon his request.
Have I failed him?

Brenda-Li is out on the streets of her hometown, looking over the storefronts. She notices padlocks on the gates and wonder if each one is locked. But, one, on the gate of a jewelry store is not locked. Brenda-Li holds it in her hands and ponders the temptation, but knows she wants to change. She recites:

Self Discovery

*Lost at sea to swim or drown.
 Strength perceived, but hidden deeply.
 The truest help is found within.
 Brought alive through awareness awakened.
 Encountered souls affect along the way.
 Some stir waves; others offer rafts.
 Discernment clarifies confusing choices.
 True anchors make their presence known.
 Confidence as brick and mortar.
 Forging connection of mind and body.
 Illuminating the safest path.
 Possible still to sink into endless abyss.
 Courage to see ahead the bright optic cues.
 Struggles surface testing the chosen way.
 Rewarded effort marking the journey.
 Help provided and received at each turning point.
 Pain and mourning are passing debris.
 Spirit revived by refreshing rain.
 New ideas to cross impenetrable barriers.
 Reefs of difficulty soon made manageable.
 Altered attitudes pierce each new day.
 Challenge self-constructed paradigms.
 Shifting energy through enlightenment.
 Clearing mind welcomes new concepts.
 Some to consider; others to cast aside.
 Drifting thoughts find new moorings.
 Slowly shaping internal congruence.
 Freedom intersects with noble duty.
 Integrity shears the wool-covered eyes.
 Trust renewed through inspired sharing.
 Time ahead the only ample answer.
 Feelings shared become the barometer.
 There is no endpoint to the challenge.
 Exhaustion buoyed by hope renewed.
 Tireless the fight fraught with fears.
 Dangers faced with solvent serenity.
 Nightmares succumb to restful dreams.
 Restlessness quieted by resonating harmonies.
 Questions interrogate future's premise.
 Beached illusions mark the past.
 Arresting concerns conquered by love.
 And in the end of her speech, she closes it and smiles.*

Alex, Marva and Lieutenant Harper walked back inside after the release of the four inmates. They reflect back on these women and share stories about who they are and how they seemed to be truly transformed. The three of them also feel ener-

gized by the newfound peace in the lives of the inmates. Perhaps the transformative effect extends to them as well?

The proof of such extended transformation is in how each of them chooses to adopt newfound happiness in their spirits and improve their attitudes towards the inmate population by being more compassionate and more dedicated towards helping others achieve transformation in their lives. In a way, the change in the four women has reflected a dramatic change in the guards and the Lieutenant.

Act 10: Reprise

Eddie Jones recites:

Recesses of the Soul

In the deep recesses of the soul exists a place where few travel, even the owner of the soul. The primary reason for this is fear to tread the unknown variables that are encountered in the search for this hidden place. I believe we all have the capability to uncover the secrets of the soul. We choose not to try because we become comfortable with our present selves and with our understanding of others. To explore deeper meaning requires taking risks, the cost of which may not be bearable. An example is the case of a man who desires to know more about a woman's feelings but will not ask insightful questions because he fears offending her. He is also afraid he may not understand the responses or be able to alter his approach to her with the added revelations. It may further require the man to acknowledge the woman in ways he has not been heretofore comfortable. In a sense, knowledge can become a burden on the man. In the case of the self, people may not be willing to dig deep into their own souls because they may discover needs they have always had which may require significant change in their lives.

I have considered the above dynamics often in my search for the deeper essence of myself and those I care deeply about. I find no fear in my interactions with loved ones and I am unafraid of self-discovery. Discovering the internal well of emotions inside me and feeling free to express them is an example of this unlocked sense of self. Yet, surely there is more work to be done. To believe otherwise is to feel an inappropriate sense of perfection.

Upon consideration of how accessible I make myself to those attempting to reach a deeper understanding of me, I realize I am open to inquiries and requests for me to share my thoughts and feelings. Where I feel I have failed is in expressing a sense of patience with people.

All:

Song: *The renewal of hope*

Then, I was, but now, surely I am.
 Tomorrow I can become new again.
 This is the only unshakable hope.
 Thoughts can change to beauty.
 Willing energy fuels reinvention.

We grow a rose on a vine of thorns.
Projected our thinking over the wall.
Some will respond to our call.
We are connected to people.
Courage provides new opportunities.
God will guard our destiny.
We must remain vibrant and strong.
We must
Remain
Vibrant
And strong!

