

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.