

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.