Appendix B

Use of Poetry in the Transformation of the Prisoner

By taking the role of *life coach*, a therapist can instill change in the client. “The transferable helping skills, which trained and experienced therapists bring to the coaching relationships, are extremely valuable in facilitating successful change and growth for coaching clients” (Williams & Davis, 2002, p. xiii). Ellis (1998) wrote: “Life coaches assist people to discover what they want in life and unlock their own brilliance to achieve it. Life coaching is about people generating their own answers, not looking outside of themselves for solutions” (p. 1). Thus, by catalyzing the powers of the person needing help through the introduction and demonstration of useful tools, true and lasting change may be possible (Kreuter, 2007a, p. 160).

Creative writing is a useful medium to assist people in making changes in their lives.

“Poetry is inherently creative in that it is a work of the imagination” (Piiro, 1999, p. 414). The metaphorical images created in the poetic expression form the basis for the stimulation of energy in the reader (Kreuter, 2007a, p. 161.). In Kreuter’s (2005a, 2006) research on the use of rehabilitative poetry in the prison setting, inmates were invited to write short essays or poems about their process of transformation, from the person they were to the way they see themselves now, and then a projected goal of who they would like to become.

Kreuter conducted a volunteer program at two prisons for women in Westchester County, New York. The program was titled: “Money Addiction” and was designed and delivered by Kreuter to small groups of women (approximately 15–20) during weekly meetings over a course of between 6 and 10 weeks. Kreuter devised an exercise where the women were asked to write about their lives from the perspective of three points in time: their past, their present, and their future. (Kreuter, 2005, pp. 98–99) wrote:

I have long believed that there is a definite potency to poetry that depicts real emotions. During my involvement in the prison, I’ve written a number of poems inspired by such experiences. I have introduced these writings at appropriate moments within the group setting and they have resulted in rich dialogue and a true sharing of non-judgmental understanding between the various groups and me. I wrote the following poem based on the shared pain of several members of my current group. The poem,

first delivered to a prison group on November 9, 2003, brings to life this ‘three-points-in-time’ metaphor:

Then, I was; now I am; I can become
 The loss of hope dwells within the abandoned dreams.
 Future suspended by the experience of present pain.
 In effect, the silenced soul has been compromised.
 Replaced only by the cold constant reality of loneliness.
 Between the whitewashed walls, free movement if stifled.
 Our minds tortured by daydreams of open fields and warm oceans.
 Suffering becomes the common muffled mantra.
 Even tears are muted by the deafening sounds of quiet agony.
 Allies only seem to exist amongst those similarly afflicted.
 Impersonal sentinels review our every move.
 Even our thoughts appear to succumb to monitoring.
 Escape made possible through discovered oasis of created memory.
 Books of fantasy turn our minds away from our presence.
 We portray an untrue picture of our developed uniqueness.
 Instead, our pretense becomes the witnessed common façade.
 We become a forced testimony of our powerlessness.
 Such tragic potency burns the listener’s taste.
 We feel torn apart from our familiar world.
 Many witnesses turn away in discouragement.
 Thus, we are scourged by the discounting of our existence.
 Our humanness judged, doubted then mocked.
 Even our anchored spiritual essence is uprooted to drift.
 Spirits are shattered in the solemn storm of bondage.
 We drown in the daunting despair of predicament.
 Yet, then I was, but now surely I am.
 So, perhaps tomorrow, I can become new again.
 This, in the final analysis, is the only unshakable hope.
 To change bleakness into beauty, one thought at a time.
 Our reinvention depends on our willing energy.
 Thus, on the wine of thorns, we can grow a rose.
 So, too, we can project freethinking over the boundaries.
 And there are some who will respond to our call.
 In reality, the connection has not been severed.
 It is our courage that provides for new opportunities.
 Responsibility for growth can never be delegated.
 Others cannot rightly guard our destiny, but God.
 We must, therefore, remain vibrant and strong.

The primary focus of this program is helping the women confront their addictions and transform their weaknesses into profound strengths. The main tool used is empathy. Kaplan (1991) considered connectedness, “an interpenetration of feelings between two people” (p. 46). The cognitive component of empathy requires the therapist to “...maintain a sense of self that permits the therapist, while being deeply affectively connected, to make the complex clinical judgments that must be made” (p. 47).

“Some inmates experience a significant hurdle in their self-healing due to the manifestation of feelings of guilt” (Kreuter, 2007, p. 160). Yalom (1980) stated: In attempting to facilitate a patient’s awareness of responsibility, the therapist soon

discovers an uninvited presence in the therapeutic arena. That presence is guilt, the dark shadow of responsibility, which often trespasses into the process of existential psychotherapy” (p. 276).

An exercise was done with the inmates towards the end of the program. This exercise involved a poetic approach to provide the inmates with an additional tool to use to reinforce newly professed positive attitudes. “The purpose is to provide the inmates with a vehicle to express positive self-affirmation” (Kreuter, 2007, p. 160). “In every act of moral, self-affirmation man contributes to the fulfillment of his destiny, to the actualization of what he potentially is” (Tillich, 2000, p. 52). The following poem was conceived and written by Dr. Kreuter, read aloud to the group and then the group had an opportunity to respond to each question. “The responses to each question were voiced in similar fashion appropriate to the challenge and congruent with the intent of the message” (p. 160). The poem:

Questions and Affirmations

When you are at the door to trouble, will you consider the risks?
 What could be the rich reward if you fail yourself?
 As new dreams can be fulfilled, will you close the door on temptations?
 Inside lingers the persistent notions, but do you see they are all false?
 Pleasures perhaps are lost, but are they replaced by the opiate of new light?
 Will you succumb to the burning need or change the image to mere want?
 Can new values instill their power within the transformed soul?
 Is there a conquest worth the pain of despair?
 Do we trust the momentum recently commenced?
 Does the moment of stolen ecstasy absolve the inner pangs of guilt?
 Do true and lasting resolutions cleanse the tortured conscience?
 Can the rushing river cleanse past pain?
 Will long-term destiny outlast short-term thinking?
 Will violence of any nature consume our lives?
 Will we create harmony with others and the community?
 Is there absolute power in a bottle, pill or pleasure?
 Do we realize the myth of the outside and protect ourselves inside?
 Will our senses be deafened by the ugly roar of our desire?
 Or will we hear the sweet silent sound of the butterfly?
 Can the accepted struggle include great pain?
 Will our inner strength triumph over momentary exhaustion?
 Should we cloak ourselves with thorns in self-inflicted injury?
 Can we heal inside through metamorphosed thought?
 Do we look back from today and neglect tomorrow’s promise?
 Or is the hope on the other side of yesterday?
 Is depleted energy real or imagined?
 Can the next rain nourish instead of drown us?
 Will we turn on to life by accepting what we’ve done?
 Can our focus turn to new opportunities ahead?

Each inmate was encouraged to add, delete or modify lines of the poem in accordance with their own thoughts and feelings and to read their version of the completed poem each day. “By doing so, the prisoner with admitted addictions may be better able to channel positive energy towards a deepening of the process of transformation of their weakened spirit to a healthier, more dynamic state of existence” (p. 161).

Therapeutic intervention or help through coaching is to guide the client towards channeling of their anxiety in healthier ways. “Counseling involves the use of interpersonal interactions, including, but not limited to those between therapist and client(s), to identify, process, and resolve relational, cognitive, emotional, cultural, and/or spiritual issues that hinder client development or growth” (Carson, 1999, p. 395). This active process may be beneficial in the reduction of symptoms of depression, despair, and hopelessness. “The hopelessness, frustration, sadness, and dissatisfaction that constitute depression can quite literally make you feel bad physically” (Hafen, Karren, Frandson, & Smith, 1996, p. 234). It is important to provide a person with a vehicle to express positive self-affirmation (Kreuter, 2005, 2006).

Kaplan (1991) considered the affective dimension where “...intense contact is made, and there is a deep connectedness, an interpenetration of feelings between two people” (p. 46). In a prison group, such intensity can be even greater (Kreuter, 2007, p. 159). Intensity of interaction can result in insightful awakenings in the thought process of not only the person giving help, but as well as for the helper. Inspiration becomes the worthy goal of the counseling mission.

Where individuals are (or feel they are) placed on the social spectrum can have a dramatic impact on their self esteem, drive, and choice of directions in life. “The concept of social stratification refers to the fact that any society will consist of levels that relate to each other in terms of super-ordination and subordination, be it in power, privilege or prestige” (Berger, 1963, p. 78). Relative societal position can make a formidable difference in potentials for an individual. This may be especially true with respect to education and career. As an example, the children of parents involved in a family business have a special opportunity to be invited to become part of that business. Not all such children welcome this type of opportunity, but, nonetheless, they may have more options than children of parents without such immediate sources of employment and career. Upbringing can lead to desire for maintaining or increasing social class. A child of a parent who belongs to a fancy country club may wish 1 day to join and will; therefore, realize that it will be necessary to sustain that privilege. Even in cases where large wealth is passed down to successive generations, it is not always managed properly. In cases of former investors in the Madoff funds, many formerly wealthy individuals lost much of their wealth.

“And the three principal rewards of social position—power, privilege, and prestige—frequently do not overlap but exist side by side in distinct stratification systems” (p. 78). Weber also formulated a three-component theory of stratification, with Social class, Social status and Political party as conceptually distinct elements (Bendix, 1977, p. 85). Max Weber defined class in terms of the expectations in life that an individual may reasonably have.

